

Albuquerque's History

Albuquerque, founded in 1706 with 18 families, was not incorporated until 1891. But much earlier than the 1890s, Albuquerque and its economy were drastically evolving. From agriculture and transportation to healthcare and technology, Albuquerque's economic base was constantly changing. Long before the railroad, Albuquerque was the sheep-herding center of the West. In the 1850s and 1860s, following the annexation of New Mexico to the United States, the sheep raising industry boomed. Miners in California and Colorado fueled a demand that led to the raising of hundreds of thousands of sheep across the mesas outside the city. The economic impact of sheep-herding and wool trade would prove to be valuable well into the next century. As the city approached the 20th century, the arrival of the railroad (1880) brought forth new economic opportunity. Initiated by railroad planners, New Albuquerque or New Town became home to the largest repair facility between Kansas and California. Albuquerque was quickly beginning to resemble most western boomtowns, equipped with everything from saloons and a horse-drawn streetcar system to a red-light district.

With the boom, came an influx of immigrants of all descents. Albuquerque was now home to a growing mix of Pueblo Indians, Hispanics, Europeans, African Americans and Chinese. As with any growing city, Albuquerque began to expand its infrastructure and services to include a school system, electricity, water works and telephones. As with present-day Albuquerque, the climate was a draw for those seeking refuge in a dry, sun-filled environment. But near the turn of the century, Albuquerque's climate was touted as "healing" and had "lung-ers" coming from far and wide flocking to the state. Before long, 1/3 of the city's population consisted of those suffering from tuberculosis or other respiratory diseases or those caring for them. It was through this that more than a dozen sanitariums were born, offering healthcare for ailing residents. Two institutions, Southwest Presbyterian Sanitarium and St. Joseph Sanitarium endured the discovery of treatment for tuberculosis. Today, they exist as Presbyterian Healthcare Services and St. Joseph Healthcare, which was recently purchased by Ardent Healthcare and will be operating under the name Sandia Healthcare.

Transportation and government followed the healthcare era. Albuquerque was selected as a stop on the first transcontinental air route in the 1920s and Route 66 brought the first transcontinental motorists through the city. The 1940s were a time of rapid growth with a US Army airfield constructed east of the city. Kirtland Air Force Base and Sandia National Laboratories would then lay the foundation for decades of nuclear research and technological advances. Kirtland AFB currently has more than \$4 billion in fiscal impact to Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and New Mexico annually and is the state's largest employer with the majority being civilians associated with Sandia Labs and the Air Force. Both research and technology would play significant roles in Albuquerque's future into the 21st century.

Now, as Albuquerque continues to develop a globally competitive economic region, the city is on the map and continues to be a favorite among expanding and relocating companies and a "place to watch" as it proceeds to climb the high-tech ladder.