

# Colonial Governors

## 1641–1656

By José García

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

Governors were normally appointed by the viceroy or the Audiencia in Mexico, who represented the Spanish king, and appointments were made after the viceroy consulted with other officials in Mexico City. The governors discussed here served during the period 1641 to 1656 and were appointed by different viceroys and the Audiencia.

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 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 returned when their successor arrived in Santa Fe.

### Juan Flores de Sierra y Valdez, 1641

France V. Scholes, in his book *Church and State*, wrote that as early as 1638, reports had been received in Mexico City concerning the differences between Gov. Rosas (1637–1641) and the clerical party, and each year thereafter the two factions sent circumstantial accounts of the situation to the viceroy and the ecclesiastical authorities in the metropolis. The Franciscan prelates urged Viceroy Coderita to make a thorough investigation, but to their dismay and disgust, he refused to act. He accepted the reports of Rosas as gospel and gave the governor his firm support. Thus it was not until the Marqués de Villeña took over as Coderita's successor that formal action was taken to provide a remedy for the sorry state of affairs that had developed in New Mexico.

Viceroy Diego López Pacheco Cabrera y Bobadilla, the Marqués de Villeña, appointed Juan Flores de Sierra y Valdez to succeed Rosas, and the Franciscans named Friar Hernando de Covarrubias as custodian, but the untimely death of Flores created a new problem for the authorities in Mexico City. Messages were dispatched to the capital, and a new governor was immediately selected to fill the vacancy. The person chosen for this delicate task—Alonzo Pacheco y Heredia—arrived in New Mexico in 1642.

However, shortly before his death, Gov. Flores had appointed Sargento Mayor

Francisco Gómez as lieutenant governor and capitán general to govern the province during the impending vacancy. So, during a period in 1641 and 1642, the governing body consisted of Francisco Gómez and the Cabildo (Council).

### Francisco Gómez and the Cabildo, 1641–1642

According to Scholes, Francisco Gómez was very involved with the governing body and was a loyal defender of former Gov. Rosas. In 1638 he wrote a strong letter defending the administration of Rosas and calling attention to the tremendous power and influence of the clergy and the unbridled manner in which they interfered in provincial affairs.

### Alonzo Pacheco y Heredia, 1642–1644

Pacheco y Heredia was appointed by Viceroy García Sarmiento de Sotomayor, Conde de Salvatierra, and upon his arrival tried to calm the waters. However, the Rosas affair would not go away, and the effect would be felt for some time. According to John Kessel in his book *Kiva, Cross and Crown*, Gov. Pacheco was involved in a controversy related to the burial of a body in the church and was instrumental in or responsible for the beheading of Antonio Baca and seven others. The details of these incidents are explained in Kessel's book.

### Fernando de Arguello Carvajal, 1644–1647

Scholes devotes some 20 pages of his book to the work of Gov. Arguello. During the governor's administration, many events took place that relate back to the Rosas affair, as mentioned earlier. Scholes' book is great for readers who have an interest in early civil, clerical and ancestral pueblo affairs.

### Luis de Guzmán y Figueroa, 1647–1649

Guzmán y Figueroa was appointed by the Conde de Salvatierra to succeed Arguello in 1647, and the disagreements between the governors and the clergy were still a concern. Guzmán was accused of violating the rights of asylum and making threats against the prelate, who had protested against his actions. The charges were serious enough that he left New Mexico before his term of office ended.

### Hernando de Ugarte y la Concha, 1649–1653

Ugarte y la Concha was appointed by Matías de Peralta, who was dean of the Audiencia, the governing body that serves when a viceroy is not present or appointed. Scholes writes that Ugarte had been imprisoned and subjected to open insults, even though he was a person "who was upright in



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justice." Still, the issues between the church and government continued, and in between these two bodies the ancestral pueblos were trying to survive. Scholes writes that during this time there was a general conspiracy afoot that involved the residents of Isleta, Alameda, San Felipe, Cochiti and Jemez pueblos.

### Juan de Samaniego y Zaca, 1653–1656

Gov. Samaniego y Zaca was appointed by Viceroy Francisco Fernández de la Cueva. The viceroy issued suitable instructions and charged him to continue to give special attention to the matters in question. Scholes describes Samaniego as "a virtuous and exemplary gentleman," and writes in the *New Mexico Historical Review* that during the administration of Gov. Samaniego, an Apache group raided the Jumano village east of Abó and carried off 27 women and children. The governor sent an expedition led by Juan Domínguez de Méndez to rescue the group. According to the report, Domínguez rescued the captives and left the Apache raiding party severely punished.



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