**COLONIAL NEW MEXICO**

***INTRODUCTION***

During the late evening hours of 15 July 1945, Enrico Fermi wandered among his fellow scientists at the Trinity Test Site soliciting bets. He wondered. Would the test bomb ignite the atmosphere? And, if so, would it destroy just New Mexico or destroy the world? A deafening roar, a brilliant orange ball of fire and a thunderous shockwave at 5:29:45 a.m. the next morning answered his question. In that same instant, the military future of New Mexico departed dramatically from its martial past. Very quickly, a territory and state that was often an outpost of empire and a battleground for Native Americans and Europeans, was becoming inextricably linked to a new ideological and imperial struggle being waged on a global scale. Despite that, two things remained constant. New Mexico would be just as it had been, dependant on a military presence for survival and stability. Secondly, those who would take part in modern conflict came from often diverse backgrounds. From the warrior traditions of the ancient Pueblo Indians to the significance of the state in the military-industrial complex of the atomic age, New Mexico's military heritage has been and continues to be defined by the contributions of peoples from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. For four centuries after the first Spanish expedition, New Mexicans fought each other in a prolonged struggle for control of the land, its resources and even its people before uniting together in the twentieth century against foreign powers. The legacy of these conflicts extends far beyond the fields of battle to an important and influential element in New Mexico's society - the veterans themselves.

***FRANCISCO VASQUEZ de CORONADO***

New Mexico's documented military past dates back to the earliest stages of contact between the Pueblos and the Spanish. Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led the first Spanish army into New Mexico in 1540. The section of the Rio Grande Valley in which Albuquerque is situated was first visited by Europeans under Hernando Alvarado who was a lieutenant commander under Coronado. In the sixteenth century it was was an important military headquarters for all the Spanish explorers who ventured into this part of the country.

Born in Salamanca, Spain around 1510 Coronado sailed in 1535 to Mexico with Antonio de Mendoza, the first viceroy of New Spain, which included Mexico. Coronado became governor of New Galicia province, northwest of Mexico City, in 1538.

In 1539, Marcos de Niza, a Spanish missionary priest, returned to New Spain from a journey to the north. He claimed to have seen a golden city, Cíbola, among the Zuni Indians in the region. Niza's account and stories by Alva Nunez Cabeza de Vaca and other Spanish explorers led to Coronado's Cíbola expedition.

Coronado gathered an army in Compostela, the capital of New Galicia, at the end of February 1540. He assembled nearly 300 soldiers, 1,000 Indian allies, including some slaves, and about 1,500 head of livestock. Several missionary priests also joined the expedition north into what was then known as *la tierra incognita* (the unknown land) in search of the seven cities of gold.

In July, Coronado reached the place he identified as Cíbola in the area of what is now Gallup, New Mexico. The Zuni Indians there fought to defend their territory, but the Spaniards defeated them and established a camp at the site. To the Spaniards' bitter disappointment, the town they thought was the legendary Cíbola was not a golden city. It was instead a small village called Hawikuh, which was inhabited by about 100 families.

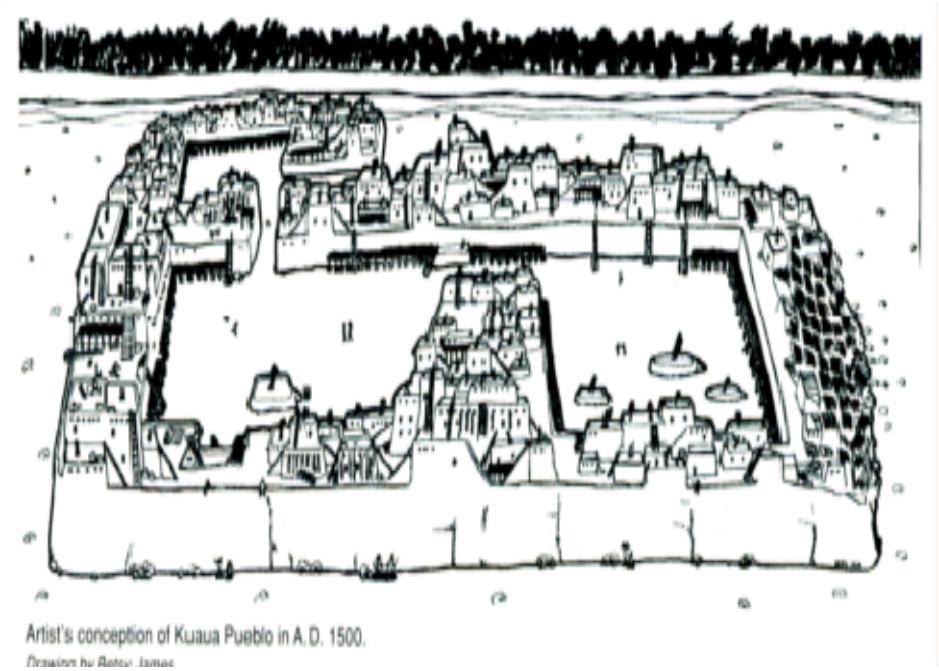
From his base camp, Coronado sent smaller bands of soldiers under the command of others to explore to the west and the east. One of his men, Pedro de Tovar, led a force to the Colorado Plateau and the Painted Desert to the northwest. Garcia Lopez de Cardenas and his party became the first Europeans to see the Grand Canyon.


