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—*Crosswinds*

THE PLACE NAMES OF NEW MEXICO

Revised Edition

Robert Julyan

WITH LOVE AND HOPE,
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO MY DAUGHTER,
ROBYN

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or in Spanish, as *fresno*.

ASPEN (general). The quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) is a distinctive tree of the NM high country, and it has given its name to many features—it occurs 17 times in GNIS—especially to mountains, where dense stands of aspens turn the autumn hillsides golden. The name appears as *Quaking Asp* on a canyon and creek in Grant and Catron Counties.

Aspen Peak, 11,109 ft. (Santa Fe; just NW of Santa Fe Basin Ski Area and Aspen Basin, 3 mi E of Aspen Hill).

ASTIALAKWA (Sandoval; on Mesa de Guadalupe, separating San Diego and Guadalupe Canyons in the Jemez Mountains N of Cañon). This large Towa pueblo, now in ruins, was inhabited when the Spanish arrived and likely was the site of the mission of San Juan that the Franciscans established early in the 17th century. The etymology of its name, sometimes transcribed *Hastialakwa*, is obscure, though its name has been reported to mean “high view above the water,” certainly an accurate description.

ATALAYA MOUNTAIN, 9,121 ft. (Santa Fe; 3 mi E of Santa Fe, S of Nichols Reservoir). The Spanish *atalaya* means “watchtower, height.” This summit gave its name to a small land grant surrounding it, referred to in early documents variously as *Atalaya Grant*, *Atalaya Hill Grant*, and *Talaya Grant*. The mountain sometimes has been called *Reservoir Hill*.

ATARQUE (general). *Atarque*, “earthen dam,” comes from the Spanish verb *atarquinar*, “to fill up with mud.” Small earthen dams in Hispanic NM became distinctive features on the landscape and natural sites for settlements, thus *Atarque* is a common NM place name.

ATARQUE (Cibola; settlement, trading point; 6 mi N of Fence Lake, 2 mi W of NM 36; PO 1910–55, mail to Fence Lake). In 1882, one year after his father had been killed by Apaches, Juan García took his mother, five younger brothers, and Manuel and Jesús Landavaso, to Jaralosa Canyon, a few miles from the present site of *Atarque*. In 1885 the Garcías dammed several nearby arroyos

and moved there, calling the site *Los Atarques*, “the dams;” the locality has been called *Atarque de García*. Juan García established a store there, and the settlement eventually became headquarters of the *Atarque Sheep Co*. The dam has since washed out, and nothing remains of the former settlement but a few ruined buildings—and the name.

Atarque Lake is 5 mi NW of *Atarque*.

ATENCIO (Union; settlement; 7 mi from the Texas line, 24 mi N of Clayton; PO 1910–14, mail to Moses). Sometime before 1908 A.C. Miera, Miguel Tixier, and José Merced Gonzáles opened a mercantile store here to serve the numerous families in the area. In 1908 they decided a PO also would serve the local population, as well as increase business, so they petitioned postal officials to establish one. The name they proposed was *Atencio*, to honor Gabriel *Atencio*, a prominent local resident. Maggie *Atencio*, Gabriel’s daughter, was the first and only postmistress. Eventually the PO was discontinued, and the mercantile store closed soon after. Today the settlement has gone, though families still live in the area.

ATOKA (Eddy; 5 mi S of Artesia, on US 285). About all that is known for sure about the name of this small, inhabited settlement is that it ultimately was derived from an Indian word, most likely from the language of the Choctaws, who lived in the SE US, where *Atoka* appears as a place name in several states. The word has been translated as “in, or to, another place,” and “ball ground,” referring to a game similar to lacrosse played by the Choctaws. In 1830 the Choctaws were forced to leave their homeland and move to a reservation in Oklahoma, which perhaps explains why the name appears in E NM; many early E NM settlers came from Oklahoma, where *Atoka* is the name of a county, and they likely brought the name with them.

ATRISCO (Bernalillo; SW suburb of Albuquerque, NW of Armijo; PO 1892–93, 1907–08, mail to Albuquerque). Certainly as early as 1703, and perhaps even as early as 1660, before Albuquerque was

founded as a villa in 1706, a cluster of farms on the Rio Grande’s W bank was known as *Atrisco*, but the name itself may be much older. It likely is derived from *atlixco*, a Nahuatl word meaning “across the river.” From the viewpoint of a traveler on the Rio Grande’s E bank this certainly would have described the community (the name *Analco* in Santa Fe has been explained similarly; see entry). Alternatively, the name *Atlixco* could have been transferred to NM from Puebla, Mexico, where it appears on a valley and a city. The locality probably the *Tousac* Zebulon Pike described as a small village in 1807.

Residents of *Atrisco* were called *Atrisqueños*. The settlement lacked municipal organization, and, with the founding and growth of Albuquerque, *Atrisco* became a satellite of its larger neighbor; it often was referred to as *Atrisco de Albuquerque*. The 1870 US Census showed *Ranchos de Atrisco* with 740 people, Albuquerque with 1,307. Despite *Atrisco* now completely absorbed by Albuquerque, the name and even something of the former settlement’s identity persists; the *Atrisco Land Grant*, made by King Charles II of Spain in 1692 to Fernando Durán y Chávez, still includes most of the land on the mesas SW of Albuquerque.

ATSINNA (Cibola; ruins). See *El Morro*.

AUGUSTINE (Socorro; settlement; 2 mi from Catron County line, on US 60; PO 1927–55, mail to Magdalena). Former rural PO, likely named for its location on the *Plains of San Agustin* (see entry). See *San Agustin (general)*.

AURORA (Colfax, Mora; settlement; NW of Ocate; PO as *Martinez* 1889–1902, as *Aurora* 1902–21, mail to Ocate). In the late 1800s, friends and relatives of the Taos priest, Padre Antonio José *Martinez*, settled in a canyon E of Black Lake. The canyon took their surname and so did the PO established there in 1889; Marcelino V. Epiménio *Martinez* was the first postmaster. Around 1900 the *Martinez* PO moved out of the canyon to a site NW of Laguna Colorada, now called Red Lake, but it retained the