

After Action Report for Onate Event 9/16-17/1606

Premise

Our purpose (besides to have fun) was to represent a generic infantry company of the day, approximately 1580 to 1610. Onate had over a hundred professional soldiers on his original expedition. These were mounted troops. But he took many of them with him on his expeditions of exploration. In addition the soldiers had to garrison each mission and encomienda (usually 2-4 to each one). The result was that the colonists pretty much had to defend themselves by serving as volunteer militia probably captained by Onate's Sergento Major (Sergeant Major). The professional soldiers had full armor and arquebuses furnished by Onate and his captains but the colonists were relegated to secondary arms. Pikes were cheap and easy to make and were obtained as soon as possible. Onate also had many halberds but these were not preferred for fighting. The infantry also had the falchion or machete type swords, although a few may have had nicer equipment and daggers as well. Leather and cotton padded armor was prevalent and chain mail was used too. Helmets were a necessity since the natives tended to throw and sling many stones which the Spanish feared more than the other weapons. A good hit on the head could render a man senseless or even blind. The event was to be considered the re-activation of our La Sociedad de Entrada that, except for a few appearances by Roberto and Tony, has been inactive for a while. Angelina Poulin and Benny's girlfriend Stevie (Stephanie) also attended the event but not in period clothing.



Muster

On Saturday we mustered six people: Dave Poulin, Mike and Barbara Bilbo, Tony Campisi, Samuel Ulibarri, and Aaron Sua. Tony acted as quartermaster, handing out the loaner gear. Museum visitation was low but that was okay because it gave us time to drill and work things out. On Sunday we had eight people: Dave Poulin "Pifanero" (Fifer), Bennett Poulin "Tambour" (Drummer), Mike Bilbo "El Bilbolero" (man from Bilbo, a city in Spain north of Bilbao) and Barbara Bilbo "La Bilboana" (woman from Bilbo), Sergento (sergeant) Tony Campisi "El Siciliano" (the Sicilian), Cabo (Corporal) Samuel Ulibarri "El Vasco" (the Basque), Aaron Sua, and Aaron's friend Kirby. The new guys took to it like fish to water. The energy level was very good and people were enthusiastic. Kirby excelled by donning the 25-30 lb chain mail shirt from the El Camino Real Center that Mike brought, and he wore it for the whole day. Aaron was very dashing in his Cavalier clothing and rapier style sword with a very fine dagger. By the second day we were rolling pretty good. We had plenty of armor and really looked the part. We could probably have outfitted about a dozen soldiers with breeches, jerkins, helmets, and pikes or swords, thanks to that notorious armorer Roberto Valdez, also known as "El Lobo Solo." (the lone wolf – because he didn't come). The weather was perfect all weekend, not hot or cold.



Pike Drill

Pikes were generic arms for infantry companies of any European infantry company during this period, mixed with swordsmen to protect the flanks, and harquebuceros (musket men) who would fire from inside or behind the pike square. In Europe where the enemy fought in formations the long pikes (14-16' long) were used. In the New World the natives fought in skirmish so the shorter half-pikes (6-8") became more popular because they were more maneuverable. Long pikes were kept in the colonial armories in case Europeans should attack. Sgt Campisi studied the ancient pike drill manuals and led us in performing the routines of holding the pike for marching, changing facing, and in going into the attack. El Vasco (Sam) helped with word pronunciation and the meanings of the commands. Saturday was a bit rough but on Sunday we pretty much had it down (sort of).



Sword Drill

Maestros de Espada (Swordmasters) Sam and Aaron led us in sword drill. Then they had a spirited sword match of their own giving us a good idea of the proper moves. The Spanish excelled at swordsmanship during this period and it was the sword that eventually won the day. “Pare quarto!” “Pare segundo!” Swordsmanship takes many years of study and, except for the maestros, we did not shine too much on this drill, but it was fun.



Comida

Barbara went to considerable effort and expense to set a table of completely authentic foods of the period. She has done extensive research on the subject and has written articles on it. She set up an impressive display of the various vegetables, fruits, cooking utensils, and dishware. Barbara furnished us with excellent finger foods and a hearty stew. Authentic carafes made their way around the table now and then. We were not left hungry except by our own choice. El Siciliano brought out an ancient style deck of cards and taught us a period predecessor of the game of Poker – possibly the original form of the game. But we only played for beans.



