

Origins Of The first American Cowboys

Chapter 12

By Donald Chavez Y Gilbert

CURRENT HISTORICAL EVENTS AND PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

A Modern Day Salute to Don Juan de Onate

IN DEFENSE OF AN HISPANIC HERO

A perspective by

Donald A. Chavez y Gilbert

The time has come again to honor the man and colonists who introduced the culture of the cowboys and ranching to these United States of America, Don Juan de Onate. A statue paying tribute to their cultural and historic contributions is being erected in downtown Albuquerque.

Predictably, Indian activists have begun protesting and predicting vandalism against the image of Onate. For those new to New Mexico this protest is a regular occurrence. Every time we make an overture of gratitude to the Onate colony of 1598 there are protests against one small piece of the story, the true facts which have over the last four hundred years of oral reiteration, been omitted, forgotten, embellished, and impassioned into something which no longer resembles actual history. Indian people are being incited to protest by radical anti-Onate activists for having allegedly cut off the feet of Acoma men whom ambushed and killed Onate's men.

As a descendent of a number of the colonizing Onate families as well as some Native American Indian grandparents, I would like to put this matter into proper perspective; first, the real history. Shortly after arriving in New Mexico in the spring of 1598 the Indian Pueblo of Acoma invited Don Juan de Onate to visit the Pueblo for purposes of good will trading and feasting. Hence, in good faith on December 4, 1599 Onate sent his nephew Ensign Diego Nunes de Chaves and company. The invitation was

a rouse and when Diego de Chaves and the men in his military party arrived they were ambushed and summarily slaughtered. This is when the first Spanish Barb horses escaped into the wild. Any reasonable person would interpret this surreptitious attack as an act of war, and as such Onate conquered the Pueblo and sentenced them to twenty years of hard labor working for Spanish families.

As a point of information since 1599 there is no written documentation of the so-called dismemberment of the twenty-four Indian perpetrators. These Indian men would have been of little practical use as laborers if they were missing a foot.

Years ago, when the statue of Onate was erected in the Espanola area of New Mexico, unknown persons vandalized the statue by symbolically cutting off the foot of the image of Don Juan de Onate.

In my opinion the protesters are not a representative sample of the majority of American Indians. I believe the media unduly fuels the fires of protest as it relates to Don Juan de Onate. In my personal observations having worked and lived with Indians over fifteen years from the north in Montana and North Dakota south to Texas, most Indians appreciate and honor Onate every day. They pay him (*the Hispanic inventor of the cowboy*) homage when they are wearing cowboy clothes, the Onate work uniform. They pay him homage by raising his livestock, and enriching their lives in the cowboy, (Onate) tradition? The work uniform of the Onate party was vaquero/cowboy clothing. Don Juan de Onate only wore full armor and lace for formal affairs like official events or for military applications. The pre-European Indians had no horses, cattle, sheep, cowboy boots, cowboy hat, chaps, etc. Yet there are so many Indians who wear cowboy clothes religiously. It is said that imitation is the highest form of flattery. If you wear Onate's work uniform, the cowboy outfit, then you are a living, breathing, walking memorial to Onate, like it or not.

By way of comparison, where is all the fuss about all the other Indian fighters in American history? As Indian wars go, there is no shortage of atrocities against Indians and plenty of blame to go around. For thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans, Indians massacred each other. Aztec king Montezuma sacrificed five thousand of his neighboring Indians per day for four days. Small wonder why these tribes were happy to recruit the help of Don Hernando Cortez to help them put a stop to Montezuma. The Pueblo Indians did not embrace the use of Spanish horses like the more aggressive tribes, so they either let the horses go or traded them to the warring tribes. These nomadic tribes used the horses, among other things, as instruments of war. Once the Comanches, Apaches, and Navajos acquired horses they almost exterminated the Pueblo tribes, had it not been for the protective intervention of Juan Bautista de Anza, the founder of San Francisco and Governor of New Mexico in 1778. George Washington, "father of our nation," killed many Indians by destroying Indian crops in order to starve out whole Native American villages. Englishman, Lord Jeffery Amherst ordered the

