

Which town in the Galisteo Basin lays claim to being the oldest?

*La cuenca Galisteo*, the north-central New Mexico geological basin defined as the area drained by the river of the same name, is uncommonly rich in traces of all the people who for no less than ten millennia have called this place home. Most of those ancient Basin settlements, many of them quite small, are long deserted, their names lost to the ages. For want of their true names they are spoken of today, if they are spoken of at all, in words the inhabitants would have regarded as gibberish. Las Madres, Burnt Corn, Lodestar, Manzanares, Lamy Junction, Escondido. Some ancient Basin towns survived for centuries, and a very few are still alive today.

So, which modern-day town in the Galisteo Basin is the oldest of them all?

The earliest written records are in Spanish, and they tell of four great cities in the Basin only a few miles distant from each other; San Cristóbal (*Yam-p'ham-ba*), Galisteo (*T'han-u-ge*), San Marcos (*Ya'a-tse*) and San Lázaro (*Ip-e-re*). There were more cities, like Santo Domingo (*Ki-wa*), closer to the Rio Grande. A hundred or more years earlier there had been in the central basin eight such cities, but Shé, Colorado, Largo and Blanco were, by the time of the Spanish, deserted. Does this then mean Galisteo might be our oldest? No. For the Pueblo Galisteo de los Tanos was a very different place, two miles distant from the 19th century town we know today by that name.

The disruptions of the Revolt of 1680 changed life in this region in many ways. The military advantage the Europeans had had – notably their horses and firearms – was now, a hundred years on, at the disposal of Native Americans too, and some Indian peoples turned out to be very adept with those new technologies. When the Spanish returned in 1692 they recorded that all the towns in the Basin had been effectively abandoned. From the pass of Glorietta and the hills of Cañada de los Alamos, across the reaches of the Galisteo all the way to the Rio Grande, just about no one lived here anymore. Settled life in the Basin had become just too hazardous.

In 1706 governor Cuervo y Valdés instituted a forced-repopulation program that caused the second occupation of the Pueblo of Galisteo – not yet the town we know today. Some of Cuervo's other new populations survived, such as Abiquiú, La Cieneguilla, and the little outpost in Rio Abajo that came to be called Albuquerque. Seventeen-ought-six also sees the first recorded mention of an ascendant, armed and mounted, Plains people, who were soon to become both

famous and feared as the Comanche. Being very good at what they did, the Comanche prospered, frequently at the expense of others.

Cuervo's Pueblo Galisteo endured for three-quarters of a century, but those Galisteños were worn down by what must have seemed to be never-ending strife. After a particularly severe outbreak of smallpox, Galisteo was abandoned for the second time around 1782, this time permanently. Thereafter, only a seasonal military post protected the Santa Fe garrison's grazing animals. With the abandonment of Pueblo Galisteo, the central Basin was again without a sedentary population.

The current Spanish village of Galisteo was established by grant in 1814. The gold mining camp of Real de Dolores, in the Ortiz Mountains, dates from about 1822. A decade later the ex-urbs of each of those, Ortiz (sheep) and Las Norias (gold), followed. Of them, only the Spanish Galisteo survives.

Ultimately the arrival of the railroad really changed things. Carbonateville, the 1879 boomtown in the Cerrillos Hills, later called Turquesa, was briefly the largest city in the Basin. Of the railroad camps – Glorieta, Cañoncito, Manzanares, Galisteo Junction, Spiess, Kennedy, Ortiz, Galisteo, Cerrillos, Waldo, and Wallace – few survive. Galisteo Junction is now Lamy. Wallace is Domingo. Manzanares, Spiess, Kennedy, Ortiz, Galisteo and Waldo are all gone. Cerrillos Station, from early 1880, could be said to have prospered slightly, as did Lamy. Madrid didn't exist until late 1892.

What is the oldest still-occupied town within the Galisteo drainage? The current village of Galisteo? If you allow that a slight relocation of many of the houses after a long-ago flood doesn't affect its status, then Galisteo is the second oldest town in the Basin. The oldest continuously occupied town was also moved a few hundred yards upslope, the result of the flood of 1886, which destroyed the old church. Occupied without interruption since at least 1300 A.D., the oldest populated town in the Galisteo Basin is Santo Domingo.