

Santa Fe Plaza

The Plaza is a National Historic Landmark located in the Santa Fe Historic District on a square block bordered by San Francisco Street, Washington Avenue, Palace Avenue, and Lincoln Avenue, south of the Palace of the Governors in downtown Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The city of Santa Fe sits on an ancient site, Oga Pogeŋ Owingeh, which was home to the Northern and Southern Tewa people for thousands of years before the arrival of Spanish settlers. Lived experiences and historical stories of Oga Pogeŋ continue to be passed down through the oral tradition, by the people of Taytsúgeŋ Oweengeŋ (Tesuque Pueblo), who continue to maintain social and cultural connections to the land.

Don Pedro de Peralta (1584 – 1666) was a Spanish colonial official who established Santa Fe as the capital of New Mexico. In 1609, the viceroy of Mexico appointed him to the post of governor of New Mexico and he officially named the city, La Villa Real de la Santa Fé de San Francisco de Asís, or The Royal Town of the Holy Faith of St Francis of Assisi in 1610. Peralta's authority as governor of New Mexico was challenged by a Franciscan missionary, Fray Isidrio de Ordoñez, who declared Peralta a "schismatic heretic" in 1612 and Peralta was arrested and was imprisoned for almost a year, until he sent word of his situation to the viceroy, who ordered his release.

During the early 1600s, Spanish colonists created a plaza in the heart of the city in an area that had been a communal gathering space for the Tewa Pueblo for hundreds of years. The Plaza was in the center of a small presidio, or fortified walled fort, erected by the Spanish and surrounded by buildings that had been constructed by the Tewa people. The Spanish village included a church, located on the eastern side of the central square of the plaza, which symbolized the "holy faith" that was the cornerstone of the city.

The plaza was the site of the battle of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and the War for Mexican Independence which ended after 11 years of revolutionary fighting. In 1821, during the reign of the new government, the Mexican flag was flown above the Palace of the Governors and the plaza was renamed La Plaza de la Constitución until General Stephen W. Kearny arrived in Santa Fe in 1846. Legend says that Kearny met no opposition as he entered the city and proclaimed the New Mexico territory part of the United States from the plaza grounds that day.

Prior to colonization, the plaza was a well-known open marketplace and center of commerce for traders. During the second half of the 19th century, the Anglo-American population in Santa Fe grew rapidly due to the influx of travelers of the Santa Fe Trail. From 1845 – 1880, boarding houses, gambling halls, and other businesses were fueled by the traders of the Santa Fe Trail network. The La Fonda Hotel, located on the southeast corner of the plaza, was known as the Inn at the End of the Trail.

In 1920, the Daughters of the American Revolution erected the "End of the Trail" monument located on the southeast corner of the plaza. This monument marks the end of the Santa Fe Trail for Missouri merchants. Once the railroad was established, travelers of the Santa Fe Trail slowed and eventually ended when the Route 66 highway became available to independent vehicle owners.

Lumber and new resources were brought in on freight trains, which transformed the city and expanded buildings and commerce. The city constructed a wooden bandstand on the plaza, where the United

States infantry bands performed free music for the public. An archival photo from 1886 shows local farmers selling produce on the bandstand in the plaza.

Early 1900 photos show burros packed with firewood tied in bundles on their back, circling the plaza and congregating along Burro Alley, and a plaza surrounded by a white picket fence with alfalfa grass planted within the square. During this period, criminals were sent to the state penitentiary in Santa Fe until their trial; 19 men found guilty of crimes were publicly hung on the west corner of the Plaza.

Soldier's Monument

Funding was appropriated by the New Mexico Territorial Legislative 1866-1867, for the creation of a Soldier's Monument or Obelisk, to honor the lives of men who died in the Civil War battle at Apache Cañón in Glorieta, and at the battle in Valverde, as well as the Indian Wars. In 1868, the 33 feet tall stone monument, consisting of an obelisk and a plinth, was situated at the historic center of Santa Fe and commemorated with great fanfare.

Inscriptions on the panels of the monument were codified into law. The [East] panel reads, "Erected by the people of New Mexico through their legislatures of 1866-7-8. May the Union be perpetual."

The [South] panel reads, "To the Heroes of the federal army who fell at the battle of Valverde. Fought with rebels February 21, 1862."

