

NEW MEXICO HISTORY MUSEUM

Telling New Mexico: Stories from Then and Now

Telling New Mexico: Stories from Then and Now, the core exhibition of the New Mexico History Museum, is divided into six sections. Five represent chronological periods from the pre-colonial era to the present. The sixth offers a panorama of New Mexico today, presented primarily through the voices and stories of its people. As the section titles imply, each is set apart by time frames and contrasting views from first-person accounts of the people who lived during the different periods.

AREA 1 ~ BEYOND HISTORY'S RECORDS



"We have lived upon this land from days beyond history's records, far past any living memory, deep into the time of legend. The story of my people and the story of this place are one single story. No man can think of us without thinking of this place. We are always joined together."

—TAOS PUEBLO (TUAH-TAH) ELDER

Visitors enter the exhibition in a curved space that evokes the landscapes of New Mexico. Around the bend, they reach a display of objects—pottery, baskets and jewelry. Together these convey the first gallery's main message:

Native peoples have lived across present-day New Mexico for thousands of years. They have explored throughout the region and traded with other peoples across North and Central America. The American Southwest remains their home, never empty nor waiting to be discovered, neither a frontier nor a paradise.

AREA 2 ~ THE FAR NORTHERN FRONTIER

The Spanish join the story at the beginning of the next gallery. Chasing legends of gold, the first Spanish explorers pushed into New Mexico in the early 1500s. They explored the Southwest, found much hardship but no gold, and returned to Mexico or Spain or perished on the way. At the end of the century, Juan de Oñate and his 500 followers founded a capital in northern New Mexico.

The Spanish Mission. For the next 200 years, the Spanish struggled to establish a colony in New Mexico. Missionaries, aristocrats and settlers competed among themselves for land and power. Soldiers and settlers exploited Native American labor, imposed taxes and claimed vast tracts of land. Missionaries sought Christian converts, suppressing



place of the governors.

*Below, right:
Unidentified Pueblo
woman at horno.*

WILLIAM H. ROBERTS
PHOTO, PALACE OF THE
GOVERNORS (MNM/DCA),
NEG NO. 149963

Native customs and religion. Spanish and Native life ways mixed and clashed. Exchange and interaction changed both cultures.

The Pueblo Revolt. In 1680, Pueblo Indians across New Mexico rose up in revolt and drove the Spanish from the territory. Spanish soldiers and settlers returned in 1693, ultimately subdued the Pueblo resistance after years of warfare, and re-established a fragile colony. Many Pueblo Indians traveled west to live with Zuni (*A:shiwí*) and Hopi (*Hopi*) peoples, some reconciled themselves to the Spanish presence, and some never would.

Neighbors and Strangers. For another century, Spanish and Indian peoples lived together in New Mexico and forged a rough coexistence. After signing treaties with Comanches (*Nemene*) and other Indians in the late 1700s, the Spanish and Pueblos of New Mexico enjoyed a decade or two of relative peace as the century ended.

AREA 3 ~ LINKING NATIONS

In 1821, the people of Mexico threw off the rule of the Spanish king and created a new nation—the Republic of Mexico, which included present-day New Mexico. Mexicans enjoyed new freedoms to own property, earn a living, and trade. But the new nation also had growing pains. In 1846, the United States invaded and, in a two-year war, defeated the new republic.



