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# Taos to St. Louis: The Journey of María Rosa Villalpando

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JACK B. TYKAL

It was in 1844 that Josiah Gregg recounted the tale of María Rosa Villalpando, as it was told to him, in his classic, *Commerce of the Prairies*:

The first settler of the charming valley of Taos since the country was reconquered from the Indians is said to have been a Spaniard named Pando, about the middle of the eighteenth century. This Pioneer of the North, finding himself greatly exposed to the depredations of the Comanches, succeeded in gaining the friendship of that tribe, by promising his infant daughter, then a beautiful child, to one of their chiefs in marriage. But the unwilling maiden having subsequently refused to ratify the contract, the settlement was immediately attacked by the savages and all were slain except the betrothed damsel who was led into captivity. After living some years with the Comanches on the great prairies, she was bartered away to the Pawnees, of whom she was eventually purchased by a Frenchman of St. Louis. Some very respectable families in that city are descended from her; and there are many people yet living who remember with what affecting pathos the old lady was wont to tell her tale of woe. She died but a few years ago.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels* (31 vols., Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), 19: 285.

Here is a rousing tale with all the elements of romance, tragedy, and adventure captured in a few short paragraphs. But what truth is there to the tale? Gregg was not always one to let accuracy stand in the way of a good story, but in this case he remained true to the story as he understood it. That it was a combination of two separate events was not his fault. The principal players in Gregg's tale are María Rosa Villalpando, the daughter of the Taos settler, "Pando," and her rescuer from Indian captivity, Jean Sale dit Lajoie, a founder of St. Louis.<sup>2</sup> Gregg was correct in placing his "Pando" in the Taos valley in the mid-eighteenth century, but his settler was far from the first in the valley. The massacre about which he wrote did take place in 1760.

Gregg's greatest error lies in having the right players in the wrong drama. In 1777 an Indian attack and massacre of a very similar nature took place at Tomé, New Mexico, and the circumstances of that attack are far more plausible with respect to the promise of a young girl to an Indian chief.<sup>3</sup> In simplest terms, according to the reports of her age at her death, María Rosa Villalpando was born in either 1723 or 1726. If she were the infant daughter promised to the Comanche chief, her family would have had to settle in the valley prior to 1730, and she would have been either thirty-four or thirty-seven years old at the time of the 1760 massacre. Her father, Gregg's "Pando," was sixteen years old in 1726, and roughly twenty years from becoming a resident of the Taos valley.

Forbes Parkhill in his *The Blazed Trail of Antoine Leroux* repeats the Gregg tale, but to account for the age discrepancy has the settler, Pando, promising his granddaughter in marriage. Throughout this biography of Antoine Leroux, Parkhill commits many errors of fact with respect to the story of María Rosa Villalpando, perhaps the most glaring being the statement that Leroux was her grandson.

The purpose, then, of this narrative is to relate, as best can be done in the absence of so many records, the story of the Villalpando family and to place the main characters in context historically with respect to the Taos massacre of 1760. Another intent is to question the accepted age of María Rosa Villalpando Sale at her death, and to at least suggest the likelihood of other possibilities. For the moment,

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2. There are various spellings of both names found in the records: among them are Villalpando, Vialpando, Pando, Videpane, Vidalpane, and Vidalpando, and both Salle Sale, and Jajoie, La Joie, Lajoie or La Joye. Sale, or Salle, is pronounced "sahlay."

3. Marc Simmons, *Taos to Tome: True Tales of Hispanic New Mexico* (Albuquerque: Adobe Press, 1978), 37-39.

however, and in keeping with the examination of the Gregg tale, let us accept that she was born in either 1723 or 1726.

In 1680 the Indians of the northern pueblos tired of Spanish rule and in a successful uprising drove their conquerors from New Mexico. Most fled to El Paso, and it was not until 1692 that any of them were emboldened to return to their former homes. Even following their return there was sporadic fighting and continued unrest until 1695.<sup>4</sup> Gregg's "Pando" was not among those returning in those early years; however, his parents were.

