

# ATLIXCO: NAHUATL WORD FOR ATRISCO

## INTRODUCTION

Research notes by Stanley A. Lucero 2009-2010.

Many years ago my mother told me to keep my eye out for information about our ancestors from the Atrisco Land Grant.

In November 2009, Lorraine Aguilar and I presented a workshop at the Cosecha 2009 Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico entitled "New Mexico History Through the Eyes of Manitos." We presented some research findings, discussed New Mexico DNA testing, and suggested teachers present family history units in the two-way classrooms. After discussing Analco as a Nahuatl word, one of the participants commented that the old name of Atrisco also comes from a Nahuatl word "Atlixco." As a result of this comment I spent several hours at the Edith Library on Central in Albuquerque and several hours on the internet to see what I would find.

Atlixco has several possible Nahuatl meanings: "upon the water"; "on the water"; "near the waters"; and "surface of a body of water". Over time Atlixco became Atrisco. Atrisco is the oldest section of Albuquerque dating before the 1680 Pueblo Revolt.

One theory suggests that Atlixco was named after Atlixco, Puebla, Mexico and was probably settled by the Mexican Indians who came with Juan de Oñate.

The refugees from the 1680 Pueblo Revolt stopped at Atrisco on their retreat to El Paso del Norte. Fernando Duran y Chavez II returned to his ancestral lands of Atrisco following the 1680 Pueblo Revolt.

Analco and Atlixco are both Nahuatl words which suggest that they were settled by the Mexican Indians who accompanied the Spanish conquistadores to conquer, settle, and acculturate the local Indians to the Catholic religion. The Tlaxcalan Indians accompanied the Spaniards on many of their expeditions to the north. The Tlaxcalan Indians spoke Nahuatl. The Tlaxcalans claim they settled Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces.

I have organized my quotes from the earliest date [1956] to the most current date [2008]. Please contact me if you locate earlier documentation for Atlixco, New Mexico.

## 1956

The Missions of New Mexico, 1776. Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez.  
Translated and annotated by Eleanor B. Adams & Fray Angelico Chavez.  
University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1956.

*"D. Church of St. Michael. D. Pueblo or Suburb of Analco which owes its origin to the Tlascalans who accompanied the first Spaniards who entered in the Conquest of this Kingdom." [See n. 2, p. 304 infra.]*

p. 154

*"On what is the west bank of the river here at Albuquerque is the settlement they call Atlixco. 12"*

p. 155. Footnote 12:

*"Like other sites near the Rio Grande, Atlixco (Nahuatl, "upon the water," probably named for the Valley of Atlixco in Mexico), present Atrisco, had settlers from the seventeenth century on and was considered a good fertile site, because the river at this point flowed farther to the east."*

p. 243

*"And he gave for the above house and lands 300 ewes which one Antonio Chaves, citizen of Atrisco at Albuquerque, owes him."*

p. 304

*"A related, and equally unsubstantiated, eighteenth-century tale has been perpetuated to the present day. This is the story that the suburb of Analco at Santa Fe was originally settled by Tlascalan Indians who came with the "first Spaniards." See Urrutia Plan, p. 10 supra. Velez de Escalante evidently read Tlascalan instead of "Mexican," in the 1680 Revolt journals of Otermin (DHM, pp. 117-18; HS, 1: 99: Twitchell translation, SANM, 2: 271) and so helped to preserve the legend. The earliest reference we have found to Mexican Indians living in the vicinity of the church of San Miguel (we do not find the name Analco until later) is dated 1640, AGI, Patronato, leg. 244, ramo 7. Since the voluminous Oñate papers make no reference to Mexican auxiliaries, we can only assume that these Indians, from the Valley of Mexico and vicinity, had come to New Mexico in the wagon trains, perhaps in the entourages of officials, or perhaps brought by the Franciscans in accordance with an old policy of "seeding" newly conquered areas with Christianized Indians to facilitate the work of conversion. The Mexican Indians did not return to New Mexico after the Pueblo Revolt, and in 1776 the inhabitants of Analco were genizaros. The Alvarado legend appears to be another version of the old New Mexico myth about the Spanish and Tlascalan deserters from Coronado's army who were believed to have settled in "Tiguex." Cf. n. 64, p. 37 supra."*

1967

*"Atrisco and Las Ciruelas 1722-1769." Greenleaf, Richard E. New Mexico Historical Review. January 1967. Pages 5-25.*

p. 5

*"There were settlers in the Atrisco valley many years before the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680. 1 The founders of the seventeenth-century Duran y Chavez family probably had estates in the Rio Abajo as early as the 1600's, and it is possibly true that Fernando Duran y Chavez II, the only member of the clan who returned to New Mexico after the Revolt of 1680, reoccupied ancestral lands stretching from Bernalillo through the Atrisco area during 1681-1703."*

p. 22. Footnote 1:

*"The name Atrisco, or Atlixco, is derived from the Nahuatl "on the water." The jurisdiction of Atrisco presumably was named after the valley of Atlixco, Puebla. Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angelico Chavez, eds. The Missions of New Mexico, 1776. A Description by Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez with Other Contemporary Documents (Albuquerque, 1956), p. 154."*

## ABOUT 1970

El Rio Abajo. Espinosa, Gilberto and Chavez, Tibo J. Carter M. Waid, editor.  
Bishop Publishing Co, Portales, NM, 197?

pp 11-12

*"Near the present Albuquerque was the Hacienda of one Carabaja, where the retreating Spaniards paused during the retreat to Guadalupe de El Paso. Across the river was a settlement known as Atlixco (later Atrisco). Atlixco, in the Nahuatl language means "near the waters." Probably the vicinity was originally settled by the Mexican Indians who accompanied Oñate from the valley of Atlixco, in Mexico. Near the present Tome was the Hacