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## LEDGERS OF A SANTA FE TRADER<sup>1</sup>

By LANSING BLOOM

IN THE LONG list of names of Governors of New Mexico not all have been those of men belonging to the military class or whose profession was that of the law. John Greiner, David Merriwether and Henry Connelly, were governors who had previously been engaged in the commerce of the Santa Fé Trail. Manuel Alvarez, some of whose activities in this same trade we are to consider, was never governor of New Mexico in his own right, but he did take an active part in political affairs and was lieutenant governor under Connelly and during his absence acted for him.

Manuel Alvarez was born at Abelgas, Kingdom of Leon, Spain. The year of his birth is not known, but he left home in the year 1818, and five years later we find him leaving Habana for New York City. On September 3, 1824, he received from Governor McNair of Missouri a passport made out for him and eleven other men who were described in the passport as "all citizens of the U. S., traders to Mexico." During this year and the year following, Alvarez made three attempts to secure Mexican citizenship, but all of them were unsuccessful, due possibly to his unfortunate designation as "a citizen of the United States." All twelve names given in this passport are French or Spanish, and at least two of them, Francis Robidoux and Antonio la Marche, were men who later appear in New Mexican annals.

Despite the statement in the above passport, Manuel Alvarez never was a citizen of the United States, and yet for some years in the late 30's and 40's he served as U. S. consul. In the spring of 1850 we find him at the head of the so called "State Party" in company with Calhoun and others, opposed to the military party which had the support of the military governor, Colonel Munroe and such men as St. Vrain, Houghton, and Beaubien. Later in the year he was

1. Read September 9, 1922, at the Meeting of the Southwestern Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at Santa Fé, N. M.. Reprint from *El Palacio*. Vol. XIV, No. 9 (May 1, 1923).

serving as lieutenant governor of the new territory, and he was an unsuccessful candidate for the position of territorial secretary.

Our present interest in Manuel Alvarez, however, has to do with the period from 1834 to 1846, and two ledgers which were kept by him covering a part of the years 1834-44, give an insight into the details of the commerce which went over the old Santa Fe Trail and into the retail business as it was conducted at the western end of that trail. Any one who is at all familiar with commercial activities of that period is familiar with the names of the more famous Santa Fe traders and knows something of that trade in a more or less vague way, but in such ledgers as these one finds numerous details which give light and color to our mental picture of that trade. A sketch is of value, but when lights and shadows can be added the picture is to that degree more interesting and enlightening.

One of these two books records the invoices of three buying trips made by Alvarez to the eastern markets in the winters of 1838-39, 1841-42, and 1843-44. The purchases made on the first of these trips, principally in New York and Philadelphia, show a total valuation of \$9,411.93. An inventory of the caravan at Independence, Missouri, including wagons, oxen, mules, etc., gave an additional estimate of about \$2,500. At the end of this inventory is added a single item, "a tobacco press, \$47."

The second purchasing trip as inventoried in March, 1842, gave a total of \$14,657.44, an increase of approximately 50 per cent over that of the preceding trip. The invoices of the third trip as made out in May, 1844, showed a great falling off. Purchases made in New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Independence, Mo., had a total valuation of only \$4,149.42.

One has but to look over the invoices of goods purchased from various New York and Philadelphia houses to have a very comprehensive idea of the kinds of goods which American traders carried on the shelves of their stores in Santa Fe. Here we find listed all sorts of beads purchased by the gross, which were doubtless used in barter with the Indians

of New Mexico, and here also are listed all sorts of merchandise desired by the soldiers, civilians, and clergy and which were thus secured for them by the traders.

The second book is a day ledger which gives us a different point of view on many names well known in Santa Fe during this period. The very first entry in the book under date of August 1, 1834, is an account with Santiago Abreu, a man then prominent in public affairs, and one who received credit from Alvarez to considerable amounts. The names of three governors are in this day ledger, Francisco Sarracino, Albino Perez, and beginning under date of March 13, 1838, "the most excellent Senor Governor Don Manuel Armijo." Jesus Maria Alarid, Ramon Abreu, Marcelino Abreu, Juan Bautista Vigil, Manuel Doroteo Pino, are the names of others who were prominent at different times in civic affairs. The Reverend Father Castro, Senor Cura Valdez, Curate Leyba and Curate Martinez, were among the ecclesiastics of that time who carried accounts. Among the military officers and troopers who ran accounts we find Alferez Caballero and Captain Don Jose Caballero, mentioned in Gregg's "Commerce of the Prairies," Cadet Baca, Alferez Manuel Baca, Corporal Antonio Sena, Captain Montez, Lieutenants Garcia, Madrigal, Martinez, and Hurtado. Sergeant Antonio Sena, Corporal Marquez and Commandant Blas Hinojos.

