

Origins of La Villa Real de la Santa Fé de San Francisco de Asís

In a *testimonio* petition to Governor Juan Oñate, Juan Martinez de Montoya suggests that the settlers residing in the town of San Gabriel, may have moved to the site of present-day Santa Fe as early as 1606-1607.

Don Pedro de Peralta is considered New Mexico's first governor, who was appointed by the viceroy of New Spain and succeeded Juan de Oñate after his death. Following orders from Mexico City, to move the provincial capital to a better location, Governor Peralta wrote officials in 1608, suggesting the relocation of Spanish settlers from the north around the Chama River, to a central location within the Santa Fe River valley, which was at the heart of Pueblo villages.

In January 1610, Peralta reached New Mexico's first capital city, *La Villa de San Gabriel*, which was located on the west bank of the Rio Grande. At the time, another small settlement was already named Santa Fé, which was possibly named after the city located in Granda, Spain. "Nueva Granada" was another name considered for the capital city; however, governor Peralta officially named the city La Villa Real de la Santa Fé de San Francisco de Asís" or "The Royal Town of the Holy Faith of St Francis of Assisi".

Peralta and his surveyor created a master plan for the city that included: a public square for the *casas reales* or offices for royal officials, a jail, arsenal storage, chapel, and headquarters for Governor Peralta. The plan was careful to position royal officials in a site that was militarily defensible, and included pathways for acequias to channel water from a regular source into the city, as well as for land designated for cultivation.

A fire during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, burned the central church on the plaza which was built in 1626. *La Parroquia*, the Catholic Parochial church, was rebuilt of adobe in its place between 1714–1717. The church was called Nuestro Padre San Francisco, or Our Father St. Francis, in 1717. French-born Archbishop Jean Baptiste Lamy then constructed a Roman Catholic cathedral, designed in the Romanesque Revival style, between 1869 and 1886.

The Cathedral Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, is adorned with several statues of Saint Francis, and participates in the tradition of the Desfile de Los Niños, otherwise known as the Children's Pet Parade. This annual event was established in the early 1920's, and pays homage to St. Francis of Assisi; patron saint of Santa Fe. Children and their pets dress in costumes for the event which culminates with an awards ceremony held on the Plaza. Priests from the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi conduct a Blessing of Animals ritual on the Feast Day of St. Francis each year.

The City has been called the "City of St. Francis," and the "City of Holy Faith," which may have been a reference of a phrase from Albert Pike's *Pose Sketches and Poems*, written in 1835. Another of the City's nicknames is the "City at the end of the Trail," referring to the end point or destination for trade along the Santa Fe Trail, and the most modern name, "The City Different".

According to Susan Hazen-Hammond, "A Native American group built a cluster of homes that centered around the site of today's Historic Plaza with settlements that spread for half a mile to the south and west. This village is ancestral lands of the in Tewa whose name, "Oga Pogehe Owingeh", means "White

Shell Water Place” and refers to its sacred water. Navajos called this place, “Yootó” meaning a string of water beads, thought to visually depict pools of standing water along the Santa Fe River.

Francis of Assisi (born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone)
(1181 or 1182 – 3 October 1226)

From the time of St. Bernard through the early sixteenth century, the role of the *sacred fool* was an influential aspect in Western European culture, and the Catholic church. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, born in 1090, near Dijon, Burgundy [France], was a Cistercian monk, as well as the founder and abbot of the abbey of Clairvaux. St. Bernard spoke of himself as a holy fool, or jester; preaching that sanctification depends on participating in the foolishness of God, and humiliation is a means to true humility.

St. Francis of Assisi was also a holy fool of God, and one of the most venerated religious figures in the history of Christianity. He was an Italian friar and the preacher who founded the Franciscan Order, the men's Order of Friars Minor, the women's Order of St. Clare, the Third Order of St. Francis, and the order of Custody of the Holy Land.

