

# Los Capitalistas

In colonial times, the Spanish traded with Plains Indians through trade fairs at Taos and Pecos Pueblos in New Mexico. In the 1790s, Pedro Vial made a trip for the Spanish government from Santa Fe to St. Louis to explore the opening of trade—traveling over sections of what would eventually become the Santa Fe Trail. Regular trade across the plains would have to wait. By the mid-1820s, New Mexico merchants had become active in the trade between Santa Fe and Missouri. An 1840s traveler observed that most of the caravans that he saw were “Mexican.”

Hispanic merchants grew wealthy trading east on the “Ruta de Misouri” (Route to Missouri) and south to Chihuahua along the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (Royal Road to the Interior Lands). Mexican law favored Mexican citizens, leading to international partnerships such as Goldstein, Bean, Peacock, & Armijo. New Mexicans might send their children to school in St. Louis and New York, thereby creating additional social, cultural, and business ties.

As the railroad moved west, Miguel Antonio Otero, Sr., and John Sellar moved their business to successive railhead towns. Otero attended school and taught in New York, became a lawyer, and served as a New Mexico territorial delegate to Congress.



“Esta algo enredado, pero asi se hace dinero.”  
 (“It is somewhat tangled, but it is a way to make money”).  
 —Damaso Rebledo, an agent for trader Manuel Alvarez, describing the Santa Fe Trade in 1846

**The Santa Fe Plaza was the western hub of an extensive global trade network.**

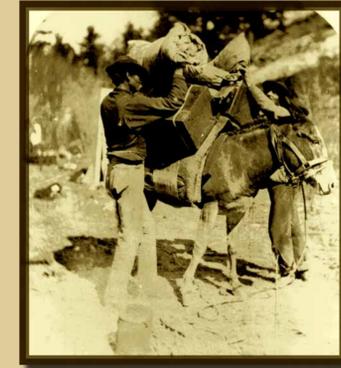
*The End of The Trail* by Gerald Cassidy  
 Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, Neg. #6977



Santa Fe National Historic Trail  
 National Trails System

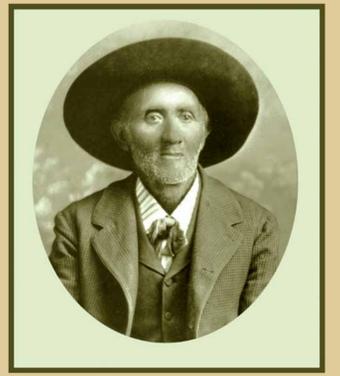
National Park Service  
 3 - Trails West, Inc.  
 Board of Parks and Recreation  
 Commissioners - Kansas City, MO

New Mexican traders used wagons on the Santa Fe Trail instead of traditional pack trains. Mules, as well as oxen, were used to pull wagons, and skilled *arrieros* (muleteers) were in great demand.



Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, Neg. #49807

Often working up to 18-hour days, workers like Jesus Vialpando labored long and hard to get wagon trains to their destination. Laborer José Librado Gurulé described the grueling trip as “Too much awake. Too little water to drink, too little frijoles; men go to sleep anywhere.”



Courtesy Pioneers Museum, Colorado Springs, CO  
 Jesus Vialpando

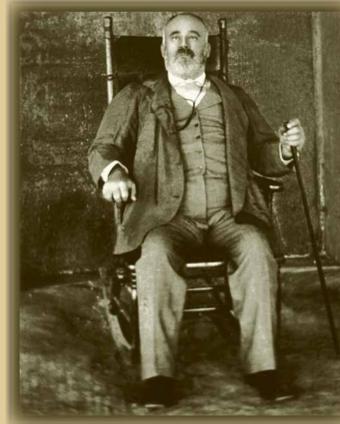
Felipe B. Delgado went to school in St. Louis. His family was prominent in the Santa Fe and Camino Real trade. He cemented business ties with Felipe Chavez, Jose Leandro Perea, and Zadoc Staab.



Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, Neg. #50560

José Leandro Perea made a fortune freighting for the U.S. government and military. By the 1860s, his net worth was estimated at \$408,000—making him a multi-millionaire by today’s standards.

Prosperous and influential businessman Felipe Chávez raised grain and sheep; shipped wool, precious metals, and American and European merchandise; and served as a banker, commissioner, wholesaler, and retailer. He had business ties in Liverpool and Manchester, England; New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis, U.S.A.; and Durango and Chihuahua, Mexico.



Courtesy Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico