

# What's In A Name?

## Origins of New Mexico Families: Part 2



Originally published in [El Defensor Chieftain](#) newspaper, Saturday, October 1, 2005

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For El Defensor Chieftain

*This is a continuation of last month's Part I on the origins of New Mexico's first families. Many of Socorro's established families have been in New Mexico for centuries, some arriving in 1598 with the Onate Expedition or with the Conquistadors. In spite of Indian attacks, droughts, lack of supplies and meager crops in the field, these people endured for over 300 years during the worst of times. Before the railroad, cars, highways, electricity and machines, these Spanish colonists built and populated New Mexico's towns, including Socorro. And, most came over El Camino Real, an arduous six month journey into an unknown land called New Mexico.*

### **ROMERO**

Bartolome Romero was a Captain and prominently served Onate from at least 1597 through 1632. He was described as of good stature, swarthy and black-bearded, married to Lucia Lopez. His son, Bartolome Romero II, also served in the Royal Spanish Army with distinction, becoming the Alcade of Santa Fe. The name "Bartolome Lopez Romero," inscribed on El Morro, is believed to be his.

Bartolome Romero, his children and grandchildren were all prominent New Mexicans in the 1600s, mostly living around Santa Fe. The majority of this large family fled to the south in 1680 following the Pueblo Revolt. Many of them returned to New Mexico with the Vargas reconquest in 1693, resettling in Santa Fe, Cienega, Bernalillo and later Albuquerque. The

Romero's in this region are all descendents of Captain Bartolome Romero.

Also fleeing New Mexico in 1680 was Diego Romero. He, and wife Maria de San Jose, returned with de Vargas and settled in Taos, where he acquired considerable land and wealth. The Romero's in New Mexico's Rio Arriba region are descendents of this family.

Yet another Romero, Francisco Xavier Romero of Mexico City, came to Santa Fe in 1693 and married Maria de le Cruz. They moved to Santa Cruz (now Chimayo) where he practiced medicine and was a shoemaker. Some of their children became some of the first settlers of Truchas and Mora. Others, likely of this clan of Romero's, settled at the head of the Rio Abajo at Sabinal. Several generations later, they were amongst the first families to reoccupy Socorro around 1815. Many of the Romero's along the Rio Abajo today are descendants of Francisco Xavier Romero.

### **SILVA**

There are no Silva's mentioned in New Mexico before 1680. The first to arrive seemed to be Antonio de Silva, a blacksmith accompanying Vargas during the 1693 reconquest. He was described as having a round dark face, large eyes and a sharp nose. He arrived with his wife, Gregoria Ruis and daughter Gertrudis, both of Mexico City. Upon arrival in New Mexico, their 3 year old daughter was described as having a "round face and big eyes." Of course, what three year old girl doesn't? In addition to Gertrudis, they had four other daughters and five sons. They settled in the Chimayo area, then moved to Bernalillo and finally Albuquerque, where Antonio died in 1736. Most of these Silva's, and their offspring, remained in the Bernalillo and Albuquerque areas.

The large Silva families in the Socorro area are mostly descendants of Jose Silva, a native of Zacatecas, Mexico. Jose arrived with a caravan of settlers along El Camino Real in the late 1700s.

In 1787, he married Maria Josefa Baca in Albuquerque. By 1816, a Jose Silva and family was living "in the Rio Abajo del Socorro." It is not known if this was Jose and Maria Silva from Zacateca, or one of his sons. Regardless, these Silva's were amongst the first families to resettle Socorro in the early 1800s.

By the late-1800s, some of these Silva's had settled east of the Rio Grande, establishing a small village or estancia consisting of several families they called Guadalajara. At the obscure Guadalajara cemetery, Juan Silva, born 1858, Flavio Romero, born 1871 and Lorenzo Vigil, born 1875, are amongst those who lived at this nearly forgotten estancia east of San Pedro.

## TORRES

Many of the Torres families in Socorro are able to trace their lineage to 1598, beginning with Juan de Torres and son Baltasar. Juan arrived with Onate with "complete armor for himself and his horse," indicating a measure of wealth. Another, Francisco Gomez de Torres, was a captain with the Conquistadors. He escorted wagon trains of supplies and colonists along El Camino Real into New Spain from Mexico City in 1619 and 1621. Most of these early Torres families fled to Guadalupe del El Paso during the 1680 Pueblo Revolt to return in later years.

