

Finally, a word of recognition is in order for that older generation of New Mexican historians who have contributed so much toward an understanding of the state's past. Three of those scholars have offered me both inspiration and encouragement over the years, and I here acknowledge them with gratitude. They are Eleanor B. Adams, Fray Angelico Chavez, and France V. Scholes.

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Introduction

FOR Spanish colonists in New Mexico, the year 1776 was memorable, but for reasons having nothing to do with events in Philadelphia or the activities of General Washington. While patriots rallied to the call of the Second Continental Congress, the New Mexicans, who would one day be Americans, were spinning out their lives hardly aware of the fighting in the East. They were distracted instead by problems that go with trying to maintain life on a difficult frontier: Indian raids, pestilence, drought, corrupt government officials, and the unending sense of isolation. Yet, several events set that year apart, so that, afterward, 1776 loomed as an important date in New Mexico history.

For one thing, two Franciscan friars undertook an extraordinary journey. Fathers Francisco Atanasio Domínguez and Silvestre Vélez de Escalante traveled almost two thousand miles in a wobbly circle from Santa Fe through the deserts and canyons of the Far West. They viewed peoples and country never before seen by white men, collected geographical information useful to Spain, battled bitter winter weather, and crossed the Colorado River above the Grand Canyon after searching thirteen days for a passage—all this, while the British had been capturing Long Island and Fort Washington on the Hudson, and General Arnold had been slowing Burgoyne's forces on Lake Champlain.

It began in March, when Padre Domínguez, canonical inspector, reached the capital of Santa Fe to begin an official examination of New Mexico's missions. All visits by churchmen of rank were a rarity in that remote province of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, so the arrival of Father Domínguez created a stir. Members of the socially elite hastened to fete him; in the central plaza, masses of the faithful surrounded him to stare. He bore their veneration with commendable tolerance, but the wretchedness of the town itself was another matter. Fray Domínguez viewed Santa Fe with the eye of a man long accustomed to the courtly cities of central Mexico. And this poor adobe nothing of a capital scarcely possessed the semblance of a street.

There were no tree-lined thoroughfares. No gleaming palaces or mansions. No gold-encrusted churches. Not a single gushing fountain, so beloved by every Spaniard. No blanket of tiled roofs glowing red in the sunset. No arched porticos or covered marketplace. No twisted and scrolled grilles adorning any window. No throng of traffic. No crowds of elegant ladies or swarms of idle, dandified young men. It was a place at the end of the world, mournful in appearance and lacking, in the judgment of Father Domínguez, anything that might lift the spirit.

True, a so-called Governors Palace, made of mud bricks and adzed timbers, hunkered low on the north side of the plaza. But to any visitor from outside the province, it scarcely seemed possible that such a rude structure could house a representative of the Spanish empire and one, at that, who presided over hundreds of square leagues of His Majesty's domain.

True, in the center of town stood a parish church, also of adobe, and with an altar screen of common pine. Boys climbed to the choir loft by a ladder because there were no stairs, and the faithful had to stand or sit on the packed-earth floor because benches were lacking. At first glance, the governor's armchair, gracing one wall, seemed to lend a touch of elegance with its upholstery of crimson velvet, gold fringe, and tasseled foot-cushion. A closer look showed its regal magnificence much diminished by the poor light and primitive surroundings.

True, there existed a friar's *convento* and a couple of smaller chapels—one for the soldiers and another, dedicated to San

Miguel, for residents who lived across the thin trickle of the Santa Fe River. There were private houses, many of them merely huts, called *jacalets*, scattered at random among the gardens and orchards that encroached almost to the plaza. But when that had been seen, there was little more.

Unless one found pleasure in contemplating the backdrop of sandy hills studded with piñon pine, and, in the distance, the soaring heights of the Sangre de Cristo Range. Unless the visitor could appreciate a sky more luminescent than the richest turquoise, or the puffy banks of dark summer clouds that boiled out of the sierra to bathe the brown houses and fields, leaving the air redolent of new-washed earth. Unless a stray traveler who had come over the parched wastes threaded by the Camino Real could discover beauty in the platinum bracelet of a stream that Santa Fe citizens, in their enthusiasm, had elevated to the rank of river. Unless some stranger warned to unbounded hospitality, unless he discovered comfort in simple houses whose walls afforded coolness in summer and warmth in winter, unless he admired lighthearted people, hard-working and stoical. Unless he did—then, like Father Domínguez in the early spring of 1776, he saw Santa Fe as a trifling place.

During April and May, Domínguez inspected the spiritual and economic condition of missions in the hinterland. Even then, he was looking toward a larger project that formed part of his purpose in coming here. His religious superiors had instructed him to go in search of a route that would link New Mexico with the recently founded province of California, and while about it, to discover new fields for missionary work among the Indians.

