"Rimrock" Revisited: An Ethnographic Study of the Homesteader Community of Fence Lake, New Mexico

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Abstract

From 1949 until 1955, a large group of researchers from the Laboratory of Social Relations of Harvard University, led by renowned anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, conducted an extensive study of five culturally different communities in a rural area of western New Mexico. The study was ground breaking in its cross-disciplinary approach to the study of cultural values, and it has become a classic. The pseudonym used for the research area was "Rimrock." A major hypothesis of this study was that culturally different communities living in the same geographical area and subject to similar environmental constraints would become more alike in values orientation over time.

In 1998, nearly fifty years after the start of the original Rimrock study, a team of researchers from the University of New Mexico revisited the five communities to investigate current conditions, and to see whether the predictions of the original study had come to pass. This researcher studied the small town of Fence Lake, New Mexico, which was called "Homestead" in the Rimrock study. In addition to describing the past and current demography, economy, and family relationships in Fence Lake, this paper will discuss two ethical issues which emerged in the course of the researcher's field work: the effect of ethnographic studies on their target communities, and the issue of objectivity in research.

Introduction to Fence Lake and the Rimrock Study

From June 1949 until 1955, the Laboratory of Social Relations of Harvard University conducted an extensive "Comparative Study of Values in Five Cultures" in the Zuni-Ramah-Fence Lake region of western New Mexico, about fifty miles south of the city of Gallup. The study involved thirty-seven field workers from different disciplines, and the research area was given the pseudonym "Rimrock." *People of Rimrock,* published in 1966, was the terminal publication of the Harvard study.

The "Rimrock" area of New Mexico was selected for study by the Harvard group because of the rather unique situation of five different cultural groups living in five separate communities within one small geographical area. These five communities were the Native American community of Zuni; a Navajo reservation community at Pine Hill (called "La Pena" in the study); a Mormon community at Ramah settled in 1877 ("Rimrock", also a fictitious name); the Spanish American village of Atarque ("Atrisco" in the study); and the most recent settlement, a farming/ranching community located around the village and service center of Fence Lake (pseudonym "Homestead").

These five culturally different communities existed in approximately the same environmental conditions, with access to the same technology. On the other hand, there were major differences in the historical and cultural roots of each community, and in the length of time each group had resided in the area. Since the critical factor of environment was seen as controlled in this study, variations in the lifestyles and cultures of the five different communities could be compared more easily, with particular reference to the values orientations of each cultural group. A major influence on the study was the

values orientation work of Florence Kluckhohn, wife of fellow-anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn. (Clyde Kluckhohn also took part in the study and was considered the project's guiding light, but unfortunately he passed away before *People of Rimrock* was published.)

The main question posed by the Harvard researchers was this: "Why do different value systems continue to exist in five cultures all having to meet similar problems of adjustment and survival in the same ecological area, all having been exposed by actual contact and by stimulus diffusion to each other's value ideas and practices?" (Albert and Vogt, 3)

The focus of this paper is the small rural community of Fence Lake, New Mexico, which is located about seventy miles south of Gallup. New migrants, primarily from Texas and Oklahoma, came into the Fence Lake area in the 1930's, taking claim to some of the last free homestead land offered by the U. S. government in the lower 48 states.

The primary researcher in the 1949-1955 Harvard study of Fence Lake ("Homestead") was Evon Vogt Jr. In addition to his contributions to *People of Rimrock,* Vogt published one other book, *Modern Homesteaders* (1955), dealing with the culture and values of the people of "Homestead" or Fence Lake, and two monographs, "A Comparative Study of the Role of Values in Two Southwestern Communities" (O'Dea and Vogt, 1953) and "Water Witching: An Interpretation of a Ritual Pattern in a Rural American Community" (Vogt, 1952). Vogt also served as Deputy Coordinator of the entire Rimrock project.

Evon Vogt Jr. was raised in the "Rimrock" area, on a ranch just outside the Mormon town of Ramah ("Rimrock"). His family had arrived in the area around 1920, before the homesteading era. As a non-Indian, non-Hispanic, non-Mormon, and non-homesteader, Vogt belonged to none the five major communities studied by the Harvard research group, although he did have family ties to the Ramah Mormon

community.

Vogt's familiarity with the area and with subjects of his study must have been a great advantage to the Rimrock research project. However, as I will discuss later, one may also question whether he held preconceived ideas or biases as a result of his prior experiences with the community he was studying. It should also be noted that Vogt's analysis and conclusions in his published work seem to have greatly offended the Fence Lakers, challenging their sense of community and individual identity.

In *People of Rimrock* and *Modern Homesteaders,* Vogt concluded that Fence Lake, whose economy until that time had largely been reliant on pinto bean farming, would eventually develop into an area of widely dispersed ranches with no community center. In effect, he predicted the demise of Fence Lake as a community. Vogt believed that the death of the community would occur as a result of the homesteaders' own values orientations, which, according to his analysis, caused them to pursue dry land farming in an area which was unsuitable due to limited water resources.

Purpose and Limitations of the Current Study

The purposes of the current study were:

1) to find out what has become of the community of Fence Lake in the interval since the Vogt study in the early 1950's, by examining Fence Lake's current demography and economy;
2) to reconsider in retrospect Vogt's analysis and conclusions regarding the culture and values of the Fence Lakers, and
3) to see whether any of his predictions regarding the community's future have come to pass.

Although it also would have been desirable to investigate the

current relations of Fence Lakers with those neighboring communities included in the original Rimrock study, and to determine the values orientations of present day Fence Lakers, these more comprehensive objectives were outside the practical scope of the present study due to limitations of time and access. The researcher spent the winter and spring of 1998 in New Mexico, making two field trips to Fence Lake and its neighboring communities. To supplement the on site field work, interviews of past and present Fence Lake residents were conducted by telephone, by email, and in person, and recent census data and other published materials were examined.

A second limitation of the current study emerged when, at the outset of my research, one former Fence Lake resident warned me against the use of questionnaires or interviewing in the community. He cautioned me that asking questions about economic activities such as income, occupation, land ownership and land use in Fence Lake would be seen as an invasion of privacy contravening local social norms. The same privacy concerns inhibited direct information gathering about individual values, relations with neighboring communities, the occurrence of inter-community marriage, and other sensitive or personal matters which were of keen interest to the researcher. In the same way that U. S. census takers are often seen as "snoopy" by private citizens, there was a real danger that my research inquiries might upset the community I wished to investigate.

This problem of methodology and access was compounded by the fact that there appears to be a strong residue of distrust in Fence Lake toward researchers and research itself as a result of the original Rimrock study. According to one of my key informants, whose family was included in the original study, the analysis and conclusions in both *People of Rimrock,* and more especially Vogt's *Modern Homesteaders,* greatly offended Fence Lakers. My informant told me that Fence

Lakers felt that the depiction of their relations with neighboring communities was unbalanced in these studies, and that the original researcher was selective in the incidents he chose to report. Also, my informant felt that in the Rimrock study, "Homesteaders" were unfairly portrayed as unrealistic dreamers who lived too much in the future and had too much confidence in man's ability to dominate and control nature. My informant exhibited strong personal feelings about the way that his community had been treated by the Rimrock study, although the informant himself is a social scientist.

Another documented reference to the negative feelings of the Fence Lake subjects towards the Rimrock study can be found in a 1981 newspaper interview with early Fence Lake settler Ray Boyett (Smith). Boyett said that Fence Lakers were upset by Vogt's description of them in "That Book" as manifesting "a complex combination of attitudes of superiority and inferiority" and being fond of what Vogt termed "loafing."

The bad feeling engendered by the original Rimrock study persists to the extent that nearly fifty years later, this researcher was advised to approach the community with caution. If more time had been available, it might have been possible gradually to develop relationships of trust with the Fence Lake community which would have permitted deeper first hand investigation. Because of time limitations and ethical concerns, and the resulting methodological restraints, much of my research into modern day Fence Lake depended on secondary sources such as published family histories, census data (which was not always reliable), newspaper interviews and other publications. Information gathered from these published materials was augmented by two visits to Fence Lake in March 1998, and interviews with two current residents plus one former resident who still owns land in the community.

History and Geography of Fence Lake and the Surrounding Area

Leaving Highway 53 between Zuni and Ramah, and driving south on what is now Highway 36, it is thirty-three miles to Fence Lake (about seventy miles from Gallup). About eighteen miles north of Fence Lake, the road leaves Zuni land. Soon after this, the rolling hills of high plateau, with scattered pinon and juniper forests, level out somewhat at an elevation of around 7000 feet, and more and more cleared areas and open range lands can be seen.

By 1941, 24,000 acres of the 92, 000 acres of homesteaded land in this area had already been cleared of native forests in order to allow farming (Simms), and the result of this clearing is still visible in the area today (see photos 1, 2 and 3). This area of New Mexico experiences low rainfall (the 1923-1950 average was 13. 35 inches) and the geology makes in unsuitable for dams (Albert and Vogt, 42). Therefore water is a critical commodity for survival and economic success. Soil in the area can erode easily, and damaged or overused land may become overgrown with undesirable vegetation such as tumbleweed and sagebrush.

The homesteaders who settled in the Fence Lake area in the 1930's were migrants primarily from Texas and Oklahoma. These homesteading newcomers formed a new community, which was the youngest of the five communities studied by the Rimrock study. From 1930-1932, eighty-one new families arrived in the Fence Lake area and took up homestead land; more arrived in subsequent years, even though the best land had already been taken (Vogt, 1955; p. 17). Some families did not stay in the area long, but moved on to more promising areas.