One family that did not flee during the Pueblo Revolt was Fra Tomas de Torres and his brother Sebastian, natives of Teposotlan, Mexico. Fra Tomas de Torres, and 20 other Franciscans, were killed in the early hours of the 1680 revolt. Sebastian Torres, his wife and child were also killed, all amongst the first to be martyred during the revolt.

The man responsible for repopulating New Mexico with Torres' following the revolt was clearly Diego de Torres. Settling in Chama by 1731, he had two children by first wife Rosa de Varela, another eight by second wife Maria Martín, while third wife Rafaela Baca bore him six children more. His 16 children and nearly a hundred grandchildren quickly populated New Mexico from Chama to Albuquerque and into the Rio Abajo.

Of the numerous Torres families in Socorro, three are presented here: the Eugene Torres, Jose Torres and Anastacio Torres families.

## EUGENE TORRES

One of Diego's grandsons, Agustín, married Felipa Baca in Belen. Agustin and Felipa were among the first families to reoccupy Socorro in 1815. One of their sons, Jose, married the 1839 fiesta queen, Maria Gallegos. Jose was a wagon master for the Army, running supply wagons between Forts Union and Craig during the Civil War and into the 1870s. After that, he operated a large farm along today's Cuba road. Jose and Maria had 13 children. However, Jose's brother, Ysidro, died in 1886, leaving 6 more children for them to raise. No wonder Jose had such a large farm!

Meanwhile, Jose's sister, Maria Paula Torres, married Army soldier Samuel Zimmerly, the genesis of this long line of Socorro families. One of Jose's daughters, Elisia, also married a soldier, Richard Stackpole, and later, son Hermino married Sam and Maria Zimmerly's daughter, Gertrudes. Suddenly, it seemed half of booming Socorro was related to the Torres family!

Jumping ahead a couple of generations, some of these Torres' had spread from Monticello to working in the mines at Kelly. In Magdalena, Eugene Torres married Euna Cuvillier, raising 5 boys, Paul, Dave, Tom, Max, Arthur, and their poor outnumbered sister, Mary. Eugene operated a store in Magdalena until relocating to Socorro in 1955. Here he opened the Western Auto



Photos: Paul Harden



**ABOVE: Gambles Hardware has been at its present location in Socorro since 1960.**

**RIGHT: Founded by Eugene and Eula Torres, Gambles is operated today by sons David and Paul Torres.**



Store on the southwest corner of California and Manzanares streets, renaming the growing business to Gambles in 1957. However, the business was condemned in 1960 by the State Highway Department when California Street was expanded from 2-lanes to the present 4-lanes. The historic building that housed Eugene's Gambles store was razed, along with dozens of other businesses along California Street.

About this same time, a fire destroyed the Grimes Department Store. Eugene Torres purchased the burned-out building and after considerable repairs, reopened his business at the new location on Manzanares. Over the following years, Gamble's expanded into the neighboring stores formerly occupied by Fortune's Clothing Store, Jessie's Apparel and Petty's Confectionery.

Today, Gambles True Value Hardware is operated by Eugene and Eula's sons, Dave and Paul Torres. Gambles has served Socorro with standard hardware items, appliances, and hard-to-find items for nearly 50 years, the longest continuously operated hardware in Socorro.

**JOSE E. TORRES**

Not related to the Eugene Torres family, another early Socorro family was Balentin and Josepha Torres. One of their sons, Jose E. Torres, born in 1858, married Guadalupe Padilla in 1889. Jose was a local businessman who also became prominent in local politics. He was elected as Socorro's Mayor in 1899, Probate Judge in 1903, and County Treasurer in 1905. Jose E. and Guadalupe Torres had eight children, among them sons Valentin and Joseph.