*P*atrol

In the afternoons we went on patrol in full armor to the mountain village to make sure the road was clear and everything was all right up there. El Vasco mustered us in the placita, while El Siciliano fell in carrying the flag of the Cross of Burgundy. Spain had become connected to Burgundy when Charles, Prince of Burgundy, married "La Loca," the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. We armed ourselves with pikes and donned helmets. People really enjoyed seeing us come around the corner and some were watching us from a distance. We marched in step and trailed pikes when the trees were too low. We took a decent break at the mountain village and then resumed our circuit back to the Baca Plaza where we broke ranks. "Rompen filas!"



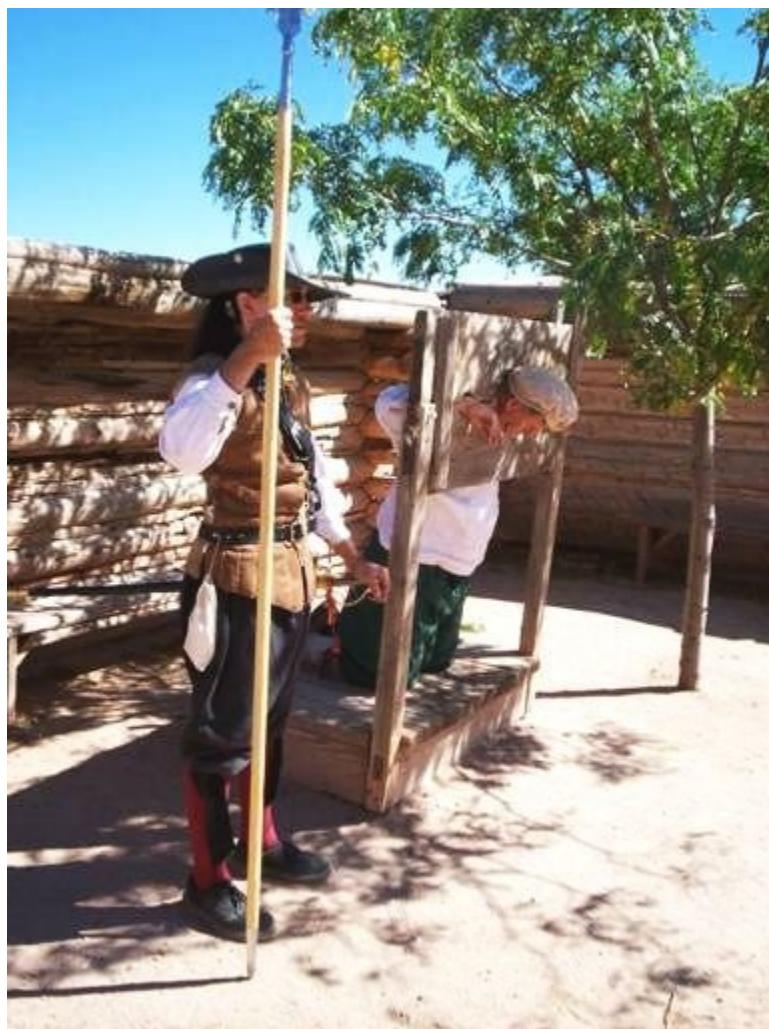
The Music

On Saturday Bennett wasn't there so I (Dave) played a few fife tunes for a while. On Sunday we played several times. A couple of times it sounded good. The last time we played I was a little tired so I ended up ad-libbing quite a bit by accident. But no one noticed because they didn't know what it was supposed to sound like anyway. Then we played a few American tunes just to get our egos back.



Military Trial

Corporal Bilbo's ancestor wasn't much different than the Bilbo we all know and love, and of course, he got into trouble and had to be punished. He was arrested by Samuel, Aaron, and Kirby, and brought to trial. Antonio read a list of his crimes that was so long that I couldn't follow it and so I can't relate it here. El Bilbolero protested that this was not a trial, but he was inevitably proclaimed guilty anyway, and was sentenced to two weeks in the stocks. We got some great pictures. Aaron took the first guard.



*H*and *O*uts

Mike and Barbara brought some excellent handouts for the visitors. One was titled “Exploracion de Nuevo Mejico.” It was about Coronado’s and subsequent explorations. “Onate’s Legacy” told about Onate’s entrance to colonize the province and his legacy, the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail, and the purpose of our historical interpretation (besides having fun). Barbara had also printed out an article about authentic foods which she handed out and discussed freely with the public. Barbara also had written a publication discussing the Coronado Project, a project to research and interpret the Spanish colonial period in the present day United States. This book also showed period dress for men and women. She couldn’t give it out but she could show it to people during discussions. Dave had his music book he had prepared to show to people also. Our documentation was very good.

*C*onclusion

It was blast as most of our events are.

Mike and Dave

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