This map shows the explorations of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in the American Southwest. Coronado searched in vain for the legendary cities of Cíbola and Quivira. The present-day state boundaries are also shown.

Source: World Book Map

In the winter of 1540, Coronado moved his headquarters to the Rio Grande Valley near the Kuaua Pueblo, which today is the focus of the Coronado State Monument near the town of Bernalillo, and then to other communities of the Tiguex province, spending the winters of 1540-41 and 1541-42 at Puaray -- also called Coofor and Alcanfor -- which is south of Kuaua.

Knowledge of Kuaua dates back to virtual infinity. In pre-recorded history, 2,000 or so years ago, people were hunting game and gathering plant products for food, plus other naturally occurring materials for clothing and shelter, in the precincts of the middle Rio Grande Valley. By 600 A. D., Pueblo Indian ancestral cultures were building pit houses close to where the Kuaua ruins stand today. The beginnings of the village probably date to around 1300 A. D. when members of ancient societies living in what is now eastern Arizona and southwestern Colorado were forced, perhaps by drought, to seek the watered valley of the Rio Grande.



Artist's conception of Kuaua Pueblo in A. D. 1500.

Source: History of Coronado Monument – Kuaua Pueblo by Don Bullis

http://home.comcast.net/~friendsofcsm/History.htm

The village grew, probably continually as the population grew, until it reached about 1,200 rooms, which were all connected together in a kind of irregular L shape around three plazas. Each of the plazas contained at least one Kiva; semi-subterranean chambers which were used for social and ceremonial purposes. Nature provided

sustenance for the Pueblo people. Game was abundant in the area, as were edible wild plants. They also cultivated corn, beans, squash and cotton.

The initial meeting between the Spaniards and the Pueblo people must have been a stunning event, particularly for the Indians. For the first time they saw armed men -- perhaps wearing armor -- mounted on horses; they saw other animals previously unknown to them: cattle, sheep, goats and swine. They heard a strange language. The Spaniards, too, must have been awed by the discovery of a functional society on a primitive frontier; the artistry of the paintings on Kiva walls must have amazed them.

Mutual curiosity didn't last long. The Spanish decided that they would simply occupy one of the twelve villages of the Tiguex province, and the Pueblo people agreed. But other problems arose. The soldiers required food and they took it from whomever they chose, and they were otherwise arbitrary in the way the dealt with their hosts. There was at least one reported rape. The Pueblo inhabitants revolted against their oppressors, and began the warfare by killing Spanish horses with arrows. Out numbered, and fighting for their lives, the beleaguered Spaniards resorted to desperate measures retaliating with great force using harquebuses (matchlock guns) and crossbows. Many of the Indian people were killed: some in the normal course of the conflict, but others burned to death or drowned. The Pueblo of Arenal and its inhabitants were destroyed. Coronado hoped that this demonstration would deter further conflict, but it only hardened the resolve of the surrounding Pueblos who carried on fighting well into the spring. By that time, the Spanish had destroyed more than ten villages. Limited resources and an inability to thwart the Spanish convinced many of the surviving Native Americans to seek sanctuary in the mountains throughout the region.