extermination of Indians in the Pontiac war in 1763 by the use of germ warfare, (smallpox). President Andrew Jackson ordered the deportation of all Indians east of the Mississippi in 1830. Texans were responsible for the Council House murders in 1840 much the way Acoma Pueblo murdered Spaniards in 1598. The American forty-niners exterminated Indian and Mexican natives in 1849. As head of US military forces Kit Carson brutally deported Navajos from their homeland in 1864, prior to Custer perpetuating the Washita Massacre in 1868. Reverend Chivington's Coloradans perpetrated the Sand Creek Massacre November 29, 1864. The Camp Grant Massacre was perpetrated by citizens of Tucson (1871). The US military deported "loyal" Chiricahuas to dungeons in Florida in 1886, and gunned down the surrendering refugees of Big Foot's band of Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890. The list goes on without as much as a whimper about memorials and monuments to these European Indian fighters. Why is Don Juan de Onate such an easy target for criticism?

For fifteen years I lived and worked on and off some two dozen Indian reservations ranging from the Standing Rock Sioux in North Dakota to the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in Texas. The one Indian propensity I observed universally was the adorning of cowboy attire on Indian bodies every day of the week. The only exceptions were for certain traditional ceremonies specific to each tribe where animal skins and feathers were worn in the traditional Indian style, e.g., Indian headdress, buckskin coverings and moccasins.

My personal opinion of the Onate monument controversy in Albuquerque is that if non-Indians are not allowed to meddle in Indian matters on their Indian reservations, then Indians who live in non-Indian country should be expected to honor the same "non-meddling" courtesy or rule in non-Indian country. It seems the rule these dissidents are following only apply at the convenience of these protesting activist Indians.

What I can say with one hundred percent certainty is that what ever happens to the Onate monument, so objectionable to certain Indians is of little importance in light of the great Spanish culture of the Western Cowboy he contributed to these United States of America and huge message of acceptance, love, and veneration Onate and his party are paid every day by millions of Indians and everyone else in the world who has ever put on a cowboy hat, boots or anything of a western ranching nature.

Chief Dan George reminded me of my own grandfather who always had a levelheaded way of reflecting on difficult topics. He even managed to allay some of the natural

tension by putting a humorous spin on how things fit into the big picture. I would have liked to hear Chief Dan George's Indian perspective on this controversy before passing on.

Everyone loves a cowboy, so let's get on with saying thank you to the people who developed the cowboy persona and brought us the ways of the west. Keep the focus on actual history rather than giving credence to a few malcontent dissidents, who whine, distort the truth, and are not a representative sample of the vast majority of both Indian and non Indian fans of the Don Juan de Onate inventor of the American Cowboy.

Terra Patre Farm and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Terra Patre Farm about twenty acres is all that remains of the original two hundred acre farm, part of the two hundred thousand acre Belen Land Grant of 1742. Donald A. Chavez y Gilbert is a descendent of, among others, Belen Land Grant founder, Diego de Torres, see the history of Belen at the end of this chapter. The owner of the farm the year the Mexican American War ended (1848), and owner at the time the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed soon after was his great-great-great grandfather, Juan Nepucemo Chavez. He married Telesfora Baca in 1848. Both their names still appear on the Middle Rio Grande Maps (102-103) for Terra Patre farm and surrounding area. The farm has piece by piece been passed down from one family member or another to the other through the generations. Chavez y Gilbert, his wife, Quillon and family run the farm in the tradition of his ancestors and have taken special steps to make it available to the community and local schools as a teaching farm. Like his ancestors his family has had to strive to preserve what remains of this farm and protect it from government intrusion, and confiscatory taxes and ordinances. The long term plan is to place this farm in a perpetual trust as a Spanish Colonial Heritage Park to be dedicated to teaching the children and grandchildren of New Mexico for many generations how the Old West began and how the first cowboys and ranchers lived.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American war (1846-1849). It is the oldest treaty still in force between the two countries. According to Griswold del Castillo, author of The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, A Legend of Conflict, fulfilling the Manifest Destiny of the United States, and "with an arrogance born of superior military, economic, and industrial power, the United States virtually dictated the terms of the settlement. Interpretations of the provisions of the treaty have been important in disputes over international boundaries, water, and mineral rights, and most important, civil and property rights for the descendants of the Mexicans in the ceded territories. Since 1848,

