



The Loretto Academy Girls' Choir performs at the chapel in 1959. (Photo courtesy of Loretto Chapel)

As I browsed through the postcards, I discovered one of a group of Loretto students standing on the staircase and soon found myself envisioning an entire exhibit filled with photographs, memorabilia, and letters that would tell their story. For I began to suspect that the true miracle was not the spiral staircase, but the impact which the Sisters of Loretto had on generations of young New Mexico women and the communities in which they lived.

NANCY OWEN LEWIS

School for Advanced Research

Cross of the Martyrs and Commemorative Walkway. Archdiocese of Santa Fe, City of Santa Fe, and Santa Fe Fiesta Council.

Several blocks northeast of the Santa Fe plaza, a twenty-foot-high white steel cross stands atop a hill overlooking the city. Called the Cross of the Martyrs, it was erected in 1977 as a memorial to the Franciscan priests killed during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. This is actually the second such memorial in Santa Fe.



The Cross of the Martyrs, with commemorative trail visible winding up the hill. (Photo courtesy Thomas H. Guthrie)

The first Cross of the Martyrs was constructed not far away of concrete and dedicated during the 1920 Santa Fe fiesta, a quasi-historical and partly Catholic commemoration of Diego de Vargas's "peaceful" reconquest of New Mexico in 1692.¹ The fiesta traditionally concludes with a candlelit procession from St. Francis Cathedral to the cross. For this solemn occasion the Caballeros de Vargas, a group of men who impersonate de Vargas and his entourage in fiesta pageantry, build small bonfires along the path to the monument.

Ironically, the new cross stands on the edge of Fort Marcy Park, near the site of the fort American soldiers built when they occupied Santa Fe in 1846. The fact that the cross was erected by the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission and the Santa Fe Fiesta Council underscores the ambiguity of this siting. A monument honoring the priests killed in the Pueblo Revolt (which temporarily expelled the Spanish from the region) and ritually associated with Spanish reconquest has thus become symbolically linked to American independence and colonialism.

The new hilltop location dramatically increased the cross's visibility, but for years the path to the cross was treacherous. To resolve this problem the

1. On the fiesta, see Ronald L. Grimes, *Symbol and Conquest: Public Ritual and Drama in Santa Fe* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992 [1976]); Sarah Horton, "Where is the 'Mexican' in 'New Mexican'?" *Enacting History, Enacting Dominance in the Santa Fe Fiesta*, *The Public Historian* 23, no. 4 (2001): 41–54; and Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 181–231.



Interpretive panels along the Cross of the Martyrs commemorative trail. (Photo courtesy Thomas H. Guthrie)

City of Santa Fe and Archdiocese of Santa Fe (which gave the land to the city) constructed a brick walkway that winds up the hill from Paseo de Peralta to the monument. Archbishop Robert Sanchez and Joe Ruiz, a local businessman and member of the Caballeros de Vargas, conceived of the walkway not just as a way of providing better access to the cross but also as a commemorative historical trail that would introduce tourists to the region's history. Ruiz spearheaded the project, which was completed in 1986, working with the city and the church to coordinate fundraising and construction. Most of the funding for the project, totaling about \$500,000, came from the city, but the sale of personalized bricks and corporate sponsorships supplemented the budget. Acknowledgment of these sponsors around the base of the cross (St. Anne's Parish, Villa Linda Mall, United Cable TV, Chevron, etc.) imbues the monument with a sense of commodification.

A sign on the gate at the foot of the walkway states that "Santa Fe is the oldest capital city in the United States, a successful blend of three cultures and yet a modern city. . . ." The commemorative walkway "provides a historical walk through Santa Fe from 500 A.D. to the present. It offers a unique and panoramic view of the city and commemorates those people and historical events which helped form Santa Fe's long and colorful history." The themes of multicultural harmony and Santa Fe's antiquity run through the historical narrative conveyed along the trail.

Twenty interpretive panels, arranged in chronological order, line the trail and describe major events from Santa Fe's past. According to Ruiz, the text for the signs was excerpted directly from the New Mexico Secretary of State's

Blue Book, which includes an overview of New Mexico history. No professional historian worked on the project. The first panel, labeled “500 A.D.,” is the only one devoted to New Mexico’s precolonial history. It describes rapid social change, population restriction and fragmentation, and abandonment of whole areas between 500 and 1400. Reducing a millennium of indigenous history to three sentences, the panel curiously emphasizes instability, neglecting to mention the highly significant cultural, religious, and architectural achievements of Ancestral Puebloans.