Father Escalante, minister of Zúñi Pueblo and a man with knowledge of western trails, entered Santa Fe in early June. He had been summoned by Domínguez to share leadership in the pending expedition. The two made preparations, enlisting eight local citizens to go as an escort, and setting July 4 as the date of departure. Delays arose. The fourth passed. It was month's end before the party got under way.

The course selected by Domínguez and Escalante toward Monterey, their ultimate destination, was a roundabout one. They traveled north and west of Santa Fe up the Chama valley

and into present western Colorado, through lands previously visited by Indian traders from New Mexico. Then they veered due west into unknown country of the Ute tribe in central Utah and finally angled southwest toward the Virgin River. By early October, snow fell, sealing the mountain passes, and the two friars reluctantly abandoned their quest. Swinging south, they forded the Colorado River at a spot above the Grand Canyon, known thereafter as "The Crossing of the Fathers." Late November saw them at last in the shelter of Zuni, after nearly four months in some of the most difficult and breath-taking wilderness on the continent. They had failed to get near California, and the Indians seen were too distant to make missions practical, but a notable chapter had been added to the history of western America.

An ominous fact of life in New Mexico during that watershed year of 1776—and one readily seen by Father Dominguez when he first came to the province—dealt with the terror spread by nomadic Indians: occasionally the Ute, often the Navajo, always the Apache and Comanche. Almost every family mourned lost relatives. Towns and ranches lay in ruins. Once-vast flocks of sheep had dwindled to remnants. Caravans moved infrequently and only under heavy guard. The devastation was appalling, and it posed a formidable question. Simply stated: Could New Mexico survive?

The knotty problem had long engaged the attention of the king and his colonial officials, for the danger was not confined to that province alone. It menaced the existence of every Spanish settlement and mission stretching from Texas to the Gulf of California. A variety of military solutions had been tried and a string of peace plans, often with friars as their agents and implementers, put forth. All ended on the scrap heap. Military forces were too skimpy, the missionaries too few, provincial officials too weak, money from the royal treasury too scarce to tackle the immense job in anything like an effective manner. On this outlying frontier, Spain was vastly overextended, and to ward off disaster, she needed a new approach.

In 1776 Charles III believed he had found one. By royal decree, he separated the northern region from the old vice-

royalty and created a new military department, to be called the Commandancy-General of the Interior Provinces of New Spain. Its success or failure in handling the Indians rested with a commandant-general, an officer vested with extraordinary powers, who would serve on the spot to formulate frontier policy. In May of that year, the king appointed to the post Don Teodoro de Croix, an able Fleming long in the service of Spain. Several years actually elapsed before Croix was able to get a grip on his task, but the infusion of new blood and fresh ideas eventually brought some relief to New Mexico and other hard-pressed regions along the border.

While Croix was traveling north from Mexico City to assume command of the Interior Provinces, a perfect oak of a man, Don Juan Bautista de Anza, rode at the head of 240 colonists across the deserts of Sonora toward California. One result of that march was the founding of the city of San Francisco in September 1776. At the time, New Mexicans had scarcely heard of Anza, but within two years, his name would become a household word. Croix named him in 1778 to the governorship of New Mexico with seemingly impossible instructions: win an alliance with the powerful Comanche and then make mutual war on the Apache. Over the next nine years, Anza not only achieved that goal, but he also compiled a truly remarkable record as an administrator, explorer, soldier, and Indian agent.

Thus, as durable veterans of the Continental Army watched a red-coated general surrender his sword at Yorktown and wondered vaguely what the future held for their fledgling nation, a tough and capable Spanish governor beyond the distant prairies was quietly, competently putting New Mexico's affairs in order. Not a sign did he have that, within a matter of decades, rule of this land along the Rio Grande would pass into the hands of tumultuous republican sons who called themselves Americans.

Across the centuries, the interplay of natural and human forces have made New Mexico the distinctive state that it is. No general agreement exists as to what influence has been the strongest, although many writers lean toward the overriding fact of aridity and the ceaseless struggle of men to lay claim to

scarce waters. Others believe that New Mexico's persistent and vital Indian cultures, healthier here than perhaps anywhere else in the United States, contribute most toward defining the source of the state's particular élan and charm. Still others see the early introduction and the enduring life of Hispanic institutions as the chief determinant affecting the region's history. A case could be made, too, on the negative side, that poverty of both land and people through the years has done more than anything else to shape New Mexico's story.

To arrive at an understanding of why New Mexico is different, one can best begin by considering the Spaniard. It was his attitude and conduct toward the Indian and later toward the Anglo-American that governed the way human society developed along the upper Rio Grande. And it was his custom and law that established the first formal procedures for dealing with the essential issues of land and water rights.

Spain ruled over New Mexico twice as long as the United States has ruled, to date. For something like 225 years, Hispanic colonists worked and died here in comparative obscurity, their accomplishments and failures known only to a handful of government officers and missionaries. Through their own distinctive brand of pioneering, they imposed their culture on the wilderness and upon the Indians occupying it. The legacy of that work survives to this day and perhaps more than anything else endows the modern state with an exotic flavor.

New Mexico was the oldest, most populous, and most important province on the outer rim of the old Viceroyalty of New Spain. That distinction is easily forgotten, now that her sister provinces of Texas and California, so feeble in colonial times, have raced ahead by all standards of measurement, since becoming part of the United States. That earlier prominence explains the stubborn persistence of New Mexico's Spanish language and culture, which elsewhere in the Southwest have lost much of their standing.

The colony of New Mexico was dedicated, not to mining, industry, or exploitive agriculture, but to subsistence farming, herding, and evangelization of the Indian people. Life ebbed and flowed for centuries; the population crept upward; towns

and ranches proliferated. And all the while, New Mexico stayed a frontier province with the dangers, hard labor, privations, and rough edges that characterize any frontier.

The Spanish pioneers who built adobe homes and missions here possessed a far different outlook from men who swung their axes and primed their long rifles east of the Mississippi. Part of the difference resided in the nature of the frontier itself. In the eastern woodlands, a brave and enterprising soul could raise a cabin, put in a crop, and rear his children. He fought off the Indians and, if lucky, kept them at bay. All the while, he fought and farmed on the assumption that, after a decade or two, the frontier would move on, leaving him a measure of tranquility in his old age and secure property to bequeath to his offspring. That situation bred its own attitude of mind.

New Mexico was not so fortunate. From its formal founding in 1598 down to the defeat of Geronimo's marauding Apaches in 1886, it suffered constant invasion by enemies. They swept, not across a frontier line, but out of every mountain chain and sheltering canyon that encircled the province. No town was so large as to be completely secure from raiders; no traveler ever left home without wondering if he would ever see it again.

The prominent Mendoza family, living on a ranch south of Albuquerque, lost thirty of its members at one swoop during the holocaust of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. On another occasion, Pablo Vialpando left a spacious hacienda in the Taos valley to go on a business trip. In his absence, hundreds of Comanches stormed the house, killing his family and neighbors who had fled there, and carrying fifty-six women and children into captivity. Señora Vialpando died defending the main gate with a lance. Manuel Antonio Chaves, a leading frontiersman of the nineteenth century, could name two hundred relatives, near and distant, who had perished at the hands of Indians. The state of insecurity was an abiding one, generation after generation, and it bred in the New Mexicans both a deep sense of fatalism and a particular kind of inner toughness. In bravery, they could match the Anglo-Americans; and in sheer grit, tenacity, and fortitude, they had no peers.

All frontiers have a way of shaping men's character and pat-

terms of conduct, bringing out the best in some, the worst in others. Colonial New Mexico suffered its quota of renegades, cowards, thieves, drunkards, and corrupt officials, but in the balance they counted for little. The stout folk, frugal and enduring, who were masters at overcoming obstacles, set the tone for that frontier society.

The character and courage of the Hispano soldier and pioneer have so often been belittled that it may come as some surprise to learn that these were respected and respectable frontiersmen. General Teodoro de Croix spoke of the New Mexicans in 1778 as "faithful and valorous in battle." Thirty years later Lieutenant Zebulon Pike described them as "the bravest and most hardy subjects in New Spain," exhibiting "in a superior degree, the heaven-like qualities of hospitality and kindness." Miguel Ramos Arizpe in 1812 paid tribute to the men of the northern border as being each "a hero that is worth a hundred ordinary soldiers," and even on the roughest campaigns, "ready to sub-sist on snakes, rats, and saddle leather without a whimper or thought of desertion." These qualities the New Mexicans shared to some degree with their frontier brethren in the East.¹

Sturdy American pioneers who answered the westering call wanted land free for the taking and a chance to build a new way of life. Some were looking to escape the restraints of conventional society or were simply responding to an inborn urge to move elsewhere, to roam unfettered beyond the line of settlement.

The Spaniard, advancing into new regions, was animated by motives other than simple restlessness or desire for farmland. He searched for lands to be claimed for the king, souls to be won for the Church, or precious metals that would gain him a fortune, titles, and social position. A farm plot or ranch was fairly easy to obtain—a man merely petitioned the crown for a vacant piece of ground—consequently, the Spaniard in New

1. Teodoro de Croix, February 10, 1778, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Document No. 2, 719; David J. Weber, editor, *Foreigners in Their Native Land* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), p. 37; Nettie Lee Benson, translator, *Report of Dr. Miguel Ramos de Arizpe* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1950), pp. 16-17.