Indians and Mexican Americans have struggled to achieve political equality with the United States. In this they have sought to take advantage of the promises made in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.” Griswold Del Castillo goes on to point out that “the treaty makers knew well that most of the Mexican citizens occupying land grants in the ceded territories did not have perfect title to their lands and that the majority was in the process of fulfilling the requirements of Mexican law.” Article X of the original text which would have better protected the rights of Mexican, soon to be American citizens was stricken by the US Congress. It said, *“All grants of land made by the Mexican Government or by the competent authorities, in territories previously appertaining to Mexico, and remaining for the future within the limits of the United States, shall be respected as valid, to the same extent that the same grants would be valid, if the said territories had remained within the limits of Mexico.”* The final watered down ratified version includes this language in Article VIII: *“Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present Treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories, or disposing thereof and removing the proceeds where they please; without their being subjected, on this account, to any contribution, tax or charge whatever.... In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy with respect to it, guaranties equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.”* Proponents of Articles VIII & IX “asserted that the treaty provisions of citizenship and property rights in Articles VIII and IX would be sufficient to protect the former Mexican citizens. After all, Article VI, Section 2 and Article III, Section 2, of the Constitution of the United States gave treaties the same status as the U.S. Constitution. They were wrong: American local, state, and national courts later ruled that the provisions of the treaty could be superseded by local laws.” Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which set up Land Commissions California examined 813 claims and eventually confirmed 604 of them involving about nine million acres. As Griswold del Castillo so amply put it, this did not mean that these land holders were protected by the courts. “On the contrary, most Californio landholders lost their lands because of the tremendous expense of litigation and legal fees. Griswold Del Castillo outlines numerous examples of Mexicans whom despite their perfected property rights were pushed out and off their lands by American squatters, courts, and lawmakers. “To pay for the legal defense of their lands, the Californios were forced to mortgage their ranchos. Falling cattle prices and usurious rates of interest conspired to wipe them out as a landholding class.” Such is the case with Terra Patre. The original 200 acres was diminished by a US Patent confiscating part of the farm to the railroad. During the great depression another approximately sixty acres was lost because farming prices were low and the owners could not feed their family and pay the water and county taxes. Similarly, in 2005 Terra Patre can not sustain itself through agricultural pursuits, so in the 1990s it began renting three RV spaces to pay for water, taxes, and the mortgage. There was no ordinance addressing

the use of RVs in the early 1990s. Now as in the past, the government by imposing draconian ordinances retroactively, county government endeavors to shut down the RV space rentals, and consequently, the expense of litigation and legal fees have already begun to conspire to threaten the existence of the last remaining parcel of this ancestral Mexican land in the hands of the same family. Now as in the past, this “living” Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo promises “ *property of every kind, ..., shall be inviolably respected.*”

The language of Article X applied to New Mexico as well as California. “For the next five decades the territorial, state, and supreme courts would be occupied with sorting out “perfect” and “imperfect” land grants and dispossessing those who occupied the land in 1848.” See *Limantour Grant & Botiller et al. v. Dominguez* (1883), pgs 74-77. “A review of selected US court cases shows that Anglo-American land corporations and the state and federal governments were the primary beneficiaries of the legal system’s interpretation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Although some Indians and Hispanics lodged lawsuits citing the treaty guarantees, the vast majority of them were unsuccessful in their efforts.”

Terra Patre in Belen was part of the Belen Land Grant founded by Diego de Torres (*an ancestor of Donald A. Chavez y Gilbert, present owner*) in 1742.

The legacy of government dispossession of native lands continues to this day. As was the case cited above by Griswold del Castillo, in keeping with the tradition of fulfilling the Manifest Destiny of the United States, **with an arrogance born of government immunity and bureaucratic impunity, Valencia County government in the year 2005 acted to remove the source of income paying off the land mortgage through retroactively insisting on applying a ex-post facto RV ordinance which would effectively amount to the dispossession of this last ancestral land owned by present day decedents of Mexican citizens at the time the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was ratified.**

What will happen to Terra Patre in Belen? This farm has had several near misses in terms of suffering the same fate of the vast majority of other native lands, which is becoming extinct. In fact much of the same land has been lost and regained occasion after occasion. Time and again due to the same forces described herein, such as litigation, taxation of indecipherable representation, enigmatic beauracratc requirements, language barriers, mistranslation of deeds (Spanish to English), surveyors’ errors, and other confiscatory forces, this farm has come to the very brink of vanishing, and then by whatever remaining resolute Hispanic daring, and fortuitous grace of God has been resurrected and restored.

