

In July 1846, Dr. Wislizenus wrote in his journal:

“We passed in the afternoon Joyita, a small town ... Near Joyita, mountainous bluffs reached for the first time the Rio del Norte; they consist of black amygdaloidal basalt.”

Dr. Wislizenus was traveling south, passing through Joyita from La Joya. Rio del Norte is the historic name for the Rio Grande. The mountainous basaltic bluffs mentioned are the San Acacia Mesa (also called “Indian Hill”) and San Acacia Butte shown on the maps. The river passes through a narrow rocky gap between the mesa and the lava (basaltic) butte, forcing the trail away from the river to cross the San Acacia Butte southward towards Alamillo and Sabino.

A few months later ...

On November 8, 1846, Lt. Abert recorded:

“The course of the river to-day was tortuous; high sand banks closed in on each side, almost obliterating the valley, except at Joya and Joyeta, where there are fields sufficiently broad for raising corn enough to supply the wants of the people, and to afford grazing grounds for their cattle.”

Lt. Abert was a U.S. Army officer involved in the survey of the newly acquired Territory of New Mexico. Later, his survey party selected the top of San Acacia Mesa to be the geodetic center of New Mexico. Today, a marker atop of the mesa marks the New Mexico Prime Meridian and the datum point for Range 1, Township 1 (R1, T1).

Joyita was destroyed by a flood in 1886.

Some people moved across the river to the village of San Acacia. Others moved to Chamisal, a small village on the west side of the Rio Grande just north of Polvadera. According to local oral history (the Tafoya families), the village immediately across the river and on El Camino Real, named Bolon Guin (corrupted as “Bowling Green” on some period maps) was also destroyed in the 1886 flood. Families from both Bolon Guin and La Joyita relocated to the irrigated farm land at Chamisal and Polvadera, then a part of the San Lorenzo Land Grant.