

AYER Y HOY en TAOS

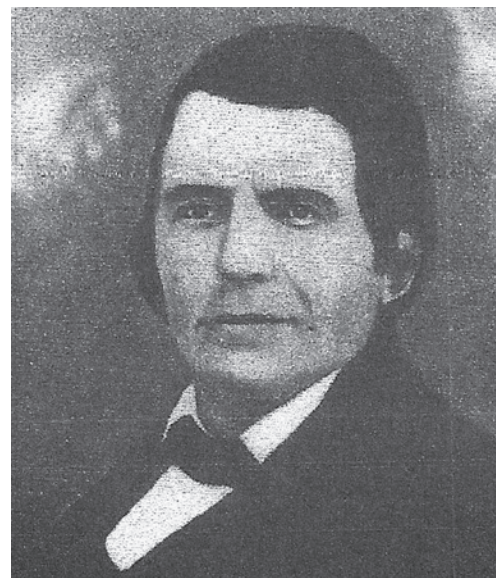
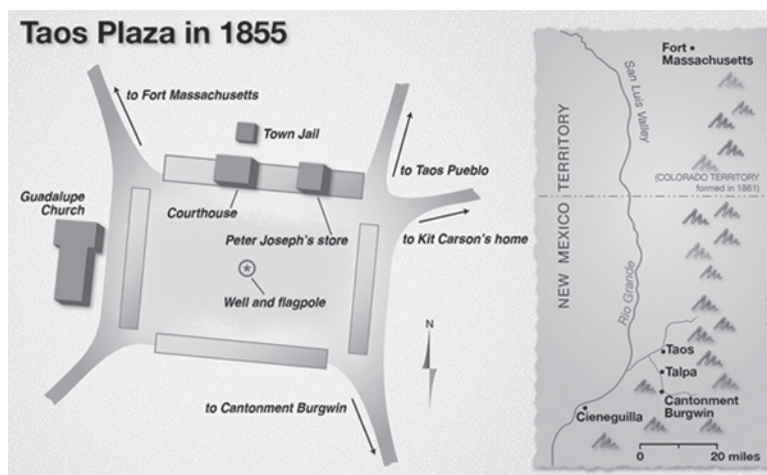
Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

Winter 2021

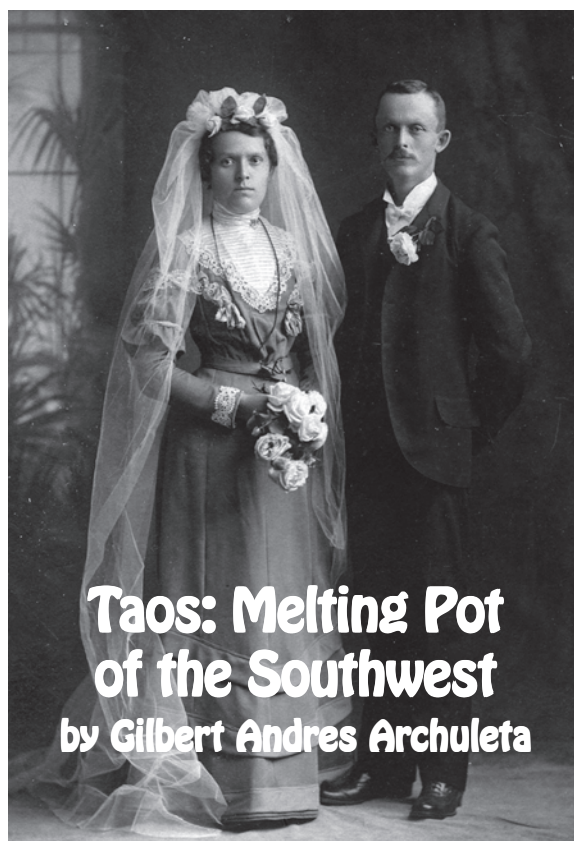
Issue #49

Peter Joseph: An Unrecognized Entrepreneur

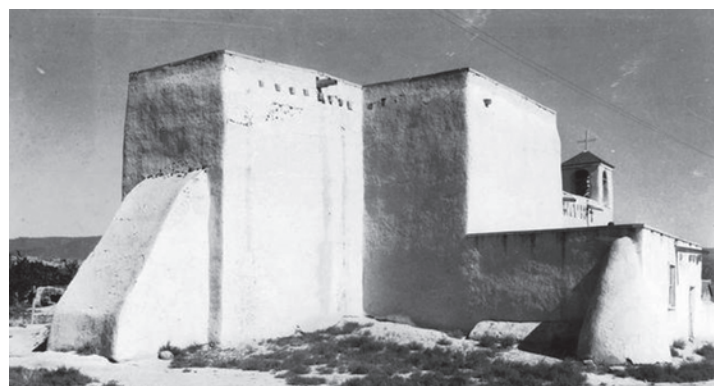
by John B. Ramsey
& Charles "Corky" Hawk



Peter Joseph-Freemason
by Dave Cordova



**Taos: Melting Pot
of the Southwest**
by Gilbert Andres Archuleta



**The History
Of The
Ranchos de Taos
Plaza**

by Van Dorn Hooker

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and Northern New Mexico

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Taos County Historical Society's publication, Ayer y Hoy en Taos - Taos County and Northern New Mexico, is published semi-annually by the Historical Society.

We invite articles of a scholarly nature, as well as book reviews of recent publications pertinent to the Taos and northern New Mexico area. We are open to publishing occasional reminiscences, folklore, oral history and poetry that are of historical interest.

The Taos County Historical Society endeavors to maintain high standards of quality in AYER Y HOY, and we seek to make improvements as we go along. Readers' comments and suggestions are welcome.

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AYER Y HOY is distributed to all members of the Taos County Historical Society as a benefit of membership.

Editor

Dave Cordova

The Taos County Historical Society is a New Mexico non-profit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the historical resources of Taos County and Northern New Mexico. Membership is open to any interested person, regardless of residence.

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A Message from the TCHS President Ernestina Cordova

Dear Friends and Members,

The year 2020 was very different from previous years because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. We hope that you and yours are safe and enjoying good health into the new year. I am sure that we all share the same wish, to be able to return to life without masks and restrictions.



Still, celebrations came and went. We celebrated virtual birthdays, Our Unsung Heroes, Women of Taos, 50 Years of Blue Lake, to name a few among many other life-events. Because of the pandemic, protocols changed the way we visited our loved ones in retirement homes and our extended families and friends. Even Taos Feeds Taos had to get creative with their procedures to be able to register families in need and then distribute the Christmas Boxes. Taos Feeds Taos was able to provide for a happier Christmas Holiday to many families in Taos.

In 2021, we are hoping to resume the work of the Historical Society and continue to host our informative lectures given by some very notable historians. Your past patronage and support of our programs is greatly appreciated and for safety reasons, we thank you for attending our Zoom Lectures.

The Society is hopeful that, in 2021, the Taos County Commissioners will resume the much needed repairs and improvements to the Old Taos County Courthouse on the Plaza. We are very anxious to have a place where the history of Taos is taught and researched and to have base of operations for historical exhibits open to the students of Taos County and the citizens of Taos.

I believe that members of the Society have ideas on how we can better serve our community. We especially want our Membership to be able to gather historical information which can be shared with the membership and open other channels of dialog on their discoveries. I would like to challenge our members to share with us, just one item they were able to get done differently because of these trying times.

We will move forward. I hope we will remain positive. Together we will survive.

Thank you. We will continue to preserve our history.

*Ernestina Cordova, President
Taos County Historical Society*

PETER JOSEPH

AN UNRECOGNIZED ENTREPRENEUR OF TAOS, 1843-1862

by John B. Ramsey & Charles (Corky) Hawk

Peter Joseph de Tevis, an immigrant from the Azores, was an active figure during the first part the U.S. occupation of Don Fernando de Taos. An immigrant from the Azores, known at the time as Pedro Jose de Tevis. Taosños will easily recognize names such as Carson, Beaubien, Bent, and St. Vrain, while only a few recognize Peter Joseph. But two streets in Taos: “Joseph” running southeast and “De Tevis”, running northwest off Kit Carson Road.