After the farm was ceded from the Mexican Government to the United States, the process of pending perfection of ownership rights in Mexico was lost and the family only held ownership historically and adversely. On April 25, 1871, under the direction of US President Ulysses Grant, J Parrish, the Secretary of the US Surveyor General Land Office filed the land claim of the "Town of Belen" under the authority of the United States Congress in December 22, 1858, "An Act to Confirm the Land Claim of Certain Pueblos and Towns in the Territory of New Mexico." Sounds like they were doing something positive – huh?, The United States relinquished its rights "(and shall not effect any adverse valid rights should such exits) to the Territorial government of New Mexico which "on March 8, 1907, the legislative Assembly of the Territory of New Mexico passed a law entitled "An Act relating to Community Land Grants," approved March 18, 1907, being Chapter 42 of the 37 Session of said Legislative Assembly, by the terms of which the management and control of the said town of Belen Land Grant should become vested in a Board of Trustees" which in 1915 filed suit against all the owners and decendants of the Belen Land Grant, notwithstanding the assertion that all 200,000+ Belen Land Grant acres are included in the suit, the order makes the disclaimer that "None of the grantees in any of said conveyances, nor parties holding under them, are made parties defendant hereto, for the reason that it is not desired nor intended, by this preceeding, to disturb, or cloud the title to any of said lands so conveyed. But the title to all of the common lands embraced in said town of Belen Land Grant, not so segregated and conveyed as aforesaid, remains in and is now held by Plaintiff." ... "It is therefore Considered, Adjudged and Decreed by the Court that the defendants and each and every one of them hereby are barred forever estopped from having or claiming any right or title in the premises heretofore described, or any part or portion thereof adverse to plaintiff, and the plaintiff's title said premises be, and the same hereby is, forever quieted and set at rest, and the said land so described is the common lands of the Belen Grant, is hereby adjudged and decreed to the land of said Board of Trustees of the Belen Land Grant, for the benefit of the owners in common thereof, and the title to said lands is hereby forever quieted and set at rest in said Board of Trustees of the Belen Land Grant, their successors and assigns. Done at Socorro, New Mexico, this 23rd day of March, 1915. Signed *M.C. Mechem*, Federal Judge." Are you beginning to get the picture how people trying to live the simple clean life in peace, speaking the lanuage of the conquered country over generations lost track of its' lawful claim(s)?

Keep in mind that the common language of the land in Belen, Valencia County was fifteenth century Spanish up until the twentieth century. The first generation to begin gaining a reasonable command of the English language was my parents' whom were born in the 1920s, let alone a command of English Legalese.

And so went the whittling away of that first two hundred acre parcel of the first 200,000 acre land grant. The railroad arrived in the latter 1800s taking whatever lands which were in the path of progress mostly taken by virtue of US Patents or by simply bilding on the land without compensation, sometimes forcibly purchasing it, and in other

cases having a third party non-owner sign a quitclaim deed of the farmer's land over to the railroad, which promptly filed the deed with the County Clerk and Assessors office. Over the generations, frequently not even being aware of the misdeed, uncontested, knowledge of the new fraudulent ownership was lost with the death of the owner in fact, succeeded by subsequent generations none-the-wiser that they even had a claim or battle to wage. Such is evidenced in the deeds reflecting some losses of this family farm.

Doubtless confusion about taxes due to the County, State, and Middle Rio Grand Conservancy District prompted the government to confiscate ownership for non-payment, as is evidenced on on April 13, 1937 when the Valencia Couty Treasurer conveyed one part of the farm to the State of New Mexico for \$4.07 and on another occasion on May 11, 1938 when the State Tax Commission redistributed ownership of part of the farm to E. L. Beardsley for \$35.00, and again January 16, 1952 when the Valencia County Treasurer conveyed part of the farm to the State of New Mexico, MRGCD for \$62.68, and again on August 1, 1958 when the Valencia County Treasurer conveyed part of the farm to the State of New Mexico for \$71.39.

After World War II, the recovery of the family farm by family members was initiated by Vicente B. Chavez, Joe B. Chavez and Jose Dolores Chavez, great-grandson of Juan N. Chavez and grandson of Roman Chavez and Telesfora Baca owners whose names still appear on the first platted maps of MRGCD. Recorded recoveries and repurchases appear in 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960. Like the parcel he recovered on August 26, 1958 from MRGCD, he purchased back other parts continually in 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, and 1966.

Jose Dolores Chavez held onto the farm leasing it out to an alfalfa farmer for over twenty years then put it up for sale. This is an appropriate juncture to stop for a point of clarification. Jose Dolores Chavez and my mother Helen Carolina Gilbert were both previously married soon after World War II, raising children like myself long since emancipated. My mother married my father Jose Epifanio Chavez in June of 1945. My mother is an heir and granddaughter of Roman Chavez and Telesfora Baca. Two of their children were Vicente Chavez and Ramona Chavez. Vicente became the father of Jose Dolores Chavez, and Ramona Chavez married Antonio Gilbert giving birth to my mother Helen C. Gilbert. After divorcing their first spouses and long past their child bearing years, Jose Dolores and Helen Gilbert, first cousins were married to each other.

Around this same time Jose Dolores Chavez decided to sell the farm to the first person with sufficient cash funds and listed it with a real estate broker. My mother, an heir and person of interest in the same farm fortunately persuaded Jose D. Chavez to keep the farm in the family and sell it to me, Donald A. Chavez y Gilbert in the late 1980s and 1990s. After Helen's death, in 1995, Jose D. Chavez made one effort to repossess the farm on a technicality. All payments were made in full on a timely basis, but one month after American Escrow Company disbursed the payment to the seller's bank, the bank in

error did not credit the account of Jose D. Chavez. He waited past the thirty day period for a legal claim to repossess and initiated the process. By this time the farm had doubled in value and had he repossessed the farm could have turned a handsome profit selling out to a developer. Fortunately, the American Escrow Company defended the truth (that the payment had indeed been paid and Jose D. Chavez' effort was thwarted. So you see, it is always open season on this piece of living history, Terra Patre Farm. Mortgage payments are scheduled to be made through the year 2018.

Asserting the promises of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo has certainly had mixed results. Article VI, Section 2 and Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution of the United States gave treaties the same status as the U.S. Constitution. In 1984, in an opinion of the US Court of Appeals the court stated landholders had rights that "were explicitly protected by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo." Ironically, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo intended to guarantee the rights of pre-1848 landholders as a result of the ceding of land from Mexico to the US, to have, to hold, to be held immune from harassment, and that "they shall be maintained and protected in the full enjoyment of their liberty, property, and religion which they possess." Instead, the treaty has over the ages moreover, conveniently served as a legal cause of action, a perfect vehicle, a forum if you will, by which to methodically, and virtually completely confiscate millions of acres from the thousands of families of Indian, Hispanic, and mestizo citizens who worked, and legally owned and occupied these New Mexico lands under the Spanish and Mexican flags prior to the Mexican American war 1846-1848; As Del Castillo put it to the greatest benefit of US Corporations, and local, state, and federal governments. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo's Failure to protect Terra Patre in the hands of Diego De Torres' present day descendants would have been consistent with the 157 year legacy of dispossession of native lands, true to form to the benefit of our local Valencia County government, and to the satisfaction of our new county planning and zoning enforcement officer Michael Marquez and his supervisor, Ruben Chavez.

Fortunately, Donald Chavez y Gilbert descends from the more astute line of Chavez' and consequently after several court hearings over the course of a year Chavez Y Gilbert prevailed over the government on March 16, 2006. The court ruled against the County Government and its zoning minions for violating Chavez' constitutional rights of due process. Score one point for our side. Hats off to judge Danny Hawks who goes down in history as a jurist who had the wisdom, constitutional "lawledge" and appreciation for the intent and spirit of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

As was the case when he was called upon to champion the underdog and fight for personal and civil rights in other causes, Chavez y Gilberts' unmitigated tenacity, perseverance, and knowledge of the laws of the land combined to save Terra Patre Farm from further losses and preserve its legacy for its future generations.

