The Road to Revolt

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro
National Historic Trail

The Pueblo of Pojoaque
National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (the Royal Road to the Interior Lands) connected people from different continents, countries, and cultures. Today the trail embodies stories of trade, conquest, colonization, missions, and wars. For puebloan people, Spanish arrival in 1598 via the trail destroyed the framework of their society.

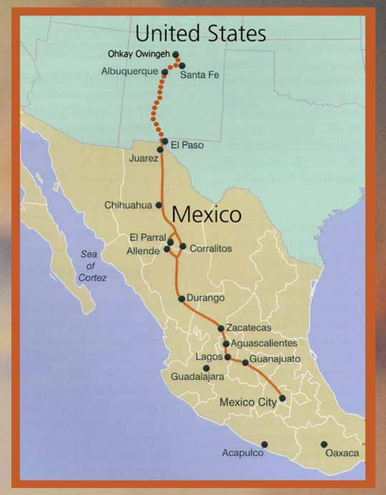
The pueblo economy was based on agriculture, supplemented by hunting and trading. The Spanish demanded religious conversion and a labor economy that produced a surplus. They treated Indian settlements as sources of farm workers.

More than 80 years of religious persecution forever changed the puebloan people. They revolted in 1680 and pushed the Spanish from New Mexico. Still, it was hard to remember life before the Spanish brought cattle, sheep, exotic vegetables and grains, iron hardware, and the new religion.

Pueblo Revolt - 1680

The Pueblo Indians, victims of two generations of religious persecution, rose against the Spanish empire in 1680. Medicine man Popé of Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo (14 miles north of Pojoaque) organized pueblo leaders. With surrounding pueblos in line, runners circulated a calendar that villages followed to measure time until the day to take up arms.

Spanish settlers were annihilated and their missions burned in retaliation for the destruction of sacred pueblo kivas. With the Spanish defeated, Popé ordered every Indian to scrub with soapweed to wash away the stain of baptism; forsake wives wed within Christian faith; and remarry according to native tradition.



El Camino Real began as faint footpaths etched by native traders as they exchanged goods. Spanish colonists carved it deeper with caravans of vehicles, livestock, and people traveling north to settle.

Today, the trail that began as a scuff in the earth is a bustling highway in some places and a preserved trail in others. Follow your heritage through cities and into wildlands, finding solitude and connecting with the past. For more information on El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail, go to www.nps.gov/elca or www.blm.gov/nm

When the Spanish arrived at the Pueblo of Pojoaque, they took the puebloan peoples' stores of food; required the Indians to weave all clothing and mantas (blankets, shawls) as a form of taxation paid to the Spanish Crown; and forced Catholicism upon the native people. If the puebloan people balked at the change in their belief system, they were flogged.