

Colonial Governors

1625–1641

By José García

The governors cited here served during the period 1625 to 1641, all appointed by Viceroy Rodrigo Pacheco de Osorio with the exception of Francisco Martínez de Baeza, who was appointed by Viceroy Lope Diego de Armendariz, and Luis de Rosas, who was appointed by Viceroy Marques de Cadereita. They all served King Felipe IV. Governors were normally appointed by the viceroy in Mexico. The term of an appointment was in most cases 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.

Admiral Felipe Sotelo Ossorio, 1625–1630

Gov. Juan de Eulate transferred the office to his successor, Adm. Felipe Sotelo Ossorio, on Dec. 21, 1625. After 12 years of service in Italy and on the Barbary Coast as a soldier and ensign, Ossorio traveled from Naples to Spain and then to New Spain. The viceroy appointed him *sargento mayor* (sergeant major) of the troops of the *presidio* of San Juan de Ulua, and in 1623 he was promoted to *comisario* of the infantry, and then to admiral of ships assigned to the Philippines. Later, while in Spain, Ossorio requested a royal recommendation from the viceroy of New Spain. His petition was heard, and in 1625 Ossorio was appointed governor of New Mexico, while retaining his title of admiral.

Ossorio's tenure as governor was filled with the same rancor as that of his predecessor. The two also shared similar personality traits. Inquisition papers indicate that Ossorio was a braggart who lacked a sense of humor and had an exaggerated opinion of his own importance, a description also applied to Eulate. Ossorio's overbearing personality made him unpopular, not only with the clergy but also with soldier-citizens and Santa Fe frontiersmen. The schism between civil authority and the church continued throughout the four-year administration of Ossorio. Numerous reported incidents illustrate Ossorio's attitude toward the clergy and ecclesiastical privilege and immunity. Charges that Ossorio was immoral, profane, blasphemous, disrespectful of the clergy and church ceremonies and suspect in the faith may or may not have been true. An atmosphere of personal animosity certainly existed among some of the soldiers, the clergy and many of the citizens of Santa Fe, but there is no evidence that the charges made against Ossorio resulted in a

formal trial by the Inquisition.

Historians believe that hostility among the citizenry caused Ossorio financial ruin and reduced him to the ignoble job of watering his own horse. Gov. Antonio de Otermín would later state that the soldier-citizens had always been unfriendly, even hostile, to governors who opposed their wishes. Ossorio left office in 1629, relinquishing the reins of government to his successor, Francisco Manuel de Silva Nieto.

Francisco Manuel de Silva Nieto, 1630–1632

Not much is known about Francisco Manuel de Silva Nieto other than that he served during this period. However, as research continues, it is hoped that some information will turn up.

Francisco de la Mora y Ceballos, 1632–1635

France V. Scholes wrote in his book *Church and State in New Mexico* that "Mora y Ceballos soon earned the ill will of many persons, both clerical and lay, by his eager desire to use his official position as a means of personal profit."

There is probably no doubt that Mora tried to squeeze a large profit out of his term of office. But apparently he was able to present adequate justification of his record to the authorities in Mexico City, for he was later appointed as commander of the garrison and *alcalde mayor* of Acapulco.

Francisco Martínez de Baeza, 1635–1637

There isn't much information available on Martínez de Baeza; Scholes dedicated a number of pages to him, and most of the information is related to differences between the governor and the clergy. This seemed to be an ongoing situation with the governors in the 1600s.

Luis de Rosas, 1637–1641

With the exception of Diego de Peñalosa, who was governor from 1661 to 1664, Luis de Rosas was the most interesting of all the men who ruled New Mexico prior to the Pueblo Revolt. He was an outspoken, hard-hitting soldier, fearless in action. He made his decisions quickly and executed them ruthlessly. He had the qualities useful in a leader of a faction but unsuited to the civil administration of a province where passions had already been deeply aroused. Men either admired him or hated him, for his character was of that direct and positive sort that leaves no room for neutral ground.

Rosas was appointed governor of New Mexico by Viceroy Marques de Cadereita, and the clergy of New Mexico later charged that he was merely Caldereita's servant. The first glimpse of Rosas in the spring of 1636 soon after his appointment shows him eager to set out for his province, for he had petitioned the viceregal authorities for permission to leave for New Mexico in advance of the regular



Illustration by Arturo de Agüero.

supply caravan. He was obliged to curb his restlessness, however, and wait for the caravan that left later in the year. He arrived in New Mexico in the spring of 1637, and on April 19 took over the province from his predecessor, Francisco Martínez de Baeza.

Rosas' first important duty as governor was to take *residencia* of his predecessor (here, *residencia* means to perform a complete investigation of all official acts taken by the person in question). The clergy confidently expected that he would submit Baeza to severe rebuke and punishment, but to their amazement he refused to permit himself to be made their instrument of vengeance. It was charged several years later (1641) by the anti-Rosas faction that he had accepted a bribe from Baeza, in return for which he made no strict investigation of the latter's official conduct. This was not unlikely, as bribery was a common means of escaping a strict *residencia*. It is evident in any case that Rosas refused to take the side of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to the recent difficulties with Baeza, and his independent action, whether it involved the acceptance of a bribe or not, brought him criticism.

Luis de Rosas was assassinated by a group of men led by Nicolás Ortiz to avenge the seduction of Ortiz's wife, María de Bustillos, by Rosas.

Sources: The New Mexico State Historian Web site at www.newmexicohistory.org. *Church and State in New Mexico* by France V. Scholes.



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