But, Coronado's victory was short lived. As one historian has said, "The Tiguex Pueblos … were subjugated with such severity as to incur Indian hostility to the Spaniards for generations."

The following spring, Coronado pressed on to the east in search of mythical riches and the Atlantic coast. Tempted by new stories of a city of gold called Quivira, Coronado led an expedition eastward across the Pecos River. He wandered through the panhandles of present-day Texas and Oklahoma and eventually reached what is now central Kansas before returning to New Mexico in the fall.

Physically broken, discredited and empty handed Coronado and his army departed for Mexico in the spring of 1542, leaving three Franciscan padres behind. Juan de Padilla, Juan de la Cruz and Luis de Escalona were all martyred within two years. Coronado remained governor of New Galicia until 1544 when he was suspended from his office during an investigation of his Cíbola expedition. In 1545, Coronado was charged with mistreatment of Indians, failure to colonize the lands he had explored, and other misconduct. In 1546, he was cleared of all wrongdoing.

The Spanish ignored the middle Rio Grande Valley for the next 56 years, until they returned to the region under the leadership of Don Juan de Oñate in 1598.

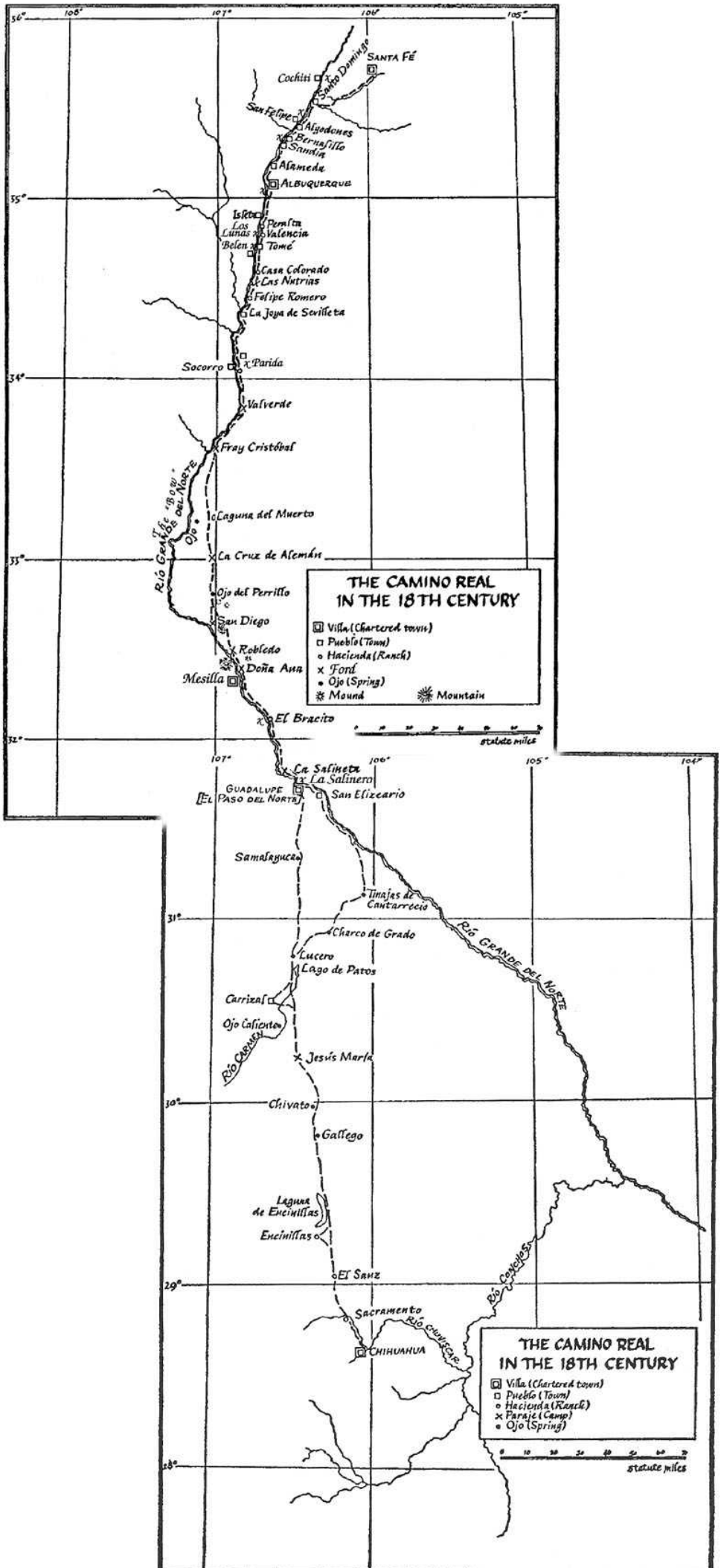
***DON JUAN de OÑATE***

Juan de Oñate (oh NYAH tay) born near Zacatecas, Mexico in about 1550 is remembered mainly for colonizing the territory now called New Mexico, in 1598. His explorations extended from the Colorado River to the plains of Kansas.

The first major expedition into New Mexico sanctioned by the Spanish Crown finally got off in 1598 when, after a two-year delay, 50 year-old Don Juan de Oñate set out from Mexico City with 500 people. Although no regular soldiers accompanied the expedition, there were 130 armed males of fighting age -- a potentially large army by then contemporary standards in the Southwest. His contract with the King of Spain called for the ambitious Spaniard to establish settlements in New Mexico at his own expense. Oñate, one the most controversial figures in New Mexico history, was born to a wealthy and aristocratic mining family in Mexico. His extensive wealth and influence made him a perfect candidate to satisfy the Crown's desire to establish settlements in New Mexico, something no other expedition had been able to do. However, what began as a promising

