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The Royal Road to the Interior Lands

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro follows the course of the Rio Grande, which was the traditional settlement place for many pre-European pueblos from Taos south to the Piro territory. After the first Spanish colonies, and especially after the reconquista of the 1690s, colonial administration in Mexico was eager to settle larger areas under the control of former militia. This resulted in the early Spanish land grants such as Atrisco (1692), Alameda (1710), Elena Gallegos (1716), and Pajarito (1746). This overlay and continuity from pueblo to land grants creates the long-term relationship between traditional communities and the land that makes New Mexico unique today.

More about El Camino Real:
atlas.nmhum.org
Spanish

1549 - 1821

Catholic Faith

The tiny New Mexican colony, and the camino that led to it, became important through the Spanish monarch’s determination to convert the Pueblo people to Catholicism. After 1631, the King funded supplies for each mission in New Mexico, including everything from medicine and food to elaborate church decorations and instruments. Each flour that served in New Mexico also received basic supplies for the long journey, and annual shipments of necessary goods, such as clothes and paper, as well as luxury goods like spices and chocolate. Missions also exported the products created by the Pueblos under their supervision, including woven goods, livestock, and pine nuts. This regular trade formed an important part of New Mexico’s early economy. Spanish support of the missions enabled the Catholic church to have a significant and lasting effect on New Mexican culture, both among indigenous people and later, among American Protestant immigrants who were required to convert in order to gain citizenship.

The Gutiérrez-Hubbell House

The Gutiérrez-Hubbell House is a symbol of the joining of colonial Spanish grace, Native culture, and Mexican traditions with Anglo-American entrepreneurship: it was the home of Juliana Gutiérrez, descendant of some of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Pajarito and New Mexico. With her marriage to James Lawrence “Santiago” Hubbell, a Connecticut Yankee, “Juliana” Hubbell was the second son and third born of James and Juliana. Like his father, Lorenzo became a merchant and trader with the “Indians” and established the Hubbell Trading Post in Ganado, Arizona, which today is a historic site managed by the National Park Service. The final inhabitant of the Gutiérrez-Hubbell House was Juliana Hubbell, who died in 1996.

Situated along El Camino Real, the oldest continuously used European roadway in North America, the Gutiérrez-Hubbell House was once a private residence, mercantile, trading post, stagecoach stop and post office. Today, the Gutiérrez-Hubbell House History and Museum is now considered a point of pride. More about the Gutiérrez-Hubbell House: gutierrezhubbellhouse.org

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro

Historical Highlights 1400 - 1930

Ancient 1400 - 1540

Mexicano Migration

The Aztecs people claimed to have migrated to present day Mexico City from the north and maintained trade relationships with northern tribes, including those along the Río Grande and up into the Four Corners. Cerrillos Hills turquiose was a particularly valued export. The Spanish built on some of these ancient trade routes, particularly through the difficult terrain of New Mexico. Some place names, such as Ático (from Nahuaatl word atli, meaning “water or ground”) are directly derived from this native connection to the south.

Cultural Intermixing

Cultural intermixing of peoples along El Camino Real started happening long before the Spanish entrada, but the Spanish caste system, developed to distinguish the many new racial mixes appearing in the New World, put names on each combination, such as mestizo (a child of European and indigenous parents) or cholo or coyote (a child of mestizo and indigenous parents). The Spanish and some tribes traded in Native captives, particularly from the Plains, the Ute and the Navajo, and those acquired as servants soon became acculturated to Spanish language and customs. These individuals were called genízaros, and established their own communities in places like Abiquiu and Belen. Today many New Mexicans can claim both Native and Spanish heritage, and mestizaje, once a derogatory label, is now considered a point of pride.

Gold & Silver Mining

In 1546, a silver strike near Zacatecas encouraged a boom that expanded to encompass areas around San Luis de Potosí and San José de Parral. These mines produced gold and silver to be shipped back to the King in Spain, but the miners needed food and clothes, as well as salt for separating the pure metals from the ore. Many of these supplies, particularly the salt, were shipped from New Mexico.

Military Presence Along El Camino Real

The Spanish maintained numerous presidios, or forts, south of El Paso, but it wasn’t until the Americans claimed New Mexico that forts were established along the Rio Grande. At first they protected trade along what Americans called the Chihuahua Trail. Later they saw troop movement during the Civil War as Texans Confederates moved north from Fort Bliss.

Modern 1821 - 1930

Along the Santa Fe Trail

When Mexico broke from Spain in 1821, trade with the United States opened, and the success of the first caravan of trade goods from Missouri inspired a frenzy of commerce, although most caravans continued through impoverished New Mexico to the bigger markets of Chihuahua.

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