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PART TWO:

THE DIARY OF PEDRO IGNACIO GALLEGO WHEREIN 400 SOLDIERS FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF COMANCHES MET WILLIAM BECKNELL ON HIS FIRST TRIP TO SANTA FE,
by Michael L. Olsen and Harry C. Myers

At the time this was written, Michael Olsen was professor of history at New Mexico Highlands University at Las Vegas, and Harry Myers was superintendent of Fort Union National Monument. Both are acknowledged scholars of the Santa Fe Trail and frequent contributors to WT. Their discovery and preparation of this significant document is a substantial contribution to Trail historiography. They presented more material about Captain Gallego, along with the story of the discovery of the diary, at the 1993 SFTA symposium.

This is the actual text of the original diary. Although it appears that there might have been more pages, they are missing from the archives, either lost, or more regrettably, stolen. The diary is found in the Mexican Archives of New Mexico (MANM), Twitchell Collection, #3 & 120, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives (NMSRCA), Santa Fe, New Mexico. The editors express their sincere thanks to the translation team of Michael Olsen and Charles Truxillo, New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, NM; Jan Garcia, Las Vegas, NM; Lucy Romo, Fort Union National Monument; and Richard Salazar, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, NM.

A diary kept by Captain of the Militia Urbana,³¹ Don Pedro Ignacio Gallego,³² of an expedition undertaken at the command of the political chief of the Province of New Mexico, Governor Don Facundo Melgares, commencing at the Plaza of San Raphael de Abiquiu,³³ from the day indicated in the present year, November 2, 1821.

2 ... At about 3 a.m. on this morning, in obedience to superior orders, the horses, kept according to instructions, were rounded up and prepared for the march, with the company of 148 men under my command. These men include those who should observe general written orders given by the commanders of the various company divisions, and men appointed for service, assigned as follows: Company No. 1, militia men and citizens from Cañada,³⁴ to guard the cattle, under the command of Second Lieutenant Don José Manuel Salazar; Company No. 2, 25 men from the central Rio Arriba,³⁵ acting as vanguard. The company halted at the Cuesta del Cuerpo Espin³⁶ a little after 5 p.m. Nothing further occurred. At 6 p.m. the Alcalde, Don José Jaramillo, appeared with 63 men. Nothing more happened.

3... Departed from the Cuesta del Cuerpo Espin at about 5 a.m. The company proceeded in the accustomed manner until about 6 p.m. and halted at the Vallecito de los Indios.³⁷ Nothing further to report.

4... Began marching from the Vallecito de los Indios about 4 a.m. Traveled in the usual formation to the Pueblo of Xemez,³⁸ stopping at about 5 p.m. Nothing further to report. A soldier, José Francisco Sanchez, of the militia company from San Buenaventura,³⁹ presented himself with an official communication from Governor Don Facundo Melgares,⁴⁰ requesting that I proceed to El Vado⁴¹ with my company.⁴² Nothing more to report.

5 ... Began marching from the Pueblo of Xemez in the direction of El Vado in compliance with the order from Governor Don Facundo Melgares, dated October 29, 1821. Halted at the Bosque of Santo Domingo⁴³ a little after 3 p.m. About 4 p.m. Manuel Chavez, commander of the company from Rio Arriba, informed me that a member of his company, Diego Gonzales, wounded José Lucero by throwing a hat at him. I sent the Second Lieutenant of the Militia Urbana, Don José Manuel Salazar, and the Corporal of the company of

volunteer militia, Miguel Quintana, to look at the wound. They swore to me and said that having thrown the hat, Diego Gonzales then punctured José Lucero in the chest with the point of a flint. Diego Gonzales turned himself in to the Sergeant José Maria Sandoval and was arrested and imprisoned.

6 ... Began marching from the Bosque of Santo Domingo about 5 a.m. Left behind two sick people, the citizen wounded by Diego Gonzales and an Indian from Santa Clara who is ill. Turned them over to Diego Martin, a citizen of Cañada, with orders to keep them in his care or turn them over to the Alcalde⁴⁴ of Cañada. Halted at Galisteo⁴⁵ at about 4 p.m. Nothing further to report.

