

1-1-1939

## Report of the Finance Committee of the Government of New Spain, March 28, 1692, Officially Authorizing Governor Vargas to Reconquer New Mexico

J. Manuel Espinosa

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr>

---

### Recommended Citation

Espinosa, J. Manuel. "Report of the Finance Committee of the Government of New Spain, March 28, 1692, Officially Authorizing Governor Vargas to Reconquer New Mexico." *New Mexico Historical Review* 14, 1 (1939). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol14/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Mexico Historical Review by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu), [lsloane@salud.unm.edu](mailto:lsloane@salud.unm.edu), [sarahrk@unm.edu](mailto:sarahrk@unm.edu).

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF NEW SPAIN, MARCH 28, 1692,  
OFFICIALLY AUTHORIZING GOVERNOR VARGAS  
TO RECONQUER NEW MEXICO

*Edited by J. MANUEL ESPINOSA*

On February 22, 1691, Don Diego de Vargas took possession of the government at El Paso as governor and captain-general of New Mexico. His principal concern was to reconquer New Mexico immediately and at his own expense, for as in the case of his predecessors since the Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1680, he had been selected to that office with special reference to the reconquest of the lost province. But starvation, costly Indian raids, forays against the Apaches, an unexpected expedition to assist in the Indian wars on the Janos frontier, insufficient soldiery, and general dependence upon the orders of the viceregal government at Mexico City, all helped to delay the proposed expedition until the following year. Finally, in the spring of 1692, Governor Vargas undertook the reconquest of New Mexico. Spain's title to the northern province was revalidated, and 2,214 Indians were baptized. The next year Vargas returned with a large colony to effect the permanent submission of the pueblos to Spanish authority, and to plant there the first Spanish settlements which were to prove permanent.

The document which is here translated is the report of the meeting of the Junta de Hacienda, or Finance Committee, of the government of New Spain officially authorizing Governor Vargas to reconquer New Mexico.<sup>1</sup> This authorization was necessary, for on September 13, 1689, that right had been granted by royal cédula to the adventurer Don Toribio de la Huerta. The Junta de Hacienda was the supreme body in viceregal matters, a miniature Council of the

---

1. *Junta de Hacienda*, Mexico City, May 28, 1692. (Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, *Historia*, tomo 37).

Indies, and was normally composed of twelve members, including the viceroy, its presiding officer: namely, the viceroy, governor, and captain-general of New Spain; two members of the royal audiencia; two alcaldes of the court of criminal law of Mexico City; three accountants of the royal tribunal of expenditures; two officials of the royal treasury of Mexico City; the accountant-general of tributes for New Spain; and the royal fiscal. The customary procedure upon receipt of provincial reports at the office of the viceroyalty of New Spain at that time was to first turn them over to the royal fiscal, who would examine them carefully and make a report to the Junta de Hacienda. The latter would read the suggestions of the royal fiscal, after which the records themselves were re-examined and final decision was made. When it was deemed expedient, military leaders were specially consulted. Where ultimate authority lay in the power of the King and the Council of the Indies, such questions were referred thereto by the Junta de Hacienda.

MEETING OF THE JUNTA DE HACIENDA,  
MAY 28, 1692

The meeting of the Junta de Hacienda, which was called on May 28, 1692, by his most Excellent Sir the Count of Galve, viceroy of New Spain, and attended by the following gentlemen: the director Don Juan de Arechaga; the licentiate Don Francisco Fernández Marmolejo; the judges of the royal audiencia, Don Andrés Pardo de Lago and Don Matheo Fernández de Santa Cruz; the accountants of the royal treasury, Don Sebastian de Guzmán, Don Antonio de Deza y Ulloa, and Don José de Urrutia—the royal officials of this court.

At this meeting five letters written to his Excellency by Don Diego de Vargas Zapata Lujan, governor and captain-general of the provinces of New Mexico, dated March 30, and April 7, 9, and 17 of this year were seen. In the first one he reports his resolve to make the entry which he has under consideration for the conquest of the rebel nations of said province, which he has prepared to the extent that he will be ready to carry out his plan on July 12 of this year,

without any help being necessary other than the fifty soldiers which he has asked for. He makes assurances that with this help he takes upon his own responsibility the carrying out and fulfilment of that which he promises.

He explains in said letter and in the antecedent ones in this regard, the manner and the circumstances which, because of their importance and concerning such a serious matter, he placed under the consideration of his Excellency in order that he might decide which proposal under such circumstances necessitates most particular attention; and the means of succeeding in such a plan. That a similar decision may be made in regard to the *autos* made by virtue of the letter and order, which is at the head of them, with reference to the discovery and investigation of the Sierra Azul, where it is said that quicksilver is found, which threw additional light on the whole matter. Following these diligencias, because they are essential to them, were placed the two royal cédulas of September 4, of '83, and September 13, of '89. At the same time an account was made of their content, and they were read carefully. Their tenor, and that of said *autos*, gave to understand that which should be kept in mind in deciding upon said undertaking.

Having done accordingly, and after conferring upon the matter, they felt, and were in common agreement, that the proposals of said governor of New Mexico for the reduction and conquest of the revolted regions, and the contents of said two royal orders, coming so close one upon the other, and with the same object in mind, seemed to be not merely opportune but rather of special divine providence. For in the first royal cédula is ordered the reconquest of said province with special effort that it be restored with the greatest saving for the royal treasury, and everything else spent in this regard for the maintenance of what is left was approved.

