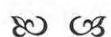


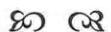
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Account of the Discovery
of the Mines, 1599

by Juan de Oñate

DOCUMENT NO. AJ-013



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C O N T E N T S

Certificate of Oñate; Captain Farfán.....	239
The Jumanos.....	241
Description of the Mines.....	244
Attestations of Quesada and Others.....	247

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ACCOUNT OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE MINES, 1599¹

IN the pueblo of Cibola, which the natives call Cuni,² on the 11th day of the month of December, 1598, Don Juan de Oñate, governor, captain-general, and adelantado of the kingdoms and provinces of this New Mexico, explorer, pacifier, and colonizer of the same for the king our Lord, said that his Lordship sent Marcos Farfan de los Godos, his captain of the guard and of the horses, with eight companions,³ from the province of Mohoqui, which is twenty leagues distant from this one, to make a certain exploration of settlements and mines, which captain returned to his presence on this day to report his experiences on the said expedition and journey. And in order that this may be on record forever and a memorandum of it be had he ordered evidence taken, and that the said captain of the guard and his companions should testify under oath and give an account of all that had occurred and of what they had discovered. Thus he provided and ordered, and signed with his name. DON JUAN DE OÑATE. Before me, JUAN VELARDE, secretary.

And after the foregoing, in the said pueblo of Cibola, on the 11th day of the month of December, 1598, the said Señor governor caused to appear before him Marcos Farfan de los Godos, captain of the guard, to whom oath was administered in the name of God our Lord and with the sign of the cross, in due form, and in virtue of which he promised to tell the

¹ "Relaciones que envió Don Juan de Oñate de algunas jornadas," ff. 11-20 (manuscript in Lowery Collection). For reference to this expedition see *Ytinerario*, pp. 275-276.

² Zuñi.

³ The eight companions were: Captain Alonso de Quesada, Captain Bartolomé Romero, Francisco Vido, Antonio Conte de Herrera, Sargento Hernan Martín, Marcos García, Juan Rodríguez, and León de Ysasti. See *post*, p. 248.

truth. The foregoing order¹ having been read to him, the witness said that he had set out² with the said eight companions from the province of Mohoqui at the order of his Lordship in the month of November of this year. They travelled six leagues³ towards the west through a land of sand dunes without timber, and where they camped for the night they found a small spring of water, where the horses could not drink, although there was plenty of water for the men. Next morning they set out from this place in the same direction, and having travelled about three leagues they found a river⁴ which flowed towards the north, of moderate width and carrying considerable water, with many cottonwoods, level banks, and little pasture.

And travelling on in the same direction they reached the slope of a mountain range⁵ in time to camp for the night, having gone about another [three] leagues.⁶ They camped without water, and the next morning they set out from this place; and after going two leagues they arrived at a grove of small pines, and at a very deep pool,⁷ which was ample to water all the horses and more if there had been more. Travelling on for two leagues along the mountain range, which was covered with snow, they camped for the night on a slope where was found a small amount of grass for the horses. They

¹ *Cabeça de proceso*. This is the technical name applied to the account and order constituting the first paragraph above.

² They set out on November 17. See p. 237.

³ The *Ytinerario*, p. 276, gives a summary of the route to the mines, taken obviously from this document. Farfán's general route and the general region of the terminus of his route are quite clear from the topographical data given. The direction was west-southwest. The terminus was evidently just east or just west of the Big Sandy River, the indications pointing rather to the former. The distance covered is given by Farfán as thirty-five leagues. The air-line distance is about two hundred miles, and by the trails more than that. Farfán's leagues therefore, average about six miles. Espejo, who clearly went to the same region, gave the distance as forty-five leagues.

⁴ The Little Colorado.

⁵ The San Francisco Mountain. They passed south of this mountain, and apparently not far from Flagstaff.

⁶ The *Ytinerario* supplies the omission here.

⁷ Southwest of Flagstaff on one of the old trails there is a laguna, which may have been the place where Farfán camped. In the same general locality, on the old trails, there were several springs, as Antelope Spring, Volunteer Spring, Snively's Holes, but a study of the map points to Laguna as the place mentioned.

camped without water. After they had unsaddled the horses and placed the sentinels, two of the Indians whom they were taking as guides said that they knew where there was water very near there, and that they wanted to go and bring some in some gourds. But the witness did not give his consent, as he feared they would flee unless accompanied by a trustworthy person, and accordingly Captain Alonso de Quesada went with them.