There are four communities neighboring Fence Lake: the Zuni pueblo to the north, a small outlying Navajo community, a Mormon

village, and a Spanish American village (now deserted). The Native American community of Zuni is the oldest in the area, occupying the region since pre-historic times. Zuni settlement concentrated in and around the present location of Zuni Pueblo after 1540, when contact was made with Spanish explorers. Navajos probably did not settle permanently in this area of New Mexico until around 1870. The relatively recent Navajo community occupies a reservation extension around Pine Hill, north east of Fence Lake and accessible directly from there by unpaved roads. (See Map, p. 72.)

The first Mormon settlers arrived in this area in 1876, and shortly after that they founded the town they named Ramah, which is a few miles east of Zuni pueblo. The Mormon community, like the Zuni, has had more reliable access to water than the other three communities in the area because they were able to build a dam nearby. Soon after the Mormons arrived, Spanish Americans from Cubero settled Atarque (Spanish for dam) around 1880. According to Fred Landavazo, the community was founded by the Landavazo and Garcia families in 1882, and the dam was named the Landavazo Dam ("Landavazo Atarque" in Spanish) (*Fence Lake New Mexico Area: Families and History, hereafter FLNMFH,* 80). This village was located only a couple of miles from what later became the village／service center of Fence Lake. Of the five communities studied by the Rimrock project, Atarque is the only one that no longer exists.

A summary of important events in the Fence Lake area and "Rimrock" region, both prior to and after the arrival of the Texan-Oklahoman homesteaders, follows (p.33).

A Summary of the Vogt Study of Fence Lake, 1949-1952

Evon Vogt. Jr. conducted research in Fence Lake while living there

Fence Lake Area Time Line

---1275---------A'ts'ina Ruin (Zuni town on top of El Morro) constructed
---1400-1500--anthropologists estimate Navajo people arrived in the Southwest
---1540---------Coronado's expedition reaches Zuni country; Zuni village of Hawikuh captured by Spanish and abandoned
---1680---------Pueblo Rebellion against the Spanish
---1703---------Zuni villages consolidated into one pueblo on present site
---1840's--------earliest recorded Navajo settlement around Zuni
---1864-1868--Navajo tribe's "Long Walk" and imprisonment at Fort Sumner
---1870---------Some Navajos settle permanently in Pine Hill area
---1876---------Mormon missionaries arrive at Zuni
---1877---------Mormons found settlement in Ramah area
---1882---------Garcia and Landavazo families settle around Atarque
---1920's--------Anglo cattle ranchers arrive in "Rimrock" area;
Texan farmers begin to homestead near Pine Hill;
Rev. D. B. Tingle encourages homesteading in Fence Lake area
---1930---------Homesteaders like Ray Boyett begin to arrive in large numbers
---1931---------November 22, "The Big Snow" around Fence Lake
---1933---------Dent's Atarque Ranch changes from sheep to cattle, range is fenced in; Fence Lake baseball team organized
---1934---------The "Fenced Lake" goes dry; Fence Lake Community Well drilled; Gardom's store opens
---1936---------Fence Lake gets a Post Office
---1938---------High school moved from Atarque to Fence Lake
---1940-1941--Fence Lake Hospital in operation
---1947---------"Spanish-American War" in Fence Lake; 12,000 acres under cultivation (*Grants Beacon*, 1981)
---1949---------Fence Lake gets electricity; Evon Vogt Jr. begins fieldwork in Fence Lake
---1961---------Fence Lake gets telephone service; First Fence Lake Reunion (held semi-annually thereafter)
---1965---------Highway 32 (now 36) from north paved as far south as Fence Lake
---1979---------Highway 36 east from Fence Lake gets paved
---1981---------Cibola County created from western portion of Valencia County
---1984---------Highway 117 east (through the Narrows) gets paved
---1987---------Publication of *Fence Lake, New Mexico, Area: Families and History* by Fence Lake Reunion Committee

with his family for 18 months, from October 1949-September 1950, and during the summers of 1951 and 1952, as part of the Rimrock study. His sources included interviews of twenty informants, interviews of officials from the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture in Albuquerque, autobiographies from all sixteen Fence Lake High School students, and information from local records such as the school, farm bureau, and water cooperative, and back issues of the school newspaper. He published his research results in *People of Rimrock* (1966), and in *Modern Homesteaders* (1955), which focuses almost exclusively on the community of Fence Lake and includes much more detail.

As stated earlier, the main question addressed by the Rimrock study was: "Why do different value systems continue to exist in five cultures all having to meet similar problems of adjustment and survival in the same ecological area, all having been exposed by actual contact and by stimulus diffusion to each other's value ideas and practices?" (Albert and Vogt, 23). The way a cultural group reacts to a situation, including external stimuli and change, is conditioned by the values it holds. The hypothesis is that different cultures sharing a common ecology and having contact with one another should become more and more culturally alike, with more similar values, over time. The persistence of different value systems as seen in the five cultures of "Rimrock" is ascribed to cultural inertia, "the self-perpetuating tendencies of cultural patterns," (Albert and Vogt, 23). However, it is admitted that each of the five communities has made adjustments to "important microvariations in ecological niches," especially those caused by variations in water supply, and that this latter situational factor has played a major role in determining the economic system and settlement pattern for each cultural group.

The Texan and Oklahoman Homesteaders of Fence Lake had been

in the "Rimrock" area for a very short time, twenty years or less, at the time of the Vogt study. I would argue that they were still in the process of adjusting to their new environment. It is questionable whether any major shift in a society's culture or values could be observed over such a short span of time. Therefore, of the five "Rimrock" cultures studied, the "Homesteaders" of Fence Lake seem the group least suited to the purposes of the study. However, the Homesteaders are also the group which is closest among the five to what we may call "mainstream American culture and values."

Intergroup Relations

According to Vogt, Fence Lake Homesteaders had a different type of relationship with each of the four neighboring communities. The inter-community relationships varied according to the degree of competition for land, resources, and power, and also due to preestablished attitudes and prejudices. There was almost no contact between the Fence Lakers and the Zunis, who live about forty miles northwest. On the other hand, the Fence Lakers were said to have generally good early relations with the Pine Hill Navajos, and sometimes hired Navajos for agricultural labor. However, they discouraged Indians from using Fence Lake stores and schools, and marriage with Indians was inconceivable to the Homesteaders at that time. The Fence Lakers are said to have considered the Mormons of Ramah as "cliquish," and also "peculiar" because of their different religious beliefs (the Fence Lakers were Protestant). At the same time, the Mormons were admired for their economic success. Fence Lakers and Mormons had social contact at rodeos, dances, and baseball games, and there was some interdating and intermarriage between the two communities. The only reported friction between these two groups was on a few occasions when drinking by the Homesteaders led to fights at

dances. The most complex and sometimes fractious relations were with the nearest neighbors to Fence Lake, the Spanish Americans of Atarque. In her earlier *Los Atarquenos,* published as her master's thesis in 1941, Frances Kluckhohn describes the competitive and often conflict-prone relations between the older Spanish American community and the Fence Lake newcomers, who seemed bent on taking power away from the Atarque community. She attributes part of the conflict, characterized by Texan Homesteader attitudes of superiority and Atarquean distrust and scapegoating, to traditional Tejano-Mexicano feuding based on historical relations. However, she blames most of the tension on the homesteaders, who were actively trying to destroy the Atarque community by taking away the school and post office, and by taking over Spanish American land whenever possible. The Fence Lakers resented Spanish-American teachers being sent to their grammar school, and they eventually succeeded in getting the High School moved from Atarque to Fence Lake. Kluckhohn predicted that the Fence Lake community might eventually fail because of its dependence on dry land farming, but "whether there will be Atarquenos left to see the hope realized is a better question still." (Kluckhohn, 248)

Vogt seems to have been strongly influenced by Kluckhohn's findings, and says that the Fence Lakers distrusted, feared, and looked down on the Atarquenos. He describes two very unpleasant conflicts between the two communities, including a 1947 fight at a dance, which developed into a long-running community feud known as "The Spanish-American War." However, he also mentions that Fence Lakers sometimes employed Atarquenos as agricultural laborers, and that the town bar was owned by a Spanish American. Fence Lakers and Atarquenos had social contact in stores, at school (not always harmoniously), and at each others' dances. Interdating and intermarriage were

discouraged by both sides but sometimes took place nevertheless. Vogt reports three Homesteader-Atarqueno intermarriages.

Child Rearing and Socialization Practices, and the Kinship System

The Rimrock study found that Homesteader infants were weaned and toilet trained early, although nursing infants were allowed to sleep with their parents. Children were expected to become independent at a young age, and were given early responsibilities for regular chores. There was more tolerance for childhood aggression than in the other four communities studied, especially in the case of male children. The emphasis of their upbringing was on individual responsibility and early mastery of adult skills, and test scores revealed that Homestead young people valued success, achievement, and becoming "grown-up." The major fears of the Fence Lake high school students were of death or accident. Few Fence Lake children received or expected to receive higher education.

Class and racial endogamy were the rule. Women tended to marry early and few continued to work outside the home after marriage. Premarital virginity was expected for women if not for men. There seemed to be a double standard regarding extramarital relationships;male transgressions of marital vows were treated with more leniency. Fathers shared some of the child care responsibilities in the family. Although power in the marriage was shared rather equally between husband and wife, Vogt observed considerable cross-sex social strain between spouses. "Momism" (emotional reliance of an adult male on the wife as a mother figure) was prevalent.

Kinship terminology in Fence Lake was based on the English kinship system. The kinship structure centered on the "isolated" nuclear family living on its own "place" or farm, forming a flexible and mobile production unit. These nuclear family homestead units were

mostly located away from the village/service center of Fence Lake, and people relied on cars for transportation. The settlement pattern was one of isolated homesteads, with a small concentration of population near the village center and its service establishments.