7 ... Left Galisteo at about 4 a.m. in the usual manner and with the usual arrangement of the company. Halted at about 8 a.m. in the Cañon de San Cristobal de Sortiada.⁴⁶ Resumed marching at about 2 p.m., stopping at the Mesa del Ojo de la Baca⁴⁷ Nothing further to report.

8 ... Left the Mesa del Ojo de la Baca at about 6 a.m. and halted at about 2 p.m. at Poblacion del Vado.⁴⁸ Nothing further to report.

9 ... At Poblacion del Vado. About noon we were reunited with companies from Jemez, Alameda⁴⁹—with 77 men, and Santa Fe—with 45 men. Nothing further occurred the rest of this day. Later we were reunited with 50 cavalrymen of the garrison.

10 ... At Poblacion del Vado. On this day I relieved from duty 20 men of the cavalry garrison.

11 ... Halted this day at Poblacion del Vado awaiting orders. Nothing further to report.

12 ... About noon I ordered all the cavalrymen to assemble in the Plaza, to march into the wilderness⁵⁰ with my company, consisting of a force of 445 men: 123 armed with guns and the rest with bows and arrows. [We had] 356 pack animals. I gave general orders to the commanders of the various companies. Halted at Ojo de Bernal⁵¹ at about 4 p.m. Nothing further occurred.⁵²

13 ... Left Ojo de Bernal about 9 a.m. Followed the usual formation. About 3:30 p.m. encountered six Americans at the Puertocito de la Piedra Lumbre.⁵³ They parleyed with me and at about 4 p.m. we halted at the stream at Piedra Lumbre.⁵⁴ Not understanding their words nor any of the signs they made, I decided to return to El Vado, in the service of your excellency.⁵⁵ At this point Vicente Villanueva⁵⁶ presented himself. Nothing further occurred.

[Becknell Journal: "On Tuesday morning the 13th, we had the satisfaction of meeting with a party of Spanish troops. Although the difference of our language would not admit of conversation, yet the circumstances attending their reception of us, fully convinced us of their hospitable disposition and friendly feelings. Being likewise in a strange country, and subject to their disposition, our wishes lent their aid to increase our confidence in their manifestations of kindness. The discipline of the officers was strict, and the subjection of the men appeared almost servile. We encamped with them that night, and the next day about 1 o'clock, arrived at the Village of St. Michael, the conduct of whose Inhabitants gave us grateful evidence of civility and welcome."]

14 ... This day about 1:30 a.m. Vicente Villanueva presented himself to me with five citizens of El Vado, to serve as an interpreter. Learning nothing new I left them [the Americans] with him, to present themselves to your excellency.⁵⁷ Then, at about 6 a.m. I resumed my march, separating a party of 100 men under Corporal Lucero,⁵⁸ with the intention of following the trail of the Americans. Halted at about 3 p.m. at the Cañon del Pecos⁵⁹ and at about 4 p.m. the party under Corporal Lucero returned, having lost the trail of the Americans at the falls of the Rio del Sapello.⁶⁰ Nothing further occurred.

15... Left the Cañon del Pecos at about 5 a.m. in good order, detaching a party of 100 men under Corporal Lucero with orders to follow the trail of the foreigners. Halted at about 4 p.m. at the point where the Rio Sapello joins with the Mora⁶¹ A little after 4 p.m. the party under Corporal Lucero rejoined us; he traced the trail of the foreigners to a point below the Sierra de la Gallina⁶² The trail of the "hostiles" [Indians] who threaten us runs in a northerly direction to the gap in the Sierra de Taos.⁶³ Nothing further occurred.

16...Began marching this day about 6 a.m., separating the party of 100 men under Corporal Lucero with orders to follow the trail of the foreigners. Halted at about 4p.m. at the Rito del Capulin,⁶⁴ where Corporal Lucero was camped with his detachment. He lost the trail at the Rio Colorado.⁶⁵ At the ford of the Rito del Capulin I noticed traces of the Indians who attacked El Vado.

17 ... Left El Rito del Capulin at about 5 a.m., dividing the men with the horses under Sergeant Antonio Garcia. with orders to cut across the land to where the foreigners might have come through.⁶⁶ Halted at El Aguague del Lobo⁶⁷ at about 4 p.m., where I again encountered traces of the same Indians who plundered El Vado. At about 5 p.m. we reunited with the detachment under the Sergeant mentioned above, who did not find evidence of the trail. Nothing further occurred.

