

La Joya de Sevilleta

Significance: The modern town of La Joya was founded as a frontier outpost for protection of the Camino Real adjacent to the site of a seventeenth-century Piro pueblo. The village of La Joya de Sevilleta marks the lower end of Río Abajo. For a time it was where caravans would gather and await the rest of the caravan and/or presidial troops who would escort them down the trail. The church and possibly the plaza, along with some ruins of structures, remain of this important village.

Annotated History:

[1598 Oñate Entrada] On 15 June 1598 the Oñate expedition traveled seven leagues from Socorro to the little pueblo which they named Nueva Sevilla. They thought it necessary to take refuge in the houses of the pueblo in case the Indians of the area decided to attack and made this the first pueblo in which they camped. They stayed there until 21 June. Between 15 June and 22 June 1598 the Maese de Campo, Juan de Zaldivar, and Sargeanto Mayor, Vicente de Zaldivar, visited "the pueblos of Abo" (Pacheco, Cárdenas y Torres 1871:XVI, 251-252). Nueva Sevilla also came to be known as Sevilleta, so named because of its resemblance to Seville, Spain. It was located on the east bank of the Río Grande, about 20 miles north of Socorro (Hammond and Rey:1953:I, 318). Vetancurt wrote that it received its name due to its large Piro population. In 1692, Vetancurt said that this pueblo was five leagues from Alamillo. Sevilleta had been razed before that time (Vetancurt 1961:266).

[1634 Benavidez Mission Report] In 1634, Fray Benavides reported that the Piro pueblo of Sevilleta boasted a convent and Indians who lived Christian lives. He wrote that when he arrived in New Mexico at the beginning of 1626, Sevilleta was burned and in ruins due to warfare with other Indians, likely the Apache. During the tenure of Benavides as Custodian of New Mexico, the pueblo was rebuilt and resettled and the convent erected and dedicated to San Luis Obispo. Benavides also used the name "Seelocú," evidently the Piro name for Sevilleta (Hodge, Hammond, and Rey 1945:63-64,252-253). Governor Juan Manso de Contreras moved the inhabitants of Sevilleta to the pueblo of Alamillo during the 1650s. The next governor, Bernardo López de Mendizábal, returned them in 1659 despite protests by the Franciscans in the area (Primera Audiencia de don Bernardo López de Mendizábal, 1663; Scholes 1942:29).

[1680 Pueblo Revolt] When Maestro de Campo Alonso García retreated down the river in August 1680 the natives of Sevilleta went south with him. It was later reported that Sevilleta was left deserted along with the other Piro pueblos of Alamillo and Socorro (Hackett and Shelby 1942:I, 70,II, 168). Otermín passed Sevilleta in January 1682 as he retreated to the south after his brief return to New Mexico (Hackett and Shelby 1942:II, 363). Vargas left the abandoned pueblo of Alamillo on 3 September 1692 and went north to the abandoned pueblo of Sevilleta. He continued on to the estancia that had belonged to Felipe Romero to find pasture for his mounts, a distance of six or seven leagues from Alamillo (Kessell and Hendricks 1992:375).

[1760 Bishop Tamarón] On 18 May 1760, after stopping at "Alamito," Bishop Tamarón came to the site where the pueblo of Sevilleta stood, and a little beyond it the ruined estancia of Felipe Romero. Tamarón wrote that both were "lost with the kingdom" (Adams 1953:201)

[1766 Lafora] Lafora viewed the ruins of Sevilleta when he passed through on 14 August 1766. He

placed it across from the mouth of the Río Puerco in an area of steep hills (Alessio Robles 1939:95). After the visit of Lafora, the area was resettled as the town of La Joya. In the 1790s landless families from Taos, Las Vegas, and Mora who had experience fighting Indians were moved there to provide protection for caravans to and from Mexico. An 1819 land grant to 67 individuals confirmed their defensive responsibilities (Taylor and Diaboli 1937:20).

[1807 Zebulon Pike] On 10 March 1807, Zebulon Montgomery Pike described "Sibilleta" as "the neatest most regular village I have yet seen." It was a square, with a mud wall facing the outside and the windows and doors pointing inward toward the plaza. He thought the population to be 1000. This was the last village Pike stayed in before entering "the wilderness" on his trip to Mexico as a Spanish prisoner and he noted that caravans gathered there before heading south (Coues 1895:II, 628-632). In 1812, Pedro Bautista Pino explained that the hazards of the journey to Chihuahua made it necessary for travelers to gather at "Joya de Sevilleta" in sufficient numbers to ensure their safety during the trip south. He also noted it as "Sevilleta," a frontier post in which seven soldiers were stationed (Carroll and Haggard 1942:106,69)

[1846 Dr. Wislizenus] Wislizenus simply called it "Joya, another small town" when he went through on 25 July 1846. His map shows the road continuing straight south as the river curved to the west (Wislizenus 1848:36). In September 1851, Baptist missionary Hiram Read arrived at "La Jolla, (La Hoyah - The Hole)," and found that he had to stay with "a Mexican, there being no American in town" (Bloom 1942:134). In 1855, Davis described "La Hoya" as a town of 400 a few hundred yards from the east bank of the Río Grande (Davis 1938:201).