It was interesting to discover from other sources (Boyett, 1974; Simms, 1941; *FLNMFH*) that many of the Fence Lake homesteaders were either members of large extended families who migrated to the area together or sequentially, or people connected by pre-Fence Lake friendships. In both *People of Rimrock* and *Modern Homesteaders,* Vogt mentions one large such extended family called "the clan" which was a major faction in Fence Lake, controlling the Baptist church, the store/cafe, and considerable land. He mentions, without naming, two other important extended family groups who exerted power in the community, but minimizes the importance of these groups in the social, political or economic life of the community, emphasizing the primacy of the nuclear family above all other relationships.

Economy, Political Structure, and Religion

At the time of the Vogt study (1949-1952), Fence Lake was still a rather isolated rural community with a population of 232. The roads leading out to Gallup, Zuni, and Quemado were as yet unpaved. The area had just been electrified. Most homes depended on hauled water or well water, and a community well was run by a cooperative association. There was a school and there were two churches, but no hospital. Local businesses included a bean warehouse and filling station; a second filling station; two repair shops (one for cars, one for farm equipment); a general store; a combination general store and cafe; a drugstore and cafe; and a bar. Additionally, there was a road grader belonging to the State Highway Maintenance Office stationed in the village. All service establishments in the community were run by Anglos, except the bar,

which was run by a Spanish American. According to Vogt, the Fence Lake community in the early 1950's reflected the American pioneer spirit, and valued entrepreneurship, free enterprise, and competition, as well as independent ownership, especially ownership of land. The prospect of owning their own land was what brought most homesteaders to the area in the first place.

The two occupational roles in the community, according to Vogt, were the "bean farmer" and the "service person." (Housewife and mother apparently did not qualify as an occupational role.) The most desirable occupational image for men was that of the independent rancher, an entrepreneurial extension of the cowboy ideal.

The actual Fence Lake economy was quite mixed. Although many Fence Lakers had raised beans as a cash crop, corn, wheat, and hay were important secondary crops, and many Fence Lakers had some cattle even at the time of Vogt's fieldwork. Farming and ranching were periodically supplemented by wage work, which sometimes required temporary migration to other areas, particularly during seasons of crop failure. Families raised some of their own food in home gardens, and hunting also provided meat.

Politically, Fence Lakers were said to be "full members of the American community" (Albert and Vogt, 220) and historical Democrats, but consigned to the fringe with little influence on local, state or national politics. Within their own community, Vogt says the Fence Lakers were factional and atomistic, lacking formal or effective organization. Community affairs were handled by volunteer committees based in theory on majority rule, but the real power was often outside these groups. There were no elected village officials, no "bosses," but rather de facto leaders who were usually successful farmers or ranchers.

Although the Fence Lake community was said to be the least

religious of the five groups studied, there were ten Protestant sects represented, and two churches. Vogt ascribes a lot of the factionalism he observed in the community to religious divisions. However, all these Protestant faiths had a common core of belief, including the precepts that the meaning of life is to be found in religious salvation, and that man has become alienated from God but that God should be valued over the world. Prayer was thought to have a therapeutic value. In the secular world, these Protestant values supported the homesteader's work ethic and belief in technical progress, in man's ability to control nature.

Church provided important social activities for the Fence Lake community, including picnic style meals after services. Church-based social activities created opportunities for interaction beyond the isolated nuclear family.

Expressive Activities

Since Fence Lake is seventy miles from the nearest town, people there had to create their own opportunities for entertainment and self-expression. Chief among the social activities in Fence Lake at the time of the Vogt study were dances, held in private homes and at the school, usually featuring local musicians playing Country and Western music; baseball games with neighboring communities; an annual rodeo; high school plays; pitching dollars, playing horseshoes, or playing dominoes (for men); storytelling; drinking; reading newspapers; and the leisure activity which Vogt called "loafing" (to the chagrin of Fence Lake residents, who thought they were being called lazy). Fence Lake humor during loafing or at other times made frequent use of preacher jokes and city slicker/country cousin jokes. Blacks or Indians might also be given the role of the scapegoat in homesteader jokes.

Fence Lake was described as aesthetically "poverty stricken"

(Albert and Vogt, 292). This is not surprising considering the isolated rural location of the young community, and the actual economic poverty of many of the inhabitants at that time. Material success was said to be valued over beauty or art. Emotional display was minimal. The source of happiness for an individual Fence Laker was thought to reside in the self and one's future prospects.

Values

The values Vogt attributed to Fence Lakers will be discussed at greater length later in this paper. To summarize, the people of Fence Lake were found to have a future time orientation, an optimistic outlook, and the belief that man can achieve mastery over nature. Individuality and personal achievement, especially economic success, were more highly valued than cooperation or intragroup harmony.

According to Vogt, the homesteaders held a flattering self-image of themselves as "the real white men" of the area, and as heirs of the pioneer spirit, "super Americans" (Albert and Vogt, 26). However, they also felt threatened and inferior when dealing with city people and government officials. Vogt describes this as a complex of superiority and inferiority.

In *Modern Homesteaders,* Vogt concluded that while Fence Lakers' values had been functional and adaptive during the early pioneer days of the new community, their continued adherence to these values had become counter-productive by the time of his research. Vogt asserts that choices made by Fence Lakers based on their values were preventing successful adaptation to the environment, and would ultimately cause the demise of the community.

Fence Lake Today

Demographics

Fence Lake today appears to be a much smaller and less cohesive community than in the 1950's. The 1990 census (see Chart 1) found a total of 105 people living in the Fence Lake census division (corresponding roughly to our area of study). This is less than half of the population reported by Vogt in 1950, and one third of the 1935 figure, but more than that reported in *The Albuquerque Journal* in 1981 (Smith). According to the Fence Lake postmistress, the current population in 1998 may have been nearer to 140, showing some growth since the last census. The postmistress reported that there were 75 rented post office boxes at the Fence lake Post Office, and 23 additional residences served by rural delivery routes.

About half of the 32 Fence Lake households who chose to have their numbers listed in the 1988 phone book (the most recent one I could locate) appear to be original settlers and homesteaders, or their descendants and descendants' families. Those original homesteaders still resident include Ruth Akard, Merl Bell, Winona Bell, four households in the Bogart family, J. C. Brown who came to the area in the 1920's, B. F. Dye, Walter T. Hall, Ervin Jacoby, Arthur Thomas Jr., Lonnie Thomas, Herman Towner (son of Earl Towner), Daniel White, and Maurita Bell Wilson. There may be other original homesteader families such as Media Bell's who do not have listed numbers.

The Fence Lake phone listings also include some former residents of the neighboring village of Atarque, which is now deserted. Some Atarquenos took out homesteads in the Fence Lake area in the 1930's, including Guillermo Landavazo whose son Alberto Landavazo still lives in Fence Lake, and Emilio Lucero who homesteaded Section 10.

The median age of the Fence Lake population in 1990 was 44.4 years, with 13 residents aged 75 and older. The average household size in 1990 was 2. 56 persons in 41 households, compared with 3.8 persons per household reported by Vogt for the 61 households in 1950. Regarding race and ethnicity in the 1990 census, 90 people in the Fence Lake Division classed themselves as "White" ; thirteen as "American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut," two classed themselves as "Other Race," and nine as "Hispanic origin, any race." Sixteen spoke Spanish in addition to English. Some of the latter group are no doubt former residents of Atarque, the SpanishAmerican village neighboring Fence Lake which is now deserted, fenced in, and owned by a cattle company which is in turn owned by a large oil company.

Today, as one approaches Fence Lake from the north, both abandoned dwellings and occupied homes (mostly large mobile homes) are seen at regular intervals amidst grazing land (some sheep but mostly cattle), cleared fields, and scattered pinon and juniper trees (see photos, p. 76-79). Some dwelling sites visible from the highway have both a newer residence and an older or ruined building in near proximity. I also observed three or four shallow depressions in the pasturelands designed to hold water for stock. These catchment basins were quite full at the time of my visit due to resent heavy rains, which also made the unpaved side roads nearly impassable. This community must have been extremely isolated before the main highways were paved.

At least three of the dwellings visible from the highway are quite substantial and seem relatively modern. The dwellings increase in number toward the service center of Fence Lake, where Highway 36 turns east at a right angle. There were several unpaved, often gated, roads leaving the main highway from time to time, and the presence of two or three mailboxes at each of these roadheads indicates the

existence of other residences not visible from the main road.

The current settlement pattern in the Fence Lake area is even more dispersed than in Vogt's time. Fewer people live in the village center, and the only public or commercial establishments there are the Mini-mart and the post office, plus the Highway Maintenance Station, the Community Church, and the school, which is closed but still used occasionally for community activities. Evon Vogt observed that although Fence Lakers were driven by the Protestant work ethic, they also placed a value on what he called "loafing", which involved hanging around and visiting at the local repair shops or playing dominoes during slack periods in the farming calendar. One would be hard pressed to find a public place to hang out and loaf in the village today. There is no eating place, and no gas station or repair shop, and in the hour or so that I spent in the vicinity of the Mini-mart, the only customer other than myself was a Navajo woman who had driven over from the Pine Hill area in order to try to sell a rug to the storekeeper.

Some of the current residents of Fence Lake commute to Gallup or Quemado to work in wage or salaried jobs. However, according to two informants, most residents still make a substantial portion of their living by ranching and farming, either full-time or part-time. This finding is not documented in the 1990 Census data, which seems to have major errors in those statistics which are based on sampling, as opposed to those from the 100% count. The Fence Lake postmistress estimated that 90% of local income comes from farming or ranching. Three farms or ranches, the Atarque Ranch, Fairlea Farms, and White's Ranch, are listed in the phone book, and Towner Angus Ranch is located a few miles east of town on Highway 36.

More detailed information from the 1990 Census is included in Charts 1-4, but data based on sampling in the Fence Lake Division has been found by this researcher to be inaccurate in at least two areas,

employment and education, when compared to informant data. The inaccuracies may result either from the sampling methodology used in the census, from misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the census questionnaire by subjects (a rancher might mark that he had no"farming" income), or even intentional misreporting by those being sampled.