The next sign, “1540,” inaugurates the Spanish colonial period with Coronado’s expedition. Subsequent signs describe the colonization of New Mexico by Juan de Oñate in 1598, the founding of Santa Fe, the Pueblo Revolt, the reconquest, Mexican independence, American occupation, New Mexico statehood (1912), the development of the atomic bomb in nearby Los Alamos, and so forth, ending in 1985 with the city’s 375th anniversary. The final, undated sign reads simply “TO THE FUTURE.”

Altogether, these historical markers successfully provide visitors with a basic timeline of New Mexico history. However, just as the description of precolonial indigenous societies is highly reductive, the signs oversimplify a complex and contested past. The presentation of Spanish and American colonialism deserves special attention. The first three signs dealing with Spanish colonization emphasize exploration and settlement. Conflict between Spaniards and Pueblo Indians does not surface until the fourth sign, which notes that “extreme demands placed by the Spanish settlers on the native population” led to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Yet even then, we are told only that during the uprising “twenty-one Franciscan priests and Friars lost their lives” (a theme that leads to the cross itself). None of the signs mention the brutality of Spanish conquest, which resulted in far more Indian than European deaths and radical social change among the pueblos. Many Hispanics in New Mexico today would dispute this brutality. Indeed, public debates over the morality of Spanish colonization seem to be perennial in New Mexico, especially since the 1990s.² But the commemorative walkway implies historiographical consensus, never hinting that New Mexicans (and historians) fundamentally disagree over interpretations of regional history today.

The sign dated 1876 rightly notes, “Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo [which ended the Mexican-American War and resulted in the cession of a vast territory including New Mexico to the United States] guaranteed the property rights of Hispanics and Indians, problems in the interpretation of Spanish and Mexican land laws worked to the disadvantage of these landholders.” The breakup of Hispanic land grants by Anglo courts and capitalists and the forced assimilation of Native Americans were two of the most devastating facets of American colonialism in the Southwest, which receives only this understated critique along the commemorative walkway.

2. Thomas H. Guthrie, “Recognizing New Mexico: Heritage Development and Cultural Politics in the Land of Enchantment,” doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 2005, 258–64.

It may be unfair to criticize this public history project for failing to provide a fuller and more nuanced account of New Mexico's double colonial history. After all, space and funding were limited, and revisionist historiography (not to mention postcolonial criticism) was not widely circulating in 1980s Santa Fe. However, even more problematic than the content of the signs (and what they omit) is the effect of their placement along the trail. Walking from the foot of the hill to the cross, visitors participate in a linear enactment of New Mexico history that proceeds from precolonial disorder to the present. Their movement along the serpentine path and consumption of the signs in chronological order lend continuity to a jagged past characterized by cycles of conquest. And the ascent up the hill, from past to present and from chaos to Christianity, suggests a progressive understanding of regional history.³ This history becomes sacralized through the course of the Catholic fiesta procession, during which the historical markers might evoke the stations of the cross.

This discourse of multicultural harmony is highly polished in northern New Mexico, even (as the path to the Cross of the Martyrs suggests) a matter of religious and corporate faith. Interestingly, a visit in April 2007 to the cross revealed a counter-discursive reinscription of the monument. Broken beer bottles along the path and dirt trails cutting between the paved switchbacks were testament to an alternative use of the space, as were spray painted messages all along the walkway. Particularly intriguing was a series of tags reading "Artists Annonymous [*sic*]," culminating with this message around the base of the cross itself: "JESUS LOVES ARTISTS/GOD FORGIVES GRAFFITI."

The walk up to the Cross of the Martyrs is well worth the effort, if only to take in the panoramic views of Santa Fe and the surrounding landscape, which the historical markers effectively, though indirectly, present as a historical stage upon which visitors can imagine the key events of New Mexico history taking place.⁴ The monument itself, with its religious, political, and ethnic associations, exemplifies the multiple layers of public commemoration in Santa Fe. And the commemorative walkway both provides some basic facts about regional history and illustrates a familiar narrative about New Mexico's past, whose sharp edges have been softened such that Spanish and American colonization result in a progressive multiculturalism.

THOMAS H. GUTHRIE

Guilford College

I gratefully acknowledge the help of Cecilia Matic, Joe Ruiz, and Cathy Stanton in preparing this review.

3. Cf. Martha K. Norkunas, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History, and Ethnicity in Monterey, California* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 23–45.

4. Guthrie, "Recognizing New Mexico," 55.