The fascination with Peter Joseph’s life is that he immigrated to Taos in the mid 1840’s, before the U.S. occupation, and when he died in 1862 his estate was valued at over sixty-two thousand dollars (\$62,000). Obviously, a successful entrepreneur! This article re-introduces him to those in Taos not familiar with this important early figure. The information contained here is from various sources that include the U. S. Censuses, a book on the Portuguese in the western US, web pages, and various books on mid-19th century Taos and New Mexico.

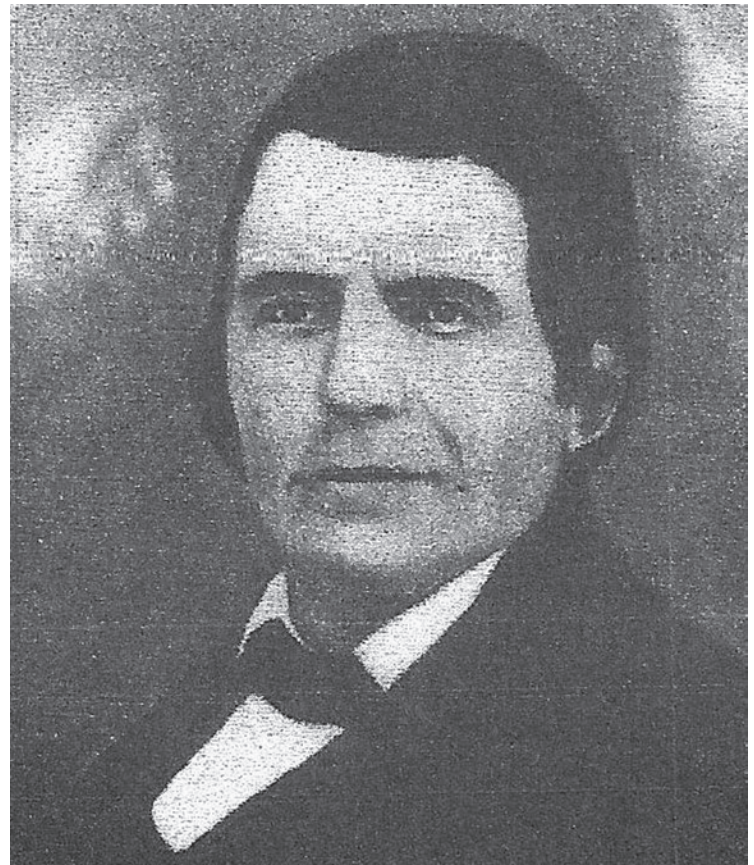
From the Azores to St. Louis

Pedro Jose de Tevis and his brother, Antonio Jose de Tevis, were born on the island of St. Michael in the Azores (a Territory of Portugal) about 1812-14. There is no information about formal education. It is generally agreed that Peter could neither read nor write. There is also very little information on Peter’s life before his arrival in New Mexico, and much of it is conflicting. The book “Land as far as the Eye Can See: Portuguese in the Old West” by Warrin and Gomes, and a brief unpublished note by Marc Simmons, appear to be the most reliable sources of information.

These scholars state that Peter Joseph and his brother Antonio Jose emigrated to the United States through New Orleans sometime in the 1830’s. The only information about the time spent in New Orleans was that Peter bought a young mulatto slave girl (Maria Ana Wilson). There is some question as to when Peter married Maria Ana. Mark Simmons says that they were married in New Orleans. Warrin and Gomes report that the marriage occurred in Taos. Catholic Church records support that they were married in Taos in 1850.¹

An 1882 interview of Anthony Joseph (Peter’s son) by William G. Ritch gives an entirely different picture. According to Anthony Joseph, Peter spent 10 to 12 years on merchant and whaling ships. He visited a large portion of the globe. In a shipwreck, only he and a cabin boy survived. He then abandoned the seafaring life and lived in New Bedford, Massachusetts, for two or three years. There he operated a hotel. He then moved to St. Louis where he operated and partly owned the Merchants Exchange Hotel. Fur traders and merchants working out of Taos, Santa Fe and Mexico frequented the hotel. Fire destroyed the hotel about 1844. However, Anthony Joseph’s 1882 account of his father’s early life raises some questions. First, a search of the digital files of newspapers did not locate a “Merchant’s Exchange Hotel” or a hotel fire in St. Louis in the early 1840’s. But there was a hotel with that name, which was destroyed by fire, in New Orleans. Second, whether Peter had enough money in the early 1840s to own a major hotel, in either city, seems improbable. Therefore, the Warrin and Gomes description appears to be more accurate.

And, it is clear that Peter and his brother Anthony moved to St. Louis before 1840. The 1840 U.S. Census lists a Peter Joseph and another male (probably his younger brother) along with a Joseph Joseph living



in St. Louis (Maria Ana’s name does not appear because slaves were not listed at that time). Two years later, an advertisement in an 1842 St. Louis newspaper lists a Peter Joseph selling oysters.²

OYSTERS

THIRTY bbls fresh Oysters, in the shell, just
rec’d per steamer President, and for sale at \$3
per barrel, or three bits per dozen, at
No. 115 Second street, next door to the Post Office,
ap6
PETER JOSEPH.

Figure 1. *Old School Democrat and Saint Louis Week/Herald*, April 13, 1842
(Genealogybank.com)

Peter was obviously enterprising and ambitious. The Santa Fe trade was one of the more lucrative, though risky, opportunities available to young men in St. Louis. In the early 1840s he likely met and was acquainted with many successful traders from New Mexico. Through such persons he could see the profits to be made in the New Mexico trade. He probably began doing business with Santa Fe Trail merchants, including the Bent and St. Vrain & Co., in the early 1840s.

It was also in St. Louis that Peter decreased the use of “de Tevis” and Americanized his name to Peter Joseph. But “de Tevis” stuck with him in various references, including his gravestone in Taos.³

To Taos and the Revolt of 1847

No definitive statement has been found to establish when Peter moved his family to Taos. A good guess would be 1845 or 46.

In his 1882 interview with Ritch, Anthony Joseph states that after the hotel fire in St. Louis, his father was outfitted with merchandise for the Santa Fe trade by wealthy traders in St. Louis. He and his family

(Maria Ana and his brother Anthony) travelled with his wagons over the Santa Fe Trail to Bent's Fort and Taos. According to Anthony, Peter "arrived in Taos a few weeks previous to the insurrection of 1847."

But other facts make clear that Peter was well established in the merchant community in Taos before the 1847 revolt. For example, he purchased real estate on Taos plaza in May of 1846, seven months before the U.S. occupation. Trader James Webb wrote that Peter had an established business in Taos at the time of the revolt. Anthony's interview states that his father had gone to Santa Fe for court proceedings with prominent Taosño Carlos Beaubien shortly before the insurrection. And "Peter Joseph" was on the roster of the volunteer force, led by Ceran St. Vrain, that accompanied Col. Sterling Price from Santa Fe to Taos to put down the rebellion.⁴ His status as an influential member of the Taos business community is confirmed by his selection as a member of one of the juries that tried the rebellion leaders, which took place on April 6, 1847.

Luckily, Peter was not in Taos on January 19, 1847. Unfortunately, the store Peter had in Taos, probably on the plaza, was looted and his merchandise stolen or destroyed. His wife and son Anthony were in Taos, not having gone with him to Santa Fe. The most reliable version of their experience is that Padre Martinez gave Maria Ana and little Anthony shelter in his home near Our Lady of Guadalupe church, likely saving their lives. One account has the rebels unsuccessfully questioning Maria Ana about where Peter kept his money before releasing her to Padre Martinez.

Another account is that when Col. Sterling Price led his force of regulars and volunteers into Taos, Padre Martinez met Price under a white flag. He had some prominent citizens and Peter's young son Anthony with him. Martinez offered his services to Price. Being the skilled politician that he was, Martinez thereafter appears to have done what he could to remain on good terms with the Americans. This was a very clever move by the Taos priest. By this time, he knew the uprising had failed. He also knew that many Taos citizens believed he had played some part in precipitating the revolt. It must have been the influence of Peter Joseph and other prominent citizens which saved Martinez from formal charges and possible execution.

