

What Lies Beneath (Artifacts of Santa Fe)

Archaeological investigations indicate that people have lived in the Santa Fe area since at least 1000 B.C., and possibly earlier. Small villages of circular pithouses associated with the period between A.D. 600 and 1200 have been found at the Historic Fort Marcy site during archaeological investigation. An increase in the number of sites in the area between A.D. 900-1100 shows a transition from pithouses to contiguous-walled adobe surface pueblos and kivas, indicating that the occupants of the Santa Fe area likely began to depend more heavily on growing corn and other crops.

Ancestors of the Okay Owingah, Tesuque, and Pojoaque pueblos occupied, farmed, and resided in what is present day downtown starting as early as 900 AD, and they built a number of villages in the area from 1050 to 1150. Agricultural practices, trade, and perhaps political expansion sustained many sites with a substantial population until 1425, when the Santa Fe area seems to have been abandoned with the exception of the settlement of Cieneguilla. Researchers have speculated that environmental changes from a mini Ice Age around 1450 created a cooler and wetter climate, which may have caused the underground water table to rise and flood the surface.

Prior to the occupation of New Mexico by Spaniards, the Pueblo Indians were agriculturalists who grew primarily corn, beans, and squash, raised turkeys, and augmented their diet by hunting and gathering. When the first Spaniards arrived, possibly as early as 1605, the Santa Fe River was a perennial stream within a large wetland which covered what is now the downtown areas of the city to the north, east, and south of the Spanish colonial plaza; an area that was larger than downtown is today (Snow 1992).

The instructions given to Pedro de Peralta constitute the basis for the first royal communal grant in the Province of New Mexico (Hammond and Rey 1953:1087-1091). In 1610, the city of Santa Fe's full name was, La Villa Real de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Asís, which means The Royal Town of the Holy Faith of St. Francis of Assisi.

Between 1600- 1868, the lifestyle of the Pueblo Indians was drastically altered by domesticated livestock and a wide variety of newly cultivated plants brought by Spaniards. Missions were established and situated in a manner of convenience for the Spanish; smaller pueblos were consolidated into larger units, and previously abandoned pueblos became reoccupied.

In August 1680, Pueblo Indians rebelled against the Spanish secular and religious authorities in a historical event known as the Pueblo Revolt. Santa Fe was attacked initially from the south by Indians from the pueblos of Galisteo, San Marcos, and La Cienega. The next day these groups were joined by Tewa Pueblo Indians from the north, who gathered on the hills overlooking the city (presumably including Fort Marcy Hill).

After a few days of hand-to-hand combat, the water supply to the city was cut-off, which eventually forced the Spaniards to flee the region to El Paso del Norte, south of the Rio Grande, where they remained until 1692. During the twelve years of exile, the "casas reales" or "royal houses" were converted into a contiguous pueblo building with as many as 1,000 occupants residing within the city. Herds of livestock were maintained and newly cultivated plants brought by Spaniards continued to be grown during this time.

The period of Reconquest (1692-1821) began in 1692 when Diego de Vargas accompanied by a force of less than 200 soldiers, vecinos, and Indian allies launched an expedition to overtake the capital of Santa

Fe for the Spanish crown. Along the route, De Vargas found the southern pueblos abandoned, their people having sought refuge in mountainous terrain in anticipation of Spanish return.

After days of negotiation, Pueblo leaders initially rejected Vargas' offer to succumb to Spanish rule, and were threatened until they ultimately decided to leave the city peacefully. On September 14, 1692, De Vargas proclaimed a formal act of repossession. "It was the thirteenth town he had reconquered for God and King in this manner," he wrote boastfully to the Conde de Galve, viceroy of New Spain. Over the course of the following month, Vargas visited all the Pueblos in the region to accept their forced acquiescence to Spanish rule.

In December 1693, rumors of another rebellion spurred Vargas to travel to Mexico where he gathered 800 people, including 100 soldiers, and returned to Santa Fe. Upon arrival, De Vargas was met by 70 Pueblo warriors and 400 family members who opposed his re-entry. A bloody battle took place which concluded with the surrender and execution of the 70 Pueblo warriors and the women and children of their families sentenced to ten years' servitude. Another revolt was organized in 1696 by fourteen pueblos, and started with the murder of five missionaries and thirty-four settlers using weapons the Spanish had traded in previous years, however the Spanish prevailed.

In the decade following the Pueblo Revolt, famine and Indian raids plagued the Spanish and Pueblos. The Palace of the Governors was again used as a center of government by the Spanish until the U.S. military took control of New Mexico. In June 1846, Brig. Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny led the U.S. Army from Kansas to conquer New Mexico and California. New Mexico Governor Manuel Armijo had planned to resist the invading forces, but ultimately decided to vacate, along with his troops, to Chihuahua. When Kearny arrived in Santa Fe on August 18, 1846 he encountered no resistance, and raised the U.S. flag over the Palace of the Governors. Construction of an earthen fort and blockhouse at Fort Marcy followed shortly thereafter and New Mexico became a territory of the United States on September 9, 1850.

The Palace of the Governors was constructed in 1610, following the establishment of the Villa of Santa Fe by Governor Pedro de Peralta, and is said to be the oldest public building in the United States that has been in continuous use. In 1909, the structure became an official National Treasure and National Historic Landmark, and was designated as the home for the Museum of New Mexico. The building was then renovated to reflect the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style, and continues to be preserved in this manner.

Between October 2002 and October 2004, the Office of Archeological studies completed excavations behind the Palace of the Governors, in advance of construction of the New Mexico State History Museum. During the excavation, fragments of Pueblo-made pottery, animal bones, and artifacts dating from the early 1600s to the middle 1800s were recovered. Archaeologist Cordelia Snow and her team found evidence of storage pits, and renovated walls that formed smaller rooms dating from 1680 to 1692, when the Palace was under the control of the regional Pueblos.

Also, among the artifacts, behind the Palace, were manufactured goods that were brought by train from the eastern United States, after the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway was completed in 1879. Archeologists determined that the area behind the Palace was "primarily used for refuse disposal, material borrowing, and gardening from the early 1600s into the early or middle 1700s. During the middle 1700s, the area was used as an informal cemetery, an irrigated garden, and a probable orchard that was bound on the south, east, and west by cobble foundation buildings and walls.

By the late 1700s, the Palace of the Governors outbuildings covered 18,000 square feet and were used as barracks, storerooms, and possibly barns or rooms with animal stalls. Some of these buildings were still standing when the US Army arrived in 1846, and may have been used until 1867, when all buildings behind the Palace of the Governors were demolished.”

The site of the Santa Fe Community Convention Center, which opened in 2008, also has a long history of occupation. Archaeological excavations revealed evidence of occupation that included prehistoric pit structures, wells, military latrines, and old school building foundations. At the lowest levels of the site are remains of an early village that may date back to the late 1200s, and prehistoric pit structures that may have been utilized as pueblo homes or ceremonial chambers. This site was also the old Spanish presidio, a garrisoned fort authorized in 1693, for defense of the northern frontier of Spain’s New World territories, and later turned into a military headquarters in 1846. U.S. Army soldiers made many alterations to the site, holding as many as 100 soldiers while it was an active post until 1895, when the Army relinquished it to the city. Several school buildings were built on top of the site until they were eventually leveled, with new buildings erected over time.

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