18...Left El Aguague del Lobo at about 6 a.m., dividing a party of 150 infantry under Juan Lucero. ordering him to go up the Mesa de Rayado⁶⁸ to identify all the places where the Indians might hide. Halted at El Ojo de la Mesa de Rayado⁶⁹ about noon. About 6 p.m. reunited with the party under Corporal Lucero, who did not find any sign of the Indians on the mesa. Nothing further to report.

19...Left El Ojo de la Mesa de Rayado at about 5 a.m. Reunited the whole company and halted on the Rio Colorado⁷⁰ at about 4 p.m., where I encountered the trail of the Indians. Nothing further to report.

20...Left the Rio Colorado 6 a.m. in the direction of the Sierra Grande,⁷¹ following the trail of the Indians, and halted at Los Cerritos del Aire⁷² about 4 pm. Nothing further to report.

21...Left Los Cerritos del Aire about 5 a.m. Traveled one league; about half way the Sergeant of the rear guard came and reported two animals were worn out. About 2 H leagues further on the commander of the company from Rio Abajo,⁷³ Don Eutivio Real, presented himself, asking permission to hunt some buffalo which could be seen at the edge of the river.⁷⁴ Forty men went on the hunt and provided the camp royally with meat. After traveling about 4 leagues, we lost the trail halfway between the Sierra Grande and the Jicara.⁷⁵

The remainder of the diary is missing from the Archives.

Notes

31. The "Urban Militia" was an elite unit, "theoretically controlled and funded by the national government, [which] functioned as a reserve force for the regular army." Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 116. For this expedition, the militia was joined by other New Mexican and Indian volunteer units, which was the usual procedure. Wilson, *Military Campaigns*, 12-13.

32. Gallego was Alcalde of Abiquiu at least from 1816 to 1832. In early 1822, Gallego was chosen as an elector to help choose the first legislative body of New Mexico, and in 1826 he was elected a member of the Territorial Deputation. Malcolm Ebright, "Manuel Martinez's Ditch Dispute: A Study in Mexican Period Custom and Justice," *NMHR*, 54 (January 1979), 27; Spanish Archives of New Mexico (SANM) I, Twitchell No. 1061, SANM II, Twitchell No. 2688, NMSRCA; & Rev. Lansing Bartlett Bloom, "New Mexico under Mexican Administration 1821-1846," *Old Santa Fe*, I (Oct. 1913 & Jan. 1914): 146, 246.

33. Abiquiu is located in Rio Arriba County, on the Chama River, about 40 miles northwest of Santa Fe.

34. A 1779 map shows a jurisdiction (Alcaldia) of Cañada and a town named Santa Cruz de la Cañada. It is likely that these troops were from the town, which was the second established in New Mexico by De Vargas in 1695. Miera y Pacheco map of 1779 in Alfred B. Thomas, *Forgotten Frontiers: A Study of the Spanish Indian Policy of Don Juan Bautista de Anza, Governor of New Mexico 1777-1787* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), 86.

35. "Central Upper River" would have been in the vicinity of the Rio Grande north and west of Santa Fe. Ibid.

36. Porcupine Hill or Peak.

37. "Little Valley of the Indians," is 13 miles northeast of Jemez Pueblo. T. M. Pearce, ed., *New Mexico Place Names* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1965), 174.

