

Parientes

By José Antonio Esquibel

Founders of the Villa de Santa Fe #6

The Gómez-Robledo Family

In 1599, Don Juan de Oñate made arrangements for his brother, Alonso de Oñate, to travel to the court of King Felipe III in Madrid to advocate for specific favors and concessions. Alonso spent several years in Spain. In 1603 he received permission to recruit additional settlers for New Mexico to help replenish the number of soldier-settlers who had left the colony in October 1601. Among the 31 men recruited by early 1604 was 19-year-old Francisco Gómez, a native of Lisbon, Portugal, who would become a notable soldier and citizen of New Mexico.

Manuel Gómez and Ana Vicenta, the parents of Francisco Gómez, were both natives of the Villa de Coina, Portugal, where they died when Francisco was a small child. It appears that Francisco and his only brother, Alonso Gómez, were then raised in Lisbon. Alonso became a Franciscan friar in Lisbon, whereas Francisco sought his destiny in the Americas. Today, Coina is one of the parishes of the municipality of Barreiro across the Tagus River from Lisbon.

A record of passage dated March 20, 1604, Sevilla, Spain, described Francisco Gómez as beardless and with a mole on the left side of his neck. This record also identified him as a son of Manuel Gómez and a native of Lisbon. In all likelihood, Francisco arrived in New Mexico sometime in 1605. He was apparently the only recruit who made the trek to the far northern frontier.

By 1606 it was clear to Don Juan de Oñate and his followers that New Mexico was not a viable economic enterprise. Each one expended a great amount of their own capital to the point that royal treasury funds were needed to supplement the welfare of the soldier-settlers. Between 1606 and 1608, the preservation of the colony continued to drain royal financial resources. The number of soldier-settlers dwindled to total of only 50, some with families.

On August 24, 1607, the remaining soldier-settlers recorded their petition to the viceroy for desperately needed provisions and financial support. They planned to abandon New Mexico on the last day of June 1608 because, in their opinion and experience, it was "impossible to keep this settlement."

During this time, several Franciscan friars presented a convincing case for not abandoning New Mexico because so many Indians had received the sacrament of Baptism. In their opinion, the Pueblo Indians were amenable to the Catholic faith. By February 1608, Felipe III, King of Spain, decreed that New Mexico would be sustained



Juan de Dios Gómez with his son, Marcelino Gómez, and wife, Carolina Tafoya. Juan de Dios Gómez was born April 7, 1844, in Santa Cruz, N.M., and died June 29, 1913. Photo courtesy of José and Cynthia Gómez.

for the preservation and protection of "*nuestra sancta fee católica*— Our Holy Catholic Faith." This purpose was most likely what the soldiers and friars had in mind when Santa Fe was first established as a garrison prior to being elevated to the status of a *villa* in 1610.

By 1610, Francisco Gómez, serving as a soldier in New Mexico, became an original founder of the Villa de Santa Fe, where he established a remarkable legacy for his children and grandchildren.

Gómez sought a marriage arrangement that would strengthen his social standing and provide a suitable dowry as a springboard for the future prosperity of his family. Such a match occurred when a union was negotiated for the hand in marriage of Doña Ana Romero, daughter of fellow soldier Bartolomé Romero and Luisa López Robledo.

The maternal grandparents of Doña Ana Robledo, Pedro Robledo and Catalina López, left the small community of Carmena in the jurisdiction of Maqueda, Spain, near Toledo, in 1574. This couple received a royal license on December 7, 1574, to travel to Mexico City in Nueva España with their four children, including Luisa López Robledo.

The Robledo-López family joined relatives in Mexico City and then moved to the town of Zamora in the modern-day state of Michoacán, Mexico. This family enlisted as settlers of New Mexico in 1597, arriving in 1598. Luisa López Robledo married Bartolomé Romero, a soldier in

Oñate's army, prior to coming to New Mexico.