He took the Indians ahead of him, and after travelling about three arquebus shots from where we were lodged the Indians saw lights and dwellings,¹ and signalled to the captain that there were the Jumana Indians. The captain, finding himself so near, told them to go over there, and having arrived there he found many Indians and Indian women in four or five *rancherías*, who surrounded them with their bows and arrows. The captain told them that he had a message for them; that he was not coming to do them harm, but, instead, to give them of what he had. Thereupon they were reassured, and two Indian chiefs of the said *ranchería* came on with the captain and friendly Indians to where the witness and his companions were. The witness treated them very well, showing them marks of friendship, caressing them, giving them beads and other presents. He then sent them back to their own *rancherías*, telling them by signs that they should reassure the rest of the people, because they were not going to injure them but to be their friends, and to find out where they secured the ore which the witness showed them.

Next morning the witness and his companions went to the said *ranchería*,² which he found deserted, there being in it only the two chiefs and a woman. They received him with signs of gladness, and as a token of peace gave them pulverized ore and a great quantity of ground dates,³ which is their food, and a few pieces of venison. The witness in return gave them more beads and presents, and begged them to go with him to show him where they got that ore. One of the Indian chiefs complied willingly.

¹ *Ranchos*.

² This is the *Ranchería* de los Gandules given in the *Ytinerario*, which supplies the distance of two and one-half leagues.

³ *Datil*.

They left their *ranchería*, going up a smooth hill. They reached a plain and a very large pine grove with many large and tall pines, which is the beginning of the mountain range, all of which, as stated, was covered with snow which reached to their knees. The Indian chief always going ahead as a guide, they travelled about six leagues along the mountain range,¹ and at the end of this distance they found a rather low valley, without snow and with very good grass, water, and wood, where they spent the night.² Leaving this place, on the following day they came in sight of another *ranchería* because they saw the smoke from it. And when they came near it the witness took with him three companions, leaving the rest of the men and the horses behind, and went to the said *ranchería*, where he found a petty Indian chief with about thirty Indians, stained with ores of different colors, and as many as eight or ten dwellings in which were women and children. The witness dismounted and embraced the captain and the other Indians, making signs of peace and friendship, giving them beads and presents of what he had with him, as a token of peace, and making a cross with his fingers, which is the sign they make when they desire peace. The Indians gave them powdered ores of different colors and apparently rich. The witness, after reassuring them, and peace having been made, begged the captain to bring the women and children there, as he wanted to see them and give to them of what he had with him. The Indian chief did so, and within about an hour he brought about forty women and as many children, all dressed in the skins of deer, otter, and other animals, with which they clothe themselves.

The Indian who had come as guide, saying that he felt too tired to go on to the exploration upon which they were going, remained in this *ranchería*, and begged the chief of it to go on with the witness and his two companions. He con-

¹ They were evidently now crossing the range south of Bill Williams Mountain.

² The *Ytinerario* calls this the *Ranchería de los Cruzados*, and gives the distance as two leagues. Espejo told of the *Cruzados* on the way to the Arizona mines, a people with small crosses on their heads. See Espejo, p. 187, above. They have been identified as the *Yavapai* (see Bandelier, in *Arch. Inst. of America Papers*, III. 109).

sented willingly, and after they had given them venison and of what they had in their *ranchería*, they set out from it, travelling through a land of pine groves, with the finest of pastures, many cattle, very good prickly pears, and many and large maguey patches, where they saw Castilian partridges, a great many deer, hares, and rabbits.¹

Having travelled about three leagues, they saw the smoke of another *ranchería*. Taking ahead of them the other chief as a guide, he said that he wished to go ahead to notify the *ranchería*, so that they would not become excited, and to tell them that we were men who would do them no harm but were friends. The witness permitted the Indian to go. He reached the *ranchería*, which was about a league² beyond, and reassured the people thereof, who came out to meet him. They arrived at the *ranchería* and received the chief of it and the rest with signs of joy and peace. They found many women and children, to whom they gave of what they had with them, and the Indians gave them powdered ore of different colors, *mescale*, and venison.

As it was late they camped for the night about two arquebus shots from there, on the bank of a river³ of fair width and much water, with good pasture and a cottonwood grove. The following morning, as the chief whom they had as a guide wished to return, the witness begged the chief of this *ranchería* to go with him and show him the mine from which they got ores. He consented willingly, and having travelled about four leagues through very fine, fertile land, with extensive pastures, they came to another river, wider than the first, where they spent the night. This river flowed almost from the north. They crossed it, and having travelled about two leagues they came to another river, much larger, which flowed from the north. They crossed it, and having travelled about

¹ Compare Espejo's description of the country near the mines.

² The *Ytinerario* does not account for this league.

³ This would seem to correspond with the northwestern branch of the Verde River, which was crossed between Bill Williams Mountain and Prescott. The old trail from Antelope Springs, south of Bill Williams Mountain, crossed the river at Postal's Ranch. It is just possible that they crossed Black Forest farther north, and went through old Camp Hualpai, where the trail forked, but I doubt it.

a league, arrived at the slopes of some hills¹ where the Indian chief said the mines were whence they got the ore.

