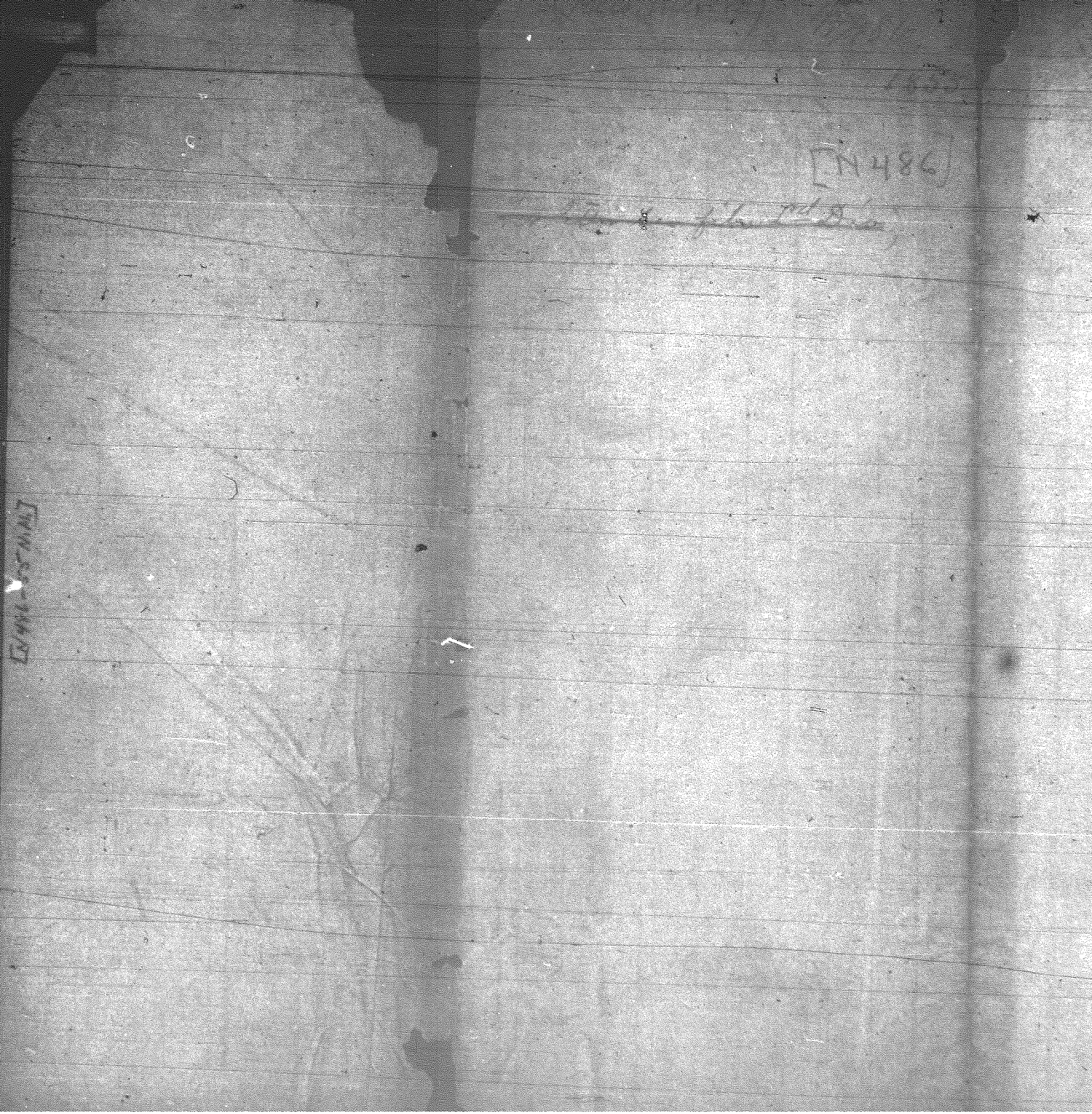

NN031229

Notes of a talk between Governor Meriwether and the Chiefs Head Men, and Captains of the Navajo Indians, held at Laguna Negra the 16th and 17th of July 1855, through the medium of two interpreters.