"A Wealthy Merchant from Taos"

Shortly after the trials in Taos, Peter headed east to St. Louis to buy merchandise to restock a new store. Fortunately, he did not have to travel far. James Webb, another Santa Fe Trail merchant, recalled a transaction involving Peter in the spring or summer of 1847. Somewhere on the Santa Fe Trail, Webb's St. Louis bound wagons, with Peter along, ran into a Missouri trader bound for New Mexico. The trader was having serious equipment problems, and requested assistance:

"We soon began to lay plans to assist the trader, whose name I forget, from Arrow Rock, Missouri, soon came to the conclusion that we could help him out. A merchant from Taos who had, the winter before, been broken up in his business, had saved his own life by burying his money and escaping to the mountains had asked to join my mess, and had requested that I should transport his baggage "to the states" with the purpose of buying a new stock during the

afternoon he (the merchant from Taos) bargained for the goods and wagons (of the trader from Arrow Rock), and we began refitting the wagons from oxen to mule teams, bargaining for mules, made arrangements to return to their homes and families very well satisfied with their opportunities and bargain. The buyer was Peter Joseph...."

Thus, Peter was able to recover quite quickly from the loss of his merchandise and other property during the violence in Taos in January of 1847.

After the turbulent year of 1847, it appears that Peter settled into the hectic life of a successful Taos merchant. That life was not easy. It involved yearly trips east on the Santa Fe Trail to obtain merchandise and freight it to Taos. It required building solid connections with reliable suppliers such as the firm of Kingsbury and Webb, with whom he did business until the late 1850's. In the winter of 1858, Peter was "in the states" buying supplies.⁵

The inventory of Peter's estate in 1860 gives a snapshot of the contents of his store on Taos plaza during the 1840s and 1850s. The merchandise was typical of "stores" at the time and included over 100 different fabrics valued at over \$5,000, over \$8,000 in tools and hardware, 1000 fanegas of wheat, and second-hand firearms. He also owned a distillery, and in 1862 the value of a gallon of whiskey was \$2.00 and he had a reserve of 160 gallons of "Taos whiskey."



By the middle of 1848 - only a year and a half after the serious losses during the Taos Revolt - he had rebuilt his business to the point that Colorado historian Janet Lecompt described him as "a wealthy merchant from Taos."

Disaster at Manco Burro Pass

But freighting on the Santa Fe Trail was dangerous. What was probably Peter Joseph's closest brush with death on the trail came in June of 1848.

In May of 1848, a large merchant caravan left Missouri for New Mexico, carrying goods for the coming selling season. Peter was one of the merchants, and some of the wagons were certainly his. At the middle crossing of the Arkansas River, all the wagons and most of the men turned left on the Cimarron Route to Santa Fe. But Peter, Elliott Lee (a survivor of the Taos Revolt a year earlier) and a few others took the Mountain Branch of the trail to Bent's Fort. Why Peter did this is unknown; perhaps he had business with Bent, St. Vrain & Co. at the fort. While at the fort, a small party of traders headed for Taos arrived from the north. Lucien Maxwell, a former Bent employee and future owner of the Maxwell Land Grant, led the party. Apaches and Utes had been causing trouble near Raton Pass, and Maxwell was looking for a safer route over the Raton Mountains south to Taos. He had been told by one of his men that Manco Burro Pass, about five miles east of Raton Pass, was an easy road, even for wagons. Peter and some of his companions joined Maxwell's group, both for security from attack and to confirm that Manco Burro Pass was wagon capable. The combined group, fourteen men and two children, left the fort on June 16 and headed south over the mountains.

While stopped at the top of Manco Burro Pass for lunch, the party was attacked by a large group of Apaches. All the riding horses and pack animals were stampeded. After four hours, four of the party were dead and all but two of the rest wounded, including Maxwell. The two children were captured. Peter Joseph was unharmed.

Darkness brought the chance to slowly escape on foot, which was done with much difficulty. On the following day, Peter volunteered to push on to Taos alone to get help. After about forty miles on foot, he reached Taos. Troops from there found the wounded survivors and brought them back to safety.

There is no record that Peter ever used the Manco Burro Pass route again.

Investor and promoter in Taos

As mentioned previously Peter finally married Maria Ana in 1850. Church records show that “Pedro Jose Terviss”, age 37 [sic] a merchant in Taos for 5-6 years married “Mariana Vesques”, age 20[sic] at Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe Church in Taos on 10 January 1850 “in order to legitimize their natural children. “The number of Peter’s children and their listed birth dates raise questions. The Ritch reference states that there were three children. Anthony (born in St. Louis Aug 26, 1846), Catharina (born in Taos 1847)⁶ and John C. (born in Taos June 24, 1848). The August 1846 date for Anthony’s birth does not agree other sources. The Congressional Record and other references do show the 1846 date. Warrin and Gomes strongly argue that his birth occurred in St. Louis in 1842. Data in the US Censuses of 1850, 1860, and 1870 agree that he was born in Missouri, but in 1844. The 1860 Census lists Anthony’s age as 16 and John’s as 14. It includes Peter’s wife “Mariana” and does not list her as mulatto.

According to the 1860 Census Peter’s household also contained two females, Indiana Joseph (Age 27) and Antonia Joseph (age 15), identified as Indians. They are listed as Cooks along with Joseph Hirst (age 27) as a Clerk. It is likely that the two Native Americans were captured or traded as part of the well-established slave trade common in New Mexico at that time. They were given the “Joseph” surname and were likely treated as part of the family.

At some point Peter’s brother, Antonio de Tevis, moved to Mora, and retained the de Tevis name. A draft discussion by Mark Simmons reports that he never married,⁷ but a recent family history published on the internet indicates that he did have a family in Mora.⁸

Although Peter could neither read nor write, this did not keep him from being successful in business and active in promoting the commercial development of Taos. For example, in 1853 Congress appropriated funds for Secretary of War Jefferson Davis to survey five possible routes for a transcontinental railroad. One of the five competing routes was to cross the Rockies south of the present Colorado-New Mexico border. Proximity to the railroad would be a major economic asset. At a “large and enthusiastic” meeting of the citizens of Taos and the Territory of New Mexico held on June 1, 1853, “on motion” of Mr. Peter Joseph, a spirited defense of the above route took place. It was agreed that:

“....it was our duty to speak out on this subject, we live in the vicinity of the best route from the Mississippi Valley to the Valley of the Pacific.”

The adopted resolution stated the route north of Taos as “much the more practicable route” for a transcontinental railroad. Copies of the resolution were sent to regional and national newspapers and U.S. Senator Thomas Hart Benton.⁹ This effort to benefit Taos was not successful. It would be sixteen years before the transcontinental railroad was built, and it would be 400 miles north of Taos.

Peter Joseph’s many businesses included a saloon on the north side of Taos Plaza, located in a building he owned. In 1855 a troop of U.S. Dragoons from Cantonment Burgwin stopped in Taos plaza on their way north. They dismounted and it appears that most of them went

to Peter Joseph’s saloon for some refreshments.¹⁰ Some of the men got drunk and became unruly. Before long, a mutiny against their commanding officer had occurred, including threats of armed force. Order was restored with the help of Taos citizens, including Kit Carson. The ringleaders of the mutiny were later court martialed. Whether Peter was present and witnessed these events is not known.

In addition to Peter’s store and saloon, he bought other property on Taos plaza and in the local area. The first purchase recorded in the estate records is a building located on the north east corner of the Taos Plaza from Jose Maria Valdez in March of 1846. Then in March of 1847 he purchased the remainder of the building from Thomas O. Boggs and his wife. The Estate evaluation described the building of consisting of two storerooms, one setting room, one parlor, one kitchen, wood storage, a chicken house, one privy, stables, corral hog pen, and a second floor. The location fits the description of his saloon and store in 1855, i.e., the north east corner of the Plaza. By the time of his death in 1862 he owned several buildings along the Plaza and adjacent areas with a total value of real estate of \$20,000. His investment ability is described in a web page by L. M. Tollefson. In 1861, Joseph purchased a section of the Maxwell Land grant for \$660. His son, Anthony, sold the property in 1880 for \$8500.¹¹ A nice profit.

Peter Joseph died in Taos in 1862. He was only 50 years old. The 1860 U.S. census for the Don Fernando de Taos district (excluding Ranchos) gives us some data showing Peter’s status two years before his death. There were 1600 residents, in 369 households. One hundred-eighty-seven (187) Heads of Household declared professions including merchant, farmer, schoolmaster, and shoemaker. Twenty-four women declared some assets. Three merchants, including Peter, declared estates of \$20,000¹² or more and 39 declared estates between \$1,000 and \$10,000. The majority of Taoseños were farmers.



