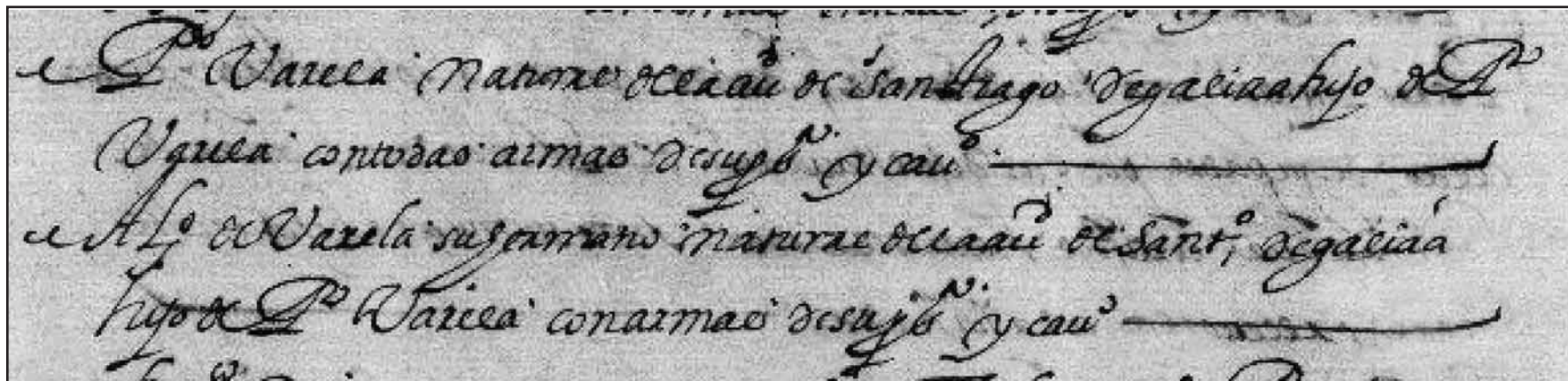


Parientes

By José Antonio Esquibel

Founders of the Villa de Santa Fe #7

The Varela Family



Copy of the review of soldiers of Oñate's army dated Feb. 17, 1597, listing the names of Pedro Varela and his brother, Alonso Varela. The record describes the Varela brothers as natives of the city of Santiago de Galicia, a reference to Santiago de Compostela. Archivo General de la Indias, México 25, N22, exp.3, f. 101.

We know nothing about the personal motivation that brought Alonso Varela and his brother, Pedro Varela, from Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain, to the Americas at the end of the 16th century. They were in Nueva España by February 1597, when they presented themselves at Las Minas de Casco, Nueva Vizcaya, as soldiers prepared to travel to the far northern territory of La Nueva México in the army of Juan de Oñate. In their late 20s and early 30s, these young men responded to the promise of adventure and riches. Both were destined to extend their legacy through numerous descendants that populated New Mexico over the course of four centuries.

The Varela brothers endured hardship caused by many delays in starting the expedition to New Mexico. Although they may have been tempted to falter in their commitment, they remained loyal to their pledge and eventually arrived in 1598. Taking part in various excursions and explorations, both withstood the physical rigors and political strife of the early years in the Spanish

colony. As a resident of San Gabriel, the first Spanish settlement in New Mexico, Alonso Varela was one of 21 men to sign a petition in December 1604 asking permission of Lt. Gov. Cristóbal de Oñate to send Juan López Holguín to the Pueblo of San Felipe, as requested by Fray Juan de Escalona. Four years later, Alonso and his brother were among the last remaining soldiers of Oñate's original army in New Mexico, which had dwindled to a complement of only 50 soldiers. For reasons unknown, they decided to make New Mexico a permanent home for themselves and their families.

Writing in April 1609, Fray Francisco de Velasco, a cousin of Oñate, recommended to the viceroy in Mexico City that the official status of *villa* be conferred upon the Villa de San Gabriel, indicating that this settlement did not have the status of a formal municipality as recognized by Spanish law. This is further supported by orders given by the viceroy in March 1609 to the newly appointed governor of New Mexico, Pedro de Peralta y Alope, in which the governor was instructed to establish a formal *villa* in New Mexico in order to put in place a structure of civil law and order.

