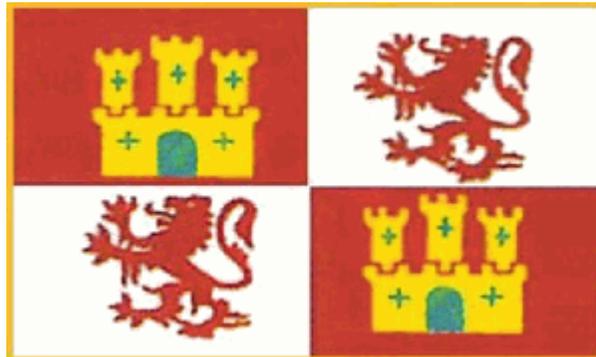


La Sociedad de la Entrada



Heronax Argualcior Sepura Capitan Vitoria Lacer, diamond
Oñate Expedition, 1597-1598

Company of Military Collectors & Historians
Plate 146. Men of the Oñate expedition illustrating the forms of arms
and armor referred to in the manifests and inventories. Drawing by
H. Charles McBarron, Jr.



Exploracion de Nuevo Mejico

In April, 1536, there arrived at Culiacán, in the Mexican Province of Sinaloa, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Andrés Dorantes, Alonso de Castillo Maldonado, and the negro Estevanico, the only survivors of the ill-fated expedition of Narváez which had left Spain in 1528. Mendoza, the

Viceroy of Mexico, was told astonishing tales by Cabeza de Vaca concerning the wealth of the country to the north, and he forthwith commanded Coronado, governor of the Province of Nueva Galicia, to prepare an expedition. The preparations went slowly, and Mendoza ordered Friar Marcos de Niza to make a preliminary exploration of the northern country. The Franciscan left Culiacán in 1539, accompanied by Estevanico and a few Indians.

After untold hardships he reached the famous pueblo of Zuñi, took possession of all the surrounding country, planted the cross, and named the territory "The New Kingdom of St. Francis". Marcos de Niza is, therefore, rightly called the discoverer of New Mexico and Arizona. He then returned to Mexico, and his narrative, especially what he said about the seven cities of Cibola, was an incentive to Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, who set out from Culiacán in 1540, accompanied by Marcos and a large body of Spaniards and Indians. Coronado crossed Sonora (now Arizona) and entered New

Mexico in July, 1540. The expedition returned in 1542 but, although many regions were discovered, no conquests were made nor colonies established. In 1563 an expedition was led into New Mexico by Francisco de Ibarra: it is worth mentioning only for the reason that de Ibarra returned in 1565 with the boast that he had discovered "a new Mexico," which was, probably, the origin of the name.



Antonio Espejo entered New Mexico in 1581, but accomplished nothing. In this same year a Franciscan Friar, Augustín Rodríguez, entered with a few companions, and lost his life in the cause of Christianity. In 1581 Espejo called New Mexico Nueva Andalucia. By 1598 the name Nuevo Méjico was evidently well known, since Villagrà's epic is called "Historia del Nuevo Méjico." The expeditions of Espejo and Father Augustín Rodríguez were followed by many more of an unimportant character, and it was not until 1598, when Don Juan de Oñate, accompanied by ten Franciscans under Father Alonso Martínez, and four hundred men, of whom one hundred and thirty were accompanied by their wives and families, marched up alongside the Rio Grande, and settled at San Juan de los Caballeros, near the junction of the Chama with the Rio Grande, thirty miles north of Santa Fé. This was the first

permanent Spanish settlement in New Mexico.

Here was established, also, the first mission, and San Juan de los Caballeros (or San Gabriel, a few miles west on the Chama river?) was the capital of the new province until it was moved to Santa Fé some time between 1602 and 1616. The colony prospered, missions were established by the Franciscans, new colonists arrived, and by the middle of the seventeenth century general prosperity prevailed. In the year 1680, however, a terrible Indian rebellion broke out under the leadership of Pope, an Indian of the pueblo of San Juan. All the Spanish settlements were attacked, and many people killed. The survivors fled to Santa Fé, but, after three days' fighting, were compelled to abandon the city and were driven out of the province.