A large majority of residents declared Taos, Rio Arriba or New Mexico as their birth location and 31, including Peter Joseph, emigrated from the US or foreign countries including 5 from Germany. Peter declared assets valued at \$20,000 and ranked third behind the Beuthner brothers¹³ at \$40,000. He must have understated his assets for the 1860 census taker, because following his death in 1862 his estate was valued at over \$62,000.

In his almost 20 years in Taos, Peter Joseph achieved much for both himself and his adopted home. He was a major contributor to the development of the mercantile economy of Taos, both under Mexican rule and following the American occupation in 1847. He was something of a transitional figure. His early career began at the end of the fur trade era; he was a contemporary of the Bents and St. Vrain in the 1840s. He was tough and smart enough to rebound from the 1847 revolt and prosper again in the “post Mexican” economy.

(Continued on Page 6)

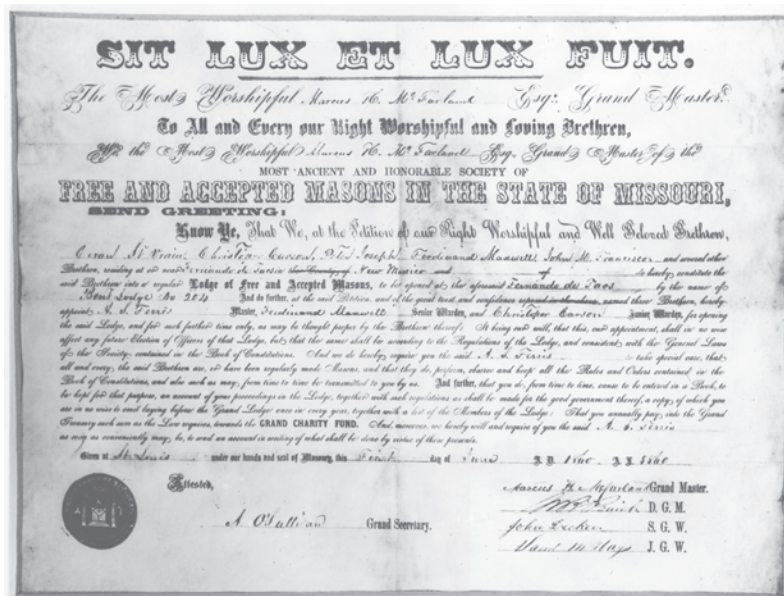
PETER JOSEPH - FREEMASON

by Dave Cordova

I was familiar with the name “Peter Joseph,” having observed the name on the original Bent Lodge Charter from Missouri in 1860, along with the names of Kit Carson, Lucien Maxwell, Ferdinand Maxwell, Ceran St. Vrain, John M. Francisco and A.S. Ferris.

What I did not know was how prominent Peter Joseph was in the early history of Taos. As a businessman, Pedro Jose de Tevis, left his indelible stamp. As he did in the early days of Freemasonry in Taos. What is known, is that some of the men who migrated to the New Mexico Territory were practicing Freemasons who desired to continue in the fraternity in the wilds of the Southwest.

Of the names on the original Charter, the names of Christopher Carson, Lucien Maxwell and Ceran St. Vrain were very familiar. The names of Peter Joseph, A.S. Ferris, John M. Francisco and Ferdinand Maxwell were not familiar, and the only name that eludes any straight connection to Taos's early history is A.S. Ferris. Peter Joseph, was better known to the residents of Taos as Pedro Jose de Tevis. John M. Francisco who was well known to the soldiers of Fort Massachusetts and Fort Garland in Southern Colorado, was a civilian sutler supplying beef and other staples to those forts. Although Freemason John



Francisco resided in Southern Colorado, he joined the Masons of Taos in petitioning for a Charter in Taos. The other name was that of Ferdinand Maxwell, who arrived in Taos in 1858 and was the brother of Lucien Maxwell.

It is most likely that Peter Joseph became a Freemason in St. Louis, before coming West in the mid-1840s. Peter Joseph may have influenced young Kit Carson into Freemasonry, but Kit had been in the circle of Freemasons including John Fremont, William Bent and Charles Bent when Carson became a Freemason at Montezuma Lodge in Santa Fe in 1854.

That Freemasonry influenced much of the settlement of the Southwest, New Mexico and, in particular, Taos, is well recorded in the biographies, autobiographies and stories that survive from the mid-1800s. That Masonic influence was interrupted in 1862, by the Civil War, but was re-constituted in 1909 when some influential Freemasons, then residing in Taos, petitioned the Grand Lodge of New Mexico for a Charter in Taos. At the time the Charter was granted to Bent Lodge 42, the officers were Isaac Wesley Dwire, Thomas Paul “Doc” Martin, Gerson Gusdorf, Benjamin Randall. Among others were notable names, such as Brooks, Oakley, Albright and Joseph. Anthony Joseph, son of Peter Joseph, was one of the first Masons made at Bent Lodge 42.

(continued from Page 5)

Both his business skills and his courage - displayed in the 1847 revolt and at Manco Burro Pass - would have made him one of the most respected persons in the Taos community until his death in 1862.

Unfortunately, the many accomplishments of this extraordinary Taos pioneer have largely been forgotten. But the historical record confirms that he had few peers in the role he played in the development of the early economic importance of Taos.

Apparently, Peter was not interested in politics. That legacy would be left to his son Anthony. The child who Padre Martinez protected during the 1847 revolt grew up to be a prominent merchant. He was successful in real estate, buying the Ojo Caliente Land Grant and founding the hot springs resort which is famous today. As a politician Anthony was elected for four terms to the U.S. House or Representatives from 1885 to 1895 as New Mexico Territory's “at large” representative in Congress.

Acknowledgements

Thanks first to Barbara Ramsay and Yolanda Romero for time that should have been spent in kitchen or yard work. Nita Murphy (UNM Southwest Studies, Taos Campus), Tomas Jaehn (UNM Southwest Studies, Albuquerque), and Dennis Northcott (Missouri Historical Society Archives) each are thanked for the extra effort for locating many of the references cited. Henrietta Christmas provided invaluable information from the Church records.

- 1 FHL # 17022 im 689, supplied by Henrietta Christmas
- 2 A search of digital copies of newspapers from St. Louis and New Orleans was made using Newspapers.com and Genealogybank.com for the names “Peter Joseph”, Tevis, Teves between 1830 and 1845. The only find was the reference cited.
- 3 The Catholic Church record from Taos in 1850 refers to the marriage of Pedro Jose Tervis with Mariana Vesques.
- 4 Santa Fe New Mexican Review, July 22, 1883 (Genealogybank.com)
- 5 Jane Lenz Elder, David J. Weber, *Trading in Santa Fe*, .bhn M. Kingsbury's Correspondence with James Josiah Webb 1853- 1861 Dallas, TX, (Southern Methodist University Press), p125, 231
- 6 No Birth or death records have been located. (Henrietta Christmas, personal communication)
- 7 Ben Hernandez to Mark Simmons, 7 November 1996, Southwest Studies Center, Taos, NM
- 8 Gilbert Gallegos, *Gil's New Mexico Genealogy/"Mexican" Vote* (<http://gilsmngenealogy.blogspot.com>)
- 9 Santa Fe Weekly Post, June 11, 1853 (Genealogybank.com)
- 10 Corina A. Santisevan and Julia Moore,ed., *TAOS A Topical History* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 2013), p153
- 11 L. M. Tollefson, *Lorettaamilsestollefson.com*, Future Urracca Ranch Property Sells for \$660, 2017
- 12 In 2019 \$10K would be approximately \$317,000 in 2019. (measuringworth.com)
- 13 There were three Beuthner brothers involved in Taos, only two are listed in the 1860CENSUS

“TAOS: THE MELTING POT OF THE WEST”

by Gilbert Andres Archuleta

Taos has always been a magnet for humans. The Sangre de Cristo Mountains and Mojuelo, a sacred mountain to the Tiwas of the area, evoke a strong power of place that holds, to this day, those who have lived and experienced this beautiful setting. Taos and its meadows, clear mountain streams and pristine blue skies beckoned, first the Native Americans and in the late 1500's, Spanish colonists. The local Tiwa people lived peacefully with the Spanish citizens, tolerated them and coexisted with these newcomers for almost a century. Except for the short twelve-year period, between 1680 and 1692, when an uprising of the native people of Nuevo Mexico, expelled the Spanish colonists, their Church and their government, theirs had been a peaceful coexistence. After the return of the Spaniards, “La Reconquista,” Taos remained a quiet village under Spanish dominion for the next one hundred years. Taos and its citizens, Hispanos and Tiwas, lived as neighbors and, although there is little recorded information available, regarding the racial mix between these two groups, there is little doubt that today's Taosños share physical traits that point to ethnic similarities between these inhabitants of Taos. The two groups, then, lived together for over two hundred years, before other ethnic groups impacted these Taos people.