The Economy of Fence Lake Then and Now

The homesteader economy of the Fence Lake area which developed in the 1930's revolved around the farming of pinto beans as a cash crop, supplemented by other crops and cattle and chicken raising. By 1941, 24, 000 acres of farmland around Fence Lake had been cleared and the bulk of this was used for pinto beans (Simms, 1941). Families also raised some of their own food in home vegetable gardens. In some years, Fence Lakers also made money by harvesting pinon nuts, as their Navajo neighbors had done before them.

Old-timer Ray Boyett describes how at times farming was supplemented by wage work: clearing roads, or working in nearby lumber camps or for the Atarque Sheep Company (Boyett). The latter company became Atarque Ranch and switched from sheep to cattle, fencing in the land. It was for a time managed by Evon Vogt. Jr.'s father.

Prices for beans in the 1930's ranged from a high of $4.14 per cwt. in 1936 to a low of $2.25 in 1940. Production varied considerably each year, partly due to weather conditions (beans are very susceptible to crop failure due to late or early frost, or lack of rain, or too much rain at the wrong time). 1938 and 1939 appear to have been bad crop years, judging from the low yield per acre (Vogt, 1955, 29), as were the early 1950's.

Fence Lake's first store opened around 1934, and the town got a post office in 1937, and a high school in 1938. In 1941, the school employed six teachers (Simms).

By 1947, the Fence Lake area had 12,000 cultivated acres, which were used for raising pinto beans, corn, feed crops, wheat, oats and hay (*Grants Beacon*, 1981.) The peak of pinto bean farming seems have been 1946, when 13,000 100-lb. sacks were produced (more than double the crop for any of the previous five years) and sold at a record price of $12. 50 per cwt., perhaps due to post-war demand. The price for beans in the 1940's averaged $5.47 (Vogt, 1955, 29).

In 1950, while Vogt was doing his fieldwork at Fence Lake, there was extremely little rain and untimely frost, and crop failure resulted. At that point in time, the land base controlled by the homesteaders totaled 63,260 acres, with 11,213 acres under cultivation on 48 separate farms. According to Vogt, the primary economy was still based on pinto beans (6417 acres). Secondary crops were corn (2092 acres) and wheat (742 acres). Livestock (including 1100 head of beef cattle) were also a significant source of income. Harvesting pinon nuts as a cash crop continued to be a source of income in years when a crop was produced. Hunting brought in meat to supplement the family diet.

Other income at the time of the Vogt study came from jobs and businesses in town, as has been previously described. Fourteen service institutions provided full support for ten families and partial support for eight families.

Although Vogt's study emphasizes the importance of bean farming to the people of "Homestead," an informant who was a teenager in Fence Lake at the time insists that even in 1950, cattle played a very important role in the economy, especially for certain Fence Lake families. In the 1960's, government "set-aside" programs were paying farmers not to grow beans, and encouraging the planting of improved grasses for grazing.

The following years of the Fifties seem to have been a bad time for pinto bean farmers around Fence Lake. According to a *Look* Magazine

article in November of 1956 (Morgan), there had not been a good bean crop in six years and the population was down to 197. Far from being thrilled at having their town pictured in a major national magazine, an informant tells me that Fence Lakers felt patronized by the nostalgic portrayal of their home as a quaint backwater bypassed by the modern world. Such a reaction would be consistent with the Homesteader's superiority-inferiority complex described by Vogt. Perhaps they were especially defensive after the release of Vogt's *Modern Homesteaders* the previous year.

By 1981, the *Grants Beacon* reported that farming in the Fence Lake area continued only on a small scale, producing alfalfa, hay, and other feed crops but not beans. Other land was used for grazing cattle (*Grants Daily Beacon,* July 1, 1981).

In the late 1990's this same ranching/farming pattern, supplemented as before by wage work both outside the community and in Fence Lake itself (eight paying jobs known of at present), seems to be continuing. A typical Fence Lake person might be involved in outside work (for example, an accounting business in a nearby town, teaching, etc.) and also be a part-time rancher or farmer. However, 1990 census data on occupations of Fence Lakers (Chart 3) seems to be very unreliable when compared to reports of local informants. Although the census data is ten years old, one wouldn't expect major changes in a population that appears to be quite stable. Yet no one reported income from "farming" (presumably this includes ranching) and there seems to be an over representation of people in the category of "Transportation and material moving occupations," although the latter may reflect the five Fence Lake people employed by the State Highway Maintenance Station in the village center. A significant number of Fence Lakers are elderly (21 persons 65 or older in 1990, nine people in the 55-64 age group) and probably are retired, although some may still

be involved in ranching. Twenty-six households had retirement income from social security in 1990.

The current population and economic data seems to support part of Vogt's prediction in *Modern Homesteaders,* that "the community is in the process of becoming a settlement of widely scattered ranches" and would never be a large community "like Plainview, Texas" where many of the homesteaders originated (Vogt, 1955, 188). However, at present, the second half of the prophesy, that ". . . the community will be too small too support its service center of schools, churches, and stores. . . " or even ". . . the possibility that the community will disappear altogether as the big ranchers continue to buy up all the land and eventually. . . may graze cattle in the streets of Homestead. . . " has not yet come to pass.

The population drain from Fence Lake seems to have stopped and numbers may even be on the increase. The current population appears stable at around 105-140. As we will see in the section on values, Fence Lakers still value their way of life and take pride in their community; they prefer to stay there if possible. Also younger people may continue to return to the community, as some have already done, to manage ranches as their parents age.

It is true that children now have to commute 30 miles to Quemado for school, that there is only one store, and no local hospital, no police, and no gas station. But the post office and the Highway Maintenance Station still provide local jobs, and Fence Lakers seem to have worked out a *modus vivendi* which allows them to remain in the area and enjoy an acceptable standard of living. Perhaps current numbers represent a population base that the land can realistically support.

Kinship, Extended Family Relationships, and Political Structure

One interesting point which I discovered about the original Fence

Lake homesteaders was the intricate network of interrelationships, by blood, marriage, or friendship, amongst them. Many of the original Texan homesteaders migrated to the area as entire families, either all at one time (such as Dr. and Mrs. M. C. Bell, parents with several children who each took out their own homesteads (Chart 5), or one after the other, as with Ray Boyett, who was followed to Fence Lake by sister Fairy, and later by siblings Ruby, Paul, Ruth, and eventually by their parents (see Chart 6). There are several similar large families or extended family groups documented in the book *Fence Lake New Mexico Families and History,* put together by the group that holds semiannual community reunions. Many of these families are still represented in Fence Lake, including three Bells and four Bogarts.

Some families came to Fence Lake in the 1930's and 1940's because they had heard about homesteading opportunities from friends or cousins already living there. Major Bruton was a friend of Ray Boyett; after he came to Fence Lake he married Virginia Link, one of four siblings of another homesteading family. The original homesteading families intermarried (for example, Ruth Boyett to Wilson Link, and Fairy Boyett to Harvey Bogart,one of five brothers who homesteaded), forming a very complex kinship network. Fence Lakers today joke about how everyone there seems to be related in some way, and they seem to like the idea. (However, if a researcher is looking for informants, it is difficult to find people who are totally unrelated and are therefore likely to have different points of view about the community's past and present.)

According to several sources, in the earlier "pioneer" days of the homesteading era in Fence Lake, cooperation among relatives and friends as well as neighbors was essential in the development of the area. People helped each other to clear land, build houses, haul water, get supplies, and so forth (Simms, Boyett). Vogt mentions extended

family relationships and three Fence Lake "clans" in *Modern Homesteaders,* but he does not credit their effectiveness as cooperative networks. Such cooperation, which was essential in the early days of settlement, may have been less evident in the Fifties when Vogt was doing his research. He observed little cooperation within extended family groups, apart from occasional help with childcare. He felt that the nuclear family unit was the paramount structure at that time.

Far from seeing Fence Lakers as cooperative, Vogt's analysis criticizes them as being too independent for their own economic good, especially when compared to the neighboring Ramah Mormons, whose community was based on cooperative enterprise. In "A Comparative Study of the Role of Values in Two Southwestern Communities," Vogt compares the Fence Lakers to the Ramah Mormons and describes how each community responded to similar challenges: the need for a school gymnasium; the need to pave village roads; land shortage; and social interaction. The analysis is quite unfavorable toward the Fence Lakers, who, according to Vogt, consistently put personal interest above the interest of the community at large.

Another example Vogt gives to support his claim that the Fence Lake community was individualized to the point of atomization is that each farmer felt the need to own his own tractor, partly as a measure of status, instead of devising a system for sharing equipment that would be more economical. By owning their own farming equipment individually, Fence Lakers were merely reflecting the cultural pattern of mainstream America. For example, most Americans today prefer to commute alone rather than carpool, to own their own lawnmowers even though they only use them an hour a week, and so forth. In this respect it is the Mormons who stand out from the mainstream because of their willingness to cooperate, and this perhaps has given the Mormons a survival advantage in the "Rimrock" area. (However, I believe the

Mormon's key advantage has been control of a reliable water supply due to the fact that they arrived much earlier and could choose their settlement location more freely than the Homesteaders).

Fence Lakers were very offended by Vogt's description of their lack of community cooperation, and one critic of the study feels that Vogt was too selective in the examples he chose to support his argument. Positive examples of community cooperation can also be cited, including the community well, organized community lobbying which led to acquisition of a post office and school for the community, highway improvements (Bogart), and electrification. Research has also revealed that land was donated by individual Fence Lakers for such key community facilities as the school, the cemetery, and the community church (*FLNMFH*), clear examples of sacrifice of individual assets for the betterment of the community. These points are not mentioned in Vogt's work.

