

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1599, Jusepe Guitiérrez, the lone survivor of the Bonilla expedition, was found by Spanish explorer Juan de Oñate. Francisco Leyva de Bonilla, a Portuguese captain in the service of Spain, was dispatched in 1594 by Governor Diego de Velasco of Nueva Vizcaya to pursue beyond the frontiers of that state a rebellious band of Indigenous Americans.

Once across the border, Bonilla and his party determined to explore New Mexico and the plains beyond and to search for the fabled treasure of Quivira. They spent about a year at the upper Rio Grande pueblos, making Bove (San Ildefonso) their principal headquarters. They then explored into Arkansas and Nebraska.

According to the statement of Gutierrez, a Mexican Native who was with the party, Bonilla was stabbed to death after a quarrel with his lieutenant, Antonio Gutierrez de Humaña, who then assumed command. Sometime after the murder, Jusepe and five other Indians deserted the party and retraced their steps toward New Mexico.

On the way, four were lost and a fifth was killed. Jusepe was taken captive by the Apache and Vaquero and kept for a year. At the end of that period, he made his way to Cicuyé and in 1599 was found at Picuris by Oñate, who secured his services as a guide and interpreter.

When Oñate arrived at Quivira in the summer of 1601, he learned Natives had attacked and wiped out Humaña and nearly all his followers on their return journey, by setting fire to the grass at a place on the High Plains subsequently called La Matanza.