The [West] panel reads, "To the Heroes of the federal army who fell at the battles of Canon del Apache and Pigeons Rancho (La Glorieta) fought with the rebels March 28, 1862, and to those who fell at the battle fought with the rebels at Peralta April 15, 1862."

And the fourth [North] panel reads, "To the heroes who have fallen in the various battles with the savage Indians of the Territory of New Mexico."

In Chris Wilson's book, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*, complaints from local residents over the monument's derogatory reference to indigenous people as "savage" or "Indios bárbaros," began in the 1950s and escalated during the 1960s. Oliver La Farge wrote an article, *Record Put Straight on Odd Folk-lore of Misinformation*, which explained that the wording "savage Indians" meant Navajo and Mescalero Apache and the "rebels" were reference to these Native tribes as well as Confederate soldiers from Texas.

According to a Santa Fe Newmexican article written in 1961:

"An elder of Tesuque Pueblo stated that his first realization that he was a second-class citizen was when he read the words "savage Indian" on the panel as a child. He added, the word should be changed stating, "Why should future generations of American Indian children continue to have this insulting reminder that the conquerors considered them little more than blood-lusting beasts, not notable martyrs fighting for their homes?"

In 1973, the American Indian Movement leadership wrote the governor of New Mexico requesting that the state change the wording of panel 4 because of the derogatory word "savage" or remove the Soldiers Monument from the public space. In response, Governor Bruce King told the Santa Fe council that the reference on the 1868 Soldier's monument to "savage Indians" had aroused criticism, and he asked that the council remove it.

The City Council determined that the monument was owned by the State of New Mexico and a unanimous vote by the council rescinded the previous vote to remove it. Federal grant funds had been sought earlier for the preservation of the monument, so the state government proposed that a plaque be placed to explain the context of the terms “Rebel” and “Savage Indians” as a resolution to the governor’s request.

A brass plaque on a concrete stand was placed on the south side of the monument, prepared in 1973, by the State Cultural Properties Review Committee. The text explains the context for the monument’s wording and reads, "Monument texts reflect the character of the times in which they are written and the temper of those who wrote them. This monument was dedicated in 1868 near the close of a period of intense strife which pitted northerner against southerner, Indian against white, Indian against Indian. Thus, we see on this monument, as in other records, the use of such terms as ‘savage’ and ‘rebel’. Attitudes change and prejudices hopefully dissolve."

In 1974, an unidentified man wearing coveralls chipped the word “savage” out of the inscription on panel 4 of the obelisk. In August 2017, the word “courageous” was written with a permanent marker over the chiseled inscription by an unknown person.

During the George Floyd protests in 2020 protests erupted over systemic racism, monuments and memorials associated with the Confederacy, slavery, or racism were torn down or removed. Statues of other controversial figures such as Christopher Columbus, Junípero Serra, Juan de Oñate and Kit Carson were also targeted in the United States. According to the Huffington Post, by October 2020 over a hundred Confederate symbols had been "removed, relocated or renamed," based on data from the Southern Poverty Law Center.

On June 18, 2020 City of Santa Fe, Mayor Alan Webber, signed a Proclamation of Emergency - Civil Unrest from Institutional Racism. This proclamation called for the removal of the Don Diego de Vargas statue from Cathedral Park, the Civil War obelisk and the Christopher “Kit” Carson monuments.

At this poignant moment in time, the mayor hastened all members of the community in Santa Fe, stating in the proclamation:

“The removal of monuments in Santa Fe was to allow our community the opportunity to have overdue conversations: we need to take an honest look at all of our history, move forward with truth and reconciliation, and create a better future based on our shared values, to maintain the peace in our city; to reject expressions of anger that involve violence or hatred. The Mayor is asking our community to use this moment to engage in respectful dialogue about our city’s past and prayerful reflection on our city’s future; and to embrace peace and reconciliation as a true fulfillment of the shared values of the people of Santa Fe. The proclamation also called for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to make recommendations to the City regarding the future of the City’s historic statues and monuments, relevant sections of the City’s Code, and other matters of education, historic trauma, and systemic racism that the City has the responsibility and opportunity to address.”

An attempt to move the Soldiers' Monument by a crane resulted in only the tip of the sandstone obelisk being dislodged. In the early morning hours on June 22, 2020, the Soldier’s monument was severely vandalized, and the word "racist" spray painted and red handprints on each side facing of the sandstone

obelisk. Each of the marble panels of the base of the monument were spray painted; the words “End the Genocide” were on the south panel, the words “Tewa Land” on the east and west panels, and black painted lines covered the north panel inscription. Huge cracks in the marble panel on the north base panel were likely caused by a blunt force object.