The same critic suggests that both the feuding Vogt observed during the time of his research at Fence Lake, as well as the observed lack of enthusiasm for cooperative projects, may have been a result of heightened economic tensions in the community after successive years of crop failure which coincided with the Rimrock study (Bogart). In such times, families would have a stronger tendency to place priority on individual and family interests because economic survival was at stake.

Since the time of the Rimrock Study, the Fence Lakers have successfully acted to secure a number of improvements for their community, including the paving of Highway 32 in 1965, and the paving of Highway 36 east in 1979. More recently, they established a volunteer fire department/rescue squad with first response capability. Community spirit was also evidenced by attendance of 27 Fence Lakers, a substantial percentage of the adult population, at a public hearing in 1990 on the environmental impact of coal leases being

considered in the area by the Bureau of Land Management. In addition to the examples cited above, there is a Fence Lake Benevolent Association, which organizes community dances and other activities in the old school, activities critical to the social life of the area since the nearest town is thirty miles away.

Fence Lake today continues to be on the extreme margin or "fringe" of local, state, and national politics, perhaps even more so than the other four communities in the Rimrock study. Since Vogt's time, Fence Lake has still not had a local citizen elected to local, state, or national office, and local (village) government still appears to be largely informal. There is no local law enforcement, the nearest sheriff being in the next county. Feeling neglected by the county seat in Grants, Fence Lakers recently tried to annex themselves out of Cibola County and into Catron County, whose services are closer to Fence Lake, but the move failed.

This researcher could not ascertain whether the factions and feuding that Vogt observed continue in Fence Lake today. I was told that some residents of the community declined to be represented in the 1985 book on local history produced by the Fence Lake Reunion committee for unspecified reasons, perhaps because they wished to maintain their privacy. Also it appears that Fence Lakers may be divided on the proposal to grant coal leases in the area, a matter that is not yet settled.

There is evidence that the Fence Lake community is able to act together when necessary to secure key services (road paving, water, electricity, emergency services) or insure the community's survival. Moreover, individuals do make sacrifices for the common good, such as training for and participating in the volunteer fire department, or opening a new store "mostly as a community service" (Hughes, 36) when the only remaining store closed two years ago.

Values

In front of the Fence Lake School, now used only for community activities, there is a monument to the homesteaders who settled Fence Lake in the 1930's. The text on the undated pioneer monument may reflect the values of at least some of the members of the Fence Lake community at the time the monument was erected:

> "There is a mysterious force that drives people to new lands and to new frontiers. There is an abiding love for the land and newly turned soil, for young livestock and the freedom of ownership, for independence of spirit. This marker will remain to honor those people who first came, those who left, those who stayed, and those who returned. Fence Lake, you will someday fade away. Until then, this serves as a remembrance of the heart, soul and spirit of those who passed this way."

This text affirms many of the same values which Evon Vogt Jr. attributed to Fence Lakers in *People of Rimrock* and *Modern Homesteaders*: the "pioneer spirit; " individualism and independence, and the desire to possess and live on one's own land; "hopeful mastery over nature" in the context of agriculture; and the work ethic, manifested as respect for those who worked hard to develop agriculture in the Fence Lake area. The text also shows concern and respect for the past as manifested by the history of the area and its residents, in contrast to the extreme future orientation observed by Vogt.

Other sources before Vogt had observed similar values in the Fence Lake Community. According to a 1941 publication by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, "A new love for the land has developed among the people" including the desire to take better care of the land by using proper farming techniques. Both independence and future orientation

are manifested in the finding that "Fence Lake people feel that they are worth more to the nation by fighting to stay on the land than they could possibly be if they depended on public funds for their support as transient laborers." (Simms, 14) The article goes on to describe how the recently arrived homesteaders were becoming rooted in the Fence Lake area. It can be argued that leaving Fence Lake after one or two bad years and moving on to a new place would have been a sign of even stronger future orientation. Yet Vogt seems quite critical of Fence Lakers who refused to leave their land after crops failed in the late 1940's and early 1950's.

In contrast to Vogt's findings that Fence Lakers' extreme individualism led to a factionalized, atomistic society, Simms cites several instances of community cooperation from 1941 and earlier including the clearing of land, and in 1940-1941 the building of a community hospital promoted by local women. Also, contrary to their tradition of self-reliance, farmers in the Thirties and early Forties accepted government help to buy farm equipment, and develop wells and water facilities: " 'Yes, we borrowed money from the Government, and we used all that help that we could possibly get from local, State, and Federal agricultural agencies,' Joe Akard says. . . . 'We know of no other way. . . to meet our individual and community problems.' " (Simms, 14) However, Vogt probably would have said that much of this government loan money was used inefficiently, allowing individual Fence Lakers to acquire tractors to the point where they were over-mechanized. Later, in the 1960's, some Fence Lakers accepted government soil bank subsidies. These payments encouraged the improvement of grazing lands and doubtless influenced the direction of future agricultural patterns in the area.

The limitations of the current study precluded a scientific assessment of current values orientations in Fence Lake. Interviews

with a few informants indicates that people who have chosen to remain in Fence Lake seem to have done so partly because they still value independence and living on their own land. Some of the elderly no doubt stay in Fence Lake because they have a home and economic security there, although others have left to retire to urban areas such as Albuquerque, where there are better medical facilities.

Fence Lake is a very safe place to live today, and no doubt this atmosphere encourages families to stay in the area despite the hardships of rural life. As in Vogt's time, "The full blown youth culture with patterns of 'hot-rodding,' etc. is absent in Homestead." (Vogt, 144) Also absent in the 1999's is the drug culture, which is rampant in nearby Gallup. The Fence Lake storekeeper told me that there is no better place than Fence Lake to bring up a family, because kids there are too busy to get into any trouble. Although her husband holds one of the few full-time jobs in Fence Lake, it sounds as though this family would be prepared to make considerable sacrifices if necessary to stay there.

The Fence Lake Reunion Committee, which sponsors semi-annual reunions, and dances in alternate years, is an interesting phenomenon in terms of values. The reunions keep the dispersed members of the old community in contact and provide an organized opportunity for them to return to Fence Lake at regular intervals, along with their children and grandchildren. To me, this indicates that ties to Fence Lake involve more than just attachment to the land and the pioneer spirit. These latter values are certainly important. But personal ties, those complex, interlinking connections of families and friends mentioned earlier, seem to be equally important to these people and are a large part of what keeps bringing them back to Fence Lake. So, perhaps, are memories of a shared experience as pioneers. For the original generation of Fence Lakers, in their twilight years, future orientation

may be giving way to a glorification of the past.

Some Thoughts on the Ethics of Ethnography

Lastly, I would like to comment on some insights which developed in the process of my 1998 follow-up research on the Homesteaders of the Rimrock study. Difficulties encountered during my research experience raised a number of issues regarding the nature of ethnographic study, including the objectivity of researchers and the ethics of the informant-researcher relationship.

The first person whom I interviewed about Fence Lake is a former resident who was a teenager at the time of the Rimrock study, and has since become a sociologist. This informant was extremely helpful and provided a great deal of useful information which caused me to read the original study and *Modern Homesteaders* more critically and from a different point of view than I might have otherwise. It was this informant who warned me strongly against making direct inquiries in the Fence Lake community about such sensitive subjects as occupation, income, and other economic matters, partly because such questioning from an outsider would go against community norms, but also because of a reservoir of distrust of researchers which endured nearly fifty years after the Rimrock study.

I had already read a 1981 newspaper article from the *Albuquerque Journal* in which Fence Lake old timer Ray Boyett portrayed Rimrock researchers in an unflattering light. In the journalist's words, "Once the community was studied by Harvard sociologists, most of whom are not welcome back. . . The Harvardians became a nuisance. . . Fence Lakers were not happy with the manure-and-mud result." (Smith) The fact that the Rimrock Study had gone to great lengths to preserve the anonymity of subjects by disguising the real names of the communities

seems not to have lessened the wrath of Fence Lakers when they read *Modern Homesteaders.* According to the journalist, Fence Lakers were especially offended by Vogt's description of their "combination of attitudes of superiority and inferiority" toward the modern world, and their fondness for what Vogt called "loafing." The Fence Lakers felt they had been misrepresented and misunderstood (Smith) by the researchers they had helped and trusted.

Contrast these statements with Vogt's pre-publication impressions that ". . . the community as a whole welcomed research workers and expressed both feelings of pride that their village had been selected for investigation, and feelings that the field workers 'livened up the community'." (Vogt, 1955, viii) He added, however, "Many of the Homesteaders are not going to like the conclusions I have drawn in this book about their community. . . " (Vogt, 1955, xi). It appears from my 1998 informants that he was correct in anticipating this.

One informant told me that many Fence Lakers read *Modern Homesteaders* when it came out in 1955, some years before the publication of *People of Rimrock,* and in his opinion, most felt betrayed by what had been written about them. In addition to the points mentioned in the Albuquerque Journal article, my informant feels that the Fence Lake community saw Vogt's analysis of "Homestead" as generally negative, and as challenging the heart of the community's identity as they perceived it. Fence Lakers were criticized for being independent to the point of factionalism and atomization, and for making economic decisions that were based on unrealistic values rather than rational thought. The Fence Lakers, on the other hand, thought of themselves as a true community, working together to improve their lot under difficult conditions.

Additionally, the relations of Fence Lakers with neighboring communities, particularly Atarque, were portrayed in a very

unflattering light which emphasized a few negative incidents while perhaps disregarding a more positive long term history of co-existence and cooperation. The predominant image I got from *Modern Homesteaders* regarding Fence Lakers' relationships with their neighboring communities was that the Homesteaders were portrayed as ignorant, intolerant racists.

