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of the Flight of  
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from New Mexico

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## ACCOUNT BY AN INDIAN OF THE FLIGHT OF UMAÑA AND LEYBA FROM NEW MEXICO<sup>1</sup>

At the pueblo of San Juan Bautista, New Mexico, on February 16, 1599, Don Juan de Oñate, governor and captain general, . . . said that he had received information that Jusepe, an Indian, a former servant of Antonio Gutiérrez de Umaña, had run away from his service and was now in this pueblo, and therefore he ordered the following inquiry in order to learn from him what he had seen and what places he had visited with Antonio Gutiérrez de Umaña, and also what information he had gathered, in order that all of this could be brought to the attention of the king our lord, his royal councils, and others. DON JUAN DE OÑATE. Before me, JUAN VELARDE, secretary.

*Witness:* At the pueblo of San Juan Bautista, New Mexico, on February 16, 1599, his lordship, the governor, ordered an Indian to appear before him. With the help of Juan de Caso Barahona, interpreter on this expedition, he said that his name was Jusepe Gutiérrez and that he was a native of Culhuacán. He took his oath by God our Lord and a cross in due legal manner and promised to tell the truth. On being questioned about this matter, he said that approximately six years ago, a Spaniard named Antonio Gutiérrez de Umaña spoke to him at his own pueblo and took him away under an agreement whereby he was to serve him in some entradas that he was going to make. Accordingly he followed Umaña as far as the valley of Santa Bárbara,<sup>2</sup> where some people were recruited. With these forces he entered this land and traveled among the pueblos for a year, more or less. His main stay was at the pueblo of San Ildefonso, which lies about three leagues from this pueblo. From there they went inland through the pueblos of the Pecos

1. From a photograph of a copy preserved in the Archivo General de Indias, *Patronato*, legajo 22.

2. In the modern state of Chihuahua.

and Vaquero Indians, where, traveling slowly and resting occasionally, they reached the buffalo in a month. Here at various places they came upon herds of the buffalo, and Indian rancherías, some of them abandoned. Along their route they saw also many marshes, springs, and arroyos with abundant water.

Proceeding on their way toward the north, the farther inland they went, the larger was the number of buffalo they saw. After traveling for fifteen days more by short marches, they reached two large rivers, and beyond them many populous rancherías. Farther on in a plain they came to a very large settlement which must have extended for ten leagues, because they traveled through it for two days, and it must have been two leagues wide, more or less.<sup>3</sup> One of the two rivers they crossed earlier flowed through this pueblo. The houses were built on a frame of stakes, with straw roofs, like jacales. They were built close together, along narrow streets, like alleys. However, in some places between the houses there were fields of maize, calabashes, and beans. The natives were very numerous but received the Spaniards peacefully and furnished them abundant supplies of food. These Indians obtained their sustenance from the buffalo.

On leaving this pueblo and proceeding toward the north, after three days' travel the soldiers came upon such a multitude of buffalo that the plain—which was level, for there are no mountains—was so covered with them that they were startled and amazed at the sight. Continuing farther on they did not find any more Indian rancherías, but found always more buffalo. This witness also says that after they left the pueblo of Pecos they found great numbers of plum trees at five or six places and that they resembled the plum trees of Castile. They found also walnut trees with small nuts. Near a large river some ten days' travel from the said Great Pueblo there were also numerous plum and walnut trees and some white sapotes. The climate here was more temperate. This river was about one-fourth of a league wide, deep and sluggish. They did not dare to cross it.

This deponent saw that after going three days beyond the said Great Pueblo, discord arose between Captain Leyba and

3. This settlement is also described on Oñate's trip to the east in search of Quivira, in 1601. See *American Journeys* at 222. [www.americanjourneys.org](http://www.americanjourneys.org)

Antonio Gutiérrez de Umaña. The latter remained alone in his tent an entire afternoon and morning, writing, and at the end of this time he sent a soldier named Miguel Pérez to call Captain Leyba, who came, dressed in shirt and breeches. Before he reached the tent, Antonio Gutiérrez de Umaña went out to meet him, drew a butcher knife which he carried in his pocket, unsheathed it, and stabbed Captain Leyba twice, from which he soon afterward died. He was buried at once. Then Antonio Gutiérrez de Umaña brought out some papers and showed them to the other men. This witness heard that because Captain Leyba had said that he was going to give Antonio Gutiérrez de Umaña a sound beating with a stick, he killed him. When some Indians who were with the soldiers saw this, five of them, together with this witness, ran away when they reached the aforesaid great river and returned to these pueblos of New Mexico. Some of them became lost on the plains of the buffalo because they got separated from one another. Only this witness and another man came to an Indian ranchería, where they killed his companion. This witness escaped, and in another ranchería nearer this place he was taken prisoner and remained there for a year with the Apache and Vaquero Indians. Then he ran away and reached a place near a pueblo of the Pecos. There he heard that Spanish people had come to these pueblos, and so he came to this pueblo, where he now resides.

This is what happened, under his oath. He ratified his testimony when it was read to him. The general questions of the law did not apply to him other than that he had been a servant of Antonio Gutiérrez de Umaña. This fact did not prevent him from telling the truth, which he did, nor was he coached by anyone. He did not know his age, but appeared to be twenty-seven years old. He did not sign because he did not know how. This statement was signed by his lordship and the interpreter. DON JUAN DE OÑATE. JUAN DE CASSO. Before me, JUAN VELARDE, secretary.

*Witness:* Then, on February 17, 1599, his lordship, the governor, ordered to appear before him the sargento mayor, Vicente de Zaldívar, Diego de Zubía, purveyor general, the caudillo, Francisco Sánchez, and Hernando de Ynojos, all of whom took an oath by God our Lord and a cross in due legal manner and

promised to tell the truth. On being questioned regarding this inquiry, they agreed unanimously that the governor had sent them from this camp to the buffalo country in September of the preceding year, 1598. The first place they reached where Leyba and Antonio de Umaña had been was some twenty-four leagues beyond, more or less; and about thirty-six leagues farther on, they came to another known place. These were thought to be the places used by Captain Leyba and Antonio de Umaña, which they learned by questioning a former servant of the latter, one who had accompanied their party as guide and interpreter, and by finding horse dung and remains of their fires.

This is what they saw and learned, under their oath. They reaffirmed their deposition, and those who knew how affixed their names. DON JUAN DE OÑATE. VICENTE DE ZALDÍVAR. DIEGO DE ZUBÍA. Before me, JUAN VELARDE, secretary.

Corrected and compared with the original by order of the governor (who here signed his name). Copied at the pueblo of San Juan Bautista, New Mexico, on February 20, 1599. Witnesses, Alonso Núñez, Cristóbal de Herrera, and Cristóbal Guillén. In testimony of which I affixed my name and the seal of his lordship. JUAN VELARDE, secretary.