

Cross of the Martyrs

The original Cross of the Martyrs was located on top of a hill in Fort Marcy Park. It was made of reinforced concrete and stood 25 feet tall, weighing 76 tons. In an effort to revitalize the tradition of Santa Fe Fiestas, Ralph E. Twitchell, Edgar L. Street, and Walter G. Turley designed the original concrete cross to commemorate the deaths of twenty-one Franciscan friars that were killed during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

During the dedication ceremony for the concrete Cross of the Martyrs in 1920, and for many years after, the Cross was the center of annual Santa Fe Fiesta activities. In 1925, the fiesta procession attracted an estimated 3,000 people. Candlelight processions and bonfires on the hillside accompanied annual events for many years that followed.

A new Cross, painted white and made of metal, standing twenty feet high, was erected on the hill near Fort Marcy in 1977, and is dedicated to the Franciscan friars who died during the Pueblo Revolt. A commemorative walkway to the Cross was later installed, and is lined with cobblestone bricks and switchbacks that commemorate the history of Santa Fe with twenty chronologically ordered plaques. The start of the walkway has a plaque noting the history of Santa Fe which dates back to 500 AD, and a final plaque that reads, "TO THE FUTURE."

A plaque dated 1712 reads, "In order to fulfill a promise that Don Diego de Vargas made, the government leaders of Santa Fe issued a proclamation calling for an annual fiesta to commemorate the Peaceful reentry of the Spanish into Santa Fe, in 1692. This annual celebration, held in September, is the oldest such community celebration in the United States."

Another plaque reads, "Santa Fe celebrated its 350th anniversary, during that year special guests Maria Teresa Perez-Balsera and Maria Luisa Perez-Balsera arrived from Spain. The two ladies are direct descendants of Capitan-General Don Diego de Vargas, the central figure of the resettlement of New Mexico in 1682. On June 26, 1960, his excellency Egidio Vagnozzi, the papal legate, crowned "La Conquistadora," reputedly the oldest marian image in the U.S. "La Conquistadora", or Our Lady of the Conquest, arrived in New Mexico in 1625."

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was one of the most significant events in New Mexico and the only successful Native uprising against a colonizing power in the history of North America. Battles against the Spanish colonists began with the death of Fray Marcos de Niza's black Moroccan slave, Estevanico, at the Zuni pueblo of Hawikuh, March 1539. According to Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's report, he stated, "Estevanico's death could be blamed on his cruelties and assaults on Indian women."

In the late 1500s, the Spanish Crown began ordering conquest expeditions into the territories of Pueblo people of New Mexico. Expeditions sought the fabled riches of "The Cities of Gold," and later the conversion of souls to Christianity. In 1595, conquistador Don Juan de Oñate was granted permission from King Philip II to colonize New Mexico. He established a headquarters settlement colony at the confluence of the Chama River near what is now known as Okay Owingeh, formerly known as San Juan Pueblo. In 1613, the Spanish government accused Oñate of several violations including the use of excessive force in retaliation of the Acoma rebellion, the hanging of two Indians, the execution of mutineers and deserters, and also adultery. He was found guilty, fined and banned from Mexico City for four years, and banished from New Mexico indefinitely.

Upon arrival, the Spanish demanded corn, blankets, and labor from the Pueblos. Missionaries forced the Pueblo people to build churches for the conversion to and practice of Catholicism. Spanish colonists forbade the Pueblo from practicing their religious dances and ceremonies. Ceremonial items and Pueblo kivas where rituals were held were also destroyed by the Spanish. Strife was compounded by a severe drought during the 1670s, which brought famine and increased raids from other tribes seeking food for survival in the region.

In 1675, forty-seven Pueblo caciques, or priests, were accused of practicing sorcery and killing seven friars and three Spaniards. The accused were brought to Santa Fe for a trial; they endured taunts and abuse by the Spaniards and were ultimately found guilty of the crimes. Death sentence orders were for four men to be taken to their respective villages of Nambe, San Felipe, and Jemez pueblos and hung publicly. The memory of this incident led to the planning of a revolt by the pueblos, and is a source of historical trauma that is still felt deeply in the hearts of the Pueblo people.

The remaining men accused of sorcery served prison sentences for many years, and in some cases for the remainder of their lives, while others were whipped publicly. One of the caciques who was publicly whipped, was a man from San Juan Pueblo, Po 'pay, who became the lead organizer of the Pueblo Revolt. According to Pueblo accounts, two young men, Nicolas Catua and Pedro Omtua, were sent as runners to each pueblo and ally tribal groups, with knotted ropes made from yucca. The instructions were to untie one knot each day, and on the last day the revolt would begin.

Spaniards arrested the two runners, though they could not get a date or plan regarding the rumored revolt, and sentenced the young men to be hanged in the plaza in Santa Fe. On the day of the revolt in August 1680, each pueblo community asked the Spaniards and priests to leave the region peacefully, and warned of the consequences if they refused. Only twenty-one out of thirty-two of these religious leaders refused to leave. Those that heeded the warning, gathered at the Pueblo of Isleta, then headed south to the El Paso area.

Antonio de Otermin, who was governor of New Mexico in 1680, organized a defense of the state's capital in Santa Fe during the revolt. An estimated thousand Spanish colonialist refugees, including their servants and slaves, from surrounding missions gathered at the capital. The natives then cut off the water from two acequias that were fed by springs in the eastern hillside. Without water for days or food supply coming in, the Pueblos allowed the Spanish to leave in a mass exodus. No further attacks occurred upon the colonists as they retreated out of New Mexico to El Paso where they remained for twelve years.