St. Francis was born to father, Pietro Bernardone, a wealthy Assisian cloth merchant, and mother, Pica, who is said to have belonged to a noble family of Provence. Francis was one of several children. At baptism, he received the name of Giovanni, which his father afterwards altered to Francesco.

At the age of twenty, Francesco accompanied townsmen in a fight with the Perugians, a rival city which they frequently battled. The Assisians were defeated in the skirmish, and Francesco was taken as one of the prisoners. He was held captive for more than a year in Perugia. While incarcerated, Francesco contracted a long illness that was accompanied by a fever. When his health regained, Francesco pursued a military career. It is said that Francesco had several strange dreams while serving in the military, and from his dreams, came an epiphany about the direction of his life. In a series of drastic measures, he renounced his family and inheritance, in order to follow a spiritual path, affiliating with lepers and beggars that lived on the outskirts of town.

While praying to an ancient crucifix, in the forsaken wayside chapel of St. Damian located below the town of Assisi, Francesco heard a voice saying: "Go, and repair my house, which as you see is falling into ruin." Taking this message seriously, Francesco stole coloured drapery from his father's shop, and sold it and his horse at a market in Foligno, to procure money for the restoration of St. Damian's church.

When the poor priest who officiated at St. Damian refused to receive the gold, Francesco flung it from him scornfully. Knowing that his father would be enraged, Francesco hid himself in a cave for a month. When he returned to town, he was emaciated and covered in dirt. Townsmen threw mud and stones, and mocked him. Francesco's father found him, and dragged him home where he beat, bound and locked his son in a dark closet. Francesco was later freed by his mother, and he then sought refuge in the church of St. Damian, until his father discovered his whereabouts and took him to a public square for trial.

While on trial at the public square, Francesco was encouraged by his father to forego his inheritance. After making the public declaration renouncing his inheritance, Francesco claimed that since he had entered the service of God, he was no longer under civil jurisdiction. Then in front of the large crowd

gathered at the public square, Francesco took off all of his clothes and handed them to his father, reportedly saying, "Hitherto I have called you my father on earth; henceforth I desire to say only 'Our Father who art in Heaven.'" The crowd present reportedly burst into an uproar, then fell silent. The bishop who had summoned Francesco to trial, was so moved by this renunciation that he wept as he wrapped Francesco with his cape.

Shortly after taking up the spiritual life of a wandering monk, Francesco, now Francis, was stopped by a band of robbers along a road. They tore off his cloak and threw Francis into a snow filled ditch, when they discovered that there was nothing to steal from him. Legend says that after the robbers left, Francis crawled out of the ditch and burst into a song of praise to God.

While serving his religious faith as a monk, he garnered a tremendous following of monks that were inspired by his relinquishment of material possessions, his work ethic, and humble demeanor, often wearing only a brown robe tied with a rope as a belt, and no shoes — even in winter. Francis drew such a following that he was persuaded to found the Franciscan Order of monks who also followed a strict path of poverty.

Francis was also known to wander into the mountains singing and preaching. He had a great love for nature and animals. In 1219, he contracted an eye disease while evangelizing and was sent to Rieti, Italy for treatment. During the winter of 1223, Francis participated in an important ceremony when he celebrated the birth of Jesus; recreating a manger with the holy family at a church in Greccio, Italy, to commemorate the humble birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

After unsuccessful attempts for a cure, Francis began to lose his eyesight and decided to return to Assisi. In the summer of 1224, Francis went to the mountain retreat of La Verna (Alvernia), not far from Assisi, to celebrate the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; there he fasted and prayed for 40 days, that he might know how best to please God. Over the following two years, he was almost completely blind and in constant pain.

Francis is only one of few individuals who bore the mark of the stigmata, bleeding lesions resembling the wounds on the crucified body of Jesus Christ, which he carefully hid until his death. He died on October 3, 1226 at the age of 44 years. On July 16, 1228, he was pronounced a saint by Pope Gregory IX, former cardinal Ugolino di Conti. The feast day of St. Francis of Assisi is on October 4th.

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