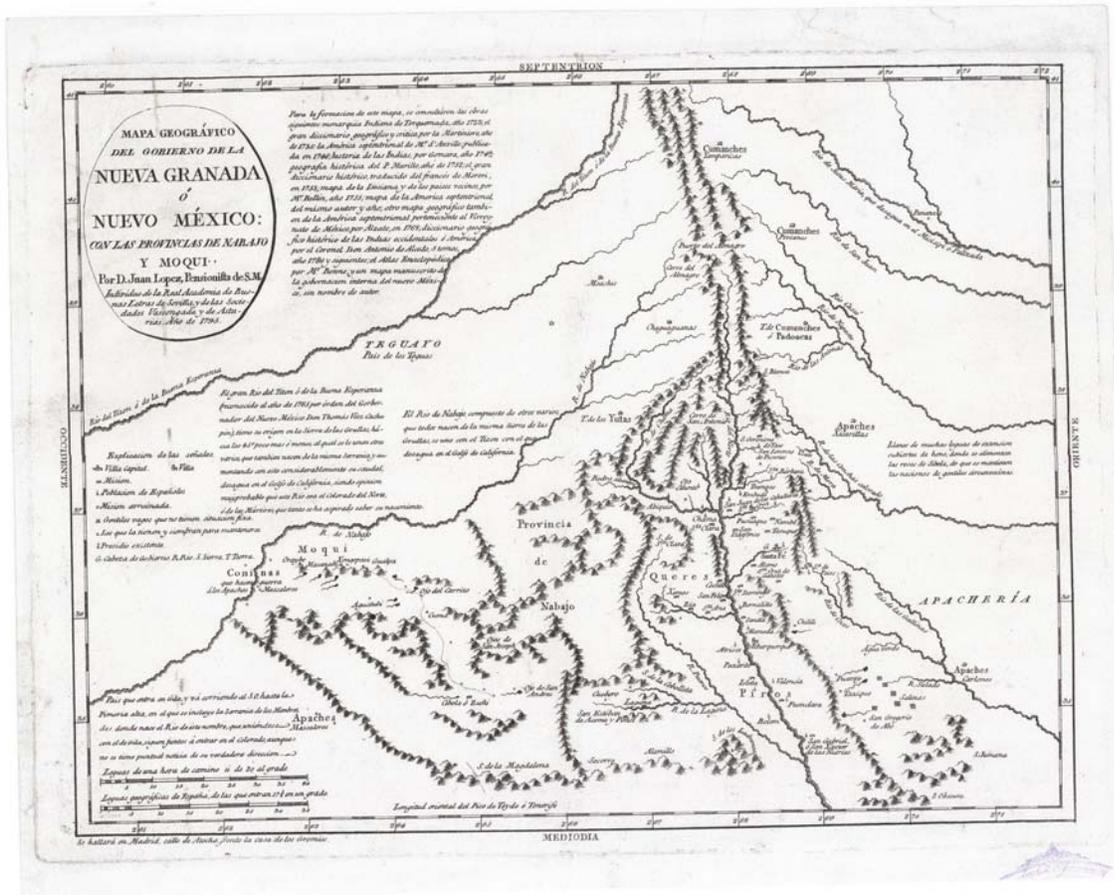
The Spanish did not lose courage: between 1691 and 1693 Antonio de Vargas reconquered New Mexico and entered it with many of the old colonists and many more new ones, his entire colony consisting of 800 people, including seventy families and 200 soldiers. The old villages were occupied, churches rebuilt, and missions re-established. A new villa was founded, Santa Cruz de Cañada, around which most of the families which had come with De Vargas under Padre Farfán were settled. The colonies, no longer seriously threatened by the Indians, progressed slowly. By the end of the eighteenth century the population of New Mexico was about 34,000, one-half Spaniards.

