

SECOND ARTICLE IN THE SERIES -- FREE STATE OF SOCORRO 1953-2003
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FREE STATE OF SOCORRO PART 2

While the success of promoting the Free State of Socorro was clearly reaping its rewards, the serious effort to document Socorro as an independent republic continued as well. By mid June 1953, additional ancient documents to establish the sovereign state of Socorro were found by Socorroan Juan Miera and given to the "Socorro Chieftain" for publication. "An old map showing the actual location of the original Socorro Grant, which extended west to the top of the Magdalena Mountains, was among the document uncovered by Miera," the Chieftain reported. Signatures of most of the Socorro landowners of the 1800's were affixed to the petition requesting recognition of the property rights of "the people of the sovereign state of Socorro," as declared on an 1882 petition to the United States congress. The wording "sovereign state of Socorro" on this 1882 document further proved the people of Socorro had recognized their independent status well before 1953, although it did reduce the size of the original grant, basically running to the Arizona border by "many leagues" to include only Socorro and Magdalena.

The legal description of this document read:

"Socorro Grant, containing about 843,000 acres ... with boundries as follows:

FIRST line on the north, the upper bluff of the San Lorenzo Creek,

SECOND line on the south, the edge of the little height of Tornal at the slope of the meadow,

THIRD line on the east, the summit of the mountain on the left side of the Rio Grande,

FOURTH line on the west, the summit of the Magdalena Mountain.

The document was signed by A.C. Richards, Clerks Office of the Supreme Court, District of Columbia, dated the 23rd day of March, 1882, indicating acceptance by the United States government. This was important, since it was accepted after the 1848 land deed that established New Mexico, seemingly proving that the Socorro Land Grant was indeed considered a "sovereign state" after the Territory of New Mexico was established, and thirty years before statehood.

This document galvanized the belief by many that Socorro indeed remains a sovereign provincia of Spain. Many of the prominent citizens of Socorro, such as Mayor Holm Bursum, Chamber of Commerce manager Moon Mullins, former "El Defensor" editor Albert Torres, and of course Free State founder Claron Waggoner, began an informal campaign for various positions in the new government. Some of these started out as quite serious, such as for Governor, Secretary of State and Ambassador to the United Nations, while others migrated to a non-serious, in fact outright silly positions shortly thereafter. For example, both Socorro papers reported it was

decided at a May 1953 meeting at the Capitol Bar that Michael Harriet was the "Wizard of the Wampum" while Mayor Bursum's official title was now "His Excellency, Uncle Holm, Presidente General, Expander of Industry, Bigger Beefs (from the citizens), sheep with self-weaving wool and Lieutenant Wizard of the Wampum." Apparently, they were all taking advantage of those Free State five-cent beers offered by the Capitol Bar and Max's Lounge!

In next months History Section of the "Defensor-Chieftain," we'll continue the 50th Anniversary of the Free State of Socorro by profiling some of the prominent characters that were involved, some of the Free State specials offered by Socorro merchants and other items of interest. The "Defensor-Chieftain" will also be sponsoring an election for the 50th Anniversary by allowing you to nominate and vote for our new Free State of Socorro officials to serve the 2003-2004 anniversary term. Who would you nominate for Governor, Mayor, Sheriff, Secretary of State and the like? No time like now to launch your campaign or create your own political party. The top nominees will be allowed a brief campaign profile in the "Defensor-Chieftain," just like a real election, where you can promise or lie what you will do for Socorro to get those winning votes! Our forefathers would be proud of us for continuing their tradition - one that is uniquely a Socorro affair.