and profitable adventure was troubled from the outset. Oñate's wealth was nearly exhausted before he even left Mexico. By the time he and his company of followers settled in northern New Mexico at the location they named San Gabriel, they were almost entirely supported by funds from the royal treasury.

Despite the financial difficulties, the expedition moved into New Mexico unchallenged by the Pueblos of the Rio Grande Valley after blazing the Royal Road, El Camino Real, a route for commerce and conquest, that 400 years later is still in use.


THE CAMINO REAL
IN THE 18TH CENTURY
Villa (Chartered town)
Pueblo (Town)
Hacienda (Ranch)
Ford
Ojo (Spring)
Mound
Mountain
statute miles
THE CAMINO REAL
IN THE 18TH CENTURY
Villa (Chartered town)
Pueblo (Town)
Hacienda (Ranch)
Paraje (Camp)
Ojo (Spring)
statute miles
Santa Fé
Cochiti
Santo Domingo
San Felipe
Algodones
Bernalillo
Sandia
Alameda
Albuquerque
Isleta
Los Lunas
Belen
Pemita
Valencia
Tomé
Casa Colorado
Las Nutrias
Felipe Romero
La Joya de Sevilleta
Socorro
Parida
Valverde
Fray Cristóbal
Río Grande del Norte "Bravo"
Laguna del Muerto
Ojo
La Cruz de Alemán
Ojo del Perrillo
San Diego
Robledo
Doña Ana
Mesilla
El Bracito
La Salineta
La Salinero
El Paso del Norte
Guadalupe
San Elizeario
Samalayuca
Tinajas de Cantarrecio
Charco de Grado
Lucero
Lago de Patos
Carrizal
Ojo Caliente
Río Carmen
Jesús María
Chivato
Gallego
Laguna de Encinillas
Encinillas
El Sanz
Sacramento
Río Conchos
Río Chuviscar
Chihuahua
Río Grande del Norte

Source: National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior
(http://www.elcaminoreal.org/maps/)

***JORNADA del MUERTO***

The roughest and deadliest part of the Camino Real was the stretch between Las Cruces and Socorro called Jornada del Muerto or Journey of the Dead, which traversed a broad, flat waterless valley featuring expansive lava beds. With no grazing or firewood, it offered no sustenance to travelers for 90 miles.

Caravans left the comparative ease of the Rio Grande just north of Las Cruces and prepared for a brutal, three-day march with little rest and no water. Oñate wrote that his group suffered for lack of water until someone's dog appeared with muddy paws. The travelers followed the dog to temporary water where animals and people slaked their thirst. Known from then on as Los Charcos del Perillo, the pools of the little dog, it became a paraje, or camping place, where wagon trains watered and prepared for the harsh trip ahead.