Although documents describing the founding of the Villa de Santa Fe, if any survived, have yet to be uncovered, it appears that Gov. Peralta y Alope may have been advised to establish the *villa* at the site of a military garrison. Among the first settlers of

the Villa de Santa Fe in 1610 was Alonso Varela, probably already holding the rank of captain at the time.

Why did the viceroy call for a new *villa* instead of acknowledging support for the already established Villa de San Gabriel? Although the location of the Villa de San Gabriel was convenient for the soldier-settlers, it was destined to be a short-lived because of its proximity to the Indian settlement of Ohkay Owingeh, christened by the Spanish as the Pueblo of San Juan de los Caballeros. Although some soldiers probably favored San Gabriel, others must have advocated for the location that Santa Fe has occupied for the past 400 years.

Alonso Varela, born circa 1566–68, entered into marriage with Catalina Pérez de Bustillo, a native of Mexico City, born circa 1591. As one of seven daughters of Capt. Juan Pérez de Bustillo and María de la Cruz, Catalina traveled with her parents to New Mexico with Oñate's army in 1598.

The names of only three of Catalina's sisters are known from historical records. Ana Pérez de Bustillo (b.ca. 1581) married Capt. Asencio de Arechuleta, a soldier in Oñate's army. Yumar Pérez de Bustillo (b.ca. 1591) became the wife of Antonio Baca, and Beatriz Pérez de

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José Antonio Esquibel has roots in northern New Mexico and northeastern Mexico. He's the co-author of two books on genealogy.

Parientes

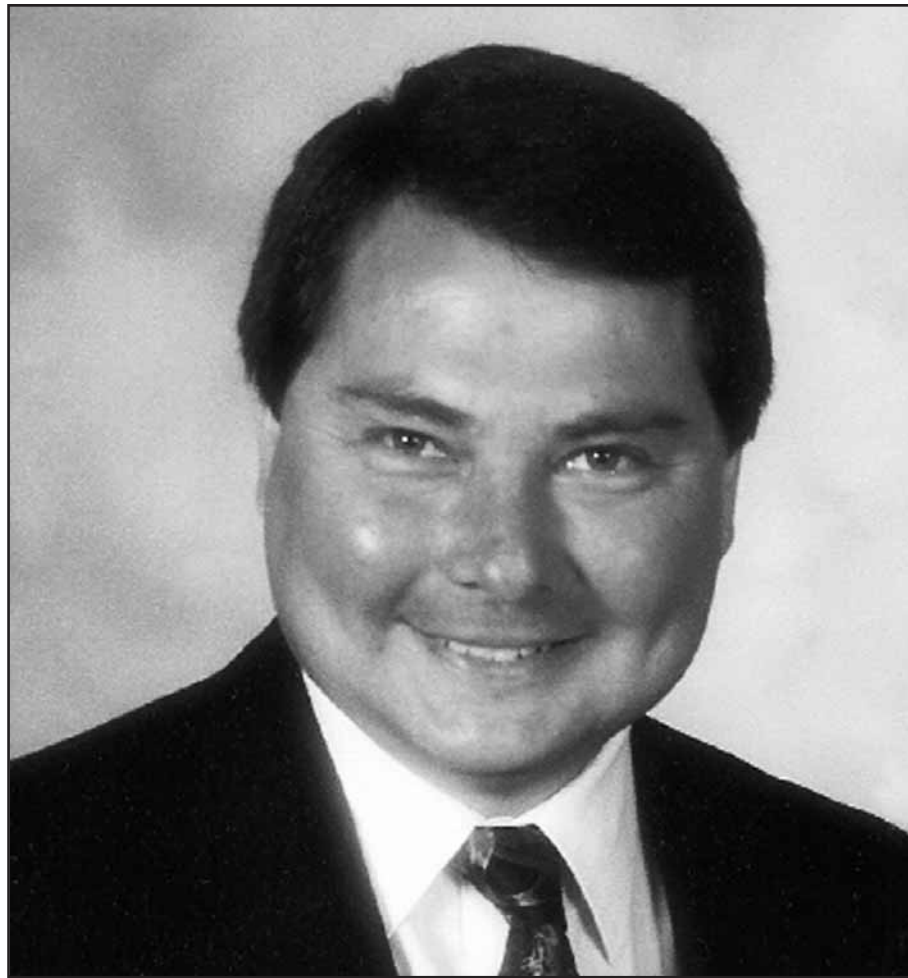
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Bustillo (b.ca. 1593) entered into marriage with Capt. Hernando de Hinojos. Another sister, whose name is not known, apparently married Juan de Pedraza, another soldier in Oñate's army.