The coming of the Villalpando family to the Taos valley was somewhat round-about, but had its beginnings in 1710 when Cristóbal de la Serna became a landowner as the recipient of a vast grant of land lying just below the Taos pueblo. From a point about a mile south of the present town of Taos, his grant extended southward roughly ten miles to the Picurís mountains. On the east it touched Ojo Caliente and reached a bit more than three miles westward to the middle road to Picurís.<sup>5</sup> The Serna grant encompassed about thirty-five square miles, and the major settlement there today is the village of Rancho de Taos, near the site of what was once the Villalpando home.

Shortly after he was given his grant, and before he had taken up residence on his new lands, de la Serna became the military commander of the Presidio of Santa Fe. Occupancy was a condition of such grants. De la Serna, however, claimed his duties required his presence in Santa Fe and thus prevented his establishing residency. This, at least, was his argument in 1715 when he requested a revalidation of his grant. His request was granted, yet he still had not established residency by 1720, when he was killed while on a punitive expedition against the Pawnees. In 1724 de la Serna's children sold the grant to Diego Romero.<sup>6</sup>

Diego Romero was part Indian and throughout his life referred to himself as a "coyote" (the Taos pueblo Indians called him "el Coyote"). In popular usage the term identified one who was of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry.<sup>7</sup> Romero and his sister Ana María were the children of Alonso Cadimo and María de Tapia, both of whom were ser-

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4. Myra Ellen Jenkins, "Taos Pueblo and Its Neighbors 1540-1847," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 41 (April 1966), 89-90.

5. Jenkins, "Taos Pueblo," 91.

6. Myra Ellen Jenkins, "Cristobal de la Serna Grant," 2, and Deposition by Malcolm Ebright, p. 1, in Records of the Surveyor General, Case #158, Trial Brief, State Records and Archives Center, Santa Fe. There is some confusion as to whether the children were sons Juan and Sebastian, or daughters Juana and Sebastiana: interview with Dr. Myra Ellen Jenkins, September 1987.

7. Jenkins, "Cristobal de la Serna Grant," 3. Fray Angelico Chavez in Margaret L.

vants at the hacienda of Felipe Romero, and who took their employer's name for their own. It is María de Tapia who is known to have brought the Indian heritage to the family, although it is not beyond the realm of possibility that her husband was also of mixed ancestry. Alonso Cadimo Romero was dead before the 1680 revolt, but during that uprising his widow fled to El Paso with her two children. She was not to return to New Mexico until 1693.

In the years following their return, María de Tapia Romero and her daughter Ana María remained in Santa Fe. Diego Romero, however, struck out on his own and gave evidence of his presence in the Taos Valley as early as 1714. There he registered a livestock brand and gave his residence as the Pueblo de San Gerónimo.<sup>8</sup> Ten years later he bought the de la Serna grant.

The year after the family's return from El Paso, Ana María Romero married a Spanish soldier of the Santa Fe garrison, Juan de la Villa el Pando (which was later contracted to Villalpando). Pando seems to have been one of the one-hundred soldiers who accompanied the thirty-five families on their return to Santa Fe from El Paso in 1693. Because no mention of Pando's military title is made in any documents, it would appear he was a common soldier in the ranks.

Juan Pando and Ana María had four known children, Ambrosio, Pablo Francisco, Juan Rosalia, and Catalina. Pablo Francisco Villalpando was born in 1710, the same year de la Serna was given his land grant, and was both the father of María Rosa and the "Pando" of Josiah Gregg.<sup>9</sup>

Juan de la Villa el Pando was dead by 1718.<sup>10</sup> For reasons, and at a date, unknown, the family pulled up stakes in Santa Fe and followed the south-to-north migration route toward the northern settlements. They stopped for a number of years in the San Juan area. By that time the name had been contracted to Villalpando, as evidenced by that spelling in the church records for the Rio Arriba (present-day Alcade) baptism of two of Pablo Francisco Villalpando's children—Pablo in 1733

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Buxton, *The Family of Lucero Godoi, Early Records* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Genealogical Society, 1981), 2a, defined a "coyote" as one of half European and half Spanish ancestry. He noted, however, the improper use was far more common and accepted.

