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*Kelly and Riley (Santa Rita) in Socorro County are considered two of New Mexico's best ghost towns. They are well presented in numerous books and online sources. Instead, this article focuses on some of the lesser known old towns, and perhaps a couple you've never heard of.*

### **Rosedale**

Gold was first discovered in the San Mateo Mountains near Big Rosa Canyon in 1882. Over the next few years, it seems everyone who attempted to develop the claims were either killed or left running for their lives by Apache Indians. Two soldiers from Fort Craig are known to have been killed in the Rosedale area. This was the last days of the so-called Indian Wars and depredations by the Apache.

By the mid-1890s, the claims at Big Rosa Canyon were worked in earnest, quickly yielding profitable gold. In no time, the mining district grew and the small town of mine shacks was named Rosedale. The two largest mines were the Golden Bell and Rosedale Mines. Smaller workings were the Lane, Robb and Reinhardt prospects.

Located about 25 miles southwest of Magdalena, Rosedale began to grow from a handful of tents and tarpapered mining shacks to a respectable town with a school, store, a bar or two, and a boarding house. The Post Office was established in 1899. In 1900, the population was a bit over 200 persons.

In a 1910 Socorro Chieftain, the 1908 mining report is published, stating Socorro County produced 46 percent of the state's \$298 million of gold production, mostly from the Rosedale mines. Producing nearly half of New

Mexico's gold, clearly Rosedale was more than a flash in the pan.

Most ghost towns came and went, with next to nothing known about the people. Such is not the case with Rosedale. Many of Socorro County's well-known family names had their roots in Rosedale.

Such as Wesley and Martha Burris, arriving in Rosedale from Oklahoma in 1899. Wesley worked in the mines while Martha, having a college degree, taught at the Rosedale school. The other teacher was Edna Fite, mother to well known Socorro Rancher Dean Fite. Other Socorro County ranching families, such as the Bruton's, McGee's, Harris' and Brunton's, also lived, at least for a time, in Rosedale.

The gold became exhausted by 1916. With little gold left to be mined, most of the miners lost their jobs. Only a skeleton crew remained looking for the other vein of gold most believed was there. Unfortunately, it was



Photo courtesy Wesley Burris

**Rosedale's grave of the Unknown Soldier. The wood-fenced grave is the first grave at Rosedale – a soldier from Fort Craig who was killed in an Apache raid near the canyon in the early 1880s. Families keep the cemetery in good order, including that of the unknown soldier.**

never found. Sporadic mining and ranching in the area kept the town alive throughout the 1920s. In 1928, the Post Office was closed, the businesses and school were closed, and Rosedale was heading for ghost town status.

During the 1930s Great Depression Years, the Rosedale Mine was reopened and produced some additional gold, but only a fraction of that from previous years. The mine was closed in 1937 and the mines, and the town, were abandoned.

According to the oral history of Edward Burris, recorded by the Socorro Historical Society, the main shaft of the Rosedale Mine was 735 feet deep with numerous drifts when closed.

Today, very little is left of Rosedale. The cemetery and remains of the Bell and Rosedale mines are the most obvious. The houses and businesses are long gone. What wasn't salvaged for lumber has since melted into the ground. A stone wall and fireplace stands as the only hint of the once prosperous town. Oddly, even that wasn't strictly Rosedale – it was a hunting lodge built in the 1930s. Operated partially by rancher Paul Woofter, it served hunters visiting the San Mateo mountains until it burned to the ground in 1943, closing the last chapter on Rosedale.

### **Turkey Springs**

After son Edward was born in Rosedale in 1901, the Burris family moved to Turkey Springs in East Red Canyon in 1903. By the early 1920s, Edward started his own ranch. The early 1920s were years of bad drought. Other ranchers moved to the Turkey Spring area for the water. The complexes of ranches and homes became a town of sorts known as Turkey Springs, though application for a post office was never made.

In 1930, the Burris families moved a few miles north to North Canyon, where they continued to ranch until the death of Wesley Burris in 1937. Another dominant rancher of this area was Paul Woofter.

In 1937, Edward and Julia Elizabeth Burris moved from North Canyon to south of Socorro, about where NM-107 joins Highway 1. This is where Wesley Burris grew up. Here they built a small complex of a grocery store, gas station, fishing supplies, road service, and their home. They named it the Fort Craig Station, and for many years it was a popular watering hole on the original two-lane highway from El Paso to Albuquerque.