Missions of Nuevo Mejico

The Franciscan Friar Marcos de Niza, as we have seen above, reached New Mexico near the pueblo of Zuñi in 1539. This short expedition may be considered, therefore, as the first mission in New Mexico and what is now Arizona. With the expedition of Coronado (1540-42) several Franciscans under Marcos de Niza entered New Mexico. There is some confusion about their exact number and even about their names. It seems reasonably certain, however, that Marcos had to abandon the expedition after reaching Zuñi, and that two Franciscan priests, Juan de Padilla and Juan de la Cruz, and a lay brother, Luis de Escalona, continued with the expedition into New Mexico, remained as missionaries among the Indians when Coronado returned in 1542, and were finally murdered by them. These were the first three Christian missionaries to receive the crown of martyrdom within the present limits of the United States.

Forty years after the Niza and Coronado expeditions of 1539-42, it was again a Franciscan who made an attempt to gain the New Mexico Indians to the Faith. This was Father Augustín Rodríguez, who, in 1581, left San Bartolomé in Northern Mexico and, accompanied by two other friars, Juan de

Santa María and Fr. Francisco López, and some seventeen more men, marched up the Río Grande and visited many more of the pueblos on both sides of the river. The friars decided to remain in the new missionary field when the rest of the expedition returned in 1582, but the Indians proved intractable and the two friars received the crown of martyrdom.



When news of the fate of Augustín Rodríguez reached San Bartolomé in Nueva Vizcaya, Father Bernardino Beltrán was desirous of making another attempt to evangelize New Mexico, but, being alone, would not remain there. It was in 1598 that Don Juan de Oñate made the first permanent Spanish settlement in New Mexico, at San Juan de los Caballeros. Ten Franciscan friars under Father Alonso Martínez accompanied Oñate in his conquest, and established at San Juan the first Spanish Franciscan mission. Missionary work was begun in earnest, and in 1599 Oñate sent a party to Mexico for re-enforcements. With this party went Fathers Martínez, Salazar, and Vergara to obtain more friars. Salazar died along the way, Martínez did not return, but a new Franciscan comisario, Juan de Escalona, returned to New Mexico with Vergara and eight more Franciscans.

New missions were being established in the near pueblos, and prosperity was at hand, but Oñate's ambitions proved fatal: in 1601 he desired to conquer the country to the north and west, and started on an expedition with a small force, taking with him two Franciscans. The people who remained at and near San Juan de los Caballeros were left unprotected. Civil discord followed, and the newly-settled province was abandoned, the settlers, with the friars, moving south. Father Escalona remained, at the risk of his life, to await the return of Oñate; but he had written to the viceroy, asking that Oñate should be recalled. Oñate, with a new comisario, Francisco Escobar, and Father San Buenaventura, set out on another counter expedition, and Escalona and the other friars continued their missionary work among their neophytes. New re-enforcements arrived between 1605 and 1608, in spite of Oñate's misrule. In 1608 Father Alonso Peinado came as comisario and brought with him eight more friars. By this time 8000 Indians had been converted. By 1617 the Franciscans had built eleven churches and converted 14,000 Indians.

In 1620 Father Gerónimo de Zárate Salmerón, a very zealous missionary, came to New Mexico. There he worked for eight years, and wrote a book on Christian doctrine in the language of the Jémez. By 1626 the missions numbered 27; 34,000 Indians had been baptized and 43 churches built. Of the friars only 16 were left. In 1630 Fr. Benavides desired to establish a bishopric in New Mexico, and went to Spain to lay his petition before the king. In his memorial he says that there were in New Mexico, in 1630, 25 missions, covering 90 pueblos, attended by 50 friars, and that the Christian natives numbered 60,000. The missions established in New Mexico in 1630, according to the memorial, were the following: among the Piro, or Picos, 3 missions (Socorro, Senecú, Sevilleta); among the Liguas, 2 (Sandia, Isleta); among the Queres, 3; among the Tompiros, 6; among the Tanos, 1; among the Pecos, 1; among the Towas, or Tehuas, 3; at Santa Fé, 1; among the Taos, 1; among the Zuñi, 2. The other two are not mentioned. However, the wrongs perpetrated by local governors exasperated the Indians, and the missionaries were thus laboring under difficulties. By 1680 the number of missions had increased to 33, but the Indian rebellion broke out. All the missions and settlements were destroyed, the churches burned, and many settlers killed. The number of victims among the Spaniards was 400. Of the missionaries, 11 escaped, while 21 were killed.