8. Jenkins, "Cristobal de la Serna," 3.

9. Fray Angelico Chavez, *Origins of New Mexico Families in the Spanish Colonial Period* (Santa Fe: Historical Society of New Mexico, 1954), 312. Don Carlos Fernandez, "Inventories of the Goods of Marcel Torres, and Division of them made by Don Carlos Fernandez, Alcade Mayor of La Canada. Year of 1763," *Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, 987, p. 33, State Records and Archives Center, Santa Fe.

10. Chavez, *Origins*, 312. Also, the parish record of Ambrosio Villalpando's marriage on October 16, 1718, identified him as the son of the deceased Juan.

and Ana María in 1735. Pablo Francisco Villalpando's brother, Juan Rosalia, was married in Santa Cruz in 1738. Other parish entries identify various family members as being in San Juan, Embudo, and Río Arriba in those years. It is not until the 1750 census that the family is recorded as being in the Taos area. They probably moved into the Taos Valley in the early to mid-1840s, and once there, settled on Diego Romero's grant as part of the larger Romero family, a common manner of settlement in those times.

Not surprisingly, most of the Spanish settlers preferred to live in the immediate vicinity of the more heavily populated Taos pueblo for both safety and convenience. Not so the Romero clan, including the Villalpando family, for they established their ranchos on the Río de las Trampas and the Río Don Fernando, several miles south of the pueblo. In 1744 a visiting friar reported only four ranches in the Taos Valley with ten Spanish families, most of them Romeros.<sup>11</sup>

The Villalpando family, including María Rosa, was a part of the greater Romero clan in the Taos Valley in 1744, assuming the approximate date of the family's move. She was at that time about eighteen years old. Her origins are obscure, and her age is uncertain by at least three years. She knew her father was Pablo Francisco Villalpando, but she could only identify her mother as "of the name Martine."<sup>12</sup> Many of the early New Mexico parish records have been lost or destroyed and no birth or baptismal record could be located in those parish records still available. The parish record of her death gave her age as 104; however, two St. Louis newspapers gave her age as 107 in reporting her death.<sup>13</sup> It is from these reports that the estimates of her age with respect to the Gregg tale are made. There is ample reason to doubt the accuracy of these reports if one applies them to her age at marriage and at the birth of her children.

In a deposition given in a 1763 legal matter, Pablo Francisco Villalpando gave his age as fifty-three, thus establishing that he was born in 1710.<sup>14</sup> So, at the time of the birth of his daughter he was at most sixteen years old. It is not impossible to father a child at that age, but he apparently was not married at that time. The earliest record of Pablo

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11. Jenkins, "Taos Pueblo," 97.

12. Marriage Contract between Jean Salle and Marie Rose Videlpane, July 3, 1770, Instrument #2023, Old St. Louis Archives, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

13. St. Louis Cathedral Book of Sepultures, 166. [St. Louis] *Missouri Republican*, August 3, 1830, and the *St. Louis Beacon*, August 5, 1830. Both Myra Ellen Jenkins and Richard Salazar of the New Mexico State Archives believe her reported age is in error: interviews during September 1987.

14. Fernandez, "Inventories," 33.

Francisco Villalpando's marriage is to Francisca Luxan in 1731, when he was twenty-one. The absence of any records connecting Pablo Francisco Villalpando and a woman named Martine certainly encourages speculation about the circumstances of María Rosa's birth. There was an extensive Martin family in the San Juan area, and mention is frequently made of various members of that family as witnesses or godparents to Villalpando marriages and births in the 1730s. Pablo Francisco Villalpando and María Martin were, for instance, witnesses to the marriage of his brother, Juan Rosalia, to Rosa Valdes in 1738. The Valdes family was also prominent in that area during those years.