As a result of my informant's warning, I restricted my approaches to Fence Lakers. Those people I did speak to, while being polite and helpful, seemed to agree that researchers were still not very popular with Fence Lakers in general and that the community had not forgotten what had been written about them before. They might make a joke about it, but some bad feeling seemed to remain just under the surface, an enduring feeling that trust had been violated by the researchers' publications.

This brings us to one of the oldest issues in ethnography, that of researcher objectivity/subjectivity, and also forces us to reconsider the trust implicit in the researcher/subject relationship. Hearing about the reaction of Fence Lakers to the Rimrock study made me question the nature of the ethical responsibility which the ethnographic researcher has to her subjects. A researcher cannot gather data without the trust and cooperation of informants, and trusts the informants to provide true and correct information. What, if any, obligation does the researcher incur in return?

If the primary object of research is to gather factual data, then does this end take precedence over the feelings of the subjects? The researcher benefits from the research process, which advances her academic career as well as adding to the pool of ethnographic knowledge. How do the subjects benefit?

In days of yore, when ethnologists went to distant exotic lands to do their field work in so-called "primitive" societies, there wasn't much

likelihood that the people they studied would read the resulting publications and be offended. However, today's global village has deprived the researcher and her product of the insulation that geographical distance once provided.

There are times when publication of data or a researcher's conclusions may be seen by the subjects as a breach of the relationship of trust. One classic case of this occurred when a book published about a certain Native American community by a trusted outsider who had been taken into that community, was seen as a betrayal of trust. In other cases, the data or conclusions may be seen as inaccurate by the community studied, but the latter group seldom gets an opportunity to rebut the research. Researchers should at least make an effort to check and confirm the accuracy of ethnographic data with a qualified person from the target culture whenever possible.

A researcher is supposed to present data and conclusions with objectivity, a quality the community being studied is presumed to lack. Although researching in one's own culture or its subcultures has the potential advantage of reducing misunderstanding due to language problems, it carries with it other potential pitfalls. No researcher is completely objective; in fact, the entire framework of our social sciences hinges on a number of assumptions and approaches that are themselves the product of a specific European cultural tradition.

The closer the researcher gets to her own back door, the more difficult "objectivity" becomes. In ethnographic research, firsthand "knowing" is thought to be more accurate and desirable than merely "knowing about." Growing up less than forty miles from the community he was studying may have been an asset for Evon Vogt Jr. in 1949 in terms of contacts and background knowledge for his research, but one cannot help but wondering whether his prior knowledge also colored his results. It seems quite possible that he may

have formed powerful opinions about Fence Lake before his research began, or unconsciously absorbed the prejudices of his own community.

If we can agree that a researcher should be objective, it follows that she certainly has no obligation to please or flatter her subjects. However, some of Vogt's comments in *Modern Homesteaders* seem quite judgmental, perhaps crossing over the line between interpretation and evaluation. The following quotations from *Modern Homesteaders* (*MH*) may have been among the sort of comments that irritated Fence Lakers. Try to consider the implications of each statement as if you yourself were a Fence Laker:

Concerning Future Orientation:

> "The Homesteaders have always been the most conspicuous 'boosters' in Western New Mexico." (MH 95)
>
> "The measure of this 'progress' has always been economic and material rather than social or spiritual." (MH 94)
>
> "The *gambling orientation* toward the farming enterprise demands, of course, strong optimism. . . " (MH 99) (Italics mine)
>
> ". . if the bean crop fails from drought or frost, the Homesteaders can always look forward with the hope that the next year will be better. In short, attention is continually shifted from the grim realities of the present to the elusive but persisting dreams and expectations for the future." (MH 108)

Vogt on "Working and Loafing" in Fence Lake:

> "There is no objective reason why the time devoted to loafing in the village could not be devoted to community improvements. . . " (MH 121)
>
> "After the Homesteaders refused to volunteer their labor for making adobes for the high school gymnasium on the grounds that

they would be busy on their 'places', enough time was spent loafing in the village in the next two months to have completed the job e asily." (MH 121)

Vogt on Fence Lakers' "Inferiority/Superiority" Complex:

"The Homesteaders still feel themselves to be superior [to the people of Atarque] in race and culture. . ." (MH 129)

". . . the self-reliant and independent Homesteader manifests strong feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. . ." (MH 124)

". . . the local Homesteader feels he is a peripheral member of American society and is never quite certain that he is being taken seriously. . . It is manifested behaviorally in face-to-face relationships with businessmen, state politicians, and the project research workers, all of whom the Homesteaders fear may regard them as 'hicks' from a 'backwoods community." (MH 135)

Vogt on "The Atomistic Social Order" of Fence Lake:

". . while men are self-reliant and independent in the area of economic responsibility, manipulation of technology etc. , they are emotionally dependent upon 'mamma' [the wife]." (MH 148)

"This 'battle of the sexes ' is not confined to specific husband and wife relationships, but also occurs in larger community affairs." (Mh 149)

A final question: to what extent does research itself have the potential to change a target community, for better or for worse, by the very act and process of the research as well as by the product? Ethnographers and explorers who visited distant shores in the past must have had some effect on the communities they visited, not only through the technology or diseases they sometimes introduced, or

because of the differentness of their cultural identity, but by their very actions and methods, the process they engaged in. This is no less true for modern social research. I cannot ascertain whether Vogt's analysis of Fence Lake culture in the Rimrock study caused the people of Fence Lake to think differently about themselves or their community, or to take a different course of action; it does not appear that they were persuaded to change their values for the economic expediency Vogt espouses. Unfortunately, however, one unforeseen but very evident side effect of the research process in Fence Lake in the 1950's was to create a future disregard and distrust of research in the minds and hearts of many of the research subjects.

In spite of the negative comments cited above, Vogt made this testimonial to the Fence Lakers' endurance in a challenging environment with limited resources:

> "Homestead" is one of the few such [migrant communities founded in the 1930's] to survive the vicissitudes of nature, the Depression, and the attraction of economic alternatives during World War II and the post-war years." (MH, 17)

In 1998, some of Vogt's predictions about the community he studied had come to pass, and some had not. The population of Fence Lake has declined, but appears to have stabilized at a level that the environment can support. Ranching, with some farming, has in fact become the dominant economic activity, as Vogt foresaw. The service center area of the village has shrunk, but it has not yet disappeared. Fence Lake is still surviving as a community, apparently with many of the same values as Vogt ascribed to it in the 1950's, values which were never far from those of the US mainstream.

Finally, the Rimrock study has left a legacy in Fence Lake. A visitor today would have trouble finding anyone among the 100 or so

current Fence Lake residents who does not either remember or know of the famous Harvard study of fifty years ago. In fact, many residents still have strong opinions about the study and about the way their community was represented in its publications.

Chart 1

Demography of Fence Lake Area, New Mexico, 1930-1998

Summary of Fence Lake Population Trends, 1935-1998

1935 (Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders*) 375
1940 (Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders*) 333
1945 (Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders*) 239
1950 (Vogt, *Modern Homesteaders*) 232
1956 (*Look* Magazine, 20 mile radius) 197
1981 (*Albuquerque Journal*) 60*
1990 U. S. Census- Fence Lake Division 105
1998 (estimate of postmistress) 140
(within a 25-mile radius of Fence Lake P. O.)

*It is not clear how much of the surrounding area was included in this figure. The area included in the *Albuquerque Journal* statistics may be smaller than the U. S. Census division.

Breakdown of 1990 Census Data (100% Count)

Total Population 105
Males 54
Females 51
By Age:
Under 5 years 4
5 to 17 years 17
18 to 20 years 5
21 to 24 years 5
25 to 44 years 23
45 to 54 years 21
55 to 59 years 4
60-64 years 5
65-74 years 8
75 and over 13**
(**Those over 75 may be remnant of original Homesteaders)
Median Age: years 44. 4
Average family (household) size in 1950 ..... 3. 8
Total households 1950 61

Average family (household) size in 1990 ..... 2. 56
- Total households 1990 41
  - Married couple families 25
  - Other family, male householder 2
  - Other family, female householder 4
  - Non-family household (includes living alone) 10

Race and Ethnicity-1990 Census
- White 90
- Black 0
- American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut 13
- Asian or Pacific Islander 0
- Other race 2
- Hispanic origin of any race (included in above) 9

Ancestry (of 57 ancestries reported) ***
- French Canadian 17
- Scotch-Irish 11
- Other*** 21

(***Nearly all ancestry categories on the US census are European, except for "West Indian," "Arab," and "sub-Saharan African." There is no category for "Spanish" or "Mexican." There is a category for "United States of America" but not for "Native American.")

