



New Mexican Hispanic Culture Preservation League Salute the First European Settlers of 1598

The Colonists

On January 26, 1598 Don Juan de Oñate y Salazar led an expedition of approximately 560 colonizers who consisted of families, soldiers and eleven Franciscan Friars and Brothers from San Gerónimo, New Spain. They traveled northward to the upper Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico. Most of them came from Spain, others came from New Spain, Portugal or other European countries. Some of them began their journey with a turbulent sea voyage. Together they struggled to survive the bitter cold of the Little Ice Age winter and then the barren hot dry land of Nuevo Mejico. They mourned as they buried their dead and hoped that this journey would not be in vain.

Their Contributions

Christianity, European government and laws, European coinage and monetary system, and the Gregorian calendar governed their lives. They introduced metal-smithing techniques and tools such as: hoes, axes, chisels, planes, levers, windlasses, saws, nails, augers, prongs, scissors and needles. They practiced and taught mapping techniques, building and brickmaking, horno oven construction, the weaving loom and carding techniques, printing, writing literature, poetry and enacted plays. They sang and celebrated with European musical instruments and dances.

Along the way and once settled they introduced items and techniques to this new land that reflected their long history and the influences of their conquerors. With their four mile long wagon train they brought 83 wagons of household goods and 61 carts bearing: winter wheat, oats, barley, chile, onions, peas, watermelon, peaches, apricots, plums, cherries, figs, dates, pomegranates, quince, pears, apples, olives, almonds, pecans, walnuts, lilacs and grape vines for winemaking. They brought thousands of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, donkeys, mules, oxen and mesquite beans to feed their livestock. Mesquite bushes still mark the trail of the Camino Real.

In Appreciation

The United States enjoys and uses much of what the first European colonists brought. Yet the journey and the people that brought these gifts remain obscure. Help us promote and educate our community and our nation about Hispanic contributions past and present. For more information contact Conchita Lucero at 299-6726 or NMHCPL Old Town Station P.O. Box 7956 Albuquerque NM 87194