Although the marriage date of Francisco Gómez and Ana Robledo is not known, it may have been in the early to mid 1620s. Their eldest child was most likely Francisca Gómez Robledo, who married Pedro Lucero de Godoy in the Villa de Santa Fe on April 8, 1641. Their eldest son, Francisco Gómez Robledo, was born in the Villa de Santa Fe around 1628. Their other known children were Bartolomé Gómez Robledo (born circa 1639), Juan Gómez Robledo, Andrés Gómez Robledo (born circa 1643), José Gómez Robledo (born circa 1645) and Ana Gómez Robledo.

Already married by May 1626, Sargento Mayor Francisco Gómez provided testimony in a case against former Gov. Juan de Eulate (1618–1625). On May 19, 1626, Gómez declared he was a *vecino* (tax-paying citizen) of the Villa de Santa Fe, age 40. More importantly, the scribe who recorded Gómez's statement made the extra effort to identify him as a *primer fundador* (first founder) of the Villa de Santa Fe.

Francisco Gómez remained a resident of the Villa de Santa Fe from the time of its founding in 1610 until his death around 1656–1657. During that time, his main occupation was that of a soldier, but he also managed to increase his economic prosperity as a rancher and farmer.

Throughout the 17th century, New Mexico was known as *tierra de guerra*, land of war. Nomadic bands of Apache and Navajo continually raided Pueblo Indian communities and Spanish farms and ranches. To the west and northwest of the Río Grande were the Navajo. To the west and southwest were the Apaches Salineros. The Apaches of Gila and Siete Ríos roamed the region to the south and southeast. To the east were the Faraon Apache, and to the northeast and north were the Apache del Acho.

Basically, the Pueblo Indian communities and the Spanish settlers were completely surrounded by nomadic tribes that constantly attacked without discrimination. They stole livestock, killed Pueblo Indian residents and settlers alike and took captives as often as they could. During the lifetime of Francisco Gómez the number of armed soldiers in New Mexico did not exceed much more than 60. In defense against the numerous attacks by nomadic



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tribes, the Spanish soldiers and Pueblo Indian warriors relied on each other as allies.

On April 13, 1644, the war captain of the Pueblo of Pecos, Cristóbal Chepira, came to the Villa de Santa Fe around midnight with a companion, Francisco Macha, seeking an emergency audience with Gov. Luis de Guzmán y Figueroa. They were sent by Don Pedro Meju, the governor of Pecos, to request assistance in protecting their pueblo from the Apache del Acho. Already, the Apache del Acho had sacked the pueblos of Taos and Picurís, where they killed Pueblo Indians and stole whatever they could take with them.

In response to the request of the Pecos Pueblo Indians, Governor Guzmán y Figueroa declared that "in view of the foregoing, and because I realize how important it is for the service of His Majesty and the peace and preservation of these provinces, it is necessary to give help to the said Christian natives and to wage war on the aforementioned enemies."

A military campaign against the Apache del Acho was organized at the Pueblo of Pecos. As happened on numerous other occasions, the campaign consisted of as many as 40 to 50 Spanish soldiers and 200 to 400 Pueblo warriors. In all likelihood, Francisco Gómez served in this expedition, although there is no record of his participation.

A catalogue of the military service records of Sargento Mayor Francisco Gómez includes as many as 14 appointments as captain and squadron leader, apparently for military campaigns and military escort duty. His exemplary military performance brought him recognition by various governors of New Mexico.

Confidence in his judgment and leadership resulted in his appointed as Lt. Governor and Captain General of New Mexico by at least three governors. Gómez even submitted an account of his services to royal officials, requesting the title and social privileges of a *caballero hidalgo*, a nobleman, which he received through a royal decree by the king. Francisco Gómez utilized this elevation of social status to improve the prosperity of his family.