The family continued to operate the Fort Craig Station, by now a small village of sorts, until 1967, when the land was condemned for the building of the interstate highway.

Since 1899, it seems everywhere the Burris' showed up, a small town or village appeared. And, they all consider Rosedale their true home, for three generations of the Burris families are buried at the Rosedale cemetery.

Today, nothing remains of the Fort Craig Station. The Ft. Craig Rest Area on I-25, near exit 115, covers the site of the station, store, and the Burris home.

### **Water Canyon**

Water Canyon began in 1886 as a railroad stop on the newly built Magdalena spur line. After climbing the steep uphill grade from Socorro, the thirsty steam engines needed additional water to complete their trip to Magdalena. Water, from wells and reservoirs built in the canyon, were pumped to a large storage tank next to the tracks. A couple of buildings, built by the AT&SF railroad, housed the employees who maintained the pumping equipment.

A Post Office was established in 1887 at the Water Canyon station to serve the nearby ranchers. Mrs. Lucy Radcliff, wife of one of the railroad workers, was the first postmaster. Driving west to Magdalena today, the old black steel water tank can still be seen north of U.S. 60 at the turn off to the Water Canyon campground. The old railroad grade can also be seen next to the railroad water tank (now used as a stock tank). This is the location of the original Water Canyon stop and Post Office.

During the early 1900s, new ranchers and small mining concerns caused the area to grow. A complex of homes



Photo courtesy Socorro County Historical Society  
**Building the Magdalena spur line. This bridge, spanning an arroyo west of the old Water Canyon station, is still visible north of U.S. 60.**



Photo by Paul Harden

**The water tank and cattle loading pens still mark the location of the old AT&SF Water Canyon station.**

and businesses were forming a small town farther into the canyon. In 1915, the Post Office was moved to the home of Lilly Jennings, also serving as postmaster. Though located about four miles south of the railroad stop, the location in the canyon was more convenient to the majority of the area's people.

In 1916, Nathan Hall became postmaster, moving the Post Office into a small store he operated in the canyon. Between the small town of Water Canyon, and the nearby ranchers and miners, about 200 people lived in the canyon.

The mines never turned into big producers and began to close. By the late 1920s, more efficient locomotives made the water stop at Water Canyon unnecessary. AT&SF closed the station in 1929 and razed the buildings. Nathan Hall closed his store and Post Office by the end of that year.

Today, a few remnants of these earlier homes, ranches and corrals can be seen in the canyon on the drive to the Water Canyon Campground. However, Water Canyon is not a true ghost town. Tom and Hilda Kelly, and brother Jim and wife Anabel, still live in the canyon, along with Frank Jaramillo near the Water Canyon entrance. Of these five remaining residences, none yet consider themselves ghosts.

### **Ojo Caliente and Cherryville**

Ojo Caliente was established in 1877 as an Army Post for the newly formed Warm Springs Reservation. It is located west of Monticello. About 2000 Apaches lived in and around the Ojo Caliente post in the 1870s and 80s. These were the Ojo Caliente, or Warm Springs Apache, who considered themselves separate from the

other Apache bands. The two most famous Warm Springs Apaches were without a doubt Geronimo and Chief Victorio. Yes, these two notorious Apache chiefs lived much of their lives in Socorro County.

The main purpose of the Ojo Caliente post was to administer the reservation and dispense food to the Apache. As a result of these services, numerous soldiers and civilians were employed as agents, wagonmasters, store clerks and the like. Many built small homes nearby for their families while employed at Ojo Caliente.

Andrew Kelley built a store in 1880, serving the post, the soldiers, area ranchers, and those Apache that had money or something to trade. Due to the growing size of the complex, store owner Kelley organized the civilian portions of the post into a small town, naming it Cherryville. The post office was opened in 1881, with mail arriving from Engle several times a week.

The Warm Springs Apache lived in relative peace at Ojo Caliente. Regardless, in 1882, the Army decided to relocate the band to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The post was closed.

Cherryville, and the Kelley store, continued to operate for a few more years, serving the remaining families and ranchers in the area, and no doubt hoping the Warm Spring Apaches would return. They did not, and the post was never reoccupied.