Valentin became involved in business at an early age. Purchasing an old adobe store on the corner of California and Abeyta streets in 1932, Valentin started the Sunset Bar. This was when California Street was a



Courtesy Max Torres

**Jose E. Torres, in 1899, when he was elected as Socorro's mayor.**



Courtesy Max Torres

**The original Sunset Bar, about 1932. It was located where today's business stands, on the corner of California and Abeyta streets.**



Photo by Paul Harden

**Arhur "Max" Torres (left) and son Chris Torres (right) are two of the four generations that have run Sunset Liquors for 73 years.**

narrow, 2-lane dirt road. By the 1950s, the popular bar had simply outgrown the small adobe structure. On a 1951 trip to Albuquerque, Valentin was struck by the architecture of a new service station being built on Route 66 in the Nob Hill area. Sitting on the curb across the street, he sketched the new "modern" building with its huge plate glass windows and curved front as the model for his new bar. By year's end, Valentin, and brother Joseph, had torn down the old adobe bar and the new building was being framed.

In 1952, Valentin and Joe opened the new Sunset Lounge and Package Liquor store, with its large plate glass windows and curved front, being one of the more modern buildings in Socorro at the time - built from a

simple sketch. Following the unexpected death of Valentin in 1955, the business was run by brother Joseph, then later by Joseph's son, Max Torres, for many years.

In addition to his interest in Sunset Liquors, Joseph "Joe" Torres is also well remembered as the Chief of Police under Socorro Mayor Holm O. Bursum Jr., serving from 1949 through 1958.

Today, Sunset Liquors is operated by Max Torres' sons Chris, Joe and Darren. Counting grandson David Jr., who works at the package store as well, four generations of the Torres family have operated this Socorro landmark business. It is one of Socorro's longest continuously run businesses, now in it's 73rd year.

Other prominent Socorro businesses were started by this Torres family, such as the El Camino Restaurant and Motel, and Randy's Ace Hardware.

### **ANASTACIO TORRES**

Another Torres family that left an indelible mark on Socorro was Anastacio "A.C." Torres. Born in 1868 to Canuto Torres and Isabelita Padilla y Abeyta, he was educated at the Sisters of Loretto Convent in Socorro. In 1883 he worked as a clerk at the Price Brothers Mercantile store in San Antonio. Studying to be an educator, he mastered both the Spanish and English languages. With these skills, he worked as a school teacher and court interpreter in Socorro for many years. In 1890, he was also elected City Clerk.

In 1904, while teaching 3rd grade in San Antonio, he bought the El Republicano Printing Company. Armed with a printing press and his language skills, he published the first edition of Socorro's bilingual newspaper, the "El Defensor," on May 7, 1904.

He married Margarita Montoya of Socorro in 1915, raising 2 sons and 5 daughters. While still the publisher and editor of the El Defensor, he was elected as State Representative in 1931, and the following year as State Senator, representing Socorro and Catron Counties for two terms. From 1953 through 1957, A.C. Torres proudly added "The Free State of Socorro" to the newspaper's masthead, being a spirited supporter of the movement.

In 1957, A.C. Torres semi-retired. After all, he was now 87 years old! He sold the paper to the Morgan family from Kansas, though he stayed on as Honorary Editor and continued writing the Spanish language portions of



El Defensor Chieftain

**Anastacio "A.C." Torres founded *El Defensor* newspaper in 1904, which he published continuously for 55 years.**



Photo: Paul Harden

**The old "Torres building" on the corner of U.S. 85 and Spring Street, was the newspaper office and printing plant for *El Defensor* from 1904 until 1959.**

the paper. In 1959, the Morgan's ceased publishing the El Defensor for personal reasons. At 89 years of age, A.C. Torres was in no position to reassume the daily operation of the paper.

In October 1959, he merged his beloved newspaper with the Socorro Chieftain. The first issue of the combined "Socorro El Defensor-Chieftain" was published on November 3, 1959.

Printing the El Defensor for 55 years, Anastacio C. Torres was the longest enduring publisher and editor in Socorro's history, and perhaps in New Mexico. The merger of these two institutions has brought continuous newspaper service to Socorro County for over 120 years. The El Defensor Chieftain is recognized as the 3rd oldest newspaper in New Mexico, and one of the longest running historical records in the Southwest.