After three days of anxious passage, Oñate reached the river near present day San Marcial. Informed by the events of the past, the Pueblos sought to avoid conflict and the destruction of their villages. At first, they accepted the Spanish presence and accommodated their settlements for a short time. After Pueblo dwellers of the village Teipana gave food and succor to the strangers, Oñate promptly renamed the village Socorro, meaning help, in recognition of their hospitality.

Why did caravans leave the river and journey into the arid wasteland? For almost 100 miles, the river was too difficult to follow, especially for livestock and wooden carts. Huge canyons led from eastern and western mountains, creating gigantic ridges to climb and descend, one after another.

The river often changed its course and left quicksand in its wake. What had been a safe passage on an earlier trip might lead to suffocating quicksand or be completely washed away. Despite hardships, travelers made better time on the flat, dry valley.

In early August 1598, 22 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, Governor Juan de Oñate set up his headquarters in San Juan Pueblo near the confluence of the Chama and Rio Grande Rivers just north of present day Espanola, but by 1601 he had moved the Spanish capital across the Rio Grande to the Yuque-Yunque Pueblo. Named San Gabriel, it served as the seat of government until 1610.

A program initiated by the Franciscan padres who accompanied Oñate was called *reducción*. It provided that the Pueblo people of Tiguex would be consolidated into a few villages where mission churches could be constructed and where the work to convert the Indians to the Roman Catholic religion could be facilitated. Kuaua was probably abandoned under this edict by 1625. There is archaeological evidence that the village was resettled about 100 years later, but the later occupants may have been Spanish. Whoever they were, they didn't stay long and the place was abandoned again and the walls were crumbling badly by the end of the 1Ninth century.

Like most European efforts to establish colonies in North America the Spanish found themselves under-provisioned and unprepared for the struggles associated with colonization. As the seasons gave way to winter and the harsh realities of New Mexico's climate began to take a toll on the expedition. Would be soldiers and colonists alike began to extort provisions from the surrounding pueblos. Once again, they resorted to various means of violence to secure precious food-stuffs. Discontent spread quickly and in 1599, Ácoma Pueblo struck back, killing eleven Spanish soldiers, including Oñate's nephew, Juan de Záldivar. Three intense days of fighting ensued. During that span, Oñate's army, now numbering only 72 men, defeated and destroyed Ácoma, maiming and killing nearly 800 inhabitants and taking more than 80 men and 500 women and children captive. For Oñate this was a significant, if bloody, military victory and it ensured that the

struggling Spanish colonizing effort would survive and grow slowly for much of the seventeenth century.

Despite his victory, Oñate's leadership came into question by the settlers at San Gabriel with whom he quarreled and by the Crown. Also, his venture was quickly becoming the largest drain on royal coffers. Forced to resign, he was tried and found guilty of immorality and abuse of power. In 1606, he was replaced by Pedro de Peralta, whose greatest success was re-establishing the struggling Spanish settlement further south on the site of present day Santa Fe, abandoning San Gabriel.

***PUEBLO REVOLT***

Throughout the seventeenth century the Spanish population in New Mexico never exceeded more than 3,000, but that did not prevent conflict. On regular occasions various Pueblos, including Zuni, Taos, Jemez, and villages of the Tewa clashed with Spanish settlers and soldiers. All achieved some minor gains, but they were short lived. Indeed, these isolated incidents had little effect on the already slow development of the Spanish colony. It was not until the Pueblo Revolt in 1680 that the Spanish were confronted with a unified threat from the Pueblos. During the two decades leading up to the revolt, New Mexico suffered from severe drought and above average temperatures. Those conditions resulted in significant crop losses and death from starvation. Crop yields and precious livestock herds were further reduced by raiding Navajos and Apaches from northern New Mexico who sought to supplement their own dwindling food supplies by preying on the inhabitants of the river valley. Those factors, along with the growing population in the valley and the routine indignities that Pueblos suffered at the hands of the Spanish, contributed to a cultural revival among the Pueblos who increasingly looked to their own leaders and traditions to handle the on-going crisis.

