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HISTORY OF THE ALBUQUERQUE REGION

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People have lived in the Albuquerque region for an unknown number of centuries. When the first Spanish arrived in 1540 they found about twenty villages, or **pueblos**, extending from Acoma on the west to the Piroso of the Manzano Mountains, and along the Province of Tiguex (Tee-way) from the neighborhood of present Bernalillo to the pueblo of Isleta.

Don Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, governor of New Galicia and commander of His Majesty's forces in search of wealth and territory for the glory of God, the King, and himself, established headquarters in the flourishing pueblo of Alcanfor, now the ruins that constitute the Coronado State Monument on the right bank of the Rio Grande across from Bernalillo. Don Francisco's search was fruitless, but two Franciscan missionaries laid down their lives for The Cross and became the first martyrs in the history of New Mexico: Fray Juan de Padilla and Fray Luis Escalona.

Don Juan de Onate, Governor, Captain General and Adelantado, made the first settlement in 1598 north of Santa Fe. In the course of time, the Albuquerque region became known as the Rio Abajo, or down river from Santa Fe, where settlers located on small ranches during the seventeenth century. The Camino Real ran parallel to the Rio Grande, bearing the traveler to Chihuahua on the south or Santa Fe to the north. The road to the west lay past the mouth of Jemez Canyon while on the east an Indian trail snaked its way through Tijeras Canyon, or Carnue as it was originally named.

The missionaries soon established The Cross in the various pueblos of the region; the oldest physical monuments to their labors are the church of St. Augustine at Isleta and St. Stephen at Acoma, dating back probably to 1618. Fray Alonso Peinado began spreading the gospel in 1613 among the folks at the pueblo of Chilili where the church was dedicated to La Navidad de Nuestra Senora. The mission of San Gregorio was established at Abo about 1622, some ten miles west of present Mountainair; San Isidro at Gran Quivira seven years later, twenty miles to the south as the crow flies; and Nuestra Senora de la Concepcion at Quarai, a few miles to the east. Another mission might have been located at Tajiique as early as 1629.

During the seventeenth century, the settlers and Pueblos were occasionally harassed by Indians from the east and west, Apache and Navaho; and friction developed between the Pueblos and Spanish to the point where the former rebelled against their masters in 1680, driving them southward to El Paso. Some of the Isleta folk migrated with the Spanish and established the pueblo of Isleta del Sur downstream from El Paso (Juarez), Mexico.

Don Diego Jose de Vargas Zapata y Lujan Ponce de Leon Contreras, scion of an illustrious Spanish family, ventured into New Mexico in 1692 with a small troop of soldiers and made a peaceful reconnaissance of Puebloland. The following year he returned with settlers and reoccupied Santa Fe. Others located in the Bernalillo area by 1695. Since the frontier folks were still hostile, Don Diego was forced to fight them, and while on a punitive campaign

toward Abo Pass in 1704, he fell ill and returned to Bernalillo where he soon died.

Along the western frontier of New Mexico, the Spanish took official recognition in 1699 of some Pueblos who had settled at the Laguna near the south end of Cebolleta Mountain. The mission was dedicated to San Jose; the name also came to be applied to the stream that flows eastward through the village to join the Rio Puerco of the East. The Navahos frequented Laguna and Jemez Pueblos, sometimes for peaceful trading and occasionally as enemies. Since the Pueblos were intimately interlocked with the Spanish, it was impossible for the frontier foe to draw any clear line between the two groups, so both suffered from their attacks.

The Navahos had a fortified stronghold on Big Bear mesa, an elongation on the north end of Cebolleta Mountain. When Captain Roque de Madrid campaigned in 1706, he pursued them southward from the San Juan region to this site but was unable to surmount the difficulties of the terrain and failed to punish the foe. Several campaigns were launched against this western enemy during the first two decades of the century, setting forth from Sia Pueblo or farther north via the Chama Valley.

Peace reigned between the Navahos and Spanish-Pueblos for a half century, beginning about 1720. Missionaries moved into Navaholand in the San Juan country in 1744 and eventually persuaded a group to move southward in 1748 to form a settlement at Cebolleta Canyon which drains from the southeastern side of Cebolleta Mountain. Another mission was established a few miles to the west at Encinal for other Navahos, but both of these ventures were shortlived. These folks were not habituated to a settled way of life, and the acquisition of livestock from the Spanish, especially sheep, turned them into a semi-nomadic people.

Beginning in 1753, the Governors of New Mexico granted sizeable tracts of land to various and sundry New Mexicans that soon encircled Cebolleta Mountain. These



Albuquerque. 1891. July. Gold Ave. - looking east. This photo was probably taken from the San Felipe Hotel (Elk's Club) (5th and Gold). The Central Bank and the Whiting Bldg. can be clearly distinguished in the background (2nd and Gold). Note boardwalk. (U.N.M. Library collection)

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were an outlet for the expanding population and livestock in the Rio Abajo. The grants were always made with the proviso that the rights of the Navahos should not be violated; that is, the authorities recognized the Indians' usufructuary to the land, and were even willing to grant titles in fee simple. However, relations between these near neighbors finally led to hostilities because of competing needs for land and water. The New Mexican's contempt for the Indian was met by pride and a rebellious spirit against the intruders.

