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Spanish Colonial Lives: Documents from the Spanish Colonial Archives of New Mexico, 1705-1774

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On their return to New Mexico from El Paso after the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, the New Mexican settlers were confronted with continuous raids by hostile Indians tribes, disease and an inhospitable landscape. In spite of this, in the early and mid-eighteenth century, the New Mexicans went about their daily lives as best they could, as shown in original documents from the time. The documents show them making deals, traveling around the countryside and to and from El Paso and Mexico City, complaining about and arguing with each other, holding festivals, and making plans for the future of their children. It also shows them interacting with the presidio soldiers, the Franciscan friars and Inquisition officials, El Paso and Chihuahua merchants, the occasional Frenchman, and their Pueblo Indian allies. Because many of the documents include oral testimony, we are able to read what they had to say, sometimes angry, asking for help, or giving excuses for their behavior, as written down by a scribe at the time. This book includes fifty-four original handwritten documents from the early and mid-eighteenth century. Most of the original documents are located in the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, although some are from the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley, the Archivo General de la Nacion in Mexico City, and elsewhere. They were selected for their description of Spanish Colonial life, of interest to the many descendants of the characters that appear in them, and because they tell a good story. A translation and transcription of each document is included as well as a synopsis, background notes, and biographical notes. They can be considered a companion, in part, to Ralph Emerson Twitchell's 1914 two volumes, The Spanish Archives of New Mexico, summarizing the documents of the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, now available in new editions from Sunstone Press.

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