Governor: I have come here to meet the Navajos and am glad to see so many present. I am glad the Navajos and the whites have been at peace so long a time, and hope they will remain at peace. I have come to see you to agree upon a country the Navajos and whites may each have, that they may not pasture there flocks on each other's lands. If we have a dividing line so that we know what each other's country is, it will keep us at peace. I will explain the kind of a treaty I desire to make with you; and when I am through I want you to counsel with each other whether you will agree to such a treaty, and want an answer in the morning. (Here the Governor explained, to the Indians, fully, the terms of the proposed treaty) These are the propositions I have to make to you, and want you to talk them over, and let me know whether you agree to them, when we meet again in the morning.

July 17th The Indians and the Governor again in Council.

This morning Sarcillas Largas, the Head Chief, sent to the Governor a staff of office and medal presented to him by Governor Calhoun with a message, to the effect that he was too old to govern his people, and that he desired to resign his office. The Governor accepted his resignation, and requested the Indians to meet in Council and elect another Head Chief. In a little while the principal men called at the Governor's tent and notified him that they had elected Manuelito as Head Chief, who would speak for the whole tribe. The Governor and Indians then again proceeded to business.

Governor: Yesterday I made known the terms of the proposed treaty

and I now want to know whether you all agree to said terms.

Manuelito: We are content with what you have proposed, and will agree to the terms you have mentioned.

Governor: I will now have the terms of the treaty reduced to writing, so that we cannot forget what it contains.

Manuelito: It is all good.

Governor: My clerk will now go to work to reduce the treaty to writing and I want you to sit here and smoke until it is finished.

Manuelito: We are sorry our people treated you badly yesterday, and I was ashamed to show myself. I am now appointed in the place of Sarcillas Largas.

Governor: I know the principal men were disposed to listen — the boys only behaved badly. For this reason I desired to meet you here. (To the interpreter) Ask those assembled if they are willing that Manuelito shall have the staff of office and medal that Largas delivered to me. Those who are in favor will hold up their hands: (they all held up their hands)

The treaty having now been reduced to writing, the Governor proceeded to read it and explain it to them, article by article, After the reading of each article the Indians were asked if they understood and agreed to it, and they answered in the affirmative until the fourth article was reached; when Manuelito remarked, that the Navajos claimed a much larger country than that proposed in the boundary assigned them, and that they were in the habit of going to Mount Polonia, and another mountain, the name of which is forgotten, to worship the spirits of their fathers, and some were loth to give these mountains up; and also that they could not get salt, unless they were allowed to visit the salt lake near Zuñi and gather it. The Governor then showed them Parks map of New Mexico, and explained to them that Mount Polonia was within the proposed reservation, and said he hoped

that this one sacred mountain would be sufficient; he also said he would grant them the privilege of gathering salt as they desired, and that he proposed to pay them for all the ceded territory. After some consultation among themselves, Manuelito said that the boundary was satisfactory. The Governor then continued the reading and explaining the treaty, the Indians assenting to each article until the ninth was reached, when Manuelito objected to the surrender of Indians who might commit depredations, and said they had once done this, but it was very unpleasant to them; that those attempting such a thing did so at the risk of their lives, and that the Navajos would much rather that the Americans would come and take such men themselves. The Governor said, in reply, that if the Americans went into the Navajo Country to arrest such men, they would not know the guilty or bad men, from the innocent and good, and that the latter would probably suffer for the bad deeds of the former, and that he must insist upon this provision. After much talk among themselves this article was agreed to, also, and the treaty duly signed in duplicate, on Oct. 18th. There was much other unimportant conversation which it is deemed unnecessary to insert.

Santa Fé New Mex
July 27th. 1855.

W. W. H. Davis
Secretary to the Governor.

NN031232