Briefly however, one cannot discount the history of relations between Spaniards in New Mexico and other Amerindians. There was a time, during the Spanish Colonial period when, because of an odious caste system brought into New Mexico by the Spaniards, slavery was an acceptable practice among the colonists. Within the context of having “slaves,” usually Amerindians bought from other Indians or captured during forays into Apache, Navajo or Plains country, illegitimate children were born. These “illegitimate” children often resulted from relations between master and slave. To quote from Ramon Gutierrez's book, *When Jesus Came, The Com Mothers Went Away*, “Between 1693 and 1848, 176 infants were recorded as born to Indian slaves and baptized. Of these, 144 or 82% were illegitimate.” Gutierrez further explains, “Aristocrats maintained mistresses and/or sexually exploited their slaves, but rarely admitted fathering illegitimate children As Fray Equia y Leronbe noted, “such children listed in baptismal registers as ‘father unknown’.”

The shameful period of slavery and exploitation notwithstanding, children resulting from these unions were New Mexicans and constituted a blood mix that supports our basic thesis. Taos is not shown specifically with a given number of “illegitimate” children during the period noted, but there is a recorded total of 154 of these children as having been baptized and living in “Spanish settlements north of Santa Fe,” as provided by Ramon Gutierrez in his book.

During the latter part of 1700 and the early 1800's two aspects of history conspired to usher in a change in the ethnic composition of all these people in New Mexico and their ways of life.

First, despite the fact that the Spanish government had forbidden travel into its provinces and trade with the Americanos to the east, incursions into Spanish territory were being made by Frenchmen from Canada and the Louisiana Territory. These cour-du-bois or trappers had slowly explored the rivers of the north and east (Arkansas, Platte, Missouri, Purgatoire, etc.) and had recently started trapping beaver in the headwaters of rivers in the Rocky Mountains. The Spanish government had overlooked this traffic since it was in the interest of Spanish merchants from Chihuahua to trade for the rich furs brought in by these Frenchmen. Hence, by the late 1700's and early 1800's a steady stream of trapper-traders came in from the north and made

Taos their trade center and a headquarters from where they outfitted their excursions into the rivers of the north. Taosños were also involved in the trapping and selling of furs during this time.



These early Frenchmen, however, were not interested in conquest or even permanent entrepreneurial ventures. These newcomers knew and wandered throughout the country from the Missouri and its tributaries to the Gunnison and into present-day Utah, where the famed mountain men's Rendezvous were held. These Frenchmen came to Taos, a northern port-of-entry into the Spanish territories and in the waning days of the fur trade, many remained in Taos and areas around Taos. Names like, Jeantet, Lacombe, Laforet, Lefevre, Leroux, Ledoux, Gurule, Blanchard, Robidoux, remain as vestiges of these newcomers to Taos and surrounding communities. Mora, Las Vegas, San Antonio del Rio Colorado (present-day Questa) a northern gateway into the Taos area, were all places where these men settled, raised families and spent the rest of their lives as Spanish, Mexican and finally American citizens. The Robideux brothers, for example, were prominent in New Mexico politics of the 1830's. One such Robideux, Louis, married Guadalupe Garcia in Santa Fe in 1829 and both had a long, as well as a productive, marriage. To the couple were born eight children. (*Trappers of the West*, article by David Weber). Another, trapper/trader, Charley Autobee, doing business in and around Taos in 1834, took up with Serafina Avila. They had two sons. Their union lasted over thirty years. Francois Laforet, like other mountain men, took up residence in San Antonio del Rio Colorado and married Maria Dolores Armenta in Taos in 1828. Their progeny resulted in sons that carried his name as well as daughters whose marriages to local men encompass a large number of the names in that community today. In a report of his travels in 1846 from Vera Cruz, Mexico through Taos and beyond, the Englishman Wm. Ruxton wrote about his long conversation with his host, Francois Laforet, in San Antonio del Rio Colorado on the eve of the Taos rebellion and the death of Governor Chas. Bent.

The second aspect of history that further affected the people of Taos and the region, was the influx of “Americanos” that came to Taos and New Mexico immediately after the independence of Mexico from Spain in 1821. The trade and travel restrictions imposed by the Spanish government were now lifted by the new government in Mexico. Almost immediately, a trail was forged from Franklin Missouri through Kansas, part of the Oklahoma panhandle and into present day Colorado, ending in New Mexico, with an official port-of-entry in San Miguel del Vado, south of Las Vegas. This trail became known as the Santa Fe Trail since the destination was Santa Fe and the trade became “The Santa Fe Trade.” From the first wagon full of trade goods for New Mexico and Chihuahua in 1821 (Wm. Becknell) until the conquest of New Mexico by the United States in 1846, large numbers of men and material arrived in New Mexico. The Spanish mystique of a closed border and its people were now revealed to, principally, American men. The allure of these foreign lands with an exotic culture (language and customs) made New Mexico irresistible to these traders. A common rallying cry of many of these traders was, “to the land of romance” (*The Wagonmasters* by Henry Pickering Walker). Others wrote about the “gregarious nature” of the people of New

Mexico and the enticing manners of the “Spanish” women who, “combed their hair in public, wore short skirts and low cut blouses, and smoked.” Without a doubt, after forty days of travel on the treacherous Santa Fe Trail, arriving at Santa Fe or Taos was like reaching a welcome oasis. The positive contacts, which included the “fandangos” held during these visits by the newcomers from the east, helped encourage this social mix, which resulted in altering the bloodlines of the host population.

That the small population of 1,350 in Taos in the mid 1800’s (*The Wagonmasters*, by Henry Pickering Walker) was impacted by French and American traders, travelers, adventurers and what-have-you cannot be disputed. The church archives in Taos and the Santa Fe Archdiocese, in general, **show** a litany of officially recorded marriages and such unions. These records imply with some logic that inter-ethnic marriages resulted in mixed bloods, hence the use of *melting pot*, as the title of this article.

Following is a partial list of records found in the archives of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Taos and from Fray Angelico Chavez’s, *New Names in New Mexico 1820-1850*:

- Andres, Andrews, a native of Pennsylvania, 26 years old was baptized in Taos, on Oct. 3, 1828. He married Maria Luz Hurtado on March 3, 1829.
- Isidor Antaya, a stranger and native of St. Louis, received permission to marry Teodora Romero, a widow of Jose Francisco Sandoval of Taos on July 29, 1829.
- *Arceno, Miguel, a Frenchman of Canada, married Maria Encarnacion, widow of Jose Martinez, at Taos, August 28, 1848.
- *Bachlet, Jose, a native of Germany, married Maria Refugio Martinez at Taos, August 28, 1848.
- Ballant, Juan Santiago, the son of Francisco Ballant and Maria Teresa “Gutierrez” married Maria Candalaria Cortez at Taos, January 25, 1836.
- Beaubien, Carlos Hipolito, married Maria Paula Lobato at Taos, September 11, 1827.
- * Juan Bautista Beaubien, a native of Canada and resident of San Antonio del Rio Colorado, married Maria Arcaria Espinosa at Taos, October 2, 1849.
- Blanchard Antonio, married Gertrudis Trujillo at Taos, July 12, 1826. In the first baptism, Antonio Blanchard was designated as a Frenchman.
- Guillermo Blanco (Blanc) was a native of “Nueva Costa de Canada” (Nova Scotia). He married Maria Albina Vigil of Taos, November 27, 1844.
- *Boggs, single, a native of Missouri, married Maria Roumalda Luna of Taos, May 22, 1846.
- Bonny, Enriques and Francisca Varela had a daughter, Maria Rufina, January 9, 1844.
- Branch, Jose de Jesus, 39 years of age and a native of Virginia, married Maria Paula Luna at Taos, on January 14, 1829.
- Brisol, Juan Olivia was Frenchman living in Taos, In July 27, 1826 he married Teodora Romero.
- Cambell, Ricardo married Maria Rosa Grijalva at Taos, September 25, 1828. He and Esteban Luis Lee, both Presbyterian, had requested Catholic baptism in June, 1826, both men were natives of St. Louis.
- Carson Cristobal, 32 years old and a native of Missouri, was baptized at Taos, January 28, 1843. He married Maria Josefa Jaramillo on February 6, 1843.
- *Chalifu, Pedro, a stranger, widower of Victoria Curzot, married Maria Dolores Apodaca at Taos, December 29, 1849, He was designated as a native of Canada.
- Chambers, Samuel and Maria Petra Valle were godparents in Taos

for a Partu child.