## PINO

The first known Pino in New Mexico appears to be Juan Bautista Pino, born in Mexico in 1709 and a traveling merchant along the El Camino Real. He was a financier and merchant for the periodic supply caravans bringing in the much needed supplies from Chihuahua and Mexico City. By 1747, he had established a residence near Isleta Pueblo, though apparently his wife, Petra Davila y Calle, and their two sons, remained in Mexico City.

When sons Joaquin Jose and Mateo Jose became adults, they joined their father in the merchant trade. Joaquin married Barbara Sanchez in 1764 and lived in Tome, bearing two sons and a daughter. His brother Mateo Jose married Teresa Sanchez, likely the sister of his brother's wife, Barbara. Teresa died giving birth to their 7th child. Mateo then married Maria Roybal, who bore him two more children.

Mateo's son, Pedro Bautista Pino, also lived near Isleta. He had four children with first wife Manuela Gabaldon. Following her death, he married Lugarde Lucero, who bore him eight more children. The family lived in Tome. Pedro was also the Deputy from New Mexico to the Spanish Cortes. In 1810, he was part of the expedition south of Tome that recommended the resettlement of the Rio Abajo region. As a result of this expedition, the first families were allowed to resettle in the original Socorro Spanish land grant a few years later, including several families of Pino's. Church records indicate Vicente Pino and Delores Baca were married in the newly rebuilt San Miguel church in 1830. By the 1860 census, 22 Pino families were recorded in Socorro County.

Back to Pedro Pino, in 1816, he married for the third time to Maria Baca, who gave him four more children. Of these, two were sons Nicholas de Jesus and Miguel Estanislado Pino, born 1819 and 1921 respectively in Galisteo. In later years, both Miguel and Nicholas became historical figures. Colonel Miguel Pino was the commander of the 2nd Regiment of New Mexico Volunteers, fighting alongside Col. Kit Carson and his regiment of volunteers at the Battle of Val Verde on February 21, 1862.

Brother Nicholas moved to Socorro as a young adult around 1840, where he continued the Pino family tradition as a merchant. In 1842, he married Juana Rascon. For much of his life, Nicholas was also active with the New Mexico Militia garrisoned at Lemitar and Socorro. During the Battle of Val Verde, he commanded the 2nd New Mexico Militia. Following



Courtesy Vincent Pino

**Nicholas Pino moved to Socorro in 1840, serving as a merchant and a colonel in the New Mexico Militia.**



Photo: Paul Harden

**Socorroan Jimmy R. Pino is a distant relative to Civil War colonels Miguel and Nicholas Pino.**

the battle, Nicholas Pino and 280 soldiers hurried to protect Socorro against the Confederates. Vastly outnumbered, Nicholas had the unfortunate distinction of surrendering Socorro to the Confederates, but not until negotiating the safe treatment to the peoples of Socorro.

Today, brothers Joe, Vincent and Jimmy R. Pino are the children of Lucas and Arelina Pino. Their grandparents, Vicente and Ana Maria Pino were married in San Marcial in 1903. Vicente's grandfather was none other than Col. Nicholas Pino.

## SARRACINO

Like the first Pino families, merchants from Mexico City, the Sarracino's were merchants from Chihuahua. The first into New Mexico was Jose Rafael Sarracino in the late 1700s. He married Maria Gutierrez in 1787.

Like many of the caravan merchants during this time, his wife and children resided in Chihuahua while Jose was "on the trail." Being a merchant on El Camino Real was a political appointment and a coveted job for the profits that could be made. For this reason, the male children of these merchants were brought into the "family business." The two sons of Jose Sarracino likewise became El Camino Real merchants, residing in Santa Fe with their families around 1820.

However, with the arrival of the Santa Fe Trail, and later the railroad, higher quality goods at lower prices were brought into New Mexico (and without the political corruption from Mexico). The El Camino Real began to die, and along with it, the merchants and their prosperity.

The two Sarracino merchants were suddenly out of a job, becoming ranchers east of Santa Fe and in Truchas. They quickly proved to be good ranchers. Shortly after the Civil War, several families of Sarracino's ventured into the Rio Abajo and southern New Mexico, running ranches from La Joya to the Diamond A near Deming, and of course, near Socorro.