Credit was frequently given in small amounts to individuals whom Alvarez designated in unusual ways. We find credit given among others to "the Snake woman;" the tailor (Juan Saavedra); the woman of the candles; teacher Boten; the wood carrier; the silversmith of Abiquiu; an Indian of San Juan; tailor Barela; Juliana the laundress; the wife of Smith; Cecilio; the mother of Jose; a man, neighbor of Melendez; the cross eyed woman; the woman of the shawl; and in July of 1837 two entries which perhaps may be taken as an index of the desperate condition prevailing just previous to the revolution of that fall: "a woman who leaves me her wash tub," and "a woman who leaves me a flat iron."

For several months of 1838 an interesting account was

run with "the illustrious ayuntamiento (city council) of Santa Fe." On April 11th of that year credit of 112 pesos was given to the ayuntamiento as rental of the cienega. A rebate of \$25 is entered apparently for certain damages unknown. Six reales were spent for a quarto of paper, and the balance was all checked out on orders of the secretary or treasurer. The last payment was of 2 pesos to the porter of the ayuntamiento on order of the treasurer.

In June of 1837 an account was started by "The Society," but unfortunately the full name of the society is not given. It started business with a dozen small spoons, a dozen tin plates, a wooden handled knife, and later in the same month they got a dozen more tin plates, two papers of vermilion, a yard of embroidered velvet and four yards of yellow ribbon. The total indebtedness was 7 pesos, 4 reales; and an entry under date of August 31st states that this was a loss to Alvarez by reason of the death of the head of the establishment.

Five other accounts are balanced off on the same date in similar ways. An account of "El Senor Jefe," who in 1837 was Albino Pérez, has the notation "irreparable loss by the death of the debtor the 10th of the current month," the figure 10 being written over with a 9. Similar notations confirm the death in that same uprising of Jesus Maria Alarid, Lieutenant Hurtado, Ramon Abreu and Santiago Abreu. The account against the last named showed a balance of 1371 pesos with the following notation: "irreparable loss by the death of the debtor occasioned on the 10th of the current month in the morning; having passed the night as prisoner in Santo Domingo and his numerous family remaining insolvent." A balance of 53 pesos against Lieutenant Madrigal is closed out with the note: "irreparable loss by his having taken his departure to the outer country without having arranged to pay his creditors, by reason of the recent events." A small account under the name of Captain Zuniga was a similar loss, he having gone to the outer country, leaving as payor Don Santiago Abreu, who was killed on the tenth in or near Santo Domingo. An interesting comment on the character of Alvarez is afforded by the fact

that he extended small credit to "Dona Chepita, widow of Don Santiago Abreu" and to "Dona Peñegrina, widow of Don Ramon Abreu."

Many other well known names besides those already given are found on the pages of this ledger, and others which though less well known are of interest as being those of Americans and Frenchmen who were in New Mexico during these years. Here are the names of Simon Turley, Julian Workman, Carlos Beaubien, Louis and Francois Rubidoux, Antonio Leroux, Antonio La Marche, Juan Fournier, Dona Carmen Alarid de Robidoux, the Senores Gregg and Co., Dr. Josias Gregg, Thomas Roulands, the American Ryder (elsewhere entered as Don Patricio Ryder), Jonathan Ross, Dr. David Waldo, Mr. Sutton (also found as Don Jose Sutton), Blanchard, the blacksmith Boggs, and many others. Among the French names it is interesting to note Auguste and Henrique Masure, each of whom is given the title "doctor." Other men who are given the same title during these years include Drs. Bacon, Hobbs, David Waldo, Josias Gregg, and East.

In short, we have in these two ledgers variegated data from some ten years of the life of a Santa Fe trader. Not only did Manuel Alvarez retail goods over the counter of his store in Santa Fe, but at different times we see either him or his partner, Damaso Lopez, leaving with a stock of goods to sell or barter as far north as Taos and Abiquiu, and at other times carrying on business dealings with firms in Chihuahua to the south. Some facts have been given regarding three purchasing trips which Alvarez made to eastern markets during this period, and copies of letters which he entered in these ledgers would indicate that during the winter of 1843-44 Alvarez crossed to London and possibly also to Paris. There is no record of purchases made in those cities, but there are copies of letters in Spanish, French and English, addressed to firms there as well as a letter written by him from London. He was a man of wide interests and in touch with the events not only of the little world centered around Santa Fe, but with the affairs which were going on in the great tierra afuera.