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A little history of Santa Fe, NM

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Celebrating
New Mexico Statehood



A little history of Santa Fe, New Mexico

Submitted by kevco on 6 March 2012 - 7:48pm



Santa Fe is the capital of the U.S. state of New Mexico. It is the fourth-largest city in the state and is the seat of Santa Fe County. Santa Fe (literally 'holy faith' in Spanish) had a population of 67,947 in the 2010 census. It is the principal city of the Santa Fe, New Mexico Metropolitan Statistical Area which encompasses all of Santa Fe County and is part of the larger Santa Fe-Española Combined Statistical Area. The city's full name when founded was "La Villa Real de la Santa Fé de San Francisco de Asís" ("The Royal Town of the Holy Faith of St. Francis of Assisi").

Santa Fe in the Early 20th Century

In 1912 the town had only five thousand people as civic leaders designed and enacted a sophisticated city plan that incorporated elements of the City Beautiful movement, the city planning movement, and the German historic preservation movement. It anticipated limited future growth, considered the scarcity of water, and recognized the future prospects of suburban development on the outskirts. The planners foresaw conflicts between preservationists and scientific planners. They set forth the principle that historic streets and structures be preserved and that new development must be harmonious with the city's character.

Santa Fe Today: Artists and Tourists

The mainline of the railroad bypassed Santa Fe, and it lost population. However artists and writers and retirees were attracted to cultural richness of the area, the beauty of the landscapes and its dry climate. Local leaders took the opportunity to promote the city's heritage making it a tourist attraction. The city sponsored bold architectural restoration projects and erected new buildings according to traditional techniques and styles, thus creating the "Santa Fe style." Edgar L. Hewett, founder and first director of the School of American Research and the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe, was a leading promoter. He began the Santa Fe Fiesta in 1919 and the Southwest Indian Fair in 1922 (now known as the Indian Market). When he tried to attract a summer program for Texas women, many artists rebelled saying the city should not promote artificial tourism at the expense of its artistic culture. The writers and artists formed the Old Santa Fe Association and defeated the plan. The old "mud city" – which short-sighted modernizers laughed at for its adobe houses – was transformed into a city proud of its peculiarities and its blend of tradition and modernity.

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