

Parientes

By José Antonio Esquibel

Founders of the Villa de Santa Fe #8

The Rodríguez Bellido Family



The foundations of the "oldest house in Santa Fe" may have been built during the time that the Rodríguez Bellido family lived in the villa. Photo courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, Z-4147.

Juan Rodríguez Bellido enlisted as a soldier in 1600 to assist in the settlement of New Mexico. In late August of that year, he and other recruits arrived in the Valle de San Bartolomé with their horses and arms to be accounted for as part of an official muster. Approaching the general inspector, Rodríguez Bellido took in his hand a banner of red

damask with gold and silk fringe and emblems of Nuestra Señora and Santiago. In Castilian he swore that the arms he bore were his own and that he intended to go to New Mexico in service to His Majesty.

Rodríguez Bellido declared he was a native of Gibraleón in Castilla and named his father as Francisco Núñez. The notary examined his physical features and recorded for posterity a description of him as "full-bearded, a scar under the left eye, 40 years old."

Traveling under the command of Captain Bernabé de las Casas, Rodríguez Bellido arrived at the Villa de San Gabriel in New Mexico on Christmas Eve of 1600. Among this

group of recruits were several other men, some with families, who would later also become first settlers of the Villa de Santa Fe, among them Juan López Holguín and Pedro Durán y Chaves.

In subsequent years, Rodríguez Bellido participated in expeditions that explored the vast region of Spain's most distant frontier. Through tough times, he remained a resident of New Mexico. His name is found on a document dated December 1, 1604, in the Villa

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de San Gabriel, which he signed along with 19 other men, indicating he was literate. It appears that Rodríguez Bellido was married by 1607. His wife was perhaps a woman identified only as Isabel and described as “the wife of so-and-so Rodríguez.” Her name was mentioned in 1607 in an investigation by the Inquisition into a case involving three women accused of bewitching. Each of these women was the spouse of a Spanish soldier, and two of the women were Indians from the Valley of Mexico.

It is possible that Isabel herself was an Indian, given that her name was recorded without a surname. Many years later, a daughter of Rodríguez Bellido was identified as being from Socorro de los Piro, referring to the Pueblo of Socorro of the Piro Indians. Perhaps Isabel was a Piro Indian woman. If so, then the Rodríguez Bellido’s children were among the earliest *mestizos* of New Mexico with maternal ancestral roots in the region.

By 1606 it was clear that New Mexico did not hold the promise many soldiers had hoped for when they journeyed to that distant land in 1598. The soldier-settlers spent a great amount of their own capital, without any return on their investment. In the words of Viceroy Luis de Velasco, those who remained in New Mexico lived with the “lacking and misery of the land and the great distance.”

In August 1607, the settlers of the Villa de San Gabriel recorded their intention to abandon New Mexico at the end of June 1608 if no provisions and financial support were forthcoming from the royal treasury. In all likelihood, Rodríguez Bellido was prepared to follow through with the abandonment of New Mexico.

Instead, King Felipe III of Spain made a determination that proved significant to the history of New Mexico and subsequently to the history of the city of Santa Fe. He decreed in February 1608 that New Mexico would be preserved for the protection of “*nuestra sancta fe católica*,” “our holy Catholic faith.” With this phrase, the king pre-figured the name that would be given to the first official *villa* of New Mexico. With its name, the Villa de Santa Fe served as constant reminder of the desire of the king to preserve the holy faith of Catholicism in New Mexico. That faith is vibrant today in the city of Santa Fe and across New Mexico, its preservation a testament to the enduring legacy of an important policy decision of Felipe III.

When Gov. Pedro de Peralta y Aloque arrived in New Mexico in late 1609, Rodríguez

Bellido was one of about 50 remaining soldiers. Others had gone to regions in the south deemed more prosperous, or at least less dangerous. If the wife of Rodríguez Bellido was a Pueblo Indian, it would offer a plausible explanation why he chose to remain. Perhaps he was also dedicated to serving as a soldier in a dangerous frontier to protect the Franciscan friars.

When the Villa de Santa Fe was officially established in 1610, Rodríguez Bellido was among the first settlers. Many years later he was referred to as “*primero fundador de Santa Fe*.” The available historical records identify three of his children as Diego Bellido, Lucía Rodríguez and María Núñez. Rodríguez Bellido was still a resident of the Villa de Santa Fe as late as May 1626. Giving his age as 70 in that year, he provided testimony in the Inquisition’s investigation of allegations of heresy on the part of former Gov. Juan de Eulate (1618–1625). Eulate shared his opinion with Rodríguez Bellido that the state of marriage was more perfect than that of the religious orders. Comments such as this became items of scrutiny in the political conflict between Gov. Eulate and the leadership of the Franciscan friars in New Mexico.

The fact that Rodríguez Bellido testified against Eulate is an indication that his personal political ideology leaned toward support of ecclesiastic authority. This is further indicated by the matrimonial alliances created through the marriages of his daughters to members of the Luján and Márquez families, also supporters of ecclesiastic authority and strong allies of the Franciscans in New Mexico. The political faction of these and other like-minded families became known as the “protectors of religion” in contrast to the “royalists,” those men and their families whose political ideology favored the governors and royal authority.

Those who favored the Franciscans tended to establish their *estancias* in the areas of Sandía and Isleta Pueblos, where strong Franciscan leaders such as Fray Juan de Salas and Fray Esteban de Perea resided in the early half of the 1600s. It is not surprising that Diego Bellido, the only known son of Juan Rodríguez Bellido, established his *estancia* in the area of the Tiwa Indians of Isleta Pueblo.