38. Jemez Pueblo is about 50 miles directly west of Santa Fe.

39. Chimayo (east of Española) was known as San Buenaventura de Chimayo. The militia unit was probably from there, perhaps comprising part of the group from central Rio Arriba. San Buenaventura was also the name of the church at Cochiti Pueblo, and the volunteers could possibly have been from there.
40. Facundo Melgares, a native of Spain, was no stranger to the Great Plains and American incursions into New Mexico. In 1806, in anticipation of Zebulon Montgomery Pike's expedition, Melgares led a detachment of 500 troops and over 2,000 horses and mules which ranged as far north and east as the Pawnee nations between the Kansas and Platte rivers. Melgares also ultimately commanded the troops who accompanied Pike to Chihuahua. Pike had a high opinion of him, as did Becknell, who found him "to be well informed and gentlemanly in manners; his demeanor was courteous and friendly." Melgares was governor (or interim governor) of New Mexico from 1818 to 1822. Ralph E. Twitchell, *Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, 2 vols. (Cedar Rapids: Torch Press, 1911), I, 458, 469, 480; & Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi, and through the Western Parts of Louisiana* (Philadelphia: C. & A. Conrad, & Co., 1810), 228-229, 250; Becknell Journal, 77.
41. "The Ford" was San Miguel del Vado located on the Pecos River. This "ford" was used long before Coronado first entered the country in 1540. San Miguel, as it is better known, was settled by Indians and Mestizos in 1790 and, in 1821, was the eastern frontier town of New Mexico.
42. A search of the SANM and MANM at the NMSRCA has not produced this document. There is, however, a document which is attributed to Melgares, dated October 29, 1821, which seems to be only a second page.
43. "The Bosque of San Domingo" was undoubtedly at the Santo Domingo Pueblo on the Rio Grande, 25 miles southwest of Santa Fe.
44. *Alcaldes* headed municipal districts, or *alcaldias*, of which there were fourteen in New Mexico in 1822. Weber, *Mexican Frontier*, 19.
45. Galisteo is about 20 miles south of Santa Fe.
46. "San Cristobal Canyon" runs east from Galisteo.
47. "Vaca Spring on the mesa" is about 20 miles southeast of Santa Fe.
48. The command marched from Vaca Spring over Glorieta Mesa to the present-day town of Rowe, and followed the Pecos River Valley to the "frontier town" of San Miguel del Vado.
49. Alameda is about seven miles north of Albuquerque. It was a Spanish settlement at the time.
50. The "wilderness" was the eastern plains of New Mexico.
51. Bernal Spring is about 25 miles southwest of Las Vegas, present town of Bernal, New Mexico.
52. Becknell recorded that on Nov. 12, "[W]e struck a trail, and found several other indications which induced us to believe that the inhabitants have here herded their cattle and sheep." There were no settlements east of San Miguel in 1821, though pastoralists from there tried but failed to establish a new community on the Gallinas River near present-day Las Vegas that year. "The meadows" of the various river bottoms throughout this area were frequented by herders, as illustrated in the diary of Captain Francisco Salazar, whose company of troops was camped near the confluence of the Mora and Sapello rivers during the second week of May 1821. They, too, were tracking Indians. Salazar encountered both wandering cattle and cattlemen in this vicinity. "Diary of Captain Francisco Salazar," SANM II, Twitchell No. 2978, NMSRCA, Santa Fe.
53. "Puertocito" is known today as Kearny Gap, about two miles south of Las Vegas. "Piedra Lumbre" (flint stone) creek is called today Agua Zara through the gap. There has been much speculation about the size of Becknell's group. Ralph E. Twitchell thought there were five men altogether, while Marc Simmons has put the number as high as thirty. Twitchell, *Leading Facts*, II, 103; & Simmons, *Opening the Santa Fe Trail*, 2. With only five other men, Becknell was lucky he did not encounter Indians. This is another point which emphasizes that Becknell was bound for Santa Fe. Ezekiel Williams undoubtedly would have warned Becknell about the danger to his small party from Indians who could easily overwhelm them.
54. Gallego probably moved east through the gap and met Becknell and his party on the plains. If they returned to the gap to camp, it was probably on the western side where there was wood for fires and shelter by the Crestone.
55. With these words, Gallego was probably disobeying an order from Melgares, thinking that this was important enough to do so and that he would be forgiven.
56. Vicente Villanueva was Alcalde at San Miguel del Vado in 1818. SANM II, Twitchell No. 2755, NMSRCA.