Increasing population led to settlements elsewhere in the Albuquerque region during the eighteenth century. Governor Francisco Cuervo Valdes founded Albuquerque in 1706, naming it in honor of Don Francisco Fernandez de la Cueva Enriquez, Duque de Alburquerque, one-time viceroy of New Spain. The site had been known in the previous century as the Bosque Grande de San Francisco Xavier, so the name of this Saint was attached to the church in the new village. However, in deference to King Philip V of Spain, San Felipe de Neri was soon substituted officially, although the change in local usage came about slowly. The church building on the north side of the plaza was erected in 1793.

Other small settlements came into existence in the years following the founding of Albuquerque. On the south side lay Atrisco with a name derived from the Aztec word Atlixco, the name of a valley near Puebla, Mexico. Farther along the placita of San Isidro de Pajarito developed on the land granted to Captain Antonio Baca; then came Los Padillas, established about 1718. A group of genizaro families who were hispanicised Plains Indians settled in 1740 at Valencia, the site of the seventeenth century ranch of Captain Francisco Valencia, and at Tome where Captain Dominguez de Mendoza, distinguished military leader of the latter part of the same century once held title to the land. Governor Don Tomas Veles Cachupin responded favorably to a petition for land in 1764 for the village of San Gabriel de las Nutrias, south of Tome, and other settlers moved onto the land across the river at Belen.

Northward from the Duke City, New Mexicans spread along the valley to Alameda where Francisco Montes Vigil, corporal in the presidial troop of Santa Fe, was a pioneer land owner. The nearby pueblo of Sandia, abandoned in the rebellion of 1680, was resettled in 1748 by refugees induced to return from Hopiland by Franciscan missionaries. The church was dedicated to Nuestra Senora de los Dolores y San Antonio. The site of Las Huertas, east of Bernalillo, better known today as Placitas, was occupied by settlers in 1767, and about mid-century a few settlers were located at Los Corrales west of the Rio Grande. Some time past mid-century, a few families located at San Isidro near the mouth of Jemez Canyon and also north of Bernalillo at the sites of Algodones and Angostura. Vallecito in the Jemez Mountains was occupied in 1768 with the folks looking to Santo Toribio as their patron Saint.

To the east of Albuquerque, Governor Cachupin granted permission in 1763 for settlers to locate in Carnue (Tijeras) Canyon. However, the site was too exposed to attacks by Apaches and was abandoned in 1770. One more attempt was made the following year, but an overnight stay convinced the men that they should not remain. Their predicament was illustrated more sharply about 1774 when the Navahos erupted on the western frontier and drove away the land grant folks. Las Nutrias to the south and Las Huertas to the north were also abandoned.



Upper Photo — Los Griegos, about 1885.

Lower Photo — Albuquerque, 1885. View westward toward Rio Grande. Large building is San Felipe Hotel, later the Elk's Club. (U.N.M. Library collection)

All told, from October of 1774 to March of 1775 there were five invasions by Comanches from the east, eight by Gila Apaches from the southwest and three actions by Navahos. Consequently, for the remainder of the century the New Mexicans remained crowded within the confines of the Rio Abajo.

Further expansion of settlements began with the opening of the nineteenth century. Los Lunas became the jumping off point for a road to the west from the Rio Abajo. Settlers reoccupied the site of Cebolleta and managed to retain possession under pressure from the government to do so in spite of Navaho attacks. The village of Cubero was established in 1834, much to the annoyance of the Laguna folks who claimed the land.

Southward from Belen the placitas of Los Gabaldones, Los Chaves, and Sausal appeared. Casa Colorado was established in 1823 on the abandoned site of Las Nutrias. Carnue (Tijeras) Canyon again lured the people to take up choice bits of land at San Miguel in 1816. Three years later they received a formal grant which extended from the mouth of the canyon to about Sedillo Hill and northward to San Antonio del Carnue which today lies astride State Highway 10. The site of San Antonito, a few miles north of San Antonio, was reserved as a campsite for travelers heading for the Santa Fe trail by way of the Galisteo Valley. Many years later, Andres Nuanes, age 85, recalled the establishment of San Miguel because "at that time I was coming along with a cart load of wood & my oxen's got scared on seeing so many people in the

canon & upset the cart & the people assisted me in fixing my cart."

Gold was found in 1828 in the Sierra Obscura or Ortiz Mountain, giving rise to the mining camp of El Real de Dolores, more commonly known as the Placer (Old Placers mining district). About a decade later another strike created the New Placer or Placer del Tuerto, also known as Real de San Francisco, but finally by the prosaic name of Golden (New Placers mining district, San Pedro Mountains). The boom brought in a population estimated at 4,000 persons.