Finally, in 1886, Kelley closed his store and post office. Ojo Caliente and Cherryville have been abandoned since, with only remnants of the former post and



Photo courtesy Ft. Sill Museum

**The Tcihene, or Warm Springs Apache, were relocated from Ojo Caliente to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, where many of the descendents of the famous band still live.**



Photo courtesy Socorro County Historical Society  
**An 1890s photo of the Puertocito trading post. This was also the post office from 1903 through 1929. Puertocito was abandoned in the 1940s.**



Photo by Paul Harden  
**Puertocito as it appears today. The wider view shows the trading post (left) and the Anastacio Baca home.**

buildings remaining. This archeological site is now on private property.

North of Magdalena is the desolate Rio Salado region. Except for Alamo, this part of northern Socorro County seems to be virtually uninhabited. However, over the years, several villages and small towns catered to the miners, ranchers and travelers that once occupied this region.

### **Puertocito**

A few miles east of Alamo along the Rio Salado is the village of Puertocito. It was a small Hispanic village and home to nomadic Navajo and Apache from the Alamo Navajo community. Though only a small village, noted mostly for its trading post, it crops up in New Mexico history now and again.

The first settler in the area was sheep herder Jose Chavez around 1872. By the 1880s, a trail from Bernardo, through Riley, Puertocito and Alamo, became a main road to the White Mountains in Arizona. In the 1880s, Anastacio Baca decided the the Puertocito gap would be an excellent location for a trading post. He was right.

Located halfway between Alamo and Riley, it served these two communities and a host of local ranchers and travelers until the 1940s. “Mi casa es su casa” was the Baca family motto – providing you had a couple of bucks to spend at the remote trading post.

One of the more famous episodes of the Baca's hospitality was in May, 1898. Around noon, two cowboys arrived at the trading post and purchased

some sardines and wine. Baca recalled how they appeared nervous, constantly looking down the trail as they consumed their lunch. When done, they rode off westward along the Rio Salado. A couple of thieves on the run, they no doubt thought. They had seen their type before.

A couple of hours later, in rode a small posse of lawmen, led by Sheriff Frank Vigil and Deputy Dan Bustamante from Valencia. They were looking for train robbers Broncho Bill Walters and Kid Johnson – matching the description exactly of their previous customers. Anastacio pointed the way of their departure.

The next morning, the lawmen found the train robbers west of the Alamo along Alamocito Creek. Refusing arrest, a shootout ensued. When the smoke cleared, Sheriff's Vigil and Bustamante laid dead on the ground. The injured bandits, seeking an easier flight, buried several heavy saddlebags stuffed with about \$50,000 in cash from the train robbery near the arroyo.

Oral history states the burial of this money was witnessed by either Anastacio Baca or local shepherd Jaime Jaramillo – if not both. There is little evidence showing Anastacio ran his trading post much after 1903, for that is when he moved his family to Quemado. He spent the rest of his life in Quemado with a measure of wealth, seemingly legitimizing the story of finding Broncho Bill's buried loot.

A Post Office was established at Puertocito by Federico Giron in 1903, the new owner of the trading post. Post Office records over the following years allows the



Photo by Paul Harden

**Deputy Sheriff Daniel Bustamante was killed by train robber Bronco Bill Walters in an 1898 shoot out west of Alamo and Puertocito. He is buried at the Santa Rita church in Riley, where his mother lived. The grave is maintained by descendent Hipolito Romero.**

succession of owners to be speculated. They include Ambrocio Garcia, Ismael Aragon, Proeopis Garcia, Bonifacio Lopez and Andres Armijo.

The longest owner and postmaster was Bonifacio Lopez, serving from 1907 until his 1927 retirement. Andred Armijo served until 1929, when the post office at Puertocito was closed and transferred to the nearby Field Ranch.

Today, not much is left of Puertocito. The ruins of the trading post and Anastacio Baca's house still stand. Nearby, a few mounds of melted adobe suggest where other houses and structures were once located.

The relocated post office at Field continued to operate until 1943. Field was a large area ranch operated by Nels and Ida Field, who homesteaded the ranch in 1887. The Field Ranch is now owned and operated by Jim Nance and family.

Today, all mail for persons living along the Rio Salado must get their mail in Magdalena.