By 1750, when the extended Villalpando clan was counted in the census of the Taos Valley, Pablo Francisco Villalpando had a sizeable number of people sharing his household. Along with his wife Francisca Luxan, there were his children Ana María, María, and Pablo, and his servants Ana María, María Villalpando, María Antonia, Toribio, and Antonio Villalpando.<sup>15</sup> In the absence of more positive identification it is not possible to identify which, if either, María in the household is the María Rosa of Gregg's tale. To further complicate the matter, Juan Rosalia Villalpando also lived in the Taos Valley in 1750 and a María Rosa is identified as his daughter in the census. Pablo Francisco Villalpando was carried as Spanish in the census record, yet his brother, Juan Rosalia, was identified as a coyote.

Among the other residents counted in the pueblo in 1750, and identified as a single male, was Joseph Xaques. Adding to the many unanswered questions, there was a Juan José Jacquez living in Río Arriba in 1754.<sup>16</sup> There is no indication that the Río Arriba Jacquez was married at the time. If either was the man that María Rosa married (or more likely, they are one and the same), then it was sometime between 1750 and 1759 that Xaques and María Rosa were married.<sup>17</sup> In her marriage contract of 1770 with Jean Sale dit Lajoie, María Rosa, then called Marie Rose, said she was the widow of Jean Joseph Jacques, "killed by the Laitanes" (Comanches) about ten years previously.

Xaques' age is not known, but María Rosa came late to marriage, for if born in 1723, she was twenty-seven in 1750 and thirty-six in 1759.

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15. Virginia Langham Olmstead, *Spanish and Mexican Censuses of New Mexico, 1750-1830* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Genealogical Society, 1981), 47-48. Buxton's *The Family of Lucero Godoi*, 180 e-f, failed to identify a María as a daughter of Pablo Francisco Villalpando and Francisca. Mrs. Buxton later wrote "I see I left out a Maria in 1750 household of Pablo Francisco VP & F. Luhan in Lucero book." Margaret Buxton to author, October 8, 1987, author's collection.

16. Chavez, *Origins*, 198.

17. Also spelled Jacques, and pronounced "ha-kess."

The usual practice was to marry at a much earlier age, sometimes as young as eleven or thirteen, but more commonly at sixteen to twenty. The late twenties was unusual for a first marriage.<sup>18</sup>

By 1760, when her husband was killed, and she was carried off into Indian captivity, she had at least one child, a son, Joseph Julian Jacques. No record of any other children has been located.

With her husband and son, María Rosa was settled in the cañada of the Río Don Fernando as one of twelve families that had built homes around the hacienda of her father when, in June of 1760, Bishop Pedro Tamarón came to the pueblo as part of a visitation program to all of northern New Mexico. He came from the Picurís pueblo some distance to the south, and while he did not mention the Romero ranchos in the report of his visit, he did note that en route to Taos he stopped at "the large house of a wealthy Taos Indian, very civilized and well to do. The said house is well walled in with arms and towers for defense." There is good reason to believe that Tamarón was describing the home of Pablo Francisco Villalpando. Tamarón's reference to towers is plural, and the Villalpando hacienda had four. Elsewhere in his account Tamarón noted that Pablo Francisco Villalpando lived in the largest home in the area.<sup>19</sup>

We do not know what the Bishop meant by "very civilized," but Pablo Francisco Villalpando was apparently able to write, and that might have been enough to qualify him as civilized in the eyes of the Bishop.<sup>20</sup> He also was quite successful in life and enjoyed a position of prominence in the valley, as evidenced by the size of his hacienda, the number of servants in his employ, and numerous entries in the church records of him as sponsor or witness to marriages, baptisms, and other matters. This, too, may have qualified him as quite civilized to the Bishop. Pablo Francisco Villalpando was also a coyote, or mixed blood, and to a full-blooded Spaniard he would have been viewed as an Indian.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the relationship between the Spanish settlements of northern New Mexico and the Comanches was tenuous at best. The Comanches came each year to the settlements to trade, and a peace of sorts was observed during those times. The

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18. Margaret L. Buxton to author, October 23, 1985, author's collection.

