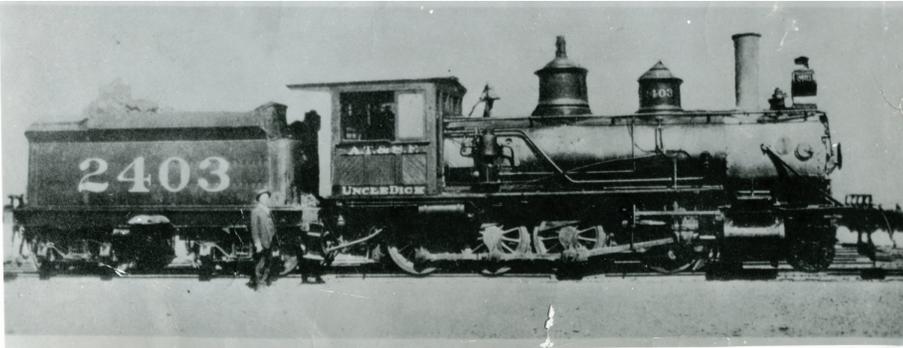


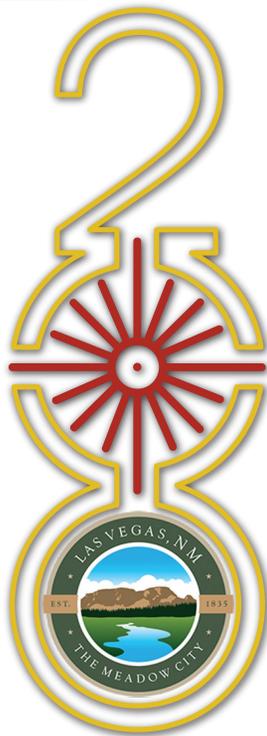
## Las Vegas and the legacy of Santa Fe Trail

The arrival of the railroad on July 4th, 1879 marked the beginning of the end of the Santa Fe trail. Now trade and commerce would be possible by rail, and another story would begin.

Former member of LVCCHP, Nancy Colalillo expresses this legacy: "Boom towns and boom times are fleeting, but the resiliency of the people who gave birth to both remain. And that is the magic of Las Vegas, NM., a town that continues to reinvent itself and survive in spite of or because of the history."



CCHP's Mission - To preserve, protect and promote the historic, cultural, and architectural heritage of greater Las Vegas through education and advocacy, and to encourage economic development through restoration and rehabilitation



The mission of MainStreet de Las Vegas is to unify the historic commercial corridor and engender pride in the community while promoting economic development and preserving historical, cultural, architectural, and natural resources through partnerships and community collaboration.



# SANTA FE TRAIL Bicentennial



## Las Vegas New Mexico

### Tour the Santa Fe Trail

The year 2021 marks 200 years since the Santa Fe Trail began its legacy as an international commercial highway. Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821 enabled William Bucknell, a trader from Franklin, Missouri (considered the father of the Santa Fe Trail) to pass through the area now called Las Vegas to sell his goods in Santa Fe for a bag of silver coins. The Trail provided new opportunities, and Las Vegas grew rapidly. In the 1820s.



"The landscape where the trail ran was inhabited, claimed, or used by a rich diversity of Indigenous peoples from nearly a dozen different Indian nations. Over the next fifty or so years, Indians from numerous Indian nations would interact in a variety of contexts, ranging from cooperation to warfare, with trail travelers who began their journey's both in the United States and Mexico. Before railway cars replaced lumbering caravans of oxen-driven wagons as the primary carrier of goods and people through this region, the U.S. military would gradually established a firm foothold in the contested land despite recurring Indian expressions of opposition and acts of armed resistance to the invasion. By the late 1860s, U.S. territorial expansion would see to it that there would be few Indian lands or peoples left along the trail." Courtesy of NPS

## Gallinas River Bridge

A group of New Mexican settlers led by Luis Maria Cabeza de Baca, received a land grant from the Mexican government and established Las Vegas (the Meadows) in 1835. The Gallinas River was a lifeline for settlers. Gallinas is Spanish for chicken – and it was said that prairie chickens flourished on the riverbanks. It's thought that the Gallinas Bridge is near the site where the Trail forded the river.