In the second place it was decided that without first conquering New Mexico it would be useless to discourse upon the benefits to be derived from working the quicksilver mine, because it is in hostile country. It was further stated by his Excellency, as his decision, that since the subject who had promised to make an entry and inspection of said mine had not come to this kingdom, his delay was not only detrimental to the royal power but also to the public welfare. At the same time, and with similar determination, as is evidenced by his letters; Don Diego de Vargas, a man of great obliga-

tions and noble blood, offered his services. Whereby, from all that which is referred to, it became quite obvious that the entry for the conquest and restoration of the provinces of New Mexico should be carried out in the manner as planned by said governor and captain-general.

Without a doubt the two royal cédulas mentioned above favored and assisted in this resolution, because it is in accord with the royal will. It is thus understood, for it was expressed with the royal Catholic zeal that the reconquest be carried out, and that the apostate rebels be restored to our Holy Faith. Especially in the second, for he orders that first of all the conquest be assured before seeking the benefits to be derived from working the mines. Also with saving to the royal treasury, for said governor does not ask at the present for any funds, but only for the aid of the fifty soldiers. They are indispensable, as he shows, because of the lack of settlers in that place of whom to avail himself. And these, as shall be arranged, will be from the garrisons of the Parral district which are paid by his Majesty.

The person being the said governor, who is of such excellent qualities, illustrious blood, and obligations, and whose advantages are far greater than those of the aspirant Don Toribio de la Huerta, who, from what we hear, could not live up so well to his promises in the undertaking, for these reasons one may count on the zeal of the governor; for by his valor and great nobility alone he could promise to carry out such a proposal.

His Excellency and all the gentlemen at this meeting give him many thanks. And in order that he may know that with punctuality, in appreciation of his conduct, he shall be granted the aid which he asks, the governor and captain-general at Parral is ordered that upon receipt of a letter from Don Diego de Vargas asking for the fifty soldiers he comply accordingly, drawing them from the four presidios, the newly established ones and the old ones of that kingdom. These fifty men should be allotted proportionally from all the said presidios so that their absence will not be felt too greatly, as will be the case if done in the above manner. They should be sent with their arms and horses, and to the region and place specified by Don Diego de Vargas in order that they be at his disposal and orders. All of this shall be done until the receipt of a letter from his Excellency stating otherwise; in such a way, and with such punctuality is the governor and captain-general of [New] Vizcaya to carry out

the order, that he shall neither postpone nor delay said remission under any pretext, or for any reason. Nor may he question these orders, with the warning that otherwise he will be held seriously to account for it in his residencia; especially for the slightest delay in this particular, which may be expected to be of the greatest value in the service of his Majesty.

This means of recruiting the soldiers to be sent to the place Don Diego de Vargas specifies has been decided upon at this meeting because it is the most convenient, and because Don Diego gives us to understand that they are necessary for the entry. By sending them to where he specifies, he may avail himself of them and use them as he sees fit. In this manner said act of provision is more greatly assured.

It is also resolved at this meeting, concerning the discovery and finding out about the vermilion and quicksilver mine of Sierra Azul, that at the present time no more proceedings and reports are necessary. When Governor Don Diego de Vargas makes the above entry into the villa of Santa Fé he can ask and inquire of others, acting in that manner which as an expert on the subject he thinks best, remitting the evidence to his Excellency when the occasion warrants it.

Also he shall send him news regarding the progress of the entry when he sends to Parral for the soldiers, or whenever he has the opportunity to do so. His good judgment will undoubtedly find a way out of everything, and he will continue his precautions as much so in regard to his person as to the other occasions caused by warfare. And should some difficulties be encountered, that they be overcome in due time, notwithstanding the confidence assured by his good reputation. To all of which will correspond the rewards with which his Majesty, may God spare him, will honor him on receipt of news regarding his acts and wishes in his royal service.

With regard to the residents who have gone out from said provinces of New Mexico, on the part of his Excellency and those in his service, in order that they return, the orders of the fiscal shall be carried out, and under the penalties he deems to impose. And as regards that which has to do with the news of the discovery of the salt licks, the governor is to be thanked. His Excellency is aware of the value this may have in the near future. And also he and the Father Custodian and Fray Antonio Guerra are to be thanked for the

pacification of the three hundred Suma Indians. For this purpose it is ordered that an altar piece, a chalice with a paten, and a bell be sent there in the manner as ordered by the fiscal; and that this be done with all promptness through the office of the factor.

In order that all the points contained in this resolution be known, the respective orders will be sent out, and a copy of the one pertaining to the entry shall be inserted in writing to the said Governor Don Diego de Vargas, in order that he may be informed of its contents. Thus resolved, signed and sealed in the presence of his Excellency.<sup>2</sup>

HIS EXCELLENCY.

SEÑORES ARECHAGA, MARMOLEJO,

PARDO, SANTA CRUZ, GUZMAN,

DEZA, AND URRUTIA.

(Four rubrics.)

---

2. For a full discussion of the various points mentioned in this document which refer to Governor Vargas's activities, see my article on "The Legend of Sierra Azul, with special emphasis upon the part it played in the reconquest of New Mexico," *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, IX, 125-150.