

Wills of a Father and Son and A Contribution to the American Revolution

By

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On January 9, 1765, a soldier lay ill at the Royal Presidio in the Villa Capital of Santa Fe and asks his *teniente* (lieutenant) to document his last will and testimony. In this will, Cristobal Madrid affirmed his faith in God, his guardian angel, and the saints. He requested of his named executors, his wife Francisca Herrera and son Juan Antonio Madrid, to be buried in the San Miguel parish church in Santa Fe and that his body be shrouded in the habit of Saint Francis. Most notably, he listed among his possessions six horses and his complete military equipment with which he “served the King.”

On January 4, 1768, Cristobal’s son, Antonio Xavier Madrid, enlisted in the Spanish military “in place of his father,” and in all probability, used his father’s military equipment. This recruit signed by the mark of a cross to signify his understanding of his responsibilities as a soldier. Antonio Xavier, age 25 and described as having a swarthy complexion with black hair, eyebrows, and eyes, was assigned to the *Tropa de Cuera*, the Leather Jacket troop, at the Presidio of Santa Fe.

Antonio Xavier Madrid served in the Spanish military in colonial New Mexico when Spain actively supported the revolution of the American Colonies. During this time, Spain’s northern territory included almost all of the United States west of the Mississippi, Louisiana, and Mexico. Spain and its colonies in America played a significant role in the American Revolution by providing military support, loans, and gifts of cash—historical facts of which most United States citizens are still unaware.

When the American colonies waged a war for independence against England, King Carlos III of Spain sought opportunity to regain land Spain lost to England in 1773. Spain agreed to join France as an ally and covertly shipped arms, munitions, cattle, uniforms, medicine, blankets, and money to the American colonies using France as the go between. Visitor-General José de Gálvez, Spanish secretary of the Indies and his nephew, Count Bernardo de Gálvez, provided secret aid to the American cause by allowing guns, ammunition, and tons of supplies to be shipped up the Mississippi to patriot forces in the north. By 1777, Spain had sent a large shipment of the following from a French port by way of Bermuda to Boston: 215 bronze canons, 4,000 field tents, 12,826 grenades, 30,000 muskets, 30,000 bayonets, 30,000 uniforms, 51,314 musket balls, and 300,000 pounds of gunpowder. Money and supplies were funneled through the French and handled by a third party—appearing as open business transactions.

Spain’s support for the American colonists remained secret until June 21, 1779, when Spain officially entered into war with England. Thomas Jefferson wrote to Bernardo de Gálvez on November 8, 1779 and expressed his thanks for Spain’s assistance to the revolutionary cause. History books in United States schools relate the aid France gave to the American Colonists and mention very little about the aid given by Spain.

As stated by Thomas E. Chavez, “...United States history is a story of a country born out of English colonies, the role of Spain has not been genuinely recognized. Nor...have the sacrifices of Spain’s colonies been acknowledged. Eighteenth-century Spanish subjects, who lived in areas that make up the present states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, answered Carlos III’s call for a special [donation] to help with the war and, in the end, secure American independence.” In March of 1780, Carlos III decreed that to sustain the war “his vassals in America” were to contribute a one-time *donativo* (donation) of one *peso* (approximately \$30 by today’s standard) per Indian and other castes and two *pesos* per Spaniard and noble. Collectors went to towns and pueblos in the New World and collected one *peso* per Indian over 18 years old and other castes, and two *pesos* from each Spaniard. *Donativos* were collected from soldiers and citizens throughout Cuba and Spain’s hard-pressed North American colonies, including the provinces of California, New Mexico, and Texas.

New Mexico Governor Juan Bautista de Anza was officially notified of the decree in a letter dated August 17, 1780 from Teodoro de Croix. With regard to *donativos* made by the Indians of the Province, Anza obtained permission to exempt the Indians of the Zuni and Hopi pueblos. (In the Province of California, Fray Junípero Serra used church funds to pay the [donations] for mission Indians.)

By 1783 a total of 3,677 *pesos* (approximately \$110,300) had been collected from soldiers and citizens in the Province of New Mexico; 247 *pesos* came from soldiers of the Santa Fe Presidio. The *donativos* were shipped to “Mexico then shipped to Havana and transferred to the American colonies, sometimes via French carriers.”

Supplies and aid to the American cause came from almost every part of the Spanish empire and currently, historians and genealogists throughout Spain, Mexico, and the United States are reviewing historical documents in an effort to rightfully give Spain and its Colonial Patriots credit for their aid.

The Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution are two national lineage societies that are interested in Spain’s involvement in the American Revolution and they are reaching out to descendants of all Spanish soldiers to research their lineage and apply for society membership. By submitting their genealogy, these Colonial Patriots can be catalogued in the SAR and DAR national repositories of genealogical and historical information, and thereby become a part of America’s history.