Residence in 1985 (based on sampling, not 100% data)
- Lived in same house 42
- Lived in different house in U. S. 41
  - Same state 7
    - Same county 0
    - Different County 7
  - Different state 34
- Lived abroad 4

Place of Birth
- Native population (based on total of 87) 87
- Percent born in state of residence 47.1%
- Foreign born 0

Language spoken at home (from 87 respondents)
- Speak a language other than English 16
  - Do not speak English very well 0
  - Speak Spanish 16

Chart 2

Fence Lake Housing-1990 Census

Occupied Housing Units 41
- Owner occupied units 32
- Renter occupied 9

Vacant housing units 38
- Total 79

Type of structure (includes unoccupied units)
- One unit, detached 50
- Mobile home, trailer 29

Year Structure Built
- 1985 to 1988 22
- 1980 to 1984 12
- 1970 to 1979 18
- 1960 to 1969 0
- 1950 to 1959 0
- 1940 to 1949 9
- 1939 and earlier 12
- Total 73

Year Occupied by Householder
- 1989 to March 1990 3
- 1985 to 1988 14
- 1980 to 1984 5
- 1970 to 1979 5
- 1960 to 1969 0
- 1959 or earlier 7
- Total 34

Bedrooms

- No bedroom 7
- 1 bedroom 4
- 2 bedrooms 44
- 3 bedrooms 18
- 4 or more bedrooms 0

Plumbing, Sewage, Water Supply and Telephone

- Lacking complete plumbing facilities 30
- Public sewer 0
- Septic tank or cesspool 55
- Other means of sewage disposal 18
- Public or private water company system 27
- Individual drilled well 30
- Individual dug well 16
- Other water source 0
- Lacking complete kitchen facilities 27
- Lacking telephone 3

Chart 3

1990 Census Data, Fence Lake Division: Economy

(This census data based on sampling techniques)

Labor Force

- Persons 16 years and over 78

(*not consistent with 100% count of 82 persons over 17*)

- In Labor Force 30
  - Male 17
  - Female 13

(All above in civilian labor force, not military)

- Private wage and salary workers 20
- Government workers 10
- Self-employed workers 0
- Commuting to work 25
  - Using car pools 36%
  - Drove alone 52%

Walked or worked at home	12%
Not in Labor force	48
Unemployed	0
Occupations	
Managerial and professional specialty occupations	
Executive, administrative, and managerial	6
Professional specialty occupations	9
Technical, sales, and administrative support	
Technicians and related support	0
Sales occupations	0
Administrative support, including clerical	3
Service occupations	0
Farming, forestry and fishing	0
Precision production, craft, and repair occupations	2
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	
Machine operators, handlers and inspectors	0
Transportation and material moving occupations	10
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, laborers	0

Chart 4

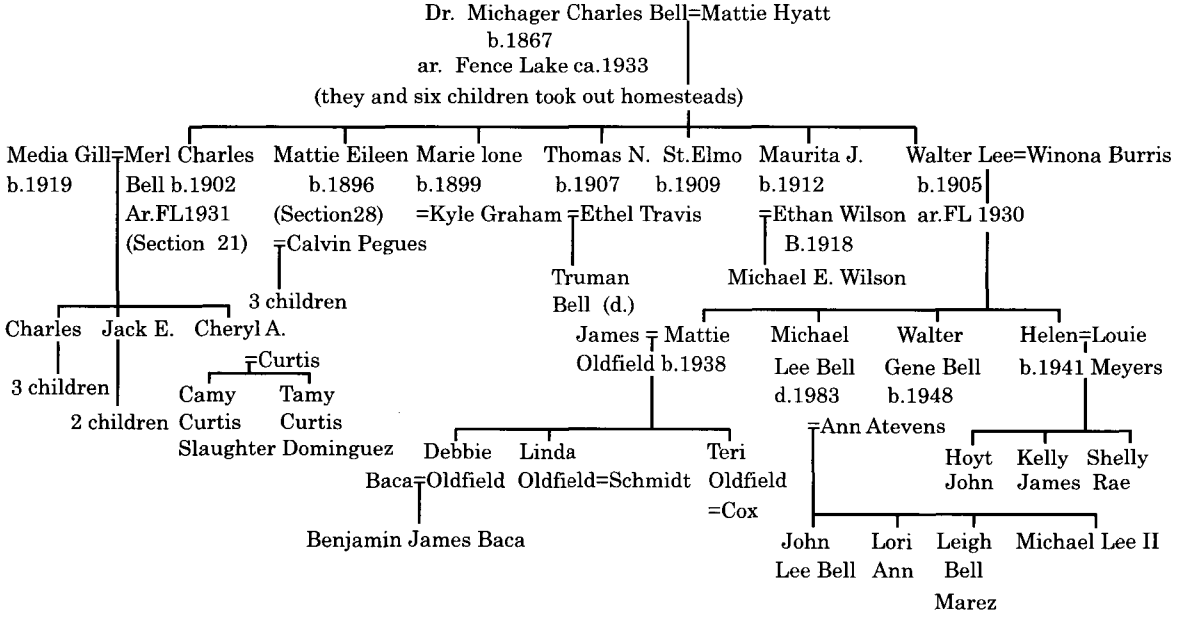
Income of 38 Fence Lake Households-1990 Census

Median Household Income in 1989	$26,111
Median Family Income in 1989	$26,806
Median Non-family Income in 1989	$4,999
Per capita income	$11,640
Households with wage or salary income in 1989	25
Aggregate wage or salary income in 1989	$890,256
Mean wage or salary income in 1989	$35,610
Households with no wage or salary income	13
Households with non-farm self-employment income	0
Households with farm self-employment income	0
Households with interest, rental, or dividend income	12
Households with social security income	26
Aggregate social security income in 1989	$209,256

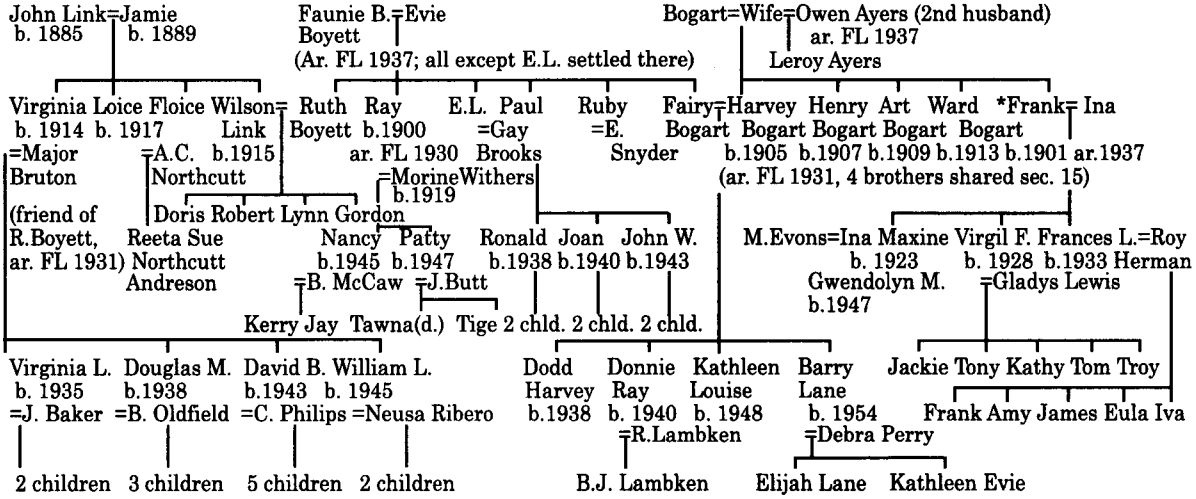
Mean social security income in 1989	$8,048
Households with other retirement income	0
Households with public assistance income in 1989	9
Aggregate public assistance income in 1989	$26,408
Mean public assistance income in 1989	$2,934
Poverty Status (based on 87 persons)	
Below poverty level	18
Persons 18 years and over below poverty level	9
Persons 65 years and over below poverty level	5
Related children under 18 years below poverty level	9

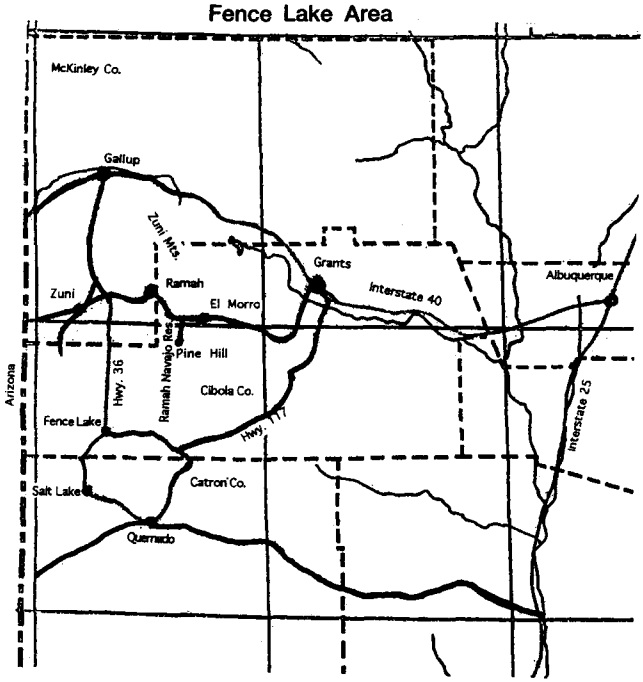
FENCE LAKE, NEW MEXICO : EXTENDED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

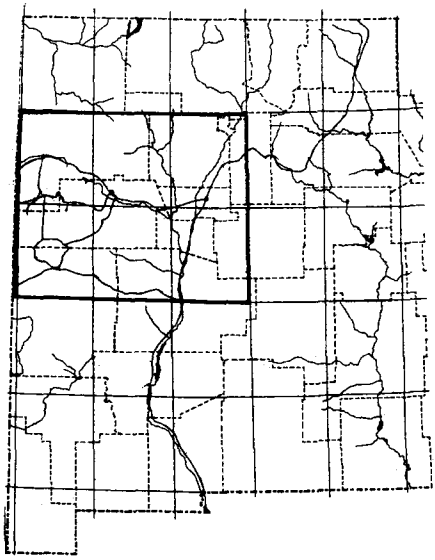
Chart 5 : THE BELLS



FENCE LAKE, NEW MEXICO : EXTENDED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
Chart 6 : THE BOGARTS AND BOYETTS







New Mexico

Fence Lake-Ramah-Zumi Area see eniargement

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Kobe, November 2000

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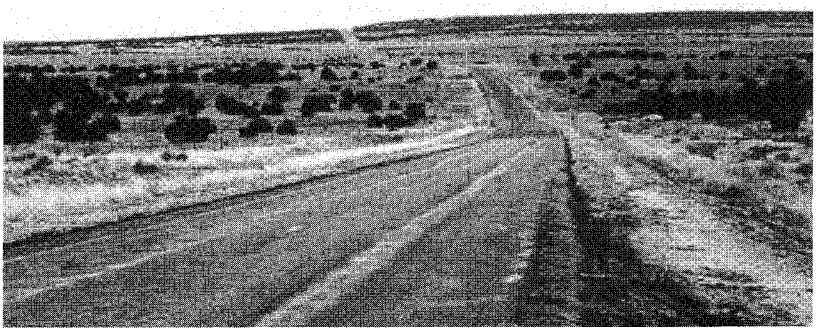