Elena Ortiz, an Ohkay Owingeh tribal member and chair of the Santa Fe-Red Nation Freedom Council, said to the Santa Fe Newmexican that she neither condones nor condemns the damage to the obelisk, but was upset with the public’s reaction to the vandalism. “I think it’s appalling that people are more upset about this than they would be upset over women and children being sold into slavery [on the Plaza] and people having their foot cut off by conquistadors,” Ortiz said.

From October 9th through October 11, 2022, people took turns chaining themselves to the obelisk. Organizers distributed an unsigned statement that read, "A coalition of groups will occupy the Santa Fe Plaza to demand the removal of the racist obelisk at the center of the town square. The three-day occupation leading up to Indigenous Peoples Day seeks the liberation of Indigenous peoples from all forms of colonialism including the removal of racist monuments and an end to the continued, systematic oppression of Indigenous communities."

On October 12, 2020, Indigenous People's Day, close to 300 people gathered midday on the plaza wrapping chains and tow straps around the monument, and 50-100 people participate in pulling it to the ground. That evening, the City cleaned up large debris and decided to board the remains of the monument with a plywood box. The City Council voted to post a plaque of RESOLUTION NO. 2021-6, explaining the City’s CHART process and the context regarding the controversy. City councilors proposed a resolution that would form a committee to deliberate and make recommendations for the disposition of controversial monuments and statues. Then, sponsors of the resolution, Mayor Alan Webber, Councilor Carol Romero-Wirth, Councilor Roman “Tiger” Abeyta, and Councilor Chris Rivera, decided on a grassroots process that would and facilitate community dialogue.

On July 14, 2021 the City’s Governing Body approved a contract with the non-profit organization, Artful Life, to be the hired consultant, recommended by the evaluation committee, to lead the Culture, History, Art, Reconciliation and Truth (CHART) public engagement process over the span of a year. An opening event, where the public could meet and greet the CHART facilitators, was held on Sunday, November 14, 2021 at Frenchy's Field, along the Santa Fe River Trail.

The CHART process (August 2021 - August 2022) was intended to promote understanding and reconciliation among people of different backgrounds; to learn about the city's history and to recommend solutions to current issues of concern. In the final report, the CHART process revealed divisions over the plaza obelisk and recommended that the city pursue ongoing public participation to learn and understand our complex histories and stories, and to promote truth, healing, and reconciliation for a future of peace and justice.

On Indigenous People’s Day, October 10, 2022, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham issued an executive order that rescinded four 1800s-era proclamations from former New Mexico territorial governors in an effort to promote healing and reconciliation. After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo 1848, Pueblo and northern Hispano communities implored the United States government to protect their property and possessions from raiding nomadic Indian tribes and the Navajo and Mescalero Apache were deemed “hostile” and “savages”. The 1851 proclamations issued by Gov. Calhoun directed Native residents to be

excluded from official census counts and authorized militias to “pursue and attack” Indigenous New Mexicans. The 1869 proclamations issued by Gov. Mitchell and Gov. Pile declared certain Tribal nations as “outlaws” and authorized New Mexico residents to commit violence against Tribal citizens.

Proposed Resolution to Rebuild the Soldier’s Monument

After a contentious city council meeting in March, 2023, that included discussion of several amendments by city councilors and two hours of public comments from more than 200 residents who spoke in opposition of rebuilding the monument, sponsors pulled the bill from the governing body’s consideration. The proposed resolution would use the pieces of the old Soldiers Monument [torn down by protestors in 2020] to rebuild the monument, intentionally highlighting the cracks, and adding new panels with more historical context that would include the story of controversy and destruction of the monument.

Councilor Romero-Wirth commented to the Santa Fe Newmexican, “We’ve heard from people formally and informally and we decided as a group it was best and an appropriate step to step back and let the temperature lower and to think about what’s been said. Maybe with time there will be a path forward.” Romero-Wirth and Fellow cosponsor Amanda Chavez began redrafting another resolution to create and provide direction for an Office of Equity and Inclusion however the resolution was never produced.