- Chaubelon, Juan, married Maria Vibiana Martinez at Taos, July 23, 1827.
- Conole, Pefro (Concle or Conklin or Connelly) and wife Maria Reyes Duran were living in Taos when their daughter, Maria Ignacia was baptized on February 7, 1827.
- *Day, Benjamin, a native of Quintoque (Kentucky), married Maria Apolonia Trujillo of Taos, June 2, 1851.
- Oecluet, Julio, a native of New Orleans, received permission to marry Dolores Trujillo of Taos, June 19, 1829.
- Fisher, Noverto Fichá (Norbert or Robert Fisher), 24 years old and a native of Virginia, married Roumalda Lopez on May 8, 1841 at Taos.
- Fornier, a native of France, married Juana Maria Ortiz, at Taos on March 29, 1843.
- Foum, Carlos, from Mesuri (Missouri) married Maria Antonia Montano in Taos, April 7, 1845.
- Framel, Jose Julian (William), 29 years old and a native of Missouri. As a stranger from Missouri he received permission to marry Maria Rufina Cordova of Taos, July 10, 1829.
- Furcat, Francisco, married Antonia Josefa Tafoya, August 19, 1828.
- *Gold, George (Guides) a native of Scotland, married Maria Estefana Montoya at Taos, March 17, 1850.
- Gordon, Julian, an “Anglo-American,” received permission to marry Juana Maria Lucero, June 27, 1826. Their residence was at San Francisco del Rancho (now Ranchos de Taos).
- Gregan, Jose Manuel (Graham?), a stranger in Taos, received permission to marry Soledad Lobato on July 12, 1830.
- Grine, Don Jose, a native of Canada, married Maria Manuela Sanchez of Taos, August 29, 1823.
- *Gruy, Julian (Wm. Gray) married Maria Prudencia Gonzales, February 12, 1854.
- Hamilton, Santiago H., 31 years old and a native of Tenesi (Tennessee) married Maria Josefa Archuleta, November 11, 1850.
- Hammons, Jose Tomas, 23 years old and a native of Quintoque (Kentucky) married Maria del Carmen Cisneros, September 30, 1833.
- *LaCome, Agustin, married Maria Rosa Arellano in Taos in 1855.
- LaFebvre, Manuel, married Maria Teodora Lopez, December 1, 1827.
- LaForet, Francisco, married Maria Dolores Armenta in July 25, 1828 in Taos.
- Lee, Esteban, married Maria Luz Tafoya, in January 23, 1829 in Taos.
- LeRoux, Antonio, a native of North America, married Juana Catalina Vigil, November 4, 1833 in Taos.
- Maxwell, Luciano, a native of the Villa de Karcaria (?) in the United States, married Maria Lux Beubien, March 27 1842 in Taos.
- Juan Jentete (Jeantet), Frenchman and his wife Maria Tiburcia Trujilla baptized their two-day old son Jose Gabriel Jantete in the San Geronimo de Taos Church on March 19, 1830.
- N.B., The first names of the newcomers were Hispanicized by priests recording these marriages. An asterisk (*) besides an entry denotes the time of the marriage after the conquest of New Mexico.

While the story of these newcomers itself, is an exciting history during the development of this region of the Southwest, it also points to the Frenchmen, as well as the Americans that followed, as precursors to the conquest of New Mexico. Our interest however, was not to look at the political or economic changes wrought by these newcomers, but rather, to look at the genetic mix that resulted from the human contact of people in Taos and New Mexico, and these newcomers, prior to the influx of Americans in 1846 and on the advent of the conquest of lands to the West.

THE HISTORY OF RANCHOS DE TAOS PLAZA

by Van Dorn Hooker

The origin of the name Taos is uncertain. The many versions of its meaning, include one Dr. T.M Pearce gives in "New Mexico Place Names"-that it's a Spanish approximation of the Tiwa Indian words, tu-o-to, "red willow place," or tua-tah, "down at the village." Some contemporary residents of the pueblo disagree. Historically, Taos Pueblo was referred to in Tiwa, their language, as "the place at Red Willow Canyon." The present community of Ranchos de Taos was also called by different names, but the most commonly used was Las Trampas de Taos. In the 1765 will of Francisco Xavier Romero it is called "este paraje de San Francisco de las Trampas en la Jurisdiccion del Valle de San Geronimo de Thaos" (this place of San Francisco de las Trampas in the jurisdiction of the Valley of San Geronimo de Taos). Later on, the 18th century settlement received the appellation "El Rancho": (El Rancho de Nuestro Padre San Francisco del Rio de las Trampas). After the plaza was completed in 1779, the term "el puesto" (the outpost) was often added to the name: "El Puesto de Nuestro Padre Senifico Francisco del Ranchos de las Trampas," indicating the quasi-military function of the plaza.

For hundreds of years before the Spanish arrived, since around 900 AD, the Taos Indians had inhabited Taos Valley. They established their pueblo in its present location some time after that and have occupied the present buildings since around 1400 AD. They farmed the fertile valley formed by the Rio de las Trampas and the Rio Chiquito, which flow from the Sangre de Cristo mountains to the west into the Rio de Pueblo de Taos. Archaeological and documentary evidence indicate that Indian settlements along the Rio de las Trampas continued until the middle eighteenth century.

Strained relations sometimes arose between the Spaniards and the Taos Indians. Part of the difficulty arose with land problems, from religious authorities' attempt to crush native rites and from civil authorities' demands for tribute. In 1613, after an open revolt against the payment of tribute, Governor Pedro de Peralta sent troops to the pueblo. Fray Alonso de Benavides, in his visit of 1627, noted that the resident priest, Tomas Carrasco, was building a church in spite of great difficulties.

Most of the first Spanish settlements in Taos Valley were along the streams. By the middle of the seventeenth century, some friendly Apaches, Plains Indians, and mixed-blood Indians were living together with the Spanish in the valley. The area that became Ranchos de Taos is on the Cristobal de la Serna land grant, originally granted to Fernando Duran y Chaves before the pueblo revolt. Although the grantee, his son Cristobal and Sebastian de Herrera were the only Spaniards to escape from Taos Valley during the revolt, they did not return after the reconquest by Don Diego de Vargas in 1696 and thereby lost title to their grant.

In April, 1710, the Duran y Chaves grant was awarded to Captain Cristobal de la Serna, a soldier stationed in Taos. There is no evidence that he settled the land, but he may have used it for grazing livestock. In 1720 Serna was killed in the ill-fated Villasur Expedition to the Platte River to look for suspected French invaders. The troops were decimated in an attack by a band of Pawnees and French. His sons, Juan and Sebastian de la Serna, sold the land on August 5, 1724, to Diego Romero, and Acting Governor Juan Paez Hurtado revalidated the grant to Romero on November 24, 1724. Diego Romero was the son of Alonso Cadimo and Maria de Tapia, servants on the hacienda of Felipe Romero at Sevilletts, south of Albuquerque. Romero was

known as "El Coyote" because of his mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry.

The large Romero family were the first non-Indian settlers on the Serna Grant. Romero himself settled on the northern boundary of the grant, the Rio de Don Fernando, closer to the pueblo. His son, Francisco Xavier Romero, alias El Talache (the mattock), appears to have been the first settler along the Rio de las Trampas, establishing his hacienda, known as "Talachia," there in the 1730s.