Mexico never experienced that intense hunger, that compulsive acquisitiveness for land that dominated the westward-moving Anglo-American.

The pioneers who came north with oxcarts and mule trains up the valley of the Rio Grande were not out to build a new society, but to transplant an old one. Their Hispanic traditions of government, religion, and material culture they intended to root firmly in the arid wastes of New Mexico. Nor was this a helter-skelter movement of individual family heads, seeking better homes and led northward by their own enterprise and initiative. Rather, it was a well-organized migration, orchestrated and closely directed by the royal government, with the royal will and purpose as its motivating force.

The contrast is important. For Spain, the frontier offered vast potential for expanding the effective limits of her empire. Conquest of the wilderness was strictly controlled, its settlement was meticulously planned, its development rigidly supervised. If Spanish custom did, indeed, undergo some transformation in New Mexico and the other northern provinces, it occurred as a natural consequence of a distinctive geography and climate and of a society in isolation. There was no intent on the part of these frontier people to be other than Spaniards in the traditional mold.

For all his reputation as abuser of the Indian, the Spaniard developed, for his day, an enlightened view toward native subjects and enthroned it as a firm policy. Following the bloody conquests of Mexico and Peru, forces for humanitarian reform led by Father Bartolomé de las Casas succeeded in affirming certain basic rights for the Indians and establishing the mission of the colonists as one of a civilizing guardianship. Ancient Spanish law regulated the conduct of war, even with those tribes perpetually hostile, so that the end was never lost sight of: peaceful submission and conversion of the Indians, followed by their incorporation into Spanish society. Nowhere do we find the attitude, so prevalent on the Anglo-American frontier, that the red man stood as a barrier, merely to be brushed aside or trampled under.

New Mexico's numerous Pueblo Indians, settled in prosper-

ous farming communities, received title to their lands, protection from encroaching settlers, and access to the courts in disputes with their Spanish neighbors. The laws did not always shield them as intended, and they suffered religious persecution at the hands of overzealous friars. But the fact remains, their legal status was clearly defined within the Spanish system. At the end of the colonial period, Pueblo Indians still possessed their ancestral lands, and their native culture survived almost intact. Even the old religion continued to serve behind a façade provided by superficial acceptance of Hispanic Catholicism. When the United States scooped up the Southwest in the Mexican War, it agreed to adhere to most of the old protective policies. As a result, the Pueblos were saved from disintegration and extinction, the lot of so many other native Americans.

If one looks for a predominant theme running like a thread through all New Mexico's history, it can readily be found in the collision and mingling of cultures. Even before arrival of the white man, Pueblos alternately fought and traded with nomadic Apaches, setting the basic pattern. The Spaniards had their days of Indian fighting, often brought on by inept governors and missionaries, but they also indulged in much borrowing of native ways. Beginning in the eighteenth century, they had to contend with European interlopers who discovered trails to the Rio Grande—first a sprinkling of French traders, and then later a tidal wave of frontiersmen out of English America.

The entire history of New Mexico from 1850 to the present is interwoven with attempts by the Indian and Hispano populations to come to terms with an alien Anglo society. Through principles supplied by the Declaration of Independence, they have tried to win equality while remaining different and have sought liberty to pursue a time-honored way of life. That history also includes the long story of the Anglo-American's adjustment to things that are uniquely and engagingly New Mexican.

1

The Spaniards

THE high, dry country of New Mexico is the birthplace of America's tall tale. The land's heady mixture of winelike air, sparkling sunlight, and bare-earth colors dazzles the senses and stimulates the imagination, so that the separation of fantasy from fact becomes a difficult, sometimes impossible, chore. Here, where space stretches far and often resembles the moon-scape, golden mirages and extravagant yarns of lost treasure have found a compatible breeding ground. The past is pock-marked with stories of men gone a little crazy, running pell-mell after nonexistent riches. Many among the gullible came to pointless and tragic endings, but a few, in their mad scramble to chase fantastic myths, changed the course of history. Among the latter were sixteenth-century Spaniards beguiled by a now almost forgotten fable of seven golden cities. The pursuit of this wonder sent them on tremendous journeys that ultimately led to the discovery, exploration, and naming of New Mexico.

The legend of seven cities was an old one, variant of a tale long popular in medieval Spain. According to tradition, seven bishops fled their country ahead of the Moorish invasion in the eighth century. Sailing westward, they reached the island of Antilia (a name echoed today in the Antilles Islands), where they each built an opulent city brimming with treasure. Gracious Benincasa, on his map of 1482, placed Antilia west of the Madeiras, and on it he inscribed names of the seven mythi-