During the conflict of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, approximately 400 Spanish colonists, including 27 Franciscan missionaries, and an untold number of Pueblo and tribal allies, lost their lives. According to the book *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History*, by 1691 or 1692, a group of Pueblo men from Jemez, Zia, Santa Ana, San Felipe, Pecos, and some Tanos traveled to El Paso and invited the Spaniards to return.

In 1997, the New Mexico Legislature decided to commemorate the history of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 by selecting Po'pay as the subject of the state's second statue for the National Statuary Hall Collection. A New Mexico Statuary Hall Commission, whose members were appointed by Governor Gary Johnson, set out to find a sculptor to create the monument image of Po'pay.

In December 1999, Cliff Fragua, a sculptor from Jemez Pueblo, was awarded the commission. The seven-foot-high statue was carved from pink Tennessee marble; it is the only colored marble statue in the collection and the first person represented in the collection that was born prior to New Mexico becoming part of the United States.

The sculptor, Cliff Fragua's, description of the statue:

"In my rendition, he holds in his hands items that will determine the future existence of the Pueblo people. The knotted cord in his left hand was used to determine when the Revolt would begin. As to how many knots were used is debatable, but I feel that it must have taken many days to plan and notify most of the Pueblos. The bear fetish in his right hand symbolizes the center of the Pueblo world, the Pueblo religion. The pot behind him symbolizes the Pueblo culture, and the deerskin he wears is a humble symbol of his status as a provider. The necklace that he wears is a constant reminder of where life began, and his clothing consists of a loin cloth and moccasins in Pueblo fashion. His hair is cut in Pueblo tradition and bound in a chongo. On his back are the scars that remain from the whipping he received for his participation and faith in the Pueblo ceremonies and religion."

At an elevation of more than 7,000 feet above sea level, the Cross of the Martyrs and Commemorative Walkway, is a city owned historic monument site often walked or hiked by visitors. The top of the walkway affords visitors with a scenic overlook of the entire city and glorious sunsets.

On Fiesta weekend, after Labor Day, the tradition of a candlelit procession to The Cross of the Martyrs from Saint Francis Cathedral, occurs after a special Mass. This historical site is free and accessible to the public, highlighting some significant events that have shaped Santa Fe's history and culture.

Sources:

1. [Cross of the Martyrs — Historic Santa Fe Foundation](#)
2. Guthrie, Thomas. "Cross of the Martyrs and Commemorative Walkway. Archdiocese of Santa Fe, City of Santa Fe, and Santa Fe Fiesta Council". The Public Historian. Vol. 29, No. 4 (Fall 2007), pp. 106-110. Published By: University of California Press.
3. Sando, Joe S., "Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History", Clear Light Publishers, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1992 pp. 61-62.

Learn more about the Pueblo Revolt, Estevanico and Po'pay:

4. Sando, J. S. (2005). *Po'pay: Leader of the first American revolution*. Clear Light Publishing.
5. Ohkay Owingeh. (n.d.). Po'pay in DC. <http://ohkay.org/popay/>
6. [Pueblo Revolt of 1680 – New Mexico History.org](#)
7. [Mystery surrounds Estebanico, black explorer of U.S. Southwest – The Journal \(the-journal.com\)](#)
8. [Po'pay Statue, U.S. Capitol for New Mexico | AOC](#)
9. [Popé, Tewa Pueblo Revolutionary | The West | PBS LearningMedia](#)
10. [Four Native artists spread the word about the Pueblo Revolt | Art | santafenewmexican.com](#)
11. [PBS | Frontera! Revolt and Rebellion on the Rio Grande | PBS](#)
12. The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and Museum Education offer a high school lesson that is themed around the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 from the Indigenous Wisdom curriculum. The lesson is titled "Creating Movement through Resilience" and was written by Mr. Leroy "Buster" Silva who is from Laguna and Acoma Pueblos. This high school unit has three lessons in Health that

meet state standards and provides a wealth of resources on the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

[Classroom | Indian Pueblo Cultural Center](#)

13. Folsom, Franklin. Red Power on the Rio Grande: The American Revolution of 1680. Follett Publishing Company; First Edition (January 1, 1973).
14. Robert, David. The Pueblo Revolt: The Secret Rebellion That Drove the Spaniards Out of the Southwest. Simon & Schuster (June 30, 2008).
15. Page, Jake. Uprising: The Pueblo Indians and the First American War for Religious Freedom. Rio Nuevo Publishers; First Edition (November 1, 2013)

Film media:

1. Documentary on Fiesta in Santa Fe, 1992: [Gathering Up Again: Fiesta in Santa Fe | Folkstreams](#)
2. Sunset View: [Cross of the Martyrs | SantaFe.com](#)

Newspaper articles regarding vandalism of the Cross:

[Mystery at Santa Fe's Cross of the Martyrs | Local News | santafenewmexican.com](#)

[Anarchists desecrate Cross of the Martyrs in Santa Fe \(pinonpost.com\)](#)

[Vandals hit Cross of the Martyrs for third year in a row | Local News | santafenewmexican.com](#)

Archival Photos:

1987: fiesta: [Fiesta - UNM CSWR Eduardo Fuss Photograph Collection - CONTENTdm Title](#)

1949: [Fiesta queen during the Fiesta parade on Lincoln Avenue at the Plaza, Santa Fe Fiesta, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1919 plaza/fiesta: [Crowds on Plaza during Fiesta, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1920-fiesta: [Deer dance - Acequia Madre House - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1920- [Dedication of Cross of the Martyrs during Fiesta, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1925- [Santa Fe, New Mexico. The 1920 Cross of the Martyrs above Paseo de la Loma is visible in background, cemetery \(Rosario Cemetary?\) visible on left - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1981- [Fiesta Caballeros de Vargas at Cross of the Martyrs during Fiesta, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1987- [Fiesta procession at Cross of the Martyrs during Fiesta, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)