

Colonial Governors — 1665–1677 —

By José García

This is the sixth article in an ongoing series devoted to the colonial governors of New Mexico.

New Mexico's governors were normally appointed by the viceroy in Mexico. The viceroy represented the Spanish king, and these appointments were made after the viceroy consulted with other officials in Mexico City. The governors in this article, who served from 1661 to 1671, were appointed by two different viceroys and served King Felipe IV. The term of an appointment was in most cases for three to four years, while some governors served longer, and others were appointed more than once. Some governors served with honorable distinction, while others were less respected. Some were military men, while others were career bureaucrats. In most cases they were dispatched out of Mexico City and could return when their successor arrived in Santa Fe.

The following information has been obtained from the New Mexico Historian's Web site, and the information is based on sources researched by Grace Meredith for a WPA Project.

Capt. Fernando de Villanueva, 1665–1668

Gov. Villanueva was appointed by Viceroy Antonio Sebastián de Toledo, and it is assumed that he came north from Mexico City to Santa Fe with the Mission Supply Service, arriving in Santa Fe and taking office sometime during the early autumn of 1665. A long search through historical works on New Mexico for the 17th century brought forth very little information concerning him.

It is stated, however, that the province was in rather a precarious state, due in part to the change in the Mission Supply Service, which made it less efficient, as well as to the long and continued controversy and opposition among the Spaniards themselves, both lay and ecclesiastical, which had a very ill effect on the Indian population. Moreover, the whole province was in fear of raids by the Apaches, which had grown more frequent and bold.

There was an uprising of the Piro Indians, who had joined with some of the Apaches at this time, and before these natives could be overpowered, they killed the *alcalde mayor* of Socorro and, shortly after, four Spaniards, somewhere in the Magdalena mountains. In punishment for these crimes, six of the Piro Indians were executed.

That Gov. Villanueva's stay in New Mexico was anything but a happy or prosperous one

seems well established. When he left Santa Fe sometime in 1668, he was ruined financially, and everything he possessed at that time was "what he had on his back."

Capt. Juan de Medrano y Mesia, 1668–1671

Gov. Juan de Medrano y Mesia took office after being appointed by Viceroy Antonio Sebastián de Toledo; unfortunately, only a little information concerning him and his activities is to be found in any of the historical works now available.

Persistent raids and hostilities of the Apaches during this period not only caused fear and worry among the colonists but was the reason for the abandonment of Chililí and all the pueblos around the *Salinas*.

Gov. Medrano was not free from the rivalry among his own countrymen or the continued controversy among them, both lay and ecclesiastical. It is stated that such very serious charges were instigated against him that "...like a madman he fled the house in which he lived at a time when there was half a *vara* [a *vara* is 32 inches] of snow on the ground, a Cristo in his hands, lance and cloak on his shoulder, shouting that he was leaving for Mexico to seek justice from God and the King against a people abandoned by God."

That Medrano must have reached Mexico safely is made certain by the fact that about 1673, when the future policy of the Mission Supply Service had not been definitely decided, he made a bid for the contract. At this time, two bids were received: one from the Franciscan Order and the other from Medrano. Medrano's was the more favorable, but in 1674 it was definitely decided that the wagons be sold and all accounts settled. Thus the regular journeys of the caravans, organized for the particular purpose of transporting supplies to New Mexico, and the contracts under friars and one layman came to an end. While this was not the end of the supply service, thereafter it continued as the procurator-general arranged, and Medrano failed to receive the contract.

Capt. Juan Durán de Miranda 1671–1675

Capt. Miranda was covered in the last issue (summer 2009) of *La Herencia*.

Capt. Juan Francisco de Treviño 1675–1677

Capt. Don Juan Francisco de Treviño was appointed governor of New Mexico by Payo Enríquez de Rivera, Archbishop of Mexico, and it is assumed that he came north with the caravans in 1675.

There is no doubt that during this time, the subtle and far-reaching influence of the old medicine men among the Indians increased, and the danger of a serious revolt against the Spanish domination grew steadily more menacing. The peril of Apache raids alarmed even the most sanguine. All efforts to convert and pacify the Apache and Navajo Indians



Illustration by Arturo de Agüero.

were unsuccessful: They raided Pueblo Indian villages that had at least in semblance accepted Christianity, burned and pillaged their dwellings, carried off many captives and were extremely proficient at stealing hundreds of horses and other livestock.

To add to these troubles in the province, crops failed because of drought and some of the Indians faced starvation. The Mission Supply service had been changed and mismanaged and was not punctual, so that even the missions suffered from a lack of food and supplies.

Almost all historians agree that by 1676, when pueblos and churches had been destroyed by the many Apache raids and many Spaniards and converted Indians slaughtered, the different stations on the frontier had just about five soldiers each, and they were badly in need of ammunition and horses.

The viceroy, after conferences with his advisers who convinced him of the gravity of the situation and of the immediate need to reinforce the defenses in New Mexico, ordered the treasury officials to prepare for the dispatch of soldiers and horses as soon as was humanly possible. It was not until 1677, however, that the caravans headed north.

Meanwhile, in Santa Fe and, indeed, in all of New Mexico, Gov. Treviño was facing serious problems. Learning that the Indians had been secretly building kivas, their age-old ceremonial houses, the governor ordered an investigation, which was instigated, it is assumed, by the Franciscan missionaries, who had not entirely eliminated the Indian religion despite all their efforts. So, Gov. Treviño ordered that all such buildings were to be destroyed.

While on the surface the Indians may have seemed quiescent, underneath seethed the desire to throw off the Spanish domination. The attempt to suppress all of the native religious rites was by no means the least factor in the causes for resentment and revolt. It is assumed that Treviño left New Mexico and returned to Mexico City in 1677. 🐾



José García was born in Rowe, N.M. He currently lives in Santa Fe and has a great interest in the colonial history of northern New Mexico.

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