### **Manuelo Rito**

Remember shepherd Jaime Jaramillo? He supposedly witnessed Bronco Bill burying his stolen loot west of the Alamo in 1898. Regardless of whether he recovered lost treasures or not, Jaramillo was the founder of a small village. It remains standing as a forgotten ghost town in Socorro County.

The stories of the lost town of Manuelo Rito were

brought to my attention many years ago, in the late 1980s. It was a personal quest to find the town, which I did in 1990. It is located west of Alamo, south of the Rio Salado, in remote Jaramillo Canyon.

In the 1890s, Jaime Jaramillo settled at a spring with a small flock of sheep. The spring is less than a mile from where the deadly shootout between train robber Broncho Bill Walters and the law occurred near Table Mountain. In the mid-1890s, son Manuel was born. After several years, the flow of the spring became unreliable, forcing the Jaramillo's to move to a more substantial spring further down the canyon in 1907.

A search of records by Security Title Abstract Company located the original homestead certificate at the Socorro County Courthouse. One hundred sixty acres was patented to Jaime Jose M. Jaramillo on November 18, 1907 via Homestead Certificate No. 3988. Son Manuel was a teenager at this time and became instrumental in building the new ranch – which evolved into a small town over the years.

Jaime hired local Navajo to quarry and cut rock to construct the buildings. These buildings still stand today and are an example of master stone work.

The first house built was called the "white house" for the light color of rock used. The ranch headquarters is a darker tan cut stone building, also of substantial construction. A third ranch house for the hired hands, consisting of four individual houses built like a motel, a stone livery stable, and a trading post were also built, all of rock and stone. These stone buildings were built at considerable expense, leading to the belief Jaime had come into some money. The growing village was called "Manuelo Rito" in honor of son Manuel.



Photo by Paul Harden

**A partial view of Manuelo Rito as it appeared in 1991. The solid staked fencing around the bunkhouses are to keep out rattlesnakes.**

Manuelo married in 1917 and his only son, Antonio, was born by year's end, and later two daughters. Manuelo and his family lived in the white house, while Jaime lived in the headquarters building.

Manuelo Jaramillo secured a contract with the government to store and dispense food to the nearby Alamo Navajo Indian Reservation. One night some Navajo broke into the livery stable and stole all the food and supplies. Manuelo placed black steel bars over the windows to prevent a reoccurrence. Today, the trading post still has the steel bars - giving it the appearance of a jail house.

Manuelo's wife Maria operated a small general store and trading post for the local Indians, ranchers and travelers along the Rio Salado. In 1919, they applied for a Post Office. The application was denied, based on the fact that the two nearby towns, Puertocito and Burley, had Post Offices. Never obtaining a Post Office no doubt is why Manuelo Rito slipped into obscurity.

Newly married Fred Martin, Jr. moved to Manuelito Rito as a ranch hand around 1928, shortly after the death of Jaime Jaramillo. Fred and Manuelo converted several rooms of the old bunk house into a road house, renting the rooms by the night to the occasional auto traveler now venturing down the Rio Salado.

In spite of the 1930s depression and dust bowl years, Fred Martin, Jr., Manuelo, and son Antonio Jaramillo, kept the ranch, and the small town, going.

In the spring of 1934, area ranchers were branding calves in the corrals at Manuelo Rito. Antonio, and the son of another rancher, were sent to the white house to make dinner for everyone. A 30-30 rifle accidentally discharged, killing Antonio instantly. Occurances following his tragic death led the family to believe the house was haunted and bringing the town bad luck. The white house was torn down to rid the town of the evil spirits. Only the foundation remains today.

Antonio's premature death left an aging Manuelo and his wife with no successor to run the enterprise.

In 1940, a massive land purchase by the Martins, who purchased 40 sections of land for \$7,000, included Manuelo Rito. Fred Martin, Jr. died in Socorro in 1994 at age 88, ending a ranching legacy. The Manuelo Rito townsite is now part of the Double H Ranch.



Photo by Paul Harden

**The barred windows of the Manuelo Rito trading post gives the appearance of a jail. Food for the Alamo Navajo community was stored and dispensed from here for several years following 1912 statehood.**

### **Council Rock**

A silver strike in the Gallinas Mountains in 1882 was big news for the region. Immediately, a town was established and numerous cabins built for the onrush of miners and investors. Streets were laid out as was a water system. It was one of New Mexico's first "planned communities."

