

## Vallejos Ditch, Costilla County, Colorado

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The Vallejos Ditch is located within the Sangre de Cristo Grant lands near San Pablo in the San Luis Valley of Costilla County, Colorado. It was in all probability named after Antonio Jose Vallejos, who founded the settlement in 1848.<sup>i</sup> Although the Vallejos Ditch is not Colorado's oldest *acequia*<sup>ii</sup>, its construction began in March 1854, seven years before the Territory of Colorado was established. Of the 83 *acequias* currently in operation in Water District 24, Division 3, the Vallejos Ditch is among one of the earliest.

In 1854, the Vallejos Ditch was entitled Priority No. 5, which meant four claims to the water must be honored before the *mayordomo* (ditch boss) allowed water to flow through the *acequia*'s main headgate. The amount depended on the amount of water available (e.g., snowpack, drought conditions).

On March 1, 1898, the enlargement to the Vallejos Ditch was entitled Priority No. 58. Then on September 30, 1911, the water right of the Vallejos Ditch was re-adjudicated. This amended claim was issued to accommodate the growing farming community's need for water. An extension to the Vallejos Ditch was decreed in 1935.<sup>iii</sup>

Many *parciantes* (irrigators) in the San Luis Valley were involved in land and water disputes with the United States Freehold Land and Emigration Company, a land speculation deal developed by William Blackmore and Colorado Territorial Governor William Gilpin to promote and sell "pristine" land to Dutch emigrants. *Parciantes* had to prove their legal rights to the land they settled as part of the Sangre de Cristo Grant. Gilpin labeled them "squatters" and worked to dupe and evict them,<sup>iv</sup> and reduce or remove their rights to the water.<sup>v</sup> (See "Costilla Land Development" article on this website.)

The Vallejos Ditch had a great impact on the number of families and family farms as several families were connected to this *acequia* – Albert, Atencio, Chavez, Esquibel, Gallegos, Madrid, Rodriguez, Quintana, Manzanares, and Valdez. Several marriages interlink these families. The following table lists the *parciantes* named in the Vallejos Ditch decrees.

The Vallejos Ditch is still in use today as the main *acequia* on the Atencio farm (established 1894), which was awarded the "Colorado Centennial Farm Award" presented by the Colorado Historical Society at the Colorado State Fair in 2000.<sup>vi</sup>

<b>Parciante</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Meliton [Emeliton] Albert	Juana Ursula Sanchez (spouse)
Sandalio Archuleta	
Cleofes de Jesus Atencio	Silveria Manchego (spouse) Felipe de Jesus Atencio (father)
Felipe de Jesus Atencio	Victoria Roybal (spouse) Juan Francisco Atencio (father)
Lorenzo Atencio	Virginia Vigil (spouse) Felipe de Jesus Atencio (father)
Ricardo Atencio	Sofia Martinez (spouse) Felipe de Jesus Atencio (father)
Filomena Bernal	
Juan Bernal	
Miguel Cordoba	
Jose Felipe Chavez	Josepha Atencio (spouse) Felipe de Jesus Atencio (father-in-law)
D. B. Duran	a.k.a. Deciderio Benigno Duran Barbarita Archuleta (spouse)
Bonifacio Borrego Esquibel	Rubel Esquibel (spouse)
Mrs Crusito [Crucita] Esquibel	
Daniel Esquibel	Veroniz Sanchez (spouse) Severo Esquibel (father)
Donato Esquibel	Delfina Atencio (spouse) Juan de Jesus Esquibel (father)
Jose Estanislado Esquibel	Juan de Jesus Esquibel (father)
Jose Rafael Esquibel	Guadalupe Borrego (spouse)
Jose Ramon Esquibel	Gertrudes Albert (spouse)
Felix Esquibel	Jose Ramon Esquibel (father)
Francisco Esquibel	
John D. Esquibel	
Juan Esquibel	
Juan Esquibel Jr.	
Juan Esquibel Sr.	
Jose Justo Esquibel	Otilia Trujillo (spouse)
Reubel Esquibel	Ursula Roybal (spouse)
Ricardo Esquibel	
Severo Esquibel	Virginia Quintana (spouse)
Esequiel Fresques	
Dolores Gonzales	
Manuel Gonzales	
Pedro Gonzalez	
Tomas Gonzalas	
Vicente Gonzales	
J. M. Jaramillo	
T. C. Jaramillo	
J. C. Lobato	
Albino Lucero	
Rosalio Lucero	
Teodoro Lucero	
Tomas Lucero	
Julian Madril	
Perfecto Madril	

<b>Parciante</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Tobias Madril	Crusita Atencio (spouse) Felipe de Jesus Atencio (father-in-law)
Felix Maestas	
Juan Maestas	
Adonias Manzanares	Jose Lino Manzanares (father)
Victor Modesto Manzanares	Romualdo Manzanares (father)
Excelso Celestino Manzanares	Cenaida Roybal (spouse) Romualdo Manzanares (father)
Jose Lino Manzanares	Margarita Mascarenas (spouse) Romualdo Manzanares (father)
Manuel Manzanares	
Porfirio Manzanares	Romualdo Manzanares (father)
Vicente Martin	
Donaciano Martinez	Juana Garcia (spouse)
Esezuiel (sic) F. Martinez	
Maria Ygnia Mestas	
Jesus Mondragon	
Enrique Montoya	
Jose V [T] Montoya	
Epimenio Quintana	Nieves de Herrera (spouse) Jose Nicanor Quintana (father)
Eplanio [Eufanio] Quintana	
Jose Nicanor Quintana	Natividad Ortega (spouse)
Adolfo Rodriguez	Ignacia Chavez (spouse)
Donaciano Rodriguez	Fedelia Atencio (spouse) Felipe de Jesus Atencio (father-in-law) Manuel Rodriguez (father)
Brigido Roibal	
Alberto Sanchez	
D. Sanchez	
Jose P. Sanchez	
J. P. Sanchez	
Lino Sanchez	
Mariano Sanches	
M. E. Sanchez	
Sigifredo [Sifredo] Sanchez	
Ponciano Sena [Serna?]	
Daniel Trujillo	
Antonio D. J. Valdez	
Emiliano Valdez	
Francisco Valdez	
J. C. Valdez	
J. J. Valdez	
Feliz de Jesus Vigil	
Cirilo Vigil	
Gabino Vigil	

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<sup>i</sup> Olibama Lopez-Tushar, *The People of El Valle: A History of the Spanish Colonials in the San Luis Valley*, Pg 37.

<sup>ii</sup> The San Luis People's Ditch built in 1852 is Colorado's oldest *acequia*. It continues to operate today.

<sup>iii</sup> Colorado Division of Water Resources, Water District 24, Division 3, Alamosa, Colorado, Pgs 205 and 206, 1935 Roxton Decree.

<sup>iv</sup> *San Luis Valley Historian*, (San Luis Historical Society), Pgs 44-57, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1994, "William Gilpin: Booster and Developer of the San Luis Valley," by Edward R. Crowther. *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in New Mexico and Colorado*, "Grants of Desperation, Lands of Speculation: Mexican Period Land Grants in Colorado," by Marianne L. Stoller, Pgs 22-39, AG Press: Manhattan, Kansas.

<sup>v</sup> *University of Colorado Law Review*, Pg 431, Vol. 74, Issue 2, Spring 2003, "Community Acequias in Colorado's Rio Culebra Watershed: A Customary Commons in the Domain of Prior Appropriation," by Gregory A. Hicks and Devon G. Pena.

<sup>vi</sup> Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.