19. Jenkins, "Cristobal," 8. Eleanor B. Adams, ed., "Bishop Tamarón's Visitation of New Mexico, 1760," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 28 (April 1958), 217. Jenkins disagrees, and believes it was the home of Francisco Xavier Romero, a son of Diego Romero, that Tamarón visited. Interview with Jenkins, September 1987.

20. Fernandez, "Inventories." Villalpando's 1763 deposition in the matter of the estate of Marcel Torres was signed in his own hand.

Indians, however, apparently held that the temporary truce did not apply to travel time, and felt no compunction against raiding on the way to or from these trade fairs. Throughout the rest of the year random raids kept the settlements in a constant state of uncertainty and terror.

It was on August 4, 1760, that three-thousand Comanches descended upon the Taos Valley, intent on destroying the pueblo. According to legend, and to Gregg, the offense was the slight afforded them by María Rosa's refusal to marry the chief. This does not seem likely for, if for no other reason, María's age at that time—thirty-four at the least—would put her far beyond the reasonable attentions of the chief who saw her as a small girl.<sup>21</sup> A more valid reason for the attack may be found in the report that the Comanches attacked to avenge an insult earlier afforded by the pueblo Indians when they danced over Comanche scalps.

Whatever the reason, the Comanches came with fire in their eyes and the settlers took refuge as best they could. Along the Río Don Fernando, south of the pueblo, the twelve families living around the Villalpando hacienda came into the shelter of the hacienda. With its four towers and supply of defensive arms, they had every expectation of surviving yet another Indian attack. Pablo Francisco Villalpando was not among those defending the hacienda for he had left the day before on business.

The Indians were somehow diverted from their initial attack on the pueblo and transferred their attention to the Villalpando hacienda. Possibly the Indians were provoked by those in the hacienda who, according to the defender's own report, fired first upon the Indians. There were reportedly as many as fourteen male defenders within the walls, and a large number of women and children.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the withering fire from the defenders, the Comanches were able to sneak below the overhanging parapet of the towers where they found cover that was certainly never intended. With the advantage of this protected position, they soon breached the walls and fought their way into the hacienda. Villalpando's wife Francisca was killed at the door where she valiantly fought the invaders with a lance. Defeat came swiftly, and all the male defenders were killed, including María's husband, Juan Jose Xaques. Many of the women and children were

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21. See Simmons, *Taos to Tome*, 37–39, for the story of the 1777 Tomé massacre which was possibly occasioned by the renegeing on a promise of marriage to an Indian chief.

22. Adams, ed., "Visitation," 217; Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angelico Chavez, eds., *The Missions of New Mexico: A Description by Fray Francisco Atansasio Dominguez* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1956), 4.

also killed either during the battle or immediately after. Francisco Atanasio Domínguez noted that after the male defenders were dead the Comanches killed a number of the women "who had fought like men, and when they were dead, they insolently coupled them with the dead men."<sup>23</sup>

By Tamarón's count, the defenders killed forty-nine of their attackers. Domínguez, however, more than doubled the number of Indians killed to over one hundred. Bishop Tamarón was perhaps fortunate to have departed the Taos area before the Comanches struck the settlement. The settlement, however, could most certainly have made good use of the twenty-two soldiers in his retinue. Those troops might have been sufficient to turn the tide had they been present and able to give battle.<sup>24</sup>

María Rosa was not among those killed, but she was one of the fifty-six women and children carried into captivity by the victorious Comanches.<sup>25</sup> In the ensuing months the Spanish authorities managed to ransom, redeem, or recapture some of those carried off in the raid. But not María Rosa. She spent the next ten years as a captive of the Indians, first among the Comanches and later among the Pawnees to whom she was traded. There is no record of the conditions under which María Rosa lived with the Indians, but she must have gained some acceptance with one, of not both, of the tribes. Sometime during the first six years of captivity she had a son who was with her when she was found among the Pawnees by the French trader Jean Sale dit Lajoie about the year 1767.