Right: At the end of the Trail, San Francisco Street, Santa Fe, ca. 1868–69.
PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS (MNM/DCA), NEG. NO. 011329

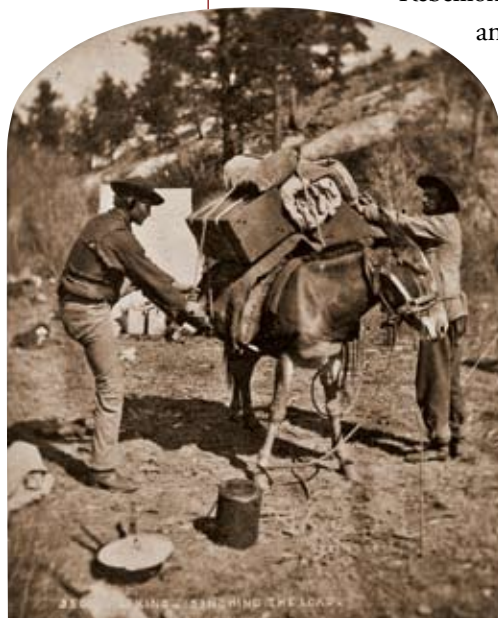
Mexican Independence. New Mexicans joined a new republic and grappled with a mixture of new laws and immigrants, and old frustrations.

Trials of a New Nation. In August 1837, Indian peoples and settlers in northern New Mexico began the Chimayó Rebellion. Though they professed loyalty to the republic, they protested taxes from Mexico City and the appointed governors. Gov. Albino Pérez was killed, but the rebellion was crushed.

Santa Fe Trail. The same year that Mexico won independence from Spain, a Missouri trader named William Becknell reached Santa Fe. His path came to be called the Santa Fe Trail—the first and most important of the pathways connecting New Mexico with the United States.

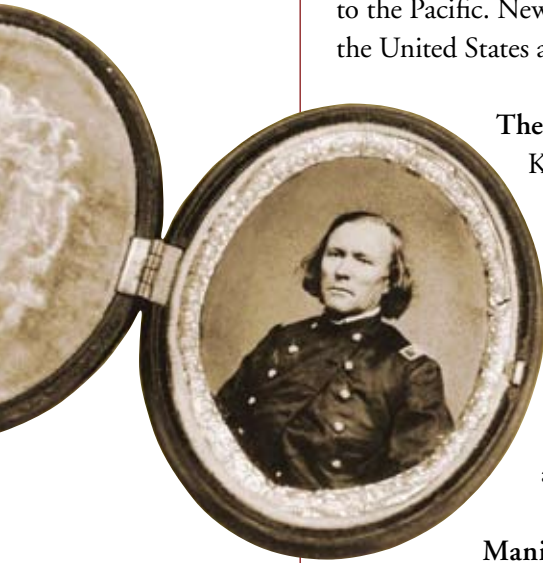
Trails, Traders and New Connections. The Santa Fe Trail was part of a network that opened up commerce across the Southwest. That commerce led to partnerships, settlements, marriages and friction among New Mexicans, Native Americans and Anglo-Americans.

Trappers and Mountain Men. Fur traders and mountain men—Mexican, American and French—traveled the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico. Many remained to become farmers, ranchers, miners or distillers and began to open New Mexico to American influence.



Cinching up a mule.
WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON
PHOTO, PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS (MNM/DCA), NEG. NO. 075134

Shifting Boundaries. Many Americans considered it the nation’s destiny to rule the continent west to the Pacific. New Mexico was caught in the middle. California was the most important goal, but the United States also hoped to pry New Mexico from the Mexican republic, by force if necessary.



Kit Carson, 1864.
WYNKOOP COLLECTION,
PALACE OF THE
GOVERNORS (MNM/DCA),
NEG. NO. 058388

The Mexican American War, or *la intervención norteamericana*. Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny invaded New Mexico in 1846 and installed a military government. Col. Alexander William Doniphan defeated the Mexican army at the Battle of Brazito, near El Paso.

The Taos Rebellion. Many New Mexicans deeply resented U.S. occupation. In 1847, hundreds of Native Americans and Hispanic New Mexicans led by Tomás Ortiz, or “Tomasito,” and Pablo Montoya rebelled against the U.S. territorial government and its appointed officials. Governor Charles Bent and other officials near Taos were assassinated. U.S. troops from Santa Fe quickly crushed the rebellion, and resistance to the American invasion faded.

