

BARCELÓ, MARÍA GERTRUDIS “LA TULES” (1800–1852)

María Gertrudis Barceló, familiarly known as “La Tules,” was an astute New Mexican businesswoman. She earned her fortune as the proprietor of a gambling hall and saloon that served as the social center for Santa Fe’s Spanish Mexican citizenry, Euro-Americans, foreign merchants and traders who passed through town. After the U.S. war with Mexico (1846–1848), her establishment became a haven for the newly posted American officers. Barceló bought properties and entertained lavishly, however, she was always conscious of her obligation to the less fortunate. She frequently made charitable gifts to the Catholic Church and to her own and other needy families and adopted a number of children. Her civic-minded foresight prompted her to contribute more than her share of taxes in the form of a “forced loan” to keep the government functioning during periodic budget shortages. She created goodwill among her Euro-American customers by lending money to the U.S. Army to pay its troops in 1846. She was a clever woman who assisted the peaceful transition of the inevitable American takeover of Hispanic New Mexico.