Photo 1 : Approaching Fence Lake From the north (Highway36)

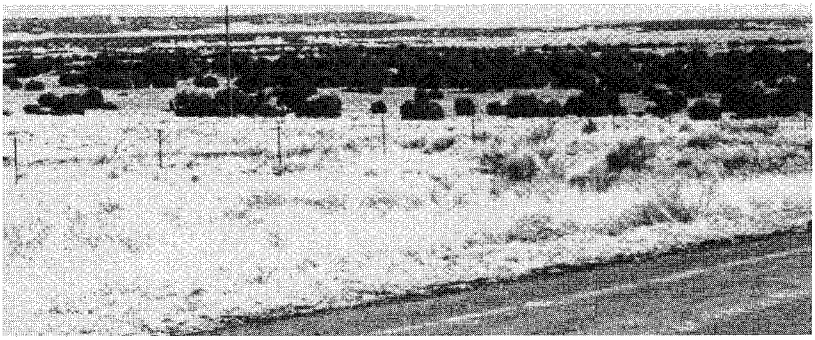

Photo 2 : The large open areas without pinon or juniper were probably cleared by homesteaders in the 1930's.

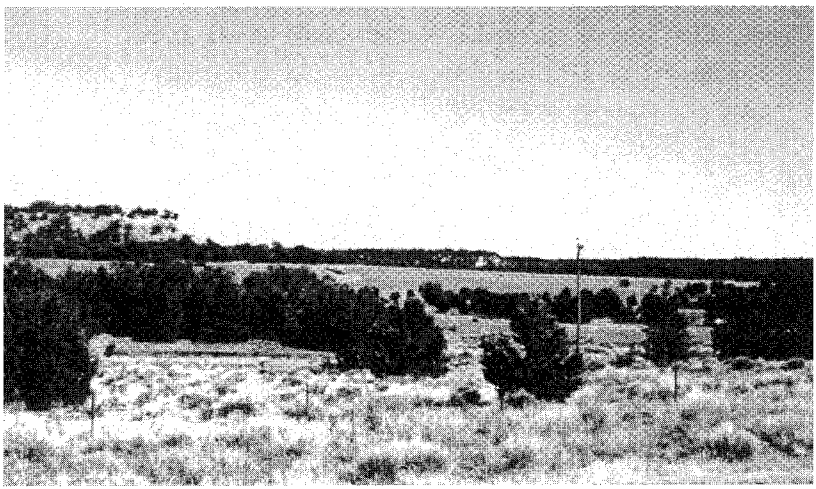

Photo 3 : A well maintained cleared field can be seen in the center.

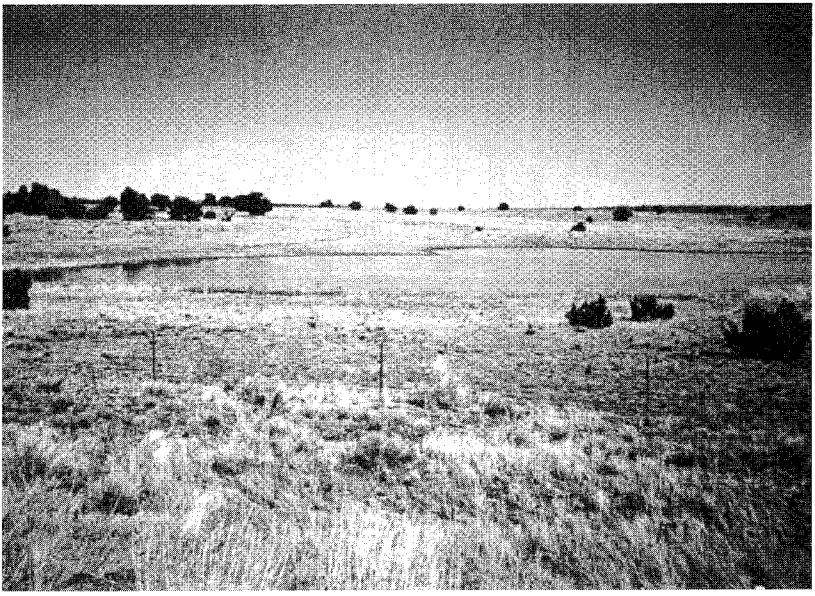

Photo 4: Catchment basins like these, full after recent rains, are still an important water source for stock in the Fence Lake area.

Photo 5: A few miles north of Fence Lake, cattle graze in what may once have been bean fields.

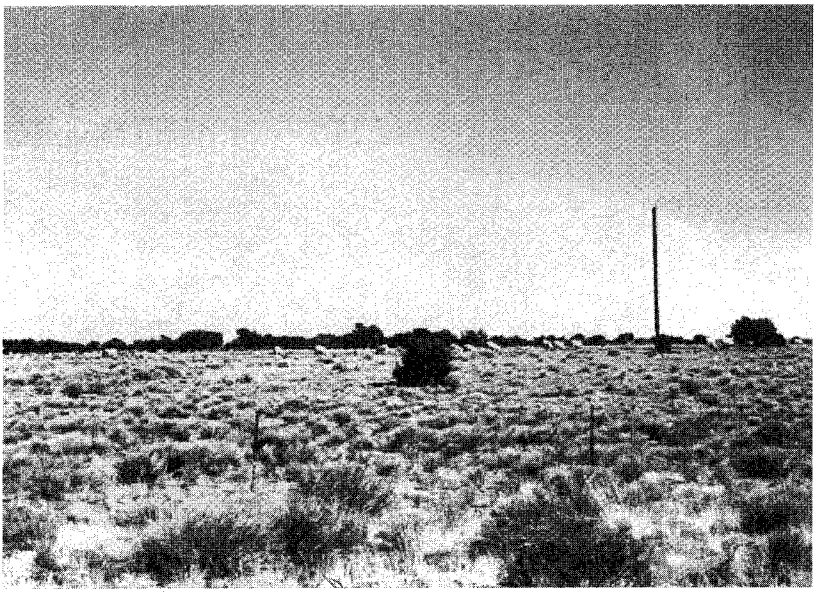

Photo 6 : Although cattle predominate, there are still sheep in the Fence Lake area.

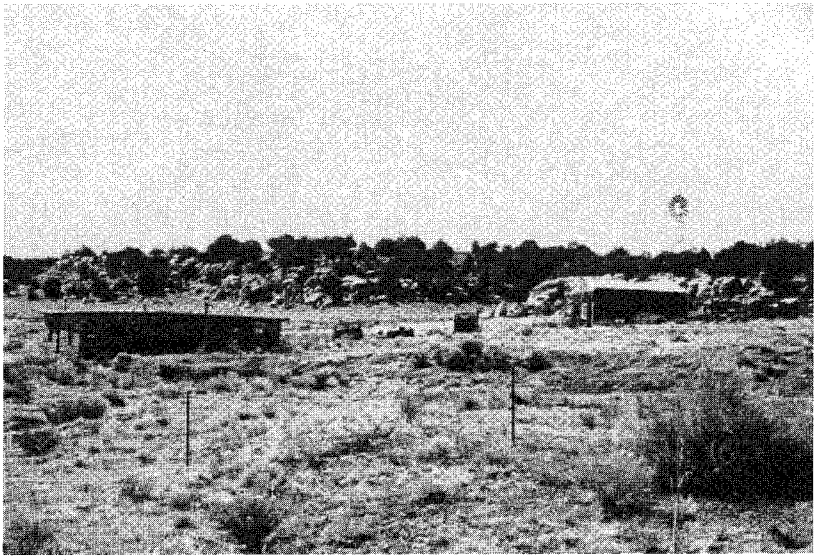

Photo 7 : The old homestead at left appeared to be still inhabited

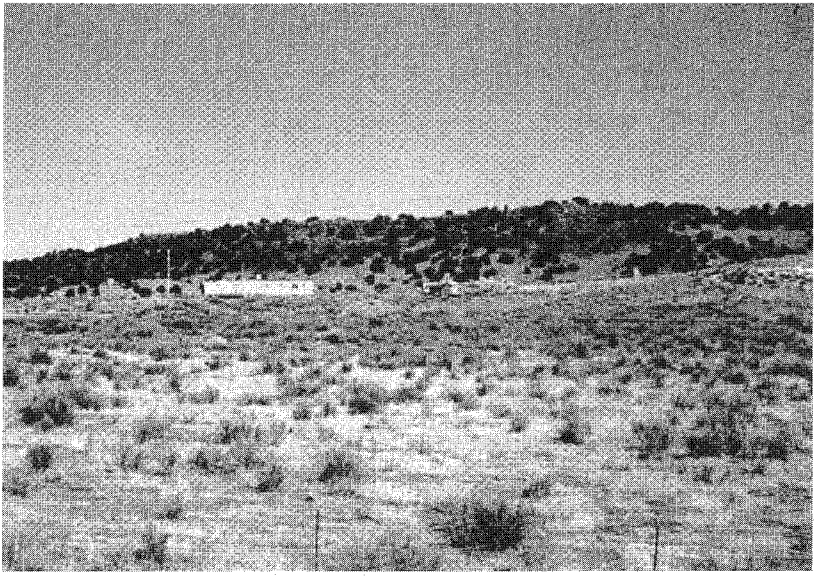

Photo 8 : Many of the inhabited dwellings in Fence Lake today are large mobile homes like the one on the left. Ruins of an older, stone home can be seen at right.