These women and their spouses, along with their brothers, Simón Pérez de Bustillo and Diego de Santa Cruz, formed the largest extended family group among the early Spanish settlers of New Mexico. The men accounted for 12 percent of the 48 soldier-settlers remaining in New Mexico in 1617. By this time, this clan, including Capt. Alonso Varela, formed a political and economic alliance with the Franciscan friars. Along with their in-laws, such as the Baca, Durán y Cháves and Márquez families, this political faction eventually became known as "protectors of religion" and consistently sided with the friars in political conflicts with the various governors of New Mexico and their allies throughout the first half of the 1600s.

About 1612, there were a number of *vecinos* seeking permission from Gov. Peralta y Aloque to leave New Mexico. The governor denied their request, given the small number of soldiers at that time. Fray Isidro Ordoñez, leader of the Franciscans in New Mexico, granted the request. This move sparked a pronounced political struggle for authority between Peralta y Aloque and his supporters and Ordoñez and his supporters. Peralta y Aloque strove to secure political control by exerting his authority, but he lost when he was eventually arrested by order of Ordoñez.

The fact that Acensio de Arechuleta, an ecclesiastical notary, was elected as *alcalde ordinario* of the Villa de Santa Fe in 1615 is a testament to the political dominance of Ordoñez and his supporters and the weakening authority of Peralta y Aloque and his supporters. After Ordoñez left New Mexico, under investigation by his superiors for abuse of power and sowing discord, several of his fellow friars and some of the supporters among the soldier-settlers continued in the same vein of enforcing Franciscan authority over secular authority in New Mexico.



Abelicio Joe Barela Jr. of Río Rancho, N.M., is the son of Abelicio Baca Barela Sr. and Beneranda Jaramillo Barela, and a descendant of Alonso Varela and Catalina Pérez de Bustillo. Photo courtesy of Abelicio Joe Barela.

Among the *vecinos-soldados* within the political orbit of Ordoñez were Asencio de Arechuleta, Cristóbal Baca, Simón Pérez de Bustillo, Capt. Alonso Varela, Alférez Pedro Varela and Capt. Gerónimo Márquez, all related by marriage. The last four were arrested by Gov. Peralta y Aloque in 1613 following an altercation with an *alcalde ordinario*, or civil magistrate, of the Villa de Santa Fe.

The incident occurred in late June 1613, when several *vecinos*, tax-paying citizens of the Villa de Santa Fe, went out to La Ciénega, described as being four leagues from Santa Fe, to brand cattle. It was there that Simón Pérez de Bustillo, a supporter of the friars, and Juan de Escarramad, an *alcalde ordinario* of the Villa de Santa Fe and supporter of Peralta y Aloque, exchanged heated words that led to the drawing of swords. In the ensuing scuffle, Escarramad was injured.

The precise role of Alonso Varela and his relatives in the incident is not clear from the original record. In any case, the governor retaliated by arresting Varela and confining

him to his house in the Villa de Santa Fe.

Curiously, it was in the area of La Ciénega that Alonso Varela, brother-in-law of Simón Pérez de Bustillo, established his *estancia* by 1628. If the Pérez de Bustillo family had acquired land in the area of La Ciénega, then Varela may have received a portion of the land as the dowry for his marriage to Catalina Pérez de Bustillo. The Varela *estancia* was located in the general area of the modern-day living history museum of Las Golondrinas, southwest of Santa Fe.

Varela's *estancia* was mentioned in the testimony of Bartolomé Romero II, who spent four or five days there in late September 1628. Romero's wife was traveling with him, and she was ill. Romero believed that his wife's illness was brought on by a spell cast by Beatriz de los Ángeles and her daughter, Juana de la Cruz.

Romero thought that Varela's wife, Catalina, was in league with Beatriz de los Ángeles. He presented a complaint to Fray Alonso de Benavides stating that

Doña Catalina had treated his wife badly during their stay at the Varela *estancia*. Perhaps this accusation of ill-treatment was related more to politics, since the Romero family members were staunch royalists, supporters of the governors rather than the Franciscans.