THE HISTORY OF BELEN

The Nativity of Ranching

By

Donald A. Chavez y Gilbert

In the eighteenth century Diego de Torres and the other Spanish founders christened the 200,000.00 acre land grant south of the present day village of Los Lunas with the Spanish name for Bethlehem, Belen, perhaps because the geographic area and climate of Belen, New Mexico is so similar to that of Palestine and Israel. Similarly in Portuguese the name is Belem. Most Belenites know that the name "Belen" means Bethlehem, but few understand Belen's rich history and that the history of the name stems far back to its Christian, Arabic, and Hebrew roots. To Christians for over two thousand years the word Bethlehem in Judah represents the birth place of Jesus Christ in Central Palestine. The Arabic version is Bayt Lahm meaning "*house of meat.*" In Hebrew Bet Lehem means "*house of bread.*"

Spain originally governed the territory of New Mexico from 1540 to 1821, then from 1821 to 1845 under the Mexican flag. Before the thirteen original (*American*) colonies signed the declaration of independence in 1776, people born in the Belen colony were already thirty-six years old. By the time of the American conquest in 1848, several generations of Belenites had been established during the interim hundred years. The ranching and cowboy culture was originally brought to what is modern day United States of America by the Spanish colony established by Don Juan de Onate and 560 original colonists in the year 1598, almost a decade before the establishment of Jamestown, Virginia, and almost a quarter century before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts. The American West was indeed born in New Mexico, including Valencia County, the heart, the

nativity of New Mexico. The first ranches and cowboy culture evolved right here along the Rio Grande River over a period of over four hundred years.

As the descendents of the Onate colonization in El Rio Arriba, (upper river valley), gained ownership of northern New Mexico lands, new generations of Spanish settlers gradually moved south in search of new cultivatable farm land. By 1740 the movement reached El Rio Abajo, (Lower River valley). A group of citizens from Albuquerque, which was founded in 1706, was looking south to improve their lot. To put this pursuit in the words of the Belen petitioners - *translated from sixteenth century Spanish*, their petition read as follows:

“To his excellency, the Governor and Captain-General: Captain Diego de Torres and Antonio de Salazar, and the other signers hereto, before the greatness of Your Excellency, with the greatest possible submission, state: That, whereas, we have large families and have no convenient lands with which to support them and having examined an uncultivated and vacant tract of land at the point of the Rio Abajo and being unappropriated, we register the same and petition for a grant in the royal name of His Majesty, (Whom God may preserve) for the purpose of settling thereon, there being suitable lands for cultivation, for pasture grounds for our herds and flocks, which we promise to occupy and settle as required by the Royal Ordinances; the boundaries of which are, on the east by the Sandia Mountains and on the west, the Rio Puerco River. The North boundary is the lands of Nicolas Chavez and those of the adjoining settlers of Our Lady of Concepcion, tract of Tome; and on the south the place called Phelipe Romero, in a direct line until it intersects the boundaries above mentioned from east to west; which Your Excellency being pleased to grant without third party prejudice and provide as we request by doing in which we will receive grace and favor, and we affirm in due form that this, our petition, is done in good faith for the purpose of overcoming our difficulties.

Signed

Captain Diego de Torres Tadeo Torres

Antonio de Salazar Cayetano Cristobal Torres

Pedro Vigil Barbara Romero

Miguel Salazar Gabriel Romero

Juana Teresa Romero Maria Vigil

Juan Antonio Salazar Francisco Martin

Miguel Salazar Nicolas Martiniano

Pablo Salazar Ignacio Barrera

Nicolas Salazar Juan Domingo Torres

Manuel Antonio Trujillo Jose Romero

Maria Torres Jose Tenorio

Salvador Torres Juan Jose Sandoval

Jose Antonio Torres Francisco Trujillo

Franco Jiron Bartolome Torres

Jose Antonio Naranjo Pedro Romero

The original Belen Land Grant consisted of approximately 200,000 acres extending from the Rio Puerco on the west to the Manzano Mountains on the east, and from the north from the Tome Land Grant and Los Chavez, to the south by the town of Bernardo. To Indian crops like corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, chili, and melons, the Belen colonists added crops such as oats, wheat, and all kinds of fruit trees as well as European live stock such as sheep, horses, cattle, goats, chickens, and pigs. These first settlers built adobe homes with hornos to make bread, which required the use of Spanish yeast. Some of these Spanish settlers continued developing the cowboy, (vaqueros), and ranching industry while others specialized in grand farms. The Belen land was fertile and despite regular attacks from wild Apache and Comanche Indians the colony thrived and grew. Working together with the Pueblo Indians the two groups of people formed a strong military and religious alliance while learning and borrowing from each other, forever

changing their respective cultures and that of the American Southwest. In 1750 a military garrison was established in Belen for the protection of the missions and the haciendas scattered along the lower river valley. Ten years later it was developed into a presidio and Belen became an armed protector against Indian marauders for 150 years to come. By 1790 the colonists of the Belen Land Grant had established six semi-military posts with a Commandate in charge of each Plaza.