Dissent among the Pueblos was galvanized and a movement to rout the Spanish out of New Mexico began. A secret meeting at Taos Pueblo set the plan in motion. Messengers were dispersed to known anti-Spanish pueblos. The plan, however, was discovered when sympathetic Pueblos alerted the Spanish and contributed to the capture

of two messengers. Weary of their discovery, the Pueblos, led by Popé, a Tewa from Oke Owinge, San Juan Pueblo, took the offensive on 10 August 1680. Even though they were aware that an attack was imminent, the Spanish were still taken completely by surprise. They failed to grasp the scope of the upheaval. Nearly 17,000 Pueblo Indians were aligned against them. Spaniards in outlying settlements who were not immediately overrun sought sanctuary in Santa Fe and Isleta Pueblo. The Spanish retaliated mercilessly, hanging Pueblo holy men and torturing others, including Popé.

However, the Native Americans capitalized easily and swiftly on their numerical superiority and laid siege to Santa Fe. Two thousand Pueblos surrounded the settlement, which could only muster 100 men of fighting age in opposition. This lone Spanish outpost in New Mexico held out for one month until, with the city literally in ruins and their supplies of food and water exhausted, Governor Antonio de Otermín issued orders to abandon the settlement. They were granted leave of the city on 21 September, retreating to El Paso, humiliated and soundly defeated. In the month of fighting, Pueblo Indians killed more than 400 Spaniards, destroyed fields and crops, and sacked or destroyed every Spanish building in the territory. Of the 33 Franciscan priests in the province, 21 were killed during the conflict. For a time the Pueblos succeeded in ridding their homes of the Spanish. It was the largest movement of its kind. Not until Arthur St. Clair's defeat in the Ohio wilderness in 1791 were so many Native Americans united in a common cause. What had begun in secret shocked the Spanish in New Mexico and in Europe, but it did not end their resolve to establish colonial dominance in New Mexico.

The desert leg of the Camino Real would secure its reputation when survivors of the revolt headed south. More than 2,000 colonists and loyal natives attempted the trek. Almost 600 of the weak, ill or exhausted refugees died on the journey.

***DIEGO de VARGAS***

The ramifications of the revolt and the ideologies that formed its foundation spread throughout the region and tempered Spanish interest in colonization until 1693 when Diego de Vargas, a Spanish aristocrat arrived in El Paso. De Vargas left his family behind in Spain, arriving in North America resolved to expand his personal fortune and establish a

permanent colony in New Mexico. He quickly demonstrated leadership and the determination desperately needed if a colony was to survive. Initial forays into New Mexico in 1693 were met with unanticipated success. De Vargas, with the aid of Pueblo allies, managed to secure the moderate allegiance of 23 Pueblo communities throughout the Rio Grande Valley. The next year, de Vargas returned with 800 settlers, which included 100 soldiers and a large number of long-standing Pueblo allies, many of whom fled during the revolt years before. However, de Vargas quickly discovered that he was not as welcome as his previous venture had suggested. When he returned in 1694, Pueblos who previously professed friendship now opposed him and his company. Diplomatic efforts to regain control of Santa Fe, which the Pueblos had occupied since the revolt, failed and soon gave way to open warfare. Bolstered by Pueblo Indian allies, de Vargas's Spaniards easily took the old capital but not before they executed 70 of the citadel's defenders who refused to surrender. Although the re-conquest of Santa Fe provided de Vargas with a much needed victory it was merely the beginning of nearly three years of ceaseless warfare between the two groups, each desperate to control the valley.

Beyond Santa Fe, the returning Spaniards exerted little influence. Authority did not come from the presence of Franciscan priests as it had in the past. It was now vested in military force. Sensing another opportunity to defeat the Spanish and chase them from the country, the Pueblos launched a full-scale uprising in 1696. Not nearly as coordinated as they were in 1680, the Pueblo attacks were met swiftly by a well-prepared and organized de Vargas. Unlike his predecessor, he anticipated a military confrontation. He countered with his small but disciplined army of Spanish and Indian allies by waging a six-month campaign aimed at destroying food supplies and attacking Pueblo strongholds. This war of attrition took a dramatic toll on the Indians. De Vargas soon gained control of the countryside, ultimately subduing all but the Hopis who slipped further into isolation in what is now northwestern Arizona.