## Distrito de Las Escuelas

This triangular-shaped historic district's name is based on the early Catholic schools located in and adjacent to it. Within this district are some of the oldest structures in Las Vegas that retain Traditional and Territorial styles present during the Santa Fe Trail era.

South Pacific Street was the route the Santa Fe Trail wagons used to exit Las Vegas on the final leg of the journey to Santa Fe. It's not difficult to imagine this street as it appeared 150 years ago: a long string of one-room-wide adobe houses and people selling milk, cheese, and local produce to wagons as they passed.

## Rheua Pearce House (1846)

The former residence of Rheua Pearce (1894-1993), an educator and founder of the Las Vegas historic preservation movement, is a handsome row of adobe rooms that is actually two houses, preserved by Rheua. She restored the interior, which is about 3 steps down from the present street level, to its original viga and latilla ceilings. The house dates to before 1848 and is an excellent example of the Mexican structures in this district.

The Plaza today — with its gazebo under a canopy of mature trees — reflects the efforts of a preservation group led by Rheua Pearce and Johnny Villegas in the 1960s.

## Rosenwald Building

On the southeast corner of the Plaza, the Emmanuel Rosenwald Building records both the city's place as a booming mercantile center in the late nineteenth century, and the role of German-Jewish immigrants.

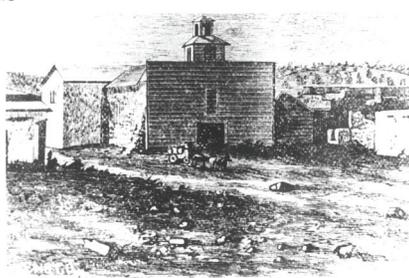
The Rosenwald Company thrived until the 1920s, when it closed. In the 1950s, the Jayval and Navajo Textiles Factory repurposed the building into a factory for the production of military parachutes during the Korean War; they inscribed the logo of the parachute within the form of a Zia to the entrance entablature. At its height, the factory employed over 300 workers and played a significant role in sustaining the Las Vegas economy until it closed in 1977. Sets for the popular movie "Red Dawn" were built here in 1983.

## First Our Lady of Sorrows Church (1836)

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Parish was established in 1835. The first settlers built the adobe chapel in 1836 in the shape of a cross, the walls of the original adobe nave still stand today within the Plaza Antiques building.

The parish later built a new church in 1852-1868, its impressive red sandstone

is a combination of Gothic and Romanesque styles. It contains a Kilgen organ that was initially water powered, and it is still played today during services.



## Presbyterian Mission (1869)



The Presbyterian Mission built their church on Socorro and Chavez Streets in Las Vegas in 1870.

The church served an active congregation until 1960 when it joined with two other churches to form the present-day First United Presbyterian Church on Douglas Avenue.

The Presbyterian Mission is one of the finest examples of New Mexican Territorial architecture, an adaptation of Greek revival architecture popular in America in the 1830's and 1840's

## South Side of Plaza

In the later Santa Fe Trail days, merchants of wool and hides, or lana y cueros, transported these products across the Trail to markets in the East. By the 1870's Las Vegas became a wealthy and important city with 2,000 inhabitants and over 500,000

sheep in the county. Oldtimers said at shearing time wagons lined up all the way out to Romeroville about 5 miles away. The plaza exhibited territorial style architecture with several two-story adobe structures. On June 8, 1877, a large fire destroyed or damaged the buildings on the south-side making room for commercial Victorian buildings to come.



The plaza at Old Las Vegas about 1870. Gen. Grant made a speech here in 1846. Photo from the W. H. Stage collection.

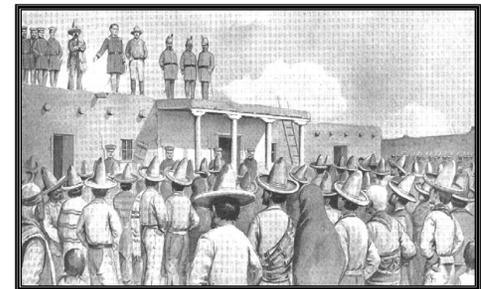
## Acequia Madre

One of the settlers' first large construction projects was the Acequia Madre (Mother Ditch) that channeled water from the Gallinas River for irrigation.