Some activities recognized by the SAR and the DAR include service in the Spanish military, service in the militia, service as Indian auxiliaries, making voluntary contributions to defray expenses of the War, Spanish cowboys (in Texas) who drove cattle to feed the American colonial troops, and mission priests who lead public prayers on behalf of Spain’s support of the American Revolution. Because many priests did not leave descendants, the SAR’s interest is in locating and marking their graves as patriots. For example, California’s Franciscan mission priest, Fray Junípero Serra, led a prayer for the success of the American colonists “because we believe their cause is just and that the Great Redeemer is on their side.”

Antonio Xavier Madrid’s military possessions listed in his will dated January 3, 1813 include two *rifles* (muskets); a Spanish military uniform consisting of a hat, an old blue wool cape, and a heavy woolen waistcoat; an *ardaga* (shield); a pair of boots and spurs; and miscellaneous garments. Also listed among his possessions are a mule, a horse, a donkey, and an additional musket. According to the Reglamento of 1729, a presidial soldier’s uniform should conform in some measure or common standard and each soldier was required to have six horses and a mule. Even though maintaining any uniformity in military dress was difficult in New Mexico due to short supply and minimal replacements, Antonio Xavier’s uniform and arms on the most part met the day’s requirements.

To his son, Juan Nepomuceno Madrid, he left a musket from the armament; a cartridge belt without cartridges; and his hat, old blue cape, aged waistcoat, and miscellaneous garments. To another son, Jose Antonio Madrid, he left a musket, a pair of boots and spurs, and his blue uniform, and shield. His daughter, Maria Josefa, was married to Josef Manuel Sena, armorer of the Presidio and one of the executors named in his will. In addition, Antonio Xavier entrusted his son-in-law to “guard” 22 *pesos*. Josef Manuel Sena and two other named executors, brothers-in-law Juan Nepomuceno Madrid and Miguel Rodriguez, were asked to “collect the horse owed” Antonio Xavier by his brother, Juan Antonio Madrid.

Based on the time Spain was at war with England and the Spanish military service records of New Mexico Colonial Patriot Antonio Xavier Madrid, we know he donated two *pesos* (\$60) toward the cause of the American colonies. At this time, the Province of New Mexico was rather poor and sparsely populated. His sacrifice to the cause of the American Revolution came at a time when cash was hard to come by and soldiers were sometimes not paid in full or paid in *pesos de la tierra* (e.g., crops) as opposed to *pesos firma* (cash).

Antonio Xavier Madrid’s father, Cristobal Madrid, listed as possessions in his will dated 1765 six horses and his complete military equipment with which he ‘served the King’. In Antonio Xavier’s will dated 48 years later, all that remained as symbols of honor and service were some muskets, a cartridge belt; a shield, various articles of military attire, a mule, and two horses. Like his father, Antonio Xavier affirmed his belief in God and the saints and asked that his body be shrouded in the habit of Saint Francis.

From their wills and from research, we can piece together only a portion of their lives. From their contributions we can document an important part of history that recognizes significant contributions to the American cause by the eastern as well as the southwestern parts of these United States. Only years later would many learn of the significant roles Spain and its colonies played in the American Revolution.

To date, very few New Mexico Colonial Patriots have been recognized by the DAR and the SAR. The DAR officially accepted **José Campos Redondo**, *Alcalde Mayor* of Santa Cruz de la Cañada, and **Antonio José Ortíz**, *Alcalde Mayor* of Santa Fe, as New Mexico Colonial Patriots of the American Revolution. The DAR recognized them on the fact that they rendered aid to the American cause by “being instrumental in collecting the required donations.”

Last March, Eva Torres Aschenbrener was inducted into the Kearny Santa Fe chapter of the DAR as a descendant of New Mexico Colonial Patriot **Juan Luís de Herrera**, 1st Squadron Leader of the *Cuera* Troop at the Presidio of Santa Fe. Last April, 75-year old James Alexander Lovato, seventh great-grandson of New Mexico Colonial Patriot **Juan de Urioste**, was

inducted into the Colorado Chapter of the SAR. In 2001, 77-year old José Teófilo Sánchez, seventh great-grandson of New Mexico Colonial Patriot **Antonio Xavier Madrid**, was inducted into the Colorado Chapter of the SAR. And, in 1999, Charles Martinez y Vigil, eighth great-grandson of New Mexico Colonial Patriot **Francisco Martín Torres**, was inducted into the South Coast Chapter of the California Society SAR during an event held at the courtyard of the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. Torres became the SAR's first recognized New Mexico Colonial Patriot of the American Revolution.