With Don Diego de Vargas, and the reconquest of New Mexico in 1691-95, the Franciscans entered the province again. Father San Antonio was the guardian, but in 1694 he returned to El Paso, and, with Father Francisco Vargas as guardian, the missions were re-established. Not only were most of the old missions again in a prosperous condition, but new ones were established among the Apaches, Navajos, and other tribes. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, petty disputes arose between the friars and the Bishop of Durango, and the results were unfavorable to the missions, which at this

time numbered from 20 to 25, Father Juan Mirabal being guardian. In 1760 Bishop Tamarón of Durango visited the province. From this time on the Franciscan missions in New Mexico changed, the friars in many cases acted as parish priests, and their work did not prove so fruitful.

During the last half of the eighteenth century, and during the last years of Spanish rule (1800-1821), the missions declined more and more. The Franciscans still remained, and received salaries from the Government, not as missionaries but as parish priests. They were under their guardian, but the Bishop of Durango controlled religious affairs, with a permanent vicar in New Mexico. The Mexican rule of 1821-1846 was worse than the Spanish rule, and the missionaries existed only in name. At the time of the American occupation, in 1846, the missions, as such, no longer existed.

Missionary work in what is now Arizona was in some cases that of the New Mexican friars, who from the beginning of their labors extended their missions among the Zuñi and the Moquis. A few of these missions, however, had no connection whatever with the missionary work of New Mexico. After Niza's exploration in 1540, we know little of the missionary work in Arizona proper, until 1633, when Fray Francisco Parras, who was almost alone in his work, was killed at Aguatevi. In 1680 four Franciscans, attending three missions among the Moquis, were killed during the New Mexican rebellion of that year. In Northern Mexico, close to the Arizona line (or, as then known, Primeria Alta), the Jesuits were doing mission work in 1600-1700. It was a Jesuit, also, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, who explored what is now southern Arizona, in 1687. No missions were established, however, in Arizona before Father Kino's death in 1711, though churches were built, and many Indians converted. The work of Father Kino was abandoned after his death, until 1732, when Fathers Felipe Segesser and Juan B. Grashoffer established the first permanent missions of Arizona at San Xavier del Bac and San Miguel de Guevavi. In 1750 these two missions were attacked by the Pimas, but the missionaries escaped. In 1752 the missions were reoccupied. A rivalry between the Franciscan and the Jesuits hindered the success of the missions.

In 1767, however, the controversy between Jesuits and Franciscans was ended, and the Jesuits expelled. The Government, not content with their expulsion, confiscated the mission property, though the Franciscans were invited to the field. Four Franciscans arrived in 1768 to renew the missionary work and found the missions in a deplorable state, but they persuaded the Government to help in the restoration and to restore the confiscated property. It is to be observed that these missions of Arizona, as well as many of those of Sonora in Mexico, were, until 1873, under the control of the College of

Santa Cruz (just across the Arizona line in Northern Mexico), separated from 1783 to 1791, and united in 1791. The two important Arizona Missions, San Xavier del Bac and San Miguel de Guevavi, became prosperous, the former under the famous Franciscan, Father Francisco Garcés from 1768 to 1774. Father Garcés labored continually among the Indians until he lost his life, in 1781, in his missionary work near the Colorado River in California. The missions of Arizona declined after 1800, and in 1828 the Mexican Government ordered their abandonment. From this time until 1859, when Bishop Lamy of Santa Fé sent the Rt. Rev. J. P. Macheboeuf to minister to the spiritual needs of Arizona, there were no signs of Christianity in Arizona other than abandoned missions and ruined churches.

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