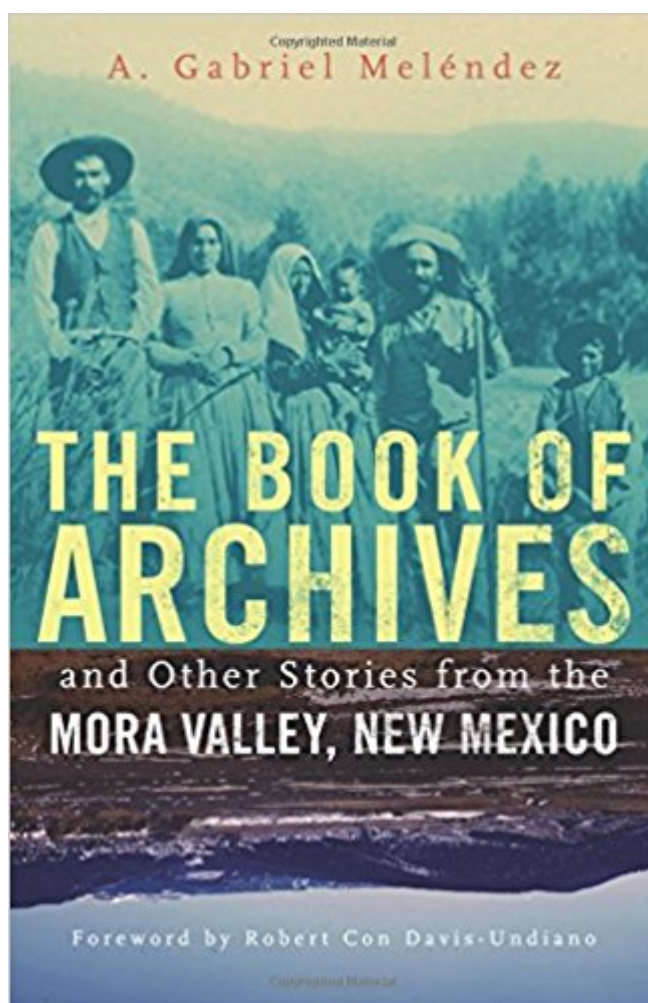


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The Book Of Archives And Other Stories From The Mora Valley, New Mexico (Chicana And Chicano Visions Of The Americas Series)



Synopsis

In the shadow of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, New Mexico's Mora Valley harbors the ghosts of history: troubadours and soldiers, Plains Indians and settlers, families fleeing and finding home. There, more than a century ago, villagers collect scraps of paper documenting the valley's history and their identity—military records, travelers' diaries, newspaper articles, poetry, and more—and bind them into a leather portfolio known as "The Book of Archives." When a bomb blast during the Mexican-American War scatters the book's contents to the wind, the memory of the accounts lives on instead in the minds of Mora residents. Poets and storytellers pass down the valley's traditions into the twentieth century, from one generation to the next. In this pathbreaking dual-language volume, author A. Gabriel Meléndez joins their ranks, continuing the retelling of Mora Valley's tales for our time. A native of Mora with *el don de la palabra*, the divine gift of words, Meléndez mines historical sources and his own imagination to reconstruct the valley's story, first in English and then in Spanish. He strings together humorous, tragic, and quotidian vignettes about historical events and unlikely occurrences, creating a vivid portrait of Mora, both in cultural memory and present reality. Local gossip and family legend intertwine with Spanish-language ballads and the poetry of New Mexico's most famous dueling troubadours, Old Man Vilmas and the poet García. Drawing on New Mexican storytelling tradition, Meléndez weaves a colorful dual-language representation of a place whose irresistible characters and unforgettable events, and the inescapable truths they embody, still resonate today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“A veritable feast of words, a rare example of the literary articulation of nuevomexicano Spanish, a double legacy of a rich vernacular register on one side and proud literary aspirations on the other.” Enrique R. Lamadrid, author of *Amadito and the Hero Children: Amadito y los Niños Héroes* “This dual-language narrative, superbly done, reminds us that by remembering our past and our ancestors we stay connected to our history and rooted in a sense of place.” Spencer R. Herrera, author of *Sagrado: A Photopoetics across the Chicano Homeland*

A. Gabriel Meléndez is director of the Center for Regional Studies at the University of New Mexico and a distinguished professor and former chair of the Department of American Studies at UNM. He is the author of several books, including *Spanish-Language Newspapers in New Mexico, 1834–1958* and *Hidden Chicano Cinema: Film Dramas in the Borderlands*. Robert Con Davis-Undiano is Neustadt Professor and Presidential Professor at the University of Oklahoma and Executive Director of *World Literature Today*. Among his many publications are *The Paternal Romance: Reading God-the-Father in Early Western Culture* and *Criticism and Culture: The Role of Critique in Modern Literary Theory*.

Gabriel Melendez tells an engaging story of the Mora Valley. Northern NM is unique in that its Spanish peoples have lived there since before Plymouth Rock, arriving in 1598. He tells the story with metaphors that are graphic in detail and well written. About the Loss of the Mora Land Grant, he writes about the 100 year fast, a time of diminished economic reality after the grant passed into private hands, and largely into the Carson National Forest. Gabriel tells the story first hand as a native son of Mora. His father, Santos was the Hermano Mayor of the Hermanos, who still gather during holy week and pray rosaries in the mountain villages of Northern New Mexico today. The *Book of Archives* title is about the collections of documents including the Mora land grant, that were blown up in the 1847 battle for Mora, between the US and Mexico. A book about home place becomes mythic no matter where the home, and Gabriel Melendez has done a beautiful job describing his own home, homeland, and place.

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