In May 1626, Capt. Alonso Varela provided testimony during an investigation by officials of the Inquisition into allegations of heresy against former Gov. Juan de Eulate. In his deposition, Varela declared he was a *primero fundador*, first founder, of the Villa de Santa, and gave his age as 60.

Five years later, in March 1631, the testimony of Doña Catalina was recorded during the Inquisition's investigation against Beatriz de los Ángeles and Juana de la Cruz for the deaths of several men that were said to have been caused by incantations and potions. Doña Catalina declared that she and her husband were *vecinos* of the Villa de Santa Fe. She gave her age as 40 and identified her husband as *teniente de gobernador*, lieutenant governor of New Mexico.

Parientes

Capt. Alonso Varela received his appointment as lieutenant governor from Gov. Francisco Manuel Nieto de Silva. As lieutenant governor he oversaw royal administrative duties of the Río Abajo region of New Mexico, mainly the Sandía-Isleta area. Curiously, many of the families that were allies of the Franciscan friars settled in the Río Abajo area. It may have been during his tenure as lieutenant governor that Alonso Varela acquired land in the Sandía-Isleta area, where his grandchildren later resided.

Capt. Varela and Catalina Pérez de Bustillo established the branch of the Varela family known as Varela Jaramillo. Alonso's brother, Pedro, established the Varela de Losada family. Because similar given names occurred in each family, the early generations of the Varela family of New Mexico present challenges in documenting the family genealogy.

Alonso Varela and his wife are known to have had one son, also named Alonso Varela. Another son was apparently Pedro Varela Jaramillo, born circa 1620. It has been previously assumed that Pedro Varela Jaramillo was a grandson of Alonso Varela. A careful examination of existing records suggests it was more likely that he was a son. There is as yet no other information extracted from existing documents that identifies additional children of Alonso Varela and Catalina Pérez de Bustillo.

The fact that members of the Varela family are rarely mentioned in records of the Inquisition attests to their consistent loyalty to the Franciscan friars of New Mexico. Denunciations of New Mexico citizens to the Inquisition were more often than not a means of political retaliation on the part of the



Abelicio Baca Barela and his bride, Seferina Abeyta Jaramillo, with his mother, Cipriana B. Barela (wife of Melitón Carrillo Barela), and his bride's mother, Beneranda Abeyta Jaramillo. Our Lady of Sorrows, La Joya, N.M., June 3, 1945. Photo courtesy of Abelicio Joe Barela.

Franciscan friars and their supporters against governors who challenged Franciscan authority in New Mexico and against the supporters of the governors known as royalists.

Pedro Varela Jaramillo and his wife, Lucía Madrid, were the parents of at least two sons and three daughters, who all survived the 1680 uprising of the Pueblo Indians. These

children were Alférez Cristóbal Varela Jaramillo (b.ca. 1665), married to (1) Casilda Cedillo Rico de Rojas and (2) Leonor Luján Domínguez; Juan Varela Jaramillo (b.ca. 1669-71), married in 1692 to Isabel Cedillo Rico de Rojas; Catalina Varela Jaramillo, married to Martín Hurtado (ONMF: 197); María Varela, married in 1695 to Joaquín Cedillo Rico de Rojas (ONMF: 285); Lucía Varela, married to Bartolomé Romero (ONMF: 97-8).

The first four children and their spouses became founders of the Villa de Albuquerque in 1706. Another possible daughter may have been Yumar Varela Jaramillo, a namesake of Yumar Pérez de Bustillo, a sister of Catalina Pérez de Bustillo. Yumar Varela Jaramillo married Capt. Pedro Madrid.

Juan Varela Jaramillo and his wife established the Varela/Barela family of the Albuquerque area. The descendants of Cristóbal Varela Jaramillo and his wife used the surname of Jaramillo and were a distinct family from the Jaramillo family of the Río Arriba region of northern New Mexico, which derived its surname from the Jaramillo Negrete family.

Information on the history and genealogy of the Varela Jaramillo, Hurtado and Cedillo families can be found in the book *Aquí Se Comienza: A Genealogical History of the Founding Families of La Villa de San Felipe de Albuquerque*,

published by the New Mexico Genealogical Society in 2007 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the founding of the city of Albuquerque (www.nmgs.org).

The next family to be featured in this series on the founding families of Santa Fe will be that of Juan Rodríguez Bellido.