FORTIFICATIONS AND FAIRS

He was not alone in the valley, for the area was the ancestral home of certain clans of the Taos Indians, and continued to be used by the Indians in the colonial era. Archaeological remains and documentary evidence indicate Indian settlements on the river near the present site of Ranchos de Taos well into the eighteenth century.

The settlers' ranches were spread along the waterways close to arable land rather than clustered into defensible plazas. Each hacienda, located on a sizable acreage, tried to provide for its own defense through fortifications such as walls and towers. In 1760, however, a severe Comanche attack and succeeding raids forced the settlers by 1770 to abandon their homes and reside within the security of the pueblo.

In 1760, Dr. Pedro Tamaron y Romeral, sixteenth Bishop of Durango, was making an episcopal visitation to the New Mexico part of his vast diocese. Of all the places he visited, none was more interesting than Taos. He recounted his experience with the Comanches at the annual fair and his meeting with the Utes.

Through long experience, the Spaniards had worked out a sequence of steps for dealing with the Indians: first the peaceful missionary approach, then if that failed a resort to war. As a last resort, the royal government was not above bribing or buying off the Indians. The great annual Taos trade fair gave them a chance to pursue the latter method. The fair, which they called *rescates* (barter, trade), brought all the tribes, Comanches, Utes, Apaches, and occasionally Navajos, friendly and hostile, to Taos to exchange their buffalo hides, buckskins, and horses for Spanish goods and Pueblo foodstuffs. The Comanches also sold good guns, pistols, powder, balls, tobacco, hatchets, and vessels made of tin. They obtained these items from other Indians who had direct communication with French traders.

During the fair a universal truce prevailed, even among the most savage warriors. Besides the business of trading, there was an exchange of captives and a great deal of boisterous revelry. Sometimes the governor came from Santa Fe with his retinue to provide a little order. The fair is described as a brilliant, noisy pageant that lasted day and night and was rivaled only by the trading rendezvous of the mountain men in the nineteenth century. Dominguez, writing in 1776, said "... the trading day resembles a second-hand market in Mexico, the way the people mill about." But after the fair was over, the Comanches and other Indians began planning to resume the raiding and plundering, sometimes waiting only a few days.

PROTECTION

When Fray Francisco Dominguez visited New Mexico in 1776, he found everyone from the valley, Indian and non-Indian, living in Taos Pueblo until the plaza at Ranchos de las Trampas was to be completed in 1779. It had become apparent that the settlers could not continue to live in scattered farmhouses and survive the continuing

raids by the Comanches, Utes and Apaches. The Comanche raid in 1760, described by Bishop Tamaron, was probably why the people banded together to plan and build the plaza.

Because of these fears, Governor Juan Bautista de Anza, like Governor Pedro Fermin de Mendinueta before him, called attention to the way the new pueblos were to be built: two and three-story houses joined together, forming plazas, and with portable ladders that could be pulled up in case of attack. He also noted the upper roofs with their embrasures in the parapets for defensive purposes. Dominguez wrote, "This [the plaza at Rancho de Taos] is being erected by order of the aforesaid governor, so that when they live together in this way, even though they are at a distance from the pueblo, they may be able to resist the attack the enemy may make."

VILLAGE LIFE

In the early days after the plaza was built, it contained only residential buildings and was the center of village life. Constructing the church from 1813 to 1815 provided a strong focal point, and village activities revolved around it. Saint Francis Day, October 4, continues today to be a fiesta day, and on January 1 and 25 villagers used to join with their neighbors from Llano Quemado to perform the folk drama, "Los Comanches." Presented on horseback with costumes similar to the traditional Comanche war garb, the pageant reenacted the rescue of two children captured by the Indians. The performance concludes with a procession into the church for a service of thanksgiving.

THE CHURCH

The plaza was nearing completion in 1779, when the Franciscan chronicler Juan Agustin de Morfi, in 1782, reporting what he had heard, said, "At three leagues (south) from the pueblo is a ranch with abundance of arable lands even more fertile than those of the pueblo ... the settlement forms a very spacious quadrilateral plaza whose houses were almost finished in 1779, with several towers at regular distances for its defense." Neither Dominguez nor Morfi said anything about a church in the plaza. The present St. Francis of Assisi church wasn't occupied until 1815, so for about thirty-six years the largest settlement in the area, outside of the pueblo itself, may have been without a place of worship.

The pueblo was three leagues, roughly eight miles, away, a good two-hour trip by wagon or carriage, longer through winter snow and over muddy roads after summer downpours. The aged and infirm must have had a hard time getting to San Geronimo church in the pueblo for services. During the long tenure of Fray Jose de Vera (1794-1810) the population of Rancho de Taos grew rapidly, judged by the entries in the baptismal, marriage and burial books in the mission church of San Geronimo. Father Vera performed all these services in the church at Taos Pueblo. If there was a private chapel somewhere in the Rancho area before 1815, no record of it has yet come to light.

The plaza was built in the form of a long rectangle with the long axis running roughly northwest to southeast. It was about eight-hundred feet long and four-hundred feet wide. Two- and three-story dwellings on the perimeter formed the fortress-like exterior walls. Some of them probably did not abut their neighboring houses, but were connected by high, thick adobe walls. There were no windows or doors in the exterior walls, so all coming and going had to be through two heavy wood gates located in the southeast and northwest plaza walls. The roofs were flat, supported by vigas and constructed in the customary way of the time. If the builders followed the governor's instructions, there were embrasures in the connecting parapet walls that formed battlements between the towers Forfi mentioned. The defensive towers were made of adobe and were probably located at the four corners of the plaza and at the gates, with one or two in the middle of the long northeast and southwest walls.

The plaza gate, or *puerton*, consisted of two leaves that closed the plaza and were heavy enough to withstand an armed attack. Each leaf was three and a half to four feet wide and at least eight feet high. Unfortunately, no eighteenth-century examples appear to have survived. It is likely they turned on pintles, as did the church doors, but whether they had a paneled construction or were built up of two layers of wood, as were gates of later date, is not known. No doubt they were secured with a heavy wood crossbar on the inside.

SPREADING OUT

The Comanche depredations decreased during the last years of Spanish rule, but the Utes and Apaches continued to harass. Governor de Anza won a historic victory over the Comanche chief, Cuerno Verde, in 1779 and made a treaty with the Comanches that lasted until the occupation by United States troops in 1846. More Spaniards began to settle in Rancho de Taos, and it soon became a typical New Mexican village with the Spanish element dominant in both cultural and economic affairs. The sparsely populated but fertile Taos valley was now safe for settlers to live in, and soon attracted both Spaniards and mixed bloods from other more crowded places. The village grew beyond the walls of the plaza.

During the last decades of the 1700s and early in the 1800s, as the Comanche threat diminished, the settlers once again spread out along the waterways of the valley, but this time, instead of building a series of dispersed haciendas, they built a defense system establishing several plazas that formed the center of the new villages.

To combat the Apaches, who were still a problem for the settlers, Jose Maria de Irigoyen, governor of Chihuahua, in the late 1830s established an organization known as La Sociedad de Guerra Contra los Barbaros to administer a 100,000-peso bounty fund. He hired James Kirker, an experienced Indian fighter, to enlist a brigade of privateers to combat the Apaches. After Kirker had recruited his men in the north, he heard that the Apaches were terrorizing the Taos area. To stop this, he turned out a herd of untended horses near Rancho de Taos. A band of 120 Indians picked up the herd and headed it toward a narrow defile in the nearby mountains. Kirker and his men ambushed them and inflicted heavy losses. The Apaches retreated toward the village with the idea of seeking refuge in the church. However, the plaza proved to be a trap; they lost forty men and all the stolen horses before making their escape.

TROOPS AND CASH

After the United States occupation of New Mexico and the abortive Taos Rebellion of January, 1847, troops were stationed in Taos Valley to protect against Apache and Ute raids and discourage further dissent by the pueblo. Troops were first garrisoned in the village of Don Fernando de Taos and later at Cantonment Burgwin, built in 1852, six miles south of Rancho de Taos on the Rito de la Olla. It was named for Captain John Burgwin, who was killed at the pueblo during the rebellion.