In the spring of 1764, while María Rosa was enduring her captivity on the plains, Auguste Chouteau stood on the limestone bluffs of the Mississippi River. He watched his small party unload the boats in which they had just arrived at the site that Pierre Laclede Ligest and his fourteen-year-old stepson and clerk had decided upon the previous fall for their trading post. The post was to be named St. Louis.<sup>26</sup> With Chouteau's small party was a contingent from the nearby settlement of Cahokia, including twenty-three-year-old Jean Sale dit Lajoie. Jean Sale was a native Frenchman, a voyageur, and a trader seeking new

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23. Adams and Chavez, eds., *Missions*, 251.

24. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History* (5 vols., Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1911), 1: 444.

25. Adams, ed., "Visitation," 217; Adams and Chavez, eds., *Missions*, 4, give the number carried into captivity as sixty-four.

26. William E. Foley and C. David Rice, *The First Chouteaus* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 1.

and greater opportunities. He is considered to be one of the thirty original settlers of St. Louis.<sup>27</sup>

As soon as the building of the new post would permit, Sale assembled his packs of trade goods and ranged out onto the tall grass prairies stretching endlessly to the west. He traded with the various Indian tribes he found there. It was on one of his trading ventures among the Pawnee villages that he found the captive María Rosa Villalpando and her son.<sup>28</sup> He undoubtedly found her presence there to be a convenient arrangement, for rather than ransom her, he chose to live with her in the village for several years. It was not until 1770 that he ended her Indian captivity. He brought her to the then six-year-old trading post of St. Louis, which was much better known far and wide as Pain Court (short of bread). It was so called because the post had become so successful in its trading that the inhabitants failed to give sufficient attention to their basic food needs. Thus their failure to attend to their planting stuck them with the derisive cognomen.<sup>29</sup>

Their marriage contract signed on July 3, 1770, identified her as Marie Rose Vidalpane, or Videlpane. Both spellings occur in the document. At this point in her history the Spanish María Rosa became the French Marie Rose (and shall be referred to by that name hereafter).

The contract between Marie Rose and Jean Sale recognized the Indian child born during her captivity. Her son, Antoine Xavier, was given Sale's name and it was agreed he was to be raised by them until he was of an age to fend for himself. It was made quite clear, however, that Antoine was to have no status whatsoever as an heir of either Sale or his wife, and no claim on either estate.<sup>30</sup>

Their agreement also gave recognition to their own son, who was identified in the contract as being about twenty months old.<sup>31</sup> The contract was quite specific in stating that their son, Lambert, had been born while Marie was a captive of the Pawnees and before they could legitimize their marriage. He was to be considered a legitimate heir of his parents in every respect, and was to share equally in their estate with any other children who might be born to them in the years ahead.

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27. William L. Thomas, *History of St. Louis County, Missouri* (2 vols., St. Louis: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911), 1: 19.

28. Spelling used is from her Marriage Contract of 1770. In the same document it is also spelled Videlpane.

29. Martin Quigley, *St. Louis: A Fond Look Back* (St. Louis: First National Bank in St. Louis, 1956), n.p.

30. "Marriage Contract," Instrument 2023, Missouri Historical Society.

31. The son, Lambert, was born on November 12, 1768. "Catholic Baptisms, St. Louis, Missouri, 1765-1840" (St. Louis: Genealogical Society, 1982), 82.