Southward from Carnue (Tijeras) Canyon, settlers moved into the Manzano Mountains as early as 1816. They established a fortified plaza at Manzano and constituted a frontier outpost in that area until the Apaches were placed on reservations and cattlemen could move onto the plains area stretching away to the south and east. The settlers were willing to move away in the 1830's because of their dangerous location, but the authorities did not permit them to do so. In subsequent years they both profited and suffered from the Jicarilla and Mescalero Apaches who traded powder and lead when in a good mood, or stole sheep and occasionally killed a shepherd when in a bad mood. The village of Chilili strengthened the frontier when settlers moved in about 1824, receiving a formal grant of land some fifteen years later.

When General Stephen W. Kearny proclaimed the sovereignty of the United States over New Mexico on August 18, 1846, the responsibility for subduing the Indians was transferred from provincial New Mexican authorities to the United States Government. The picture did not change, however, until the white men had a little war of their own. In its course, the Confederate forces under Brigadier General H. H. Sibley defeated the Federal troops under Colonel E. R. S. Canby at Valverde and moved up the valley, taking possession of Albuquerque and the capital. The high tide of success was ended with their defeat in Glorieta Pass. The last firing occurred at Peralta, fifteen miles south of Albuquerque, when a small force of Confederates, having missed the ford across the Rio Grande, engaged in a brief skirmish with Canby's troops. Then the war fever subsided and New Mexicans turned their energies toward building a new commonwealth.

The new departmental commander, General James H. Carleton, compelled the bulk of the Navahos to migrate to the Pecos Valley by way of Albuquerque, Tijeras Canyon, and San Antonito during the years 1863-1866, but two years later the Navaho leaders persuaded the Government to move them home to the mountains, so a serpentine line of men, women, and children wended their way across the Rio Grande about the time when patriotic Americans were holding their annual Independence Day celebration.

With the Navahos subdued, settlers returned to the farm land in the valley of the Rio Puerco northward and southward from El Cabezón, but overgrazing and soil erosion doomed them in the twentieth century. From San Ignacio on the south to La Tijera on the north the people moved away. El Cabezón (or La Posta) managed to survive until the 1950's, so it is the most tangible example of a ghost town created by man's abuse of the land. The development of the highway from Bernalillo to the San Juan Valley boomed the village of Cuba (formerly Naci-

miento), now the most prominent settlement on the northern side of the Albuquerque region.

Transportation was essential for the development of New Mexico, and the dreams of those who wanted to join the Orient and Occident in bonds of trade soon brought the railroad to the Rio Abajo. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad won the contest to serve the region, and the first train rolled into Albuquerque on April 5, 1880. Swinging southward and then westward to take advantage of the easy gradient extending westward from Los Lunas, new towns were born along the way, among them Grants, now the capital of the uranium industry.

Albuquerque boomed and the population increased during the 1880's from 2,600 to 6,100 in round numbers. "Progress was evident . . . as early as 1882 in the graded streets with good sidewalks, three miles of street car line in operation, a telephone exchange with twenty-five miles of wire connecting all parts of the town [the telegraph arrived in 1876], gas lighting on the streets and in residences and business places, blocks of business houses with iron and glass fronts, two banks, two daily newspapers, the **Morning Journal** and the **Evening Review**, five churches, and hotels, stores, and offices necessary to accommodate the public" ²and about ten houses of prostitution along with the ubiquitous saloon.

The railroad era witnessed the continued rise of population in New Mexico, and the appearance of various institutions that, in addition to church and school, were common to the American scene. The original Grant Opera House served the public in Albuquerque from 1883 until its destruction by fire in 1898. The University of New Mexico opened its doors in the summer of 1892, and gradually became a center of regional studies dealing with the rich and varied cultural heritage of the Southwest. An early symptom appeared when the pueblo style of architecture was adopted for the University in 1906.

The development of the automobile, and highway improvement following World War I, made U. S. Highway 66 a main east-west route and Albuquerque became a crossroads for the region which helped to continue its status as a trade center for the surrounding country. World War II ushered in the Atomic Age and a marked increase of population. Albuquerque alone grew from 35,000 to 200,000 between 1940 and 1960 with the big increase occurring after the War. The great stimulus came from the expenditure of Federal money with the establishment of Sandia Base, Manzano Base, and the Special Weapons center, to the discomfiture of jackrabbits and patrons of Lovers' Lane.

With jet-powered war planes patrolling the skies to ward off a surprise attack from an enemy, the Albuquerque region has experienced a revolution in appearance from the days when Spanish soldiers with sword and breastplate stormed the walls of sun-dried mud in the face of flying arrows tipped with a hard rock—from the age of stone weapons and animal power to the atomic bomb and a new power scarcely yet harnessed for civilian use.

²The **Journal**, June 16, 1882, quoted in Lucille Boyle, 1948, **The economic history of Albuquerque, 1880-1893**: Univ. New Mexico unpub. master's thesis, p. 14.