Provisioning for men and horses helped the cash-short farmers of the valley. Naturally prices went up and corn, wheat and fodder became harder to secure. Lt. J.H. Whittlesey, though, blamed high flour prices on the large amount of wheat used to make whiskey, "... of the most deleterious nature" (the famous Taos Lightning), and hoped legislation would be enacted "... to stop the pernicious traffic."

During the nineteenth century, wheat production and flour milling were the life blood of the Rancho de Taos economy. In 1871, Alexander Gusdorf, immigrant to New Mexico from Germany, moved from Peñasco to the village to manage a mill and general-merchandise store owned by his uncle Zadoc Staab, an affluent Santa Fe merchant.

Gusdorf quickly established himself as a community leader and is credited with introducing threshing machines and self-tying binders to the valley, as well as planting the first fruit orchard there. In 1879 he bought out his uncle and constructed a three-story steam-powered flour mill, the first of its kind in New Mexico. It was located on the corner of the plaza, just south of the church. The mill burned to the ground in 1895, and Gusdorf moved his headquarters to Don Fernando de Taos. It was a very serious blow to the village economy. Gusdorf later became the president and chairman of the board of the First State Bank of Taos. When he died in 1923 he was succeeded by his German-born wife, Bertis (Bertha).

Other businesses were located around the plaza at different times. In the early 1900s Tomas Rivera had a general merchandise store on the south corner opposite the church. He and his family lived in the house next door to the store. From a photograph of the interior of the store, it appears that he did, in fact, carry almost anything a family could need: foodstuff, cloth, clothing, farm tools and many other items. According to this daughter, Eva Rivera Martinez, who still lives in the family home on the plaza, Tomas Rivera owned the first automobile in Ranchos de Taos.

A group of buildings on the northwest side of the plaza are now separated from it by the highway. In the 1890s this area was occupied by the residence and general store of "Squire Hartt. Today the Ranchos de Taos post office and some other stores are there. The motion picture theater closed down several years ago. Martinez Hall, next to the post office, was the scene of many Saturday night dances, and is still used for receptions and other gatherings.

PLAZA VIEJA

Behind the post office and the stores is an area the local people call "Plaza Vieja" (old plaza). There is an open space with some houses sited around it, with the remains of a stone wall on the northwest side. Possibly, as the main plaza became filled to capacity, an extension was made to the northwest side to accommodate more settlers. I have found no written description of Plaza Vieja.

Father Jose A Garcia had not been long at his assignment as first pastor of St. Francis church before he began planning to build a new parish house. He wrote Archbishop RE. Gerken on June 1, 1937, that he was in the process of acquiring land for the new building and was going to have the parishioners make the adobes. He sent the Archbishop a copy of the plan for the house, and after some correspondence back and forth, Gerken approved it. Work proceeded slowly, but it was finished early the next year. It is located on the northeast side of the church across the street.

HIGHWAY SQUABBLE

On April 17, 1939, Father Garcia wrote Archbishop Gerken that he had heard there was a danger that the highway from Santa Fe to Taos, which was being proposed at that time, would avoid Ranchos de Taos and go to the north through Cordillera because of a local squabble. The squabble was between opposing groups, each favoring one of two routes proposed by the State Highway Department. The department had surveyed a route that would take the new road through the Ranchos de Taos plaza just south of the church, and the other would be where it was finally placed, north of the church in its present alignment. Garcia said that he had not taken sides on the issue, although importuned by both parties. He was more concerned that if the road did not go through the Ranchos de Taos Plaza the church would lose money from tourism, the people would be greatly inconvenienced and the visitors would miss the most interesting sights on the road to Taos. Other citizens of the Taos area were not as noncommittal as Father Garcia and strongly challenged the routing of the road to the south

across the front of Saint Francis Church. On July sixth the Taos Artists Association, composed of forty-six members, sent a telegram to the Archbishop asking him to intercede with Governor Miles "... to prevent the immediate destruction of the Ranchos de Taos plaza by the contemplated routing of the Santa Fe-Taos highway." The telegram continued, "The beauty, historic value and actual use of the church will be virtually ruined should this road pass directly in front of it. Stop." They indicated that this routing was proposed by a single person interested in improving his business. They also pointed out the responsibility of the Catholic Church to stop such "vandalism." They felt the road would endanger people entering and leaving the church.

Some Taos citizens, mostly from the artists' community, formed the "Save the Ranchos Plaza Committee" and began a campaign to put the highway to the north of the church, where the road was then located. The old road to Santa Fe is south of the present state highway about a third of a mile and parallel to it. It came up to the plaza at the southwest corner, turned left and went north behind the buildings that form the southwest wall of the plaza. It turned northeast in front of the buildings that form the northwest end.

Archbishop Gerken did contact Governor John Miles and according to the newspaper account, placed before him the protests from the artists' association against the highway being in front of the church. Miles said that the decision was up to the Taos County Commissioners. He said, "Personally I'm not favoring one route or the other." Highway engineer Burton G. Dwyre said, "The Highway Department desires to do what the people want. It is not insistent upon any given location, in front or in back of the church, provided it is one that the Bureau of Public Roads will approve. It must be remembered it will pay two-thirds of the cost." The governor replied to Gerken with a letter reiterating what he had said when they met.

Mrs. Dasburg wrote the Archbishop, citing a story in the Santa Fe New Mexican that said the highway was to go north of the church. And local residents tell the story that Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Frances Perkins, Secretary of the Interior, and Mabel Dodge Luhan and others were contacted to use their influence to have the road located north of the church and that they did indeed intervene through contacts with the state officials.

So the highway was built across the northwest part of the plaza where the old road was located, but as it left the plaza heading southwest it followed a new route north of the old road, the route it follows today. The documents in the archives of the Archdiocese do not say who made the final decision on routing, but it must have been the County Commission following the recommendations of the Highway Department and the Bureau of Public Roads. Obviously, the Archbishop's influence and the sentiments of the people of Taos Valley, and perhaps even Mrs. Roosevelt, had a strong impact on the decision makers. This threat to the integrity of the plaza brought forth a great outpouring of feeling for the plaza and the church as had never occurred before. The artists and business people realized the importance of the plaza and church to the whole Taos Valley and wanted to protect them from the degradation they felt the highway alignment south of the church would cause. Not until 1967 when the church was threatened with the application of cement stucco instead of mud plaster was there another citizen movement to protect it.

Lectures, Field Trips & Special Events (Tentative Schedule)

March 6, 2021 - Lecture by ZOOM
"Over the Santa Fe Trail to Mexico"
by Joy L. Poole, Deputy State Librarian

April 3, 2021 - Lecture by ZOOM
"Reflections on Three Trails"
by Rick Hendricks, State Records Admin.

May 2, 2021 - Honoree Luncheon
Taos Pueblo - Blue Lake

June 5, 2021 - Lecture by ZOOM
"Star of David on the Santa Fe Trail"
by Naomi Sandweiss (HSNM/NMJHS)

July 10, 2021 - Field Trip
St. James Hotel in Cimarron, NM
email - paulcfigueroa@gmail.com

Please visit our website for a complete schedule

First Saturday of the month at 2:00 PM
Kit Carson Coop Meeting Room
118 Cruz Alta Road - Taos

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Paul Figueroa

Membership

Effie Romero

Publications/Website

Dave Cordova

Local History

David Maes

Preservation

Charles Hawk

Folklore

David Maes

Hospitality

Sylvia & Irene De La Torre-Spencer

BECOME A MEMBER

We invite your participation and support through an annual membership, which includes subscriptions to "Ayer Y Hoy" and our periodic newsletters. Other activities include recordings of oral histories, maintaining archive materials and participating in community events.

Membership categories:

Individual	\$20
Family	\$30
Sustaining	\$50
Business	\$75

To become a member sign up on our website:
<http://taoscountyhistoricalsociety.org/members.html>
or send a check, along with your name and address, to:

TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 2447 - TAOS, NM 87571

For more information call (575) 770-0681
or e-mail: cordova@taosnet.com



Taos County Historical Society
PO Box 2447 • Taos, NM 87571

The Taos County Historical Society was formed in 1952 for the purpose of "...preserving the history of the Taos area." This part of New Mexico has a fascinating history, full of people, events, stories and places. If you are interested, we invite your participation in our field trips or lecture programs, or by supporting the Society by becoming a member.