And arriving at the slope of the said hills, the banks of the said rivers were seen, with deep ravines having the finest of pastures, and extensive plains. As it was late, they camped that night on the slope of these hills, at a spring of water which issued from one of them, very large and carrying much water, almost hot.² Here six Indians from different rancherías of those mountains joined him, and next morning they took him up to the said mine, which was at a good height, although one could go up to it on horseback, for these Indians had opened up a road. There they found an old shaft, three *estados* in depth, from which the Indians extracted the ores for their personal adornment and for the coloring of their blankets, because in this mine there are brown, black, water-colored, blue, and green ores. The blue ore is so blue that it is understood that some of it is enamel. The mine had a very large dump, where there were many and apparently very good ores, which are the ones which have been enumerated.

The vein is very wide and rich and of many outcrops, all containing ores. The vein ran along the hill in plain view and crossed over to another hill which was opposite, where they took from twenty-eight to thirty claims for themselves and for the companions who remained at the camp as a guard to the Señor governor. At one side of the said hill they found another vein of more than two arms' length in width, which they named the vein of San Francisco. Here they took fourteen or fifteen claims. On the other side of the other part of the outcrop³ they found another vein which they named San Gabriel, wide and rich in ores, where they took fourteen or fifteen more claims; and on the other side, on the hill of the outcrop, they found another vein which they named the

¹ I am in doubt as to whether the last stream was the Big Sandy or the Spenser River, a branch of the Santa María, but the indications seem to point to the latter. In that case the mines were in the Aquarius Range; in the other case, they were in the Hualpai Range. Both of these ranges have become mining districts.

² The identification of this spring may become the key to the locality.

³ *La descubridora*.

vein of Guerfanos, wide and rich in ores, where they took ten or twelve more claims.

As it was late they descended and slept at the said camp and spring of water; and complying with the instructions which he had from his Lordship he assembled all the Indians he could in order to learn about everything else which there was in the country. When everybody from the rancherías and the mountains had come together he asked them through what country the three rivers which they had seen came, and where they went. They said and indicated by signs, joining them on the ground with a rod, that the said three rivers and two others which joined them further on,¹ all united and passed through a gorge which they pointed out to them, and that beyond the gorge the river was extremely wide and copious, and that on the banks on both sides there were immense settlements of people who planted very large fields of maize, beans, and gourds in a very level country of good climate; and (referring to the snow which they showed him on the mountain which they were leaving behind) they said that neither on the mountain of the mines nor in the settlements of the rivers does it ever snow, because the climate is mild and almost hot. Conditions described on this river and settlements were understood to extend to the sea, which they showed to be salty by dissolving a small quantity of salt in water in order to demonstrate the condition of the sea water.

When the witness asked them where they got some shells which they wore suspended from their noses and foreheads, which are pearl-bearing, they said by signs that they got them from this said salt water, which is thirty days' journey from their rancherías, which, according to their rate of travel, must be eighty or ninety leagues. And making signs with the hands, placing one hand over the other in the form of a shell, they opened it on one side. They said that there these shells were to be found, and that they opened them and found some white and round objects as large as grains

¹ This confirms my opinion that the mines were on the eastern slope of the Aquarius Mountains. In that case the Big Sandy and the main Colorado would be referred to as the other two streams uniting with the three to form the Colorado.

of maize; and that it is from the shells that they get them; and that in that neighborhood there are many and very large settlements.

After this was over the captain and his companions set about returning to examine and consider with care the qualities of the country and the mines wherein they found, as has been stated, the said veins, besides many other reports which the Indians give. The veins are so long and wide that half of the people of New Spain can have mines there. At a quarter of a league, half a league, or a league, there is a very great quantity of water from the said rivers and spring, where many water mills can be constructed; with excellent water wheels, and water can be taken out with the greatest ease.

Near to the very mines themselves are enormous pines, oaks, mesquites, walnuts, and cottonwoods, and, as has been stated, great pastures and plains and fine lands for cultivation. The maize which the Indians gather gives most excellent evidence of the bounty of the land, because this witness got down to cut off with his own hand a stalk of that which the Indians had planted and had, and although it appeared to have been broken in the middle, yet this half which he brought to his Lordship so that he might see it was two fathoms and three spans long, and as thick as the wrist. In all this land the good pasture lands continue, and there is much game, as deer, hares, and partridges, and although no fish were seen in the river, because of the little we saw of it, they found on it many Indians clothed in the skins of beavers, which were very fine and well tanned. They found two lizards hung in a ranchería to dry. In the groves on the rivers mentioned there are a great number of birds of all kinds, which is an excellent indication of the good climate of the country, and from what this witness saw in it, the said mountains are without doubt the richest in all New Spain, for the witness has been in almost all the mines of New Spain and he has seen that this country has the same qualities, especially the rich mines of San Andrés.