Manifest Destiny. New Mexico had very different destinies in the eyes of different New Mexicans. Native Americans, Hispanics and newly arrived Anglo-Americans all imagined and contested different futures for the territory.

AREA 4 ~ BECOMING THE SOUTHWEST

With the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Mexico lost vast territories, New Mexicans lost their country, and most of modern-day New Mexico became part of the United States. Becoming the “American Southwest” involved decades of accommodation, struggle and violence.

Indian Policy. The U.S. Army established a string of forts across New Mexico, and Native Americans responded with decades of resistance. Army leaders tried to confine Native Americans to a life of farming and raising livestock on reservations. The army forced thousands of Apaches (*N’de*) and Navajos (*Diné*) to walk hundreds of miles from their homelands to a reservation. Hundreds of Native Americans perished during this “Long Walk” and their imprisonment at Bosque Redondo near present-day Fort Sumner.

Land and Water. Who owned New Mexico’s land and water—the earth, the king, the people who cared for them, the holders of deeds? Conflicts over land and water created friction and confusion and sometimes erupted in violence, as in the Colfax County and the Lincoln County wars. New Mexico and other parts of the Southwest earned reputations for lawlessness in the late 1800s.

The Coming of the Railroad. By the 1880s, the railroad began to transform New Mexico. Trains brought in machinery, workers and manufactured goods—and left with ore, cattle, lumber and agricultural products. As railroads crisscrossed the state, ranching, mining, the timber industry and tourism grew up around them.



Below, right:
Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe No. 311, Las Vegas, New Mexico, July 19, 1897.
REX STUDIO
COLLECTION, PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS (MNM/DCA),
NEG. NO. 070765

“Enchantment and Exploitation.” The railroads brought more newcomers to New Mexico and spread word of the enchanting territory. People came for their health, their art, the natural beauty, curiosity, scientific interest, to see Native Americans and to make money. They transformed the territory.

AREA 5 ~ OUR PLACE IN THE NATION

New Mexico connects to the nation and the world. Conflicts and challenges—local, national and international—have profound impacts in New Mexico.

Statehood at Last. To become a state, New Mexico struggled to overcome prejudice against Hispanics and Native Americans, political corruption, its reputation for violence and Washington politics. After some 60 years as a territory, New Mexico drafted a constitution and joined the United States on January 6, 1912.



The Great Depression. The effects of the Great Depression were as complicated as New Mexico itself. Some areas suffered greatly, but new federal money poured into the state for agricultural aid and other projects. The Works Progress Administration and other government agencies helped artists, writers, photographers and many others.

World War II. Some 60,000 New Mexicans enlisted in armed forces for WWII. In the early years of the war, New Mexico suffered the highest casualty rate of any state. Displays on the Bataan Death March, Native American code talkers and Japanese internment camps show how New Mexicans were affected by World War II at home and on the battlefield.

New Mexico’s Secret. At Los Alamos, the U.S. government assembled the greatest concentration of scientific resources and brainpower in history to develop the atom bomb—and keep it a secret. The project changed New Mexico by bringing money, scientists and nuclear technology to the state. The bomb changed the world, and concerns about the atomic age began to grow.

AREA 6 ~ MY NEW MEXICO

The past lives in the present. Our memories and traditions will become New Mexico’s history. Whether cowboy, miner, immigrant or scientist, whatever your ethnic or religious background, the stories of New Mexicans today reveal unbroken connections to the past. Our work in ranching, mining, tourism, government, oil and gas, and technology; our ceremonies of celebration; our festivals of feasting and fun; our oral traditions, and our families—these are the stories that touch on all that is important in the long life of an ancient land that became our New Mexico.

Right: The first atomic explosion, July 16, 1945, Trinity Site, New Mexico.

COURTESY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Below: Unidentified cowboy. NEW MEXICO MAGAZINE COLLECTION, PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS (MNM/DCA)

