

Chimayó

Chimayó is a settlement located along State Road 76, 10 miles east of Espanola. The name of this town comes from a Tewa pueblo, occupied during the 12th century, called *Tsimayo* or “good flaking stone” which may have referred to the mineral, mica, which is found in the rocks of the area.

Within the town is the Plaza of San Buenaventura, likely built around 1740. The name referred to St. Bonaventure, who was the Cardinal Bishop, Doctor of the Church, pioneer and reorganizer of the Franciscan Order. He is the patron saint of the Pueblo of Cochiti and Humanas Pueblo.

The shrine of El Santuario de *Nuestro Señor de Esquipulas* (Our Lord of Esquipulas) was built in 1813, by Don Bernado Abeytas, with an altarpiece made of colonial folk art and architecture. The altar also included a Crucifix that features the Lord of Esquipulas crucified on a "living cross," which signifies Christ's victory over death.

In 1899, the Catholic Church placed a ban on the Penitente societies, which forced centuries old religious practices underground, and away from larger towns and into genizaro rural villages of northern New Mexico. Ceremonies were practiced by the Penitentes that remembered mission services of the Franciscans during the late 1700s. The religious order of the Penitente Brotherhood was known to conduct reenactments of the crucifixion, and medieval customs of self-flagellation that were derived from New Spain and became prohibited.

The Santuario at Chimayó, is a special healing place. The ground of the floor of the church is believed to have miraculous healing powers, and is a pilgrimage destination site that thousands walk to from Santa Fe and other starting points annually during Holy Week. Many generations of local residents and other people of faith have traveled to the shrine to offer prayers for healing, for themselves and others, as well as thanksgiving for favors received — this beloved tradition continues today.

El Santuario de Chimayo, was owned by the descendants of Bernardo Abeyta until 1929, when the Spanish Colonial Arts Society in Santa Fe, writer Mary Austin, artist Frank Applegate and architect/preservationist John Gaw Meem purchased it from the family and donated it to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. On April 15, 1970, the site became a National Historic Landmark. During the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 2021, Sunday mass was offered in an Outdoor Mass Area, and the church was closed to large groups. An online request form for “holy dirt” was offered to patrons.

In the early 1900s, curio dealers in Santa Fe introduced commercial looms and yarns to local weavers of surrounding communities, including the town of Chimayó. These new tools and resources promoted the textile tradition and economic industry in northern New Mexico. In 2000, the most common industries for the town of Chimayó were: Public administration (23.9%) Accommodation & food services (10.1%) Construction (9.1%) Educational services (8.6%) Health care (7.1%) Arts, entertainment, recreation (5.8%) Professional, scientific, technical services (5.0%). According to the U.S. Census of 2010, Chimayó's population was 3,177 residents; 87.1% Hispanic.

Many streams, rivers, and creeks are located within the area and include: Rio Quemado, Cañada de Ojito, Arroyo de los Encinos, Arroyo de los Alamos, Arroyo de los Ajuelos, Arroyo Cuesta de los Vaqueros, and the nearby reservoir of Santa Cruz Lake. The most notable historic sites in the town are the Plaza del Cerro Historic Site, Oratorio de San Buenaventura Historic Site, and the Chimayo Museum. On September 19, 2015 the Rancho de Chimayo restaurant celebrated their 50th anniversary and in

2022 continues to serve traditional New Mexican dishes. Trujillo's Weaving Shop and Centinela Traditional Arts also continue to sell the work of local weavers.

Sources:

1. Julyan, Robert. The Place Names of New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press, 1998.
2. [HOME | holychimayo](#)
3. Donald J. Usner Plaza del Cerro in Chimayo Oral History Interviews. The collection includes audio recordings of interviews that span from 1989-1991, are available on-site at the University of New Mexico via New Mexico's Digital Collections. The collection also includes tape logs of the interviews. Interviewees speak about their memories of the Plaza del Cerro, the history of Chimayo, and they recount stories about life in Chimayo. Social connections and interactions, family, daily life, celebrations, education, economic strategies, and politics are all discussed.
4. [El Santuario de Chimayo---American Latino Heritage: A Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary \(nps.gov\)](#)
5. De Aragon, Ray John. The Penitentes of New Mexico: Hermanos de la Luz - Brothers of the Light. Sunstone Press (June 15, 2006).
6. Chavez, Angelico; Chavez, Fray Angelico. My Penitente Land: Reflections of Spanish New Mexico. Sunstone Press (May 15, 2012).
7. City Data of Chimayo: <http://www.city-data.com/city/Chimayo-New-Mexico.html>. Accessed: 11/6/2021.
8. [Plaza del Cerro, Chimayo, New Mexico | Four Corners Region \(fourcornersgeotourism.com\)](#)
9. [HISTORY — RANCHO DE CHIMAYÓ \(ranchodechimayo.com\)](#)
10. [chimayoweavers.com](#)

Archival Photos:

1889-1905 - [Penitente procession, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1910- [Procession at santuario de Chimayo, Chimayo, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, Jesse Nusbaum Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1988 - [Allason Catanach and Paul Aguilar make the Good Friday pilgrimage to Chimayo - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

1993 - [Lowrider car with hood painting of Jesus and church, Good Friday pilgrimage to El Santuario de Chimayo, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

[Santeros: A Living Tradition in American Art from the Southwest \(depaul.edu\)](#)