[Resolution 2024-26](#)

In 2024, Santa Fe City Council passed “A Resolution Recognizing The Importance Of History; Calling For Placing Culturally And Historically Important Statues In Respectful, Safe, Public Places To Tell The Story Of Pueblo And New Mexico History In An Honest, Accurate, And Complete Manner; Beginning This Process By Placing The Pueblo Revolt Runners Statue In The Santa Fe Convention Center And Supporting Relocation Of The Don Diego De Vargas Statue To The New Mexico History Museum, Which Includes The Palace Of The Governors.”

At the request of Los Caballeros de Vargas, the New Mexico History Museum agreed to accept the Don Diego De Vargas statue from the City of Santa Fe as part of a temporary educational exhibit that is open for public viewing –free of charge. In June 2024, the Santa Fe City Council approved the plan for the de Vargas statue to be on display in the courtyard of the New Mexico History Museum for no more than four years after which, the City would determine the statue’s next location.

A white board at the museum solicited public comments with a sign that reads:

“Please share your thoughts on a sticky note and post it on the feedback board.

What can we learn from historical figures?

Whose stories does this statue represent, and whose are missing?

How does this statue add to or challenge what we know of New Mexico history?

What role should public art play on shaping our communities?”

Former Pojoaque Pueblo governor and sculptor George Rivera created a statue of Catua and Omtua – two runners who played a key role in the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. The statue was a gift to the city of Santa Fe in 2018 from Tesuque Pueblo and remained in storage amid controversy surrounding public art and monuments until its placement indoors at the Santa Fe Convention Center On the commemoration of Pueblo Revolt Day in 2024.

Civil Lawsuit to Rebuild the Soldier's Monument

In June 2021, Union Protectoriva de Santa Fe, a local social and fraternal organization, filed a civil lawsuit asking the court to force Mayor Webber and the city government to “repair and restore” the Soldier’s Monument. First Judicial District Court Judge Matthew Wilson ruled on Sept. 6, 2024 that the case could not be dismissed due to evidence that the city’s changes to the Plaza, including encasing the Soldier’s Monument base in a box and putting a sign in front of it, along with removing the de Vargas statue, could violate the state law governing historically significant sites.

Proposed Resolution to Relocate the Soldier's Monument

On October 31, 2024, the Santa Fe City Council approved a resolution to study the feasibility of moving the Soldiers' Monument and directs the city manager to formally ask the National Cemetery to take the monument. Movement of the monument needs approval from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs to move the monument. The Tesuque Pueblo Governor, Milton Herrera, sent a letter to the City Council supporting the placement of the monument at the cemetery and recommended a reworded plaque.

State Judge's Ruling

On December 20, 2024, First Judicial District Court Judge Matthew Wilson determined the legality of the emergency proclamation that called for the removal of three monuments in the city: the Kit Carson statue at the federal courthouse, the Don Diego de Vargas statue at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, and the Soldier’s Monument or Obelisk at the Plaza, issued by Santa Fe Mayor Alan Webber on June 18, 2020. Judge Wilson ordered the City of Santa Fe to deconstruct and remove the plywood box covering the plaza Soldier’s monument, and remove the proclamation sign and any shrubs or other obstructions within 30 days – and restore it to pre-2020 condition within 180 days or “otherwise comply with preservation laws to ensure proper maintenance”.

“The Soldiers’ Monument is an inextricably interconnected component of both the Plaza and the District. As such, the Court finds and concludes that the Prehistoric and Historic Sites Preservation Act and related regulations apply to the Soldier’s Monument. The Court finds and concludes that Plaintiff [Union Protectoriva de Santa Fe] has failed to establish the de Vargas Statue and the Kit Carson Obelisk are inextricably interconnected components of or integral to the Plaza or the District. Therefore, the Court does not grant any relief or offer further analysis with respect to either the de Vargas Statue or the Kit Carson Obelisk,” the judge wrote in the ruling.

Kit Carson monument

Carson was a fur trapper, expedition guide, served as an agent for the Office of Indian Affairs for the northern New Mexico Territory until the onset of the Civil War. During his military service, Carson served as a Union soldier and participated in battles against the Confederates at the Battle of Val Verde and at Glorieta Pass. He was appointed lieutenant colonel organizing the 1st New Mexico Volunteer Infantry and commanding over a third of five columns of troops; totaling close to 500 men, which were divided into two battalions, each made up of four companies. Most of the men that comprised the volunteer military militias were from the Pueblos of Santo Domingo, Zuni, Oribe, and Santa Clara. Spanish and Hispano descendants who lived in settlements, established by Spain during the 17th century in northern New Mexico, also enlisted in militias.