Sometime in 1628, Diego Bellido received as visitors at his *estancia* Doña Beatrís de los Ángeles, a Mexican Indian woman married to the Spanish soldier Capt. Juan de la Cruz, and her daughter, Juana de la Cruz, the wife of

Capt. Juan Griego. Both women were residents of the Villa de Santa Fe, traveling to and from the Pueblo of Senecú in south-central New Mexico. During their visit, Doña Beatrís gave Diego a potion with herbs in milk, referred to as “*un caxete de leche*.” As a result, Diego later became ill and died. It was thought he had been bewitched or hexed. There was a similar occurrence resulting in the death around 1626 of Hernando Márquez Sambrano, an in-law of Diego Bellido.

Word about the bewitching spread across New Mexico as several similar incidents came to light. Capt. Bartolomé Romero accused Doña Beatrís de los Ángeles of causing his wife, Doña María Granillo del Moral, to become deathly ill through some sort of enchantment or hex when the two women were together at the Pueblo of Senecú. In the Villa de Santa Fe, the Mexican Indian blacksmith, Francisco “Pancho” Balón, reported that he became ill after eating “*una panocha o tortilla*” given to him by Doña Beatrís. These incidents caused concern and became entwined with social and political biases. Eventually, Doña Beatrís and her daughter were denounced to the Inquisition. Before the lengthy investigation was initiated in 1631, the gossip mill ran something like the following in the Villa de Santa Fe:

- Doña María Robledo, wife of Capt. Gaspar Pérez, came to the house of Doña Petronila de Zamora and told her that Doña Beatrís had bewitched Diego Bellido at his *estancia* with “*un caxete de leche*.” Doña María also mentioned that Juana de la Cruz had done the same to Hernando Márquez Sambrano.
- Alférez Diego de Trujillo was at the house of Doña Ana de Bustillo, widow of Capt. Andrés de Archuleta, when her daughter, Doña María de Archuleta, told him that Doña Beatrís had used *hechizos* to cause the death of Diego Bellido and Hernando Márquez Sambrano.
- Catalina Bernal, wife of Juan Durán, heard from her stepson, Nicolás Durán, that Doña Beatrís had bewitched Doña María Granillo del Moral, wife of Capt. Bartolomé Romero.”
- Doña Beatrís de Bustillo, widow of Capt. Hernando de Hinojos, was told by Francisco Balón about how he became sick from eating “*una panocha o tortilla*” given to him by Doña Beatrís, who lived in the Villa de Santa Fe in the house of Diego de Vera.

It appears news traveled well in New Mexico. In the case of Doña Beatrís and her

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The Church of San Miguel was constructed when the Rodríguez Bellido family lived in the Villa de Santa Fe. Photo courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, Z-4113.

daughter, information about two incidents in southern New Mexico made its way to the Villa de Santa Fe. No formal charges were brought against Doña Beatrís and her daughter. In fact, much of the testimony against these women came from people who were members of families that supported the Franciscan friars. As it turns out, Doña Beatrís and her daughter belonged to an extended family group that was critical of the Franciscans.

By 1631, Lucía Rodríguez (b.ca. 1611), a daughter of Juan Rodríguez Bellido, was already married to Capt. Francisco Luján (b.ca. 1611). There are no known descendants of this couple. In 1641, Luján was involved in the murder of Gov. Luis de Rosas along with members of the Márquez, Baca, Durán y Cháves, Archuleta, Salazar and Ruiz de Hinojos families. Each of these families strongly supported Franciscan authority in New Mexico.

Underlying the killing of Gov. Rosas was the extreme factionalism between the Franciscan leadership and their supporters and the

governors and their supporters. Of the 220 taxpaying citizens of New Mexico in the early 1640s, 73 of them sided with the Franciscans and assisted in establishing fortifications at the Pueblo of Santo Domingo in defense against retaliation from Gov. Rosas. The Rodríguez Bellido family and their in-laws were among the 73.

María Núñez, another known child of Juan Rodríguez Bellido, was identified as being from Socorro de los Piro, in the area of modern-day Socorro. She married Francisco Márquez (b.ca. 1588), who had come to New Mexico with his father, Gerónimo Márquez, in 1598. María and Francisco became the parents of Catalina Márquez, who married Capt. Nicolás de Aguilar.

Although Nicolás de Aguilar and Catalina Márquez were the parents of four children (Gerónima, María, Isabel and Nicolás), it is not certain that this family remained in New Mexico. Caught up in the political conflict between “royalists” and “protectors of religion,” Aguilar was arrested by the Inquisition in 1662 for his severe persecution

of Franciscan friars as a loyal supporter of Gov. Bernardo López de Mendizábal. He was sent to Mexico City for trial, found guilty and banished from New Mexico for 10 years.

Members of the Rodríguez Bellido family persevered as residents of a harsh and dangerous frontier. Politically, they tended to side with the Franciscan friars with regard to governing authority. Socially, they preferred to intermarry with families of the same political stripe as their own. There may be descendants of Juan Rodríguez Bellido living in New Mexico today. A loss of records makes it challenging to determine any proven lines of descent. The longtime residents of Santa Fe with the Rodríguez surname are descendants of other men who brought this family name to New Mexico in the 1690s. Although living descendants cannot be identified, it is important to acknowledge the Rodríguez Bellido family as first settlers of the Villa de Santa Fe.

The last known founding family of the Villa de Santa Fe is the Durán y Cháves family, which will be featured in the next issue. 