Jean Sale and Marie Rose Vidalpane, or Villalpando, were married that same day and took up residence in the home Sale had built on his property. It was a house built in the French manner of vertical posts on a foundation of stone, twenty-five by twenty feet, on the northwest corner of Block 57 in the burgeoning settlement. Their home faced on the Rue des Granges, which was at that time the westernmost street of the trading post.<sup>32</sup> Jean was at that time twenty-nine years old and Marie Rose was at least forty-four.

There were other children born to their marriage. Pierre was born in 1771, and twins Marie Josephe and Helene were born in 1773.<sup>33</sup> Lambert and Helene lived to adulthood. Pierre and Marie Josephe apparently died at an early age for later references to the family identified only the two children.

For reasons unknown, after twenty-two years of marriage Jean Sale returned to France in 1792, and there he remained for the rest of his life. He left his wife and daughter in St. Louis, but took Lambert with him. Lambert, then twenty-four, remained in France with his father for perhaps two years before returning home. Lambert's reasons for going, or for returning, were never explained. Once back, he remained in St. Louis until his death in 1834.

An undoubted surprise for Marie Rose and her family was the 1802 visit of her son Joseph Julian Jacques. Travel between St. Louis and New Mexico was both arduous and dangerous in those years and would not have been undertaken as a lark. Commerce and contact between the two settlements was virtually non-existent, and one can only guess at the manner by which Jacques learned his mother was alive and well in St. Louis. He was no doubt greatly pleased to find he had a step-brother and sister, and was warmly welcomed by his mother. On reflection, perhaps his joy at meeting Helene and Lambert Sale was not unbounded, for beyond any wish to see his mother, he had come to determine his status as an heir. This question was resolved by an agreement signed by Jacques, his mother, and half-sister Helene Leroux on August 3, 1803. Very strangely, no mention of Lambert was made in the document, and his signature does not appear on it. The terms of the agreement stated that Joseph Julian Jacques relinquished his share of any part of his mother's estate to which he might otherwise be entitled to his half-sister Helene. In consideration of this he received the sum of two hundred pesos, hard money.<sup>34</sup> This 1803 document is

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32. Quigley, *St. Louis*, n.p.

33. "Catholic Baptisms," 82.

34. Document No. 1445. Old St. Louis Archives, Missouri Historical Society.

the only record that any children were born to Marie Rose and her first husband, and the absence of mention of any siblings of Jacques certainly gives good cause to believe he was the only child of that marriage.

The Sale family continued to be a part of the rapidly growing town of St. Louis. The public records, however, contain a woeful dearth of information about them. Other than parish records of births and deaths, the only records identifiable with the family were an 1805 valuation of \$800 for the property which Jean Sale had acquired in Block 57 at the founding of the settlement, and which he left to Marie Rose, and an 1807 court matter in which she brought suit in behalf of her then deceased son Antoine to collect a debt owed him.<sup>35</sup> She won the suit. In the property valuation record, she was identified as both the "Widow Lajoie," and more completely as "Marie Rose Vidalpando, widow of Jean Sale dit Lajoie," although at that time he was still alive, and living in France.

According to Gregg Marie Rose was the progenitor of several respectable families of St. Louis. Her daughter Helene married Benjamin Leroux on January 17, 1792.<sup>36</sup> Benjamin died in 1795, but not before they somehow apparently managed to have three children. One must say "apparently" for Benjamin died in January, 1795, yet the record of Catholic Baptisms for St. Louis contains baptisms for Le Roux children as late as 1803. A daughter, Marie Angelique, was born December 30, 1792 and baptized January 17, 1793, on her parents' first anniversary. A boy, Sylvestre, identified as the son of the "widow Le Roux" was baptized on March 16, 1798, and one Helene, whose parents were not identified but who is listed with the Le Roux family, was baptized on June 6, 1803. Frederick Billon identified Helene and Benjamin Leroux' children as Watkins, Marie Angelique, and Helene.<sup>37</sup> In *The Blazed Trail of Antoine Leroux*, Forbes Parkhill states that the mountaineer Antoine Leroux was the son of Helene Leroux, and a grandson of Marie Rose Sale. There is no evidence of this relationship. No record of Antoine Leroux' birth could be found in St. Louis, and Leroux, in his wedding contract in Taos in 1833, identified his parents as Antonio Lerous and Elene Jose.