Just prior to the American conquest of New Mexico the only source of supplies for non-agricultural materials was by caravan trade with Chihuahua, Mexico. Yearly caravans of carretas, (two wheeled wagons), journeyed from Chihuahua to New Mexico and back, creating a class of ricos, rich New Mexicans like Nicolas T. Armijo nephew of the Mexican General Manuel Armijo. When the Santa Fe Trail opened eastern American markets, New Mexicans were quick to take advantage of the opportunities. Some of these men from Belen and El Rio Abajo were Colonel Francisco Perea, and Antonio Jose Otero who made their fortunes selling sheep to California. Jose Antonio Chavez, a cousin of the Pereas and son of New Mexico's first governor under Mexican rule was robbed of \$12,000 in gold and murdered on the Santa Fe Trail on his way to Independence, Kansas by a band of Texans led by John McDaniel. Felipe Chavez, "El Millionario," and grandson of Francisco Xavier Chavez first Mexican Governor of New Mexico, increased his wealth in the sheep and caravan business. He later financed new Belen and Los Lunas merchant immigrants like the Beckers, and Hunings respectively.

The first significant wave of non-Hispanic ancestors arrived after the American conquest. These new members of the community came from everywhere, but primarily funneled through the American east coast as Germans, Irish, French, and Italian emigrants, e.g., surnames: Bordeaux, Connelly, Fiel, Gilbert, Hubbell, Robinson, and Sachs. They too brought new innovations, commerce, and new languages. It must have been difficult for the Spanish speaking people to learn English from newcomers speaking with German American, French American, Irish American, and Italian American accents. In actuality, being that Spanish was the most universal language of the time, it was the emigrants as well as the American Indians who learned to speak Spanish. There are still a few elderly Indians particularly in the Pueblos who are tri-lingual speaking heir native tongue, old Spanish and new English. Similarly there are to this day a few old timer Spanish Americans who speak the fifteenth century Spanish which arrived with the original Spanish explorers and colonists. English would not become a major influence in the Belen area until the time between the early 1900s and

World War One. At that time almost everyone was Spanish/English bilingual. By the time World War II was over English was becoming the dominant language. Most baby boomers spoke English well with varying degrees of Old Spanish fluency. The Old Spanish has been virtually replaced, (with the exception of the oldsters and some baby boomers) by the modern Spanish of Mexican national migrant farm workers and other immigrants from central and South America.

The economic history of Belen can be divided into three waves. First, the pre railroad period era when farming and ranching, (agriculture), was the principal industry sprinkled in with some merchants and shippers. However, most trading was just that, trading or bartering of goods and services. There was little or no money to speak of. Second, the rail road era; After the railroad arrived in Belen in the summer of 1880 money in substantial quantity was introduced and became the principal method of trade. Railroad workers were paid in U.S. currency and Belen experienced a major economic boom. Many more Belen ancestors arrived via the Santa Fe Railroad. The Santa Fe Railroad is to this day a major employer in the community. The city of Belen was incorporated into a municipality in the year 1918.

Third, commencing the new millennium, Albuquerque, having outgrown its boundaries spilled into Los Lunas twenty miles to the south in the 1980's with developers gobbling up the few remaining open spaces for residential and commercial zoning, the wave has begun to touch the borders of Belen. Farms are beginning to give way to smaller uses such as residential and business uses, and land values have accelerated in prime areas rapidly. The pressure of this latest wave of new people needing places to live combined with the arrival of the 21st century, and the high tech computer allowing more people to leave the city to work at home has set Belen on the brink of a dramatic economic and social boom. It will take the concerted and coordinated efforts of actively involved community members and elected officials to ensure that Belen continues healthy economic growth while simultaneously preserving its relaxed rural atmosphere, rich heritage, as well as that of its surrounding neighbors, like Pueblitos, Casa Colorada, Los Chavez, Tome, Jarales, Vegita, and Bosque. There are many ways to work toward this goal. One way is to appreciate and celebrate our past. Another is to actively capture and preserve traditions and icons of our unique culture, and finally we must teach our children our true history and set aside land and land marks to as teaching examples for future generations.