The town was called Council Rock. It was located about 12 miles northwest from Magdalena.

Though the population was scarcely above zero, one of the promoters, M. C. Logan, managed to establish a Post Office on February 14, 1882. Council Rock proved to have far more hype than silver. The cabins sat empty and the Post Office was closed in 1883.

Afterwards, the area became home to the Medley's and Bodenhamer's, two of the old prominent ranching families of the region. The Medley Ranch home, and a nearby cemetery, mark the location of Council Rock. These are but a few of the old towns that are no more in Socorro County. Should you decide to visit any of these old ghost towns, always remember to "take only photos, and leave only footprints."

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*Some of the references used in this article:*

*Socorro Chieftain archives, "True Tales of the American Southwest," by Howard Bryan, Socorro County Historical Society, interviews with Wesley Burris, Ed Harris, Fred Martin, Jr., Tom and Jim Kelly, Hipolito Romero, and field work by the author.*

**Some additional photos not published in the original article:**



Photo by Paul Harden  
**The water tank and stock pens at the AT&SF Water Canyon station. The flat swale between the tank and stock pens is the old railroad grade.**



Photo by Paul Harden  
**Remains of the old AT&SF station building. Likely, this was also the location of the first Post Office.**



Photo by Paul Harden  
**A few lonely telegraph poles still stand along the old railroad grade near Water Canyon.**

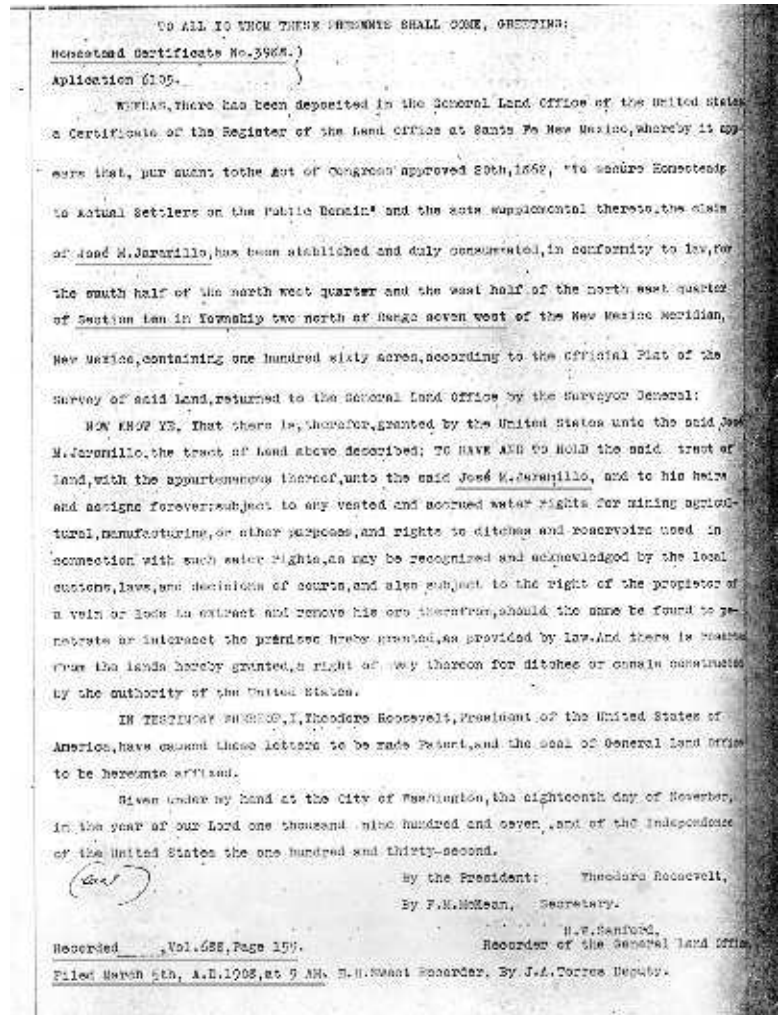


Photo by Paul Harden  
**The 1908 homestead certificate for Jose M. Jaramillo, founder of the hamlet Manuelo Rito in western Socorro County.**



Photo by Paul Harden  
**A pictograph of a horse at the old Indian "meeting place" near Council Rock, dating it after 1540 – when the Spanish brought the first horses into New Mexico.**