Lambert never had any children of his own. He married the widow

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35. "St. Louis Landowners in 1805" (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Collections, 1908), 3: 190.

36. "Catholic Marriages, Saint Louis, Missouri 1774-1840" (St. Louis: St. Louis Genealogical Society, n.d.), 23.

37. "Catholic Baptisms," 26; Frederick Billon, *Annals of St. Louis, 1765-1804* (St. Louis: Frederick Billon, 1886), 426.

Magdeline Delor dit Cayolle in 1811 and adopted the six minor children she brought to the marriage. One of those children, Marie Rose, married the mountaineer Etienne Provost in 1829. They had two daughters, one of whom, also a Marie, lived to adulthood.

Marie Rose lived in St. Louis until July 27, 1830, when she died at the home of her daughter, Helene Leroux, at the reported age of 104 (or 107). Much of her life still remains a mystery, and the records that could confirm her birth in that earlier time no longer exist.

Marie Rose was sure of the identity of her father, as she named him in her 1770 marriage contract, but her reference to "of the name Martine" indicates she was only vaguely aware of her mother's identity. If she was born in 1723, or even in 1726, she was most likely born in Santa Fe. All evidence indicates that she was born of a liaison between Pablo Francisco Villalpando and a girl named Martine.

But at what time did this liaison take place? Thus far this narrative has allowed the premise that María Rosa was well over one hundred years old when she died in 1830. But what if she was not? In the 1730s the Villalpando families shared the San Juan area with both the Valdes and Martin families. Could the illegitimate daughter of Pablo Francisco Villalpando have been born during the San Juan years of a liaison with a woman of the Martin family?

Interestingly, there is a parish entry in 1739 for the March 8, baptism of Rosa, a Coyota, "the daughter of unknown parents" who was to be raised by Rosa Valdes. The church records of early New Mexico are replete with baptisms of children of unknown parentage, which was a mannerly way of providing baptism and spiritual safety for the illegitimate offspring of possibly prominent families without naming names. Remember that in 1738 Juan Rosalia Villalpando married Rosa Valdes, and the witnesses were his brother Pablo Francisco Villalpando and Maria Martin. More than that, a sizeable contingent of all three families lived in the San Juan area in those years.

There is no evidence to say that this Rosa, coyota, is the María Rosa of Gregg's tale. The absence of the first name, "María," is not disturbing for that was a common name given to many Spanish and French girls. It makes more sense if she were that María Rosa, however, for in 1760 that woman was twenty-one years old. Whether "Rosa, Coyota" or someone else, the younger age factor presents a much more logical view of the María Rosa taken by the Indians in 1760. She and Jean Sale had four children with the birth of the twins in 1773. Had she been born in 1723, she was fifty years old at the time she bore her twin daughters. Late enough to be having children if she were thirty-four, as she would have been had she been born in 1739. The facts,

scant as they are, just do not seem to warrant acceptance of the earlier dates for her birth.

Consider also that the "Rosa, coyota," was to be raised by Rosa Valdes and the census of 1750 identified a María Rosa as a daughter in Juan Rosalia Villalpando's family in the Taos Valley, and no daughter by that full name in Pablo Francisco Villalpando's family. It is certainly not beyond the realm of possibility that the illegitimate María Rosa was raised in Juan Rosalia's family, knowing always who her real father was yet having only a vague idea of the true identity of her mother.

Regardless of the true date of her birth, the story of María Rosa Villalpando Sale is one of a strong frontier heroine whose travail might have been forgotten had not Josiah Gregg captured it in a brief paragraph.