The uprising of 1696 marked the end of the first wave of fighting between the Spanish and the native communities of New Mexico. It also marked an end to hostilities between the Spanish settlers and the Pueblos. The two sides never clashed in open

warfare again. Each side suffered dramatically from the wars waged between 1680 and 1696. The Pueblo population declined from 17,000 to 14,000 in just 20 years. More importantly, the disproportionate number of male deaths during that period upset the balance of Pueblo society and diminished their ability to mount any type of opposition to Spanish settlement in the region. Moreover, after 1700, a tenuous alliance was forged between these groups when they found themselves faced with new challenges from Ute, Apache, and Navajo Indians who frequently attacked outlying settlements seeking slaves to trade, livestock and foodstuffs, or simply to defend the borders of their traditional homes from expanding settlements of Spaniards.

***VILLA de ALBURQUERQUE***

On 23 April 1706 Don Francisco Cuervo y Valdés, who replaced Governor Vargas in 1704, wrote to the king of Spain and to the viceroy of New Spain stating that he had founded a new villa in New Mexico, which he named after the viceroy, Fernandez de la Cueva, Duque de Alburquerque:

> *"I certify to his majesty: That I have founded a villa on the banks and in the valley of the River of the North in a place of good fields, waters, pastures, and timber, distant from this villa of Santa Fe about twenty-two leagues,... naming it the Villa of Alburquerque... There are now thirty-five families located there, comprising 252 persons, adults and children. The Church has been completed... the government buildings have been begun, and other houses of the settlers are finished with their corrals, irrigation ditches running, fields sowed—all without any expense to the Royal Treasury."*

The necessity of forming this settlement was prompted by frequent nomadic Indian raids. Franciscan fathers were also motivated at the time to build the church of San Felipe de Neri on the north side of what is now the Old Town Plaza.

Throughout this era, the military power in New Mexico was rarely determined by the presence of regular soldiers. In fact, professional soldiers did not arrive and remain in

New Mexico until after the Pueblo Revolt. Survivors of the revolt established a presidio or fortified settlement at El Paso, and after Diego De Vargas returned in 1693, another was established in Santa Fe as ordered by the Viceroy. With their establishment the responsibility of defense shifted from the local citizenry to professional soldiers paid for by the Crown. Despite their presence very few communities could rely on paid troops for defense in the eighteenth century. Their numbers were very few and their ability to defend was limited largely to the area immediately surrounding the presidio. They were hardly an effective defensive force, and certainly incapable of waging any type of offensive war on their own.

***VECINOS***

Although the presidio system expanded after 1780, individual citizens and territorial militias known as "vecinos," or neighbors, were a mainstay on the frontier. Locals armed themselves however they could, with bow and arrow, lances, spears, or if they were fortunate enough, a firearm. Even their personal dwellings often incorporated some type of fortifications. When a campaign was called for, volunteer militia units comprised of both Spanish and Pueblo Indians supplemented the small number of regulars. Such an alliance between the Spaniards and Pueblos was not unique, either to the region or the era. Europeans and Indians throughout the Americas forged alliances. Traditional rivalries among Indian nations encouraged some to seek alliances with Europeans while others enjoyed lucrative economic and political relationships with trans-Atlantic powers that resulted in increased influence and temporary regional hegemony over their Indian neighbors. The alliance between the Pueblos and Spanish in New Mexico in the eighteenth century had mixed success, but it did ensure the survival of each during one of the most turbulent times in New Mexico.

In a place where resources were limited, human beings and livestock became two of the most coveted commodities. And in the absence of any strong military presence or central government, predation provided an organizational impetus for the political and economic system that took shape in New Mexico. It initiated a cycle of violence that would remain unbroken until the 1860's.

***TRANSITION***

Direct influence from Spain declined markedly throughout the eighteenth century. By 1821 more than just an ocean separated Mexico from the Crown. Three hundred years had passed and a decade of violent upheaval throughout much of New Spain culminated in Mexican independence on 24 February 1821. The most dramatic consequence of revolution was marked by the recall of regular soldiers from the presidios. Their departure ushered in a new era of violence and increased raiding. Although conflict was frequent during the period from 1821 to 1846, it was also irregular in nature. At its lowest point, the territorial militia mustered not merely to defend against increased attacks from Indians but to take the offensive, plundering Navajo, Apache, and Ute Indians, stealing their stock and taking slaves. Indeed, by this time, the raiding economy was reaching its peak. Neither Native Americans nor European interlopers could gain the upper hand, and as long as a balance of power existed, the cycle remained unbroken.

The first challenge to that cycle came not from the Mexican government but the United States, which took control of the territory in 1846 while at war with Mexico.