For a Patriot to be recognized by the SAR and the DAR, descendants of Patriots must research and document their lineage and apply for membership. One source of vital information is the Spanish enlistment papers, which provide service dates, physical descriptions, and occasionally name of a soldier's parents. The list of Spanish enlistments for the Province of New Mexico, as excerpted from Hough and Hough, *Spain's New Mexico Patriots During Its 1779-1783 War with England*, is available on NMHS Vice President José Esquibel's website at <http://pages.prodigy.net/bluemountain1/patriota.htm>; and in Virginia Langham Olmsted's, "Spanish Enlistment Papers of New Mexico, 1732-1820," published in the December 1979 issue of the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*.

The SAR accepts male applicants, 18 years or older, who can prove lineage back to a Patriot ancestor who contributed to the American cause between the 1779-1783 timeframe, the time Spain officially was at war with England. The DAR's criterion for descendants of New Mexico Colonial Patriots is slightly different. Female applicants, who are descendants of New Mexico Colonial Patriots, must be able to prove that the Patriot soldier was at the Presidio of Santa Fe between April 3, 1782 and November 18, 1782, and that he was discharged after November 1782. April 3, 1782 is the date Governor Anza authorized collection of the *donativos* within the Province of New Mexico. November 18, 1782 represents the date of Anza's letter to Croix informing him that all but three *donativos* were collected.

As stated by Robert H. Thonhoff, "An important door of recognition has been opened for many thousands of Hispanics if they but do their genealogical homework." Consider the number of descendants of Spanish Colonial Patriots who served under the Spanish flag (including Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico) who, as a result of Spain's aid, can say their ancestors aided in the American Revolution and can now be officially recognized through societies such as the SAR and the DAR. Thomas Chavez adds, "Hispanic families in the United States range from recent arrivals to people whose ancestors settled in what is today the United States before Jamestown or the Puritans and Pilgrims." Members of these families can now be included in stating that their ancestors aided the American cause. There is no better way to "open that door of recognition" than to document the contributions of our Colonial Patriots and get their information officially recognized, microfilmed, and catalogued in historical documents.

Antonio Xavier Madrid was but one of many Spanish soldiers and citizens who contributed to the American cause. For generations, descendants of New Mexico Colonial Patriots have made significant contributions by proudly serving in defense of their countries. During the period when New Mexico was under Mexican rule, José Antonio Sena, Antonio Xavier Madrid's grandson, was recognized for valor in recognition of his service against the *aventureros tejanos* (adventurous Texans) in 1841. Manuel Armijo, commanding officer and Governor of New Mexico, recommended Sena for an *escudo de honor*, the Mexican equivalent of the Medal of Honor. This honor was granted to Sena by the President of the Republic of Mexico, along with a promotion to Captain.

Continuing in this tradition, descendants of New Mexico Colonial Patriots as United States citizens have continued to proudly serve their country. As stated by the Eugene A. Obregon / Congressional Medal of Honor Campaign, "unquestioned service to the country is part of the ethos of the Latino community.... Out of a total of 3,427 medals granted by the U.S. Congress, 38 have been given to citizens of Latino ancestry, making Latinos the largest single ethnic group, in proportion to the number who served, to earn this prestigious award."

There is no better way to honor our Patriot ancestors than by working to ensure that future generations will be aware of the contributions of Spanish Colonial Patriots to the American cause. If you take the number of New Mexico Colonial Patriots, add to that number all their descendants, we would have an impressive number of newly found daughters and sons who can impact and change what traditionally was taught about American colonial history. Through the actions and support of our Spanish Colonial Patriot ancestors, we, as their descendant daughters and sons, solidify our right and privilege to be called Americans.

About the Author:

Virginia Sánchez is a member of the New Mexico Historical Society. She co-presented on the New Mexico Colonial Military at the last NMHS conference in Las Cruces, NM. She recently submitted her application for membership to the Daughters of the American Revolution in honor of her eighth great-grandfather, New Mexico Colonial Patriot, *Soldado de Cuera* Antonio Xavier Madrid.

Additional Information:

Any interested male descendant of a New Mexico Patriot can contact one of the following for additional information about the SAR: David Van Wormer, Colorado Society of the Sons of the American Revolution 1860 South Holly St., Denver, CO 80222; George W. Randle, New Mexico Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, Box 525, Placitas, NM 87043 (snggrand@nm.net); or <http://www.sar.org>. Any interested female descendant of a New Mexico Patriot can contact Donna J. Santistevan at 7830 S. Valentia Street, Englewood, CO 80112 (mountrosa@aol.com) or <http://www.dar.org>. The first year chapter, state, and national dues are between \$35-50, depending on the chapter. The cost to submit your completed application is about \$25.