57. Becknell found a "Frenchman" in San Miguel who could interpret for him and accompanied the group of Americans into Santa Fe, where Becknell arrived on the 16th. He had an interview with Governor Melgares who said he would like to see more American trade.
58. Corporal Juan Lucero was no ordinary soldier. He accompanied Pedro Vial to Natchitoches in 1788 at a young age, perhaps 15 or 16. He was with Vial on his attempted expedition to the Pawnees in 1805, was sent to make peace with the Kiowas in late 1805, returned to the Kiowas twice in 1806, met with the Cuampe and Flecha Rayada tribes in 1807 near present-day Colorado Springs, Colorado, was on an expedition to the Arkansas River from November 25, 1808, to March 5, 1809, accompanied expeditions to the Comanches in 1810, 1816, and twice in 1818, and made a trip to the "Indians" in 1819. He was described in 1806 as a native of New Mexico, "of very good conduct, of spirit and demonstrated valor, of knowledge in the field and of a disposition suitable of command; his height, 5 feet, 1 inch; 17 years, 20 days of service. He knows how to read." It is estimated he was 49 or 50 in 1821. Lucero was not only a good soldier, but an excellent frontiersman by any standards. Loomis and Nasatir, *Pedro Vial*, 449-454; & Alfred B. Thomas, "Documents Bearing upon the Northern Frontier of New Mexico, 1818-1819," *NMHR*, 4 (April 1929): 156.
59. "Pecos Canyon" is present Pecos Arroyo just east of Las Vegas. Gallego probably accompanied Villanueva part way back to San Miguel and then returned to Las Vegas. The reason to choose present Pecos Arroyo for Gallego's "Canon del Pecos" is that, during his expedition, Gallego and the troops marched an average of 16.8 miles a day or approximately 1.17 miles an hour. It would be totally out of line to march from the river valley of the Pecos, down to San Miguel, to La Junta in the next day's travel, a distance of about 38 miles in one day.
60. The diary reads: "*las caidas del rio del Sapeyo*." "*Caida*" can be translated as "falls, drop, or descent." "Rapids" might be the best translation, even though the location on the Sapello River cannot be pinpointed. The Sapello River heads in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains near Rociada, New Mexico, and joins the Mora at present Watrous, New Mexico.
61. Present Watrous, New Mexico, known as La Junta during Santa Fe Trail days. The Mora River heads in the mountains above Mora, New Mexico. Its valley was used to travel from Picuris Pueblo over the mountains and out onto the Plains.
62. The "Turkey Mountains" are about 10 miles north of Watrous.
63. The "gap in the Taos Mountains" is where the Rayado River comes out of the mountains west of Rayado, New Mexico. For most Spanish expeditions to the plains, this was where they came out of the mountains from Taos and headed for Laughlin Peak. A trail also ran from here to Point of Rocks, New Mexico, which was used by *Ciboleros* and later Santa Fe Trail travelers.
64. Based on past distances traveled, "Chokecherry Creek" had to be within 20 miles of La Junta. There are a couple of possibilities, but present Vermejo Creek, south of Wagon Mound, New Mexico, is the best candidate based on the next two days' travel.
65. "Red River" is the present Canadian River. Although we do not know exactly where Becknell crossed this stream, it was likely between present-day Springer and Maxwell, New Mexico.
66. In essence, Sgt. Garcia was sent across the Canadian River in the direction of Laughlin Peak, which is about 13 miles southeast of Capulin, New Mexico.
67. The location of "Wolf Spring (flowing)" is not known. Based on the travel of the next day, it could be placed about 10 miles south of Rayado on what would later be called the Mountain Route of the Santa Fe Trail, at the mouth of what today is called Aguaje Canyon.
68. Rayado and Gonzalitos Mesas are prominent landmarks southwest of Springer, New Mexico, with Rayado Mesa closest to the mountains.
69. "The Spring of Rayado Mesa" is at present Miami Lake, about 3.5 miles southeast of Rayado.
70. They were at a crossing of the Canadian essentially somewhere between Springer and Maxwell.
71. "Big Mountain," known as Sierra Grande today, is about 5 miles slightly southwest of Des Moines, New Mexico. They were following the corridor of the Indian-Spanish trail to the plains.
72. "Windy hills" are the Chico Hills, just north of Chico and south of Laughlin Peak.
73. "Lower River" of the Rio Grande, means this company came from the vicinity of Albuquerque, Belen, or was perhaps the group from Alameda.
74. No matter which way traveled, the river has to be present Carrizo Creek, which was known as Rock Creek in the time of the Santa Fe Trail.
75. The "Jicara" was probably a reference to the Jicarilla River, which is probably present Ponil Creek. Gunnerson, "Documentary Clues," 57.