I will close with a transcript of the ROYAL BELEN LAND GRANT, by Governor and Captain General of the Kingdom of New Mexico, followed by the DEED AND CONVEYANCE OF THE BELEN LAND GRANT, by Senior Justice, and War Captain, Nicolas Duran De Chaves.

The Royal Belen Land Grant:

“In the Town of Santa Fe, on the 15th day of November, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty, I, the Lieutenant Colonel, Governor and Captain General of the Kingdom of New Mexico, Don Gaspar Domingo de Mendoza having seen the present petition made by the persons therein referred to, should order, and did order, that a grant be made to them of the tract they ask for, in the name of the King, Our Sovereign, (whom God may preserve) in order that they may settle, cultivate and improve the same for the benefit of themselves, their children, heirs and any third party as they promise in their petition. Therefore, I order and direct the Senior Justice of the Town of Albuquerque, Don Nicolas de Chaves, to give them the possession referred to, under the conditions and terms required in such cases; and, there being no doubt of the existence of other royal grants in the vicinity and the deed and title of these who adjoin said lands are required to be presented for the fulfillment of this new grant in order that it may be divided with more propriety for the purpose of avoiding suits and difficulties at the present time as well as in the future, I deem it proper to conform to the forms which are provided. I have so provided, ordered and signed, with my attending witnesses acting by appointment in the absence of a notary, there being none in the kingdom.

Don Gaspar de Mendoza

Antonio de Herrera

Jose Ferrus

It is noted in my book of government on file in the Archives of this Capitol on the reverse of page 68. Mendoza

The Royal Deed And Conveyance Of The Belen Land Grant:

Santa Fe. January 25th 1742

At the place of Our Lady of Belen, jurisdiction of the Town of Albuquerque, on the Ninth day of the month of December of the year, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty, I Captain Nicolas Duran de Chaves, Senior Justice and War Captain of said town and jurisdiction, by virtue of the decree of Lieutenant Colonel Don Gaspar de Mendoza, Governor and Captain General of this kingdom, promulgated on the 15th day of November of said year (1740) wherein I am directed to proceed to give royal possession to Captain Diego de Torres as the representative of the persons to the tenor of their petition, a grant is made to them in the name of His Majesty, which decree was published to those adjoining said lands by my order, and there being no objection to the petition, I proceed to give possession; said lands being bounded on the north by those of Captain Nicolas Duran de Chaves, on the house fronting on the foundation of the house of Phelipe Romero; on the west, the Rio Puerco, that portion of the opposite of the river of the Purisima Concepcion, and on the east by the Sandia mountains, and the south by ruins of the foundation of the house of the said aforesaid, Phelipe Romero, and having examined said boundaries with three attending and instrumental witnesses, according to the law I took the aforesaid Torres by the hand and walked with him over the lands and he cried in a loud voice and pulled up grass and threw stones and gave other manifestations which are made and provided in such cases, receiving this possession in the name of His Majesty, quietly and peacefully with the same boundaries contained in his petition; whereupon, I directed perpetual landmarks to be established, giving him said lands free and with general pastures, waters, watering places, timber uses and customs, in order that he, his children, heirs an successors, may enjoy the same without opposition, and the royal possession to be evidence of the sufficient title, and by virtue of which he shall enjoy the same afore estates, and in order that it may so appear, I place it onto the record. Bernabe Baca, Baltazar Baca and those in attendance, being instrumental witnesses who signed with me, acting judge, on the present common paper, there being none in these parts."

Before me as acting Judge.

Captain Nicolas Duran de Chaves

Attending:

Jose Miguel Alvarez de Castillo

Guillermo Saavedra

A couple of sources of more detailed history of the Belen area are El Rio Abajo by Gilbert Espinosa and Tibo T. Chavez Sr., and Original Families of New Mexico, by Fray Angelico Chavez.

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