## Old Town Plaza

In 1835, the settlers began to establish a traditional Spanish style Plaza according to the Spanish "Law of the Indies". It is probably the largest and best preserved in New Mexico. The first flat-roofed log and adobe houses stood side-by-side, one room deep around the Plaza, forming a defensive enclosure for residents and livestock in case of an attack. The citizens of Las Vegas erected a windmill in 1876 which served briefly as a vigilante gallows. In 1880, a bandstand with trees and a picket fence was added.



Kearny proclamation in 1846, atop the Maese and Romero houses. Illustration by K.M. Chapman of Las Vegas, from Ralph Emerson Twitchell's *The Military Occupation of the Territory of New Mexico from 1846 to 1851*, 37.

## Maese House

General Kearny's Proclamation Monument

In 1846 in connection with the war with Mexico, General Kearny and the Army of the West invaded New Mexico. On August 15th, 1846, General Stephen Watts Kearny, stood atop the one-story house of the Las Vegas mayor Juan de Dios Maese to proclaim the annexation of New Mexico by the United States and to require Mayor Maese and other officials to pledge an oath of allegiance to the United States. In 1847 there was Hispanic resistance to the American invasion in the towns of Mora and Taos.

## Fort Union National Monument

The American Army occupied Las Vegas from 1846 to 1851 when Fort Union was established and the garrison at Las Vegas was removed. During its forty year history, Fort Union, (the original fort was built in a star shape) was the largest base in the American Southwest and functioned as a military garrison, territorial arsenal, and southwest military supply depot for some 50 other Forts in the Southwest.

Fort Union sat at the junction of two main branches of the Santa Fe Trail (the mountain route and the plains route) to protect New Mexican citizens, travelers, commerce, and mail routes from frequent Indian raids.

Today, visitors can explore impressive ruins of Fort Union, and see Santa Fe Trail ruts that still remain.



## Don Miguel Romero House

The family of Don Miguel Romero and his wife Josefa Delgado were among New Mexico's most prominent families. Don Miguel and his five sons (his 5 daughters were prominent figures in Las Vegas as well) were involved in freighting goods between Missouri and New Mexico. The eminent five sons would become leaders of the Republican Party and prominent elected officials for the next 50 years.

The Miguel Romero home is located here on the northeast corner of the Plaza. Records indicate it was a Spanish colonial adobe mansion of 24 rooms built around two placitas. Portales lined the courtyard and house's façade. One could walk through a doorway into the Romero orchards that extended towards the river. It was one of the finest Territorial houses in all of new Mexico.

## Charles Iffeld Building (1882 - 1890)

Many German-Jewish immigrants moved to Las Vegas to provide merchandise to the local population and later became contractors to supply corn, wheat, sheep, horses, mules, and oxen to the American Army. In addition, they shipped large quantities of wool and hides to buyers in the East.

Arthur Morrison was the first Jewish merchant in Las Vegas. He served as the sutler for the army post in Las Vegas before Fort Union opened in 1851.

Charles Iffeld, who became the most successful Jewish merchant in New Mexico arrived in Santa Fe in 1865 and relocated his business to the Las Vegas Plaza in 1869. In 1882 he began building the Italianate building on the Plaza. This was later merged into the grand Plaza Hotel (built 1884) in 2006, an excellent example of Renaissance Revival architecture.

The Jewish newcomers established mercantile firms that were a combination of importer-exporters, wholesalers, retailers, and bankers. These mercantile establishments played a critical role in developing the economy of New Mexico.

The Jewish merchants were fluent in Spanish, the language of their customers. They gained the trust of their customers by offering credit and barter transactions. As more arrived, they spread out to most towns in New Mexico. Many of the Jewish merchants returned to their native lands to find Jewish wives and brought them back to New Mexico.

New Mexico's first synagogue was built in Las Vegas in 1883.