Although President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, issued September 1862, officially ended the practice of slavery, human trafficking and slave labor continued to be practiced in New Mexico until the early 1900s. Union forces pushed Confederates out of New Mexico into Texas and down the Rio Grande

into Mexico. Determined to eliminate Indian raiding in New Mexico, the United States government turned Civil War military forces from fighting Confederate to fighting what New Mexico deemed as “hostile” Indians. Governor Calhoun issued a second proclamation on March 18, 1851, which “authorized the attack on any hostile tribe of Indians that may have entered settlements for the purpose of plunder and depredation...and directed or ordered residents to capture the property from any hostile tribe of Indians”.

The Mescalero Apache and Dine’ (Navajo) are two groups who faced greater challenges and are still recovering from the devastating impacts of slavery, forced removal from their homelands, the precarious Navajo Long Walk and incarceration at Bosque Redondo, and the hardship and human cruelty of the “scorched earth” policy enacted in 1860 and led by Kit Carson. Due to the legacy of historical injustices, these communities have vulnerabilities and barriers to accessing aid such as water infrastructure, adequate housing, and the ability to interact with their ancestral homelands due to toxic contamination from the legacy of nuclear weaponry and militarization by the federal government.

From 2020-2024 there have been public protests and repeated graffiti on the Kit Carson monument. The property [monument] was turned over to General Services Administration (an agency of the federal government) in 2023 and is charged with making a decision regarding the future of the Carson monument.

The GSA completed an Environmental Assessment in November 2024 with a preferred action for the federal agency:

Alternative 4, “which disassembles and removes the monument from the [Santa Fe] Federal Oval, would have a minimal but beneficial effect on the urban environment, including the goals of tourism. Removal would decrease the future likelihood of vandalism on-site at this particular location”.

A public comment period was held for thirty days and closed on December 30th, 2024. GSA will take action after a 90-day review of comments and issuance of a final report

On December 12, 2024, the Navajo Nation governing council passed Resolution 0251-24 “Reaffirming the Navajo Nation’s opposition to any monument of Christopher “Kit” Carson being placed in the state of New Mexico, and specifically at Bosque Redondo, Santa Fe Cemetery, or the Carson House and Museum in Taos”. The Navajo Nation requests the immediate removal of the name of Christopher “Kit” Carson from all government properties, including monuments, parks, highways, streets, etc. in the State of New Mexico; and cease in naming public properties using the Christopher “Kit” Carson name; and tribal consultation regarding the placement of the Carson monument.

City of Santa Fe’s Action regarding the Soldiers’ Monument in 2025...

History of Fiesta de Santa Fe

The plaza is host to the oldest community celebration known as Fiestas, which dates back to 1712. During the week of the Fiesta de Santa Fe, La Conquistadora, a Marian statue originally carved as an image of Our Lady of Assumption representing Mary's miraculous assumption into heaven, is venerated in a procession around the plaza. Tree-ring dates reveal, La Conquistadora was carved between 1448 - 1648, however the country of her origin and maker are unknown. The statue was brought from Mexico to Santa Fe by Franciscan priests in 1625.

During the Pueblo Revolt in 1680, the church was set on fire, and the statue incurred some damage but was not destroyed. Spanish settlers carried her to the El Paso area, the temporary settlement called El Real de San Lorenzo. During the period of Spanish exile from New Mexico, the first record of clothing and jewels made for the statue was in 1686, and included dresses of silk and satin with gold galloon trim, strings of pearls, gold and silver earrings and a filigree cross. In August 2014, 60 garments out of a collection of 200 outfits made for the statue, were on exhibit as part of the 300th anniversary celebration of the Chapel of La Conquistadora.

The statue of La Conquistadora accompanied Don Diego de Vargas, friars, families and soldiers on their expedition to resettle Santa Fe in 1692. According to author and historian Fray Angélico Chávez, De Vargas believed that La Conquistadora had answered his prayers to regain the city without too much bloodshed. He rebuilt the parish church that had been destroyed during the revolt, to honor the Marian image, which he called Nuestra Señora de la Conquista.