By the 1880s, the Sarracino Ranch ran from the Rio Salado to about U.S. 60 near Water Canyon. Some of the Sarracino's in today's Socorro are descendants of these successful sheep and cattle families.

## PADILLA

Jose de Padilla was the first of this family name in New Mexico, though it is not known how or when he arrived, other than in 1668 he was mustered in as a captain in New Spain. Twelve years later, during the Pueblo Revolt, he fled to Guadalupe del Paso "with his wife, five children and six servants." He served as an escort on the El Paso to Mexico City arm of El Camino Real, twice that is known, in 1683 and again in 1689.

Jose Padilla, wife Maria, and son Jose Junior remained refugees from New Mexico in Senecu del Paso the rest of their lives, while sons Juan and Diego returned to New Mexico in 1693 with the de Vargas reconquest.

Son Juan de Padilla settled in the Santa Cruz (Chimayo) area, marrying Margarita Martín, raising two sons, Julian and Tomas. Juan must have died around 1730,



Photo: Paul Harden

**Many of the early Padilla families settled in San Antonio, San Pedro and La Joya. Pillar Padilla, of Polvadera, is the son of Frank Padilla, of San Antonio, and Isabel Enriques, of Mesilla.**

for church records show "Margarita, a widow, married Bernardo Roybal." Bernardo and Margarita finished raising the two Padilla sons, in addition to their own children carrying the Roybal name. All of these children married and had their own children in and around the Santa Fe area into the late 1700s. Tomas de Padilla was still serving as a soldier at the Sante Fe Presidio in 1766.

Jose's son Diego also returned to New Mexico. He married Catalina de Salazar in 1706. They had two sons, Pedro and Luis, before Catalina died a few years later. Diego then married Maria Baca in Bernalillo in 1713, who bore him five additional sons and three daughters. These Padilla's lived from Bernalillo to Santa Fe. When the Rio Abajo was reopened for settlement, numerous Padilla families settled in La Joya, Socorro, San Antonio and Don Pedro.

## VARGAS

The recolonization of New Mexico in 1693 was led by the great reconquistador Vargas, whose full name was Don Diego de Vargas Zapata Lujan Ponce de Leon. What happened to him and his family?

He was from a long line of noble Castillian families that was very loyal to Spain. In the new world, de Vargas was the man that led the exiled families back into New

Mexico following the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. His reconquest opened the doors for the resettlement of New Mexico that has not been broken since. Unfortunately, he did not have any known children in New Mexico to carry on his name following his sudden death in Bernalillo in 1704. It is not known if he had any children in Spain.

Two brothers, Manuel Fernandez de Vargas and Sebastian de Vargas, entered New Mexico in 1693 along with the reconquest, though not directly related to the famous de Vargas. These Vargas brothers were from Guadalajara. Manuel was a tailor, marrying Luisa de la Cruz at San Lorenzo in 1695 at 19 years of age. He must have died young, as in 1716, his wife Luisa was listed as "a widow living in Chimayo."

Older brother Sabastian married Maria de Layva in 1696 at 22 years old. In the early 1700s, he was a landowner around Santa Fe and a captain in the Royal Army. After a long marriage and several children, his wife died in 1742. Sabastian de Vargas lived a long, fruitful life, dying in 1757 at 80 years of age. The handful of colonial Vargas families in present day New Mexico are decendants of Manual and Sabastian de Vargas, not the reconquistador Don Diego de Vargas.

This has been a small sampling of Socorro's founding families. Many families were not included due to the limitation of space. Others will be presented in future articles.

Next month: Part I of the history of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro.

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Some of the references used in this article:  
Historical documents of the Onate and Vargas expeditions, "Origins of New Mexico Families" by Fray Angelico Chavez, courtesy Sam Pino, the New Mexico Hispanic Genealogical database, "Legacy of Honor," Jacquelin Maketa, various issues of the El Defensor Chieftain and El Defensor, and interviews with Jimmy R. Pino, Pilar Padilla, Max and Chris Torres, Dave and Paul Torres, and others.