Hereupon the witness and his companions returned to report to his Lordship all that they had seen and explored and all that they had heard of, as he did. He returned to his presence for two reasons: first, because they lacked pro-

visions, and secondly, because the time allotted for the said journey was up. And this which he has stated is what occurred, what he saw and learned, and is the truth by the oath which he has taken. And it being read to him he reaffirmed and ratified it. He said he was about forty years of age, and was a legally qualified witness. And he signed in his own name with his Lordship. MARCOS FARFAN DE LOS GODOS. Don JUAN DE OÑATE. Before me, JUAN VELARDE, secretary.¹

Witness. And after the above, in the said pueblos of Cibola, on the 11th day of the month of December, 1598, his Lordship the governor caused to appear before him Captain Quesada, to whom he administered oath in the name of God our Lord and with a sign of the cross, in legal form, and in virtue of which he promised to tell the truth. And being shown the above order and the narrative given regarding this matter by Captain Marcos Farfan de los Godos on this day, he declared that the said account is true, and that all is literally as happened, and is what occurred to them in the said journey, and that, in addition to what the said Captain Marcos Farfan de los Godos declared, they found and discovered another rich vein about a half-league from the other mines, towards the north, which they named the vein of La Cuesta; and also another, a quarter-league away, more or less.

This witness found two veins where he and the others who were with him took up claims; and he understands and is very certain that there are an infinite number of mines throughout all that land, because the indications are extremely favorable. He said that this is the truth, and he

¹On the return to New Mexico, the samples of ore brought from the west were distributed among various men of mining experience, to be assayed. On February 18, 1599, at the pueblo of San Juan Baptista, Oñate ordered declarations regarding the results. It was stated that as Farfán had set out from Moqui, his party was unprepared with tools, and could only get samples extracted with daggers and knives. Alonso Sánchez, *real contador*, declared that from one sample the assay showed eleven ounces of silver per quintal. In his testimony it is clearly implied that the mines explored by Farfán were the same as those discovered by Espejo. Diego de Çubia, *proveedor general*, also made a declaration, on the basis of an assay, to the effect that he believed the mines to be rich ("Relacion de los ensayes que se hicieron de ciertas minas," MS.).

reaffirmed and ratified it and the account of the said Captain Marcos de los Godos, under the oath which he has taken. He said that he was about thirty years of age, and was a legally qualified witness; and he signed his name with the said governor. ALONSO DE QUESADA. DON JUAN DE OÑATE. Before me, JUAN VELARDE, secretary.

In the pueblo of San Juan Baptista of this New Mexico, on the 15th day of the month of January, 1599, the said Señor governor, for the said inquiry, caused to appear before him Captain Bartolomé Romero, Antonio Conte de Herrera, his chief equerry, Francisco Vido, his chief page, Sargento Hernan Martin, Marcos Garcia, Juan Rodriguez, and León de Ysasti, to whom he administered oath in the name of God our Lord and with the sign of the cross, in legal form; and the foregoing order and the statement and account given by Captain Marcos Farfan de los Godos, and the statement and deposition of Captain Alonso de Quesada being read to them, they all and severally said that the said statement and relation, as rendered and declared, are true and what happened, by the oath which they have taken; and they reaffirmed and ratified the same, and again said and stated it in the form stated and declared by the said captains. And they signed it with their own names, with the said governor. CAPTAIN ROMERO, ANTONIO CONTE DE HERRERA, FRANCISCO VIDO, JUAN RODRIGUEZ, HERMAN MARTIN, LEON DE YSASTI, MARCOS GARCIA, DON JUAN DE OÑATE. Before me JUAN VELARDE, secretary.

In the pueblo of San Juan Baptista of New Mexico on the sixteenth day of the month of January, 1599, his Lordship Governor Don Juan de Oñate, having seen this inquiry, ordered that one, two, and more copies be made, in order to send it to the king our Lord and to his royal council. And this he provided, ordered, and signed with his name. DON JUAN DE OÑATE. Before me JUAN VELARDE, secretary.

This copy was corrected and compared with the original, which remains in possession of the Señor governor who here signed his name; and at his request and order I had this written in the pueblo of San Juan Baptista of this New Mex-

ico on the twenty-second day of the month of February, 1599, the correction being witnessed by Antonio Conte, Cristobal de Herrera, and Francisco de Villalva. In witness whereof I signed and sealed it with the seal of his Lordship. Don JUAN DE OÑATE. In testimony of the truth. JUAN VELARDE, secretary.