In addition to his house and property in the Villa de Santa Fe, Gómez received two land grants in the area of San Juan Pueblo, another land grant in the area of Taos Pueblo, one near Tesuque Pueblo, and still another located

south of Isleta Pueblo near Sevilleta known as San Nicolás de las Barrancas. As an *encomendero*, Gómez received tribute from at least eight pueblo communities, including Pecos, Tesuque, Taos and Sandía. In return for collecting this tribute, Gómez was expected to subsidize military campaigns by contributing horses, supplies and food for the Spanish soldiers and Pueblo Indian allies.

After the death of Francisco Gómez around 1656–1657, his substantial estate passed to his eldest son, Sargento Mayor Francisco Gómez Robledo. His younger sons assisted in managing livestock and performing farming activities at the various family estancias. His widow, Doña Ana Robledo, retained the assets she brought to the marriage. She also owned a warehouse in the Villa de Santa Fe. This warehouse stored goods from the northern family properties and the Indian tributes that were either sold locally or exported for commercial trade. Basically, the Gómez Robledo family and their in-laws, the Romero and Lucero de Godoy clan, operated as a large and prosperous family corporation.

In the early 1660s, the prosperity of the Gómez Robledo-Romero-Lucero de Godoy clan became a target of their economic rivals and political enemies, namely the Franciscan friars and their supporters. The allies of the Franciscans formed a faction known as "supporters of religion" while the Gómez Robledo clan and their political allies were known as "royalists."

This factionalism, which reached back to as early as 1612, was at the center of the social discord among the Spanish *vecinos* that marked this era. It is not surprising that the politically motivated clashes between the friars and members of the three most prominent 17th-century "royalist" clans occupied most of the cases submitted for investigation by Inquisition officials in New Mexico.

On the morning of May 4, 1662, Sargento Mayor Francisco Gómez Robledo was awakened in his house on the corner of the plaza of Santa Fe at 5 a.m. by sounds of a commotion. Acting under orders of Inquisition officials, Don Juan Manso, a chief constable of the Inquisition of Mexico City, arrested Gómez Robledo in his home.

Gómez Robledo was escorted to a cell of the Franciscan *convento* and held under guard.

His arrest also resulted in the sequestration of his property, belongings and *encomienda* tributes. He eventually learned that the Franciscan friars of New Mexico accused him of practicing Judaism. In the end, Gómez Robledo was found innocent and was released from jail in January 1665.



Isidoro Gómez and María Theodorita Medina. Isidoro Gómez, a son of Juan de Dios Gómez, was born March 13, 1869, in Taos, N.M., and died May 11, 1949, in Sopris, Colo. María Theodorita Medina was born September 11, 1869, and died January 9, 1947, in Sopris, Colorado.

The denunciation of Francisco Gómez Robledo had the desired effect of diminishing the political and economic prosperity of the clan, but only in the short term. The Gómez Robledo family regained its social and commercial prominence until the great loss of all of their major assets with the Pueblo Indian uprising of August 1680.

The male members of the Gómez Robledo family never returned to New Mexico to reclaim their extensive property holdings. However, several daughters of Andrés Gómez Robledo were among those who chose to resettle New Mexico in 1693. In particular, Doña Francisca Gómez Robledo married Ignacio Roybal y Torrado. They were the progenitors of the Roybal family of New Mexico. Doña Lucía Gómez Robledo and her husband, Miguel de Dios Sandoval, established one of the two large branches of the Sandoval family of New Mexico.

The Gómez surname survived in New Mexico through the children and descendants of Juana Luján. She had three children that went by the surname of Gómez del Castillo. The name of the father of these children remains a mystery. It is thought that he was a member of the Gómez Robledo clan, or that perhaps Juana Luján was related to them. The Gómez del Castillo surname was shortened to Gómez, which is still found in New Mexico today among the descendants of Francisco Gómez del Castillo.

The next family to be featured in this series on the founding families of Santa Fe will be that of Alonso Varela and Catalina Pérez de Bustillo. If you have a grandparent or great-grandparent who is a descendant of this family, you are invited to submit a photograph of the individual or their family.

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