In 1717, La Conquistadora was placed in what is now the Catholic Basilica of St. Francis. In 1771, La Conquistadora was proclaimed patroness of Nuevo México and Queen of Heaven by the Cofradia del Rosario or confraternity that continues to care for her. Annual church functions and the Fiesta de Santa Fe were created to give thanks for her role in the reconquest. A re-enactment, also known as The Entrada, was performed annually during the Fiesta de Santa Fe each September; celebrating what organizers call the “peaceful resettlement” of the city by De Vargas in 1692.

In 1911, The Entrada was invented by an Episcopal minister to increase tourism and was one of many events that took place during the annual Fiesta de Santa Fe each September that sparked controversy and incited protests. In 1977, the All Pueblo Council of Governors formally expressed its disapproval of the Fiesta de Santa Fe, “for its offensive display depicted by the reenactment.”

In 1992, a documentary film, [Gathering Up Again: Fiesta in Santa Fe](#) was made. The film focused on the Native American who accepted the role of Cacique Domingo in a pageant that reenacts the “peaceful reconquest of 1692”. The reenactment depicts inaccuracies in the historical representation of the reentry of the Spanish, with Hispanics and Anglos dressed in Plains Indians costumes and war paint on the face during the pageantry. Due to the controversy over the Fiesta re-enactments, Archbishop Robert Sánchez renamed La Conquistadora to Our Lady of Peace in 1992.

During The Entrada reenactments, September 2015, 2016 and 2017, protesters gathered on the plaza calling for its abolishment. Eight protesters were arrested in 2017, which led to months of closed-door discussion with various stakeholders, including the Santa Fe Fiesta Council and the Caballeros de Vargas, a fraternal organization that puts on the annual commemoration and reenactment. In 2018, the Santa Fe Fiesta Council decided to drop The Entrada, and agreed to return to the original intent of the proclamation signed in 1712, which states that the purpose of the Fiesta event is to celebrate the faith that founded the city.

Santa Fe continues the Fiestas as an annual event in September, with traditions of Catholic vespers, mass, sermon and procession around the Plaza. The week-long Fiestas celebration culminates with the burning of Zozobra, a figure resembling an old man in a suit with bow tie, stuffed with shredded paper, is meant to help drive away the doom and gloom of the previous year. In 1924, Will Shuster created the first ever Zozobra as part of a private event at his home, as a celebratory event for residents who were not Catholic and did not participate in Festas.

Shuster was inspired by the celebrations of the Yaqui Indians of Mexico, and chose the name, Zozobra, which translates to "The Gloomy One." Zozobra has grown in size over the years, and stands over 50 feet tall today, making the marionette one of the largest in the world. After the figures' construction the public is encouraged to participate in stuffing it with shredded papers of memories and negative issues they wish to rid themselves of, which may include police reports, divorce papers and bankruptcy documents.

Another annual tradition is the Desfile de Los Niños or otherwise known as the Children's Pet Parade. This annual event was established in the early 1920's, and pays homage to St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of Santa Fe. Children and their pets dress in costumes for the event, which culminates with an awards ceremony held on the Plaza. Priests from the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi conduct a Blessing of Animals ritual on the Feast Day of St. Francis each year.

Community events

Since 1909, the Museum of New Mexico has worked to protect and promote traditional southwestern Native American arts and crafts. Native American Artisans sell their handmade pottery, textiles, and jewelry made of traditional materials such as turquoise, coral, and silver from under the portal of the Palace of the Governors, as they have for decades.

In 1988, a car crash was staged on the Plaza, in front of the Five 'n Dime store, for the film *Pow Wow Highway*. Actor Mario Lopez also filmed, *Holiday in Santa Fe*, a Lifetime network movie, on the Plaza in April 2021. The Lifetime network crew filmed in various locations around the city, and the Plaza was decorated with Christmas decorations for the movie's storyline of a tight knit family that runs a business creating ornaments inspired by Mexican Christmas traditions.

For many hundreds of years, "buskers" or street performers, some are local residents and others are visitors passing through town, have put on different types of performances on the Plaza including juggling, music, dance and theater. In April 2014, the Plaza was packed by so many performers that the City of Santa Fe drafted a new ordinance for buskers, requiring them to apply for a license from the City and submit a declaration of what kind of performance they intend to put on for public audiences. Performers were also required to have a photo identification to show while performing, and each performer must stay at least 50 feet away from each other as well as other vendors on the plaza.

Street performers were required to move at least 100 feet every two hours, and those on the Plaza must leave after two hours of performance, with a maximum of five buskers allowed on the plaza at any given time. Vocal and musicians must not be audible at a distance of 50 feet, and sound amplification can only be used between 1 and 3 p.m. daily, and never on the Plaza. Performing on the Plaza bandstand was also prohibited, as well as any act that involves fire, spray paint or aerosols. During annual festival events such as Indian Market, Spanish Market, arts and crafts fairs, or evening musical performances, buskers are allowed to perform with written permission from the event's sponsor. Buying a 30-day busker's license for \$10 was eliminated, and a \$35 license for one calendar year became the only option.

For eight decades, native New Mexican, Antonia Apodaca, wrote songs and performed on the Plaza. Her family members said that when Antonia was 13, she won a contest against adult accordion players at Santa Fe's La Fonda on the Plaza. She won many more awards over the course of her lifetime, including the New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts in 1992, the Premio Hilos Culturales in

2011, and the New Mexico Music Commission's Platinum Music Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2018.

German-born guitarist, Ottmar Liebert, moved to Santa Fe in the 1980s and is still a resident. Ottmar also performed guitar on the Plaza during the 1990s, and continues to perform shows at the Lensic with his band, Luna Negra (2000-2021). During the mid-1990s the musician and dancer known as Chuscales also performed guitar flamenco music on the plaza. Chuscales emigrated from Antequera, Spain to North America in the 1980s, and spent decades touring with the famous Maria Benitez flamenco troupe. His grandfather was a Gypsy who grew up in a family known for its performers. One of Chuscales' childhood mentors was flamenco master Paco de Lucia. He also grew up playing and listening to flamenco music in the famed caves of Sacromonte.

Many other styles of music have been performed on the plaza. Between 2016 - 2018, a Dixieland gypsy jazz band from Seattle also performed regularly on the Plaza of Santa Fe. Native American hand drum musicians, pow wow dancing using digital recordings, hoop dance performances by the Pojoaque Lightning Boy Foundation, Afro-Native American flute player (Johnny "Nailman" Alston), solo saxophone, violin, and guitar performers, as well as local mariachi bands.

Today, the Plaza is a public park used as a community-gathering place for civic celebrations including local artisans' markets, free music from live bands during the summer, parades, lowrider and classic car shows, CommUNITY non-profit organizations information and educational awareness day events, fundraising events such as Pancakes on the Plaza, winter holiday displays that include Las Posadas, New Year's Eve fireworks, ice sculptures, and bonfires in the streets surrounding the square.

The Plaza is also host to annual events such as the Indigenous People's Day celebration, Contemporary Hispanic Market, Spanish Market and the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts (SWAIA) Santa Fe Indian Market. Restaurants, galleries, boutiques, and museums line the streets around the Plaza. Wedding parties often grace the Plaza with a promenade around the square after their ceremony, often with live mariachi serenading the newlyweds and cheers from local residents.

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35. [Controversial statue of Don Diego de Vargas back on display in Santa Fe](#)
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Archival Photos:

1. 1872-1880: [Palace of the Governors from south side of Plaza, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)
2. [1885 Plaza-obelisk: 13th United States Infantry Band, Plaza, in front of Palace of the Governors, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)

3. 1881 – 1883- [Plaza, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)
4. 1866: [Plaza looking west, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)
5. 1880: [9th Cavalry Band on plaza, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, Ben Wittick Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)
6. 1912: ["Famous Team of Trotters" on the Plaza, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, Jesse Nusbaum Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)
7. 1886? Farmer's market on the [Bandstand, Plaza, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#) (Farmers selling produce under the bandstand)
8. 1988: [Car crash staged on Plaza during a film of Pow Wow Highway, Santa Fe, New Mexico - Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection - CONTENTdm Title \(unm.edu\)](#)
9. [CHUSCALES "GYPSY BOOK" December 17 & 18 at 7:30 PM, 2015 - Mina Fajardo](#)
10. [Guitarist Ottmar Liebert talks 'weird and strange and wonderful' Santa Fe on PBS | Neighbors | santafenewmexican.com](#)
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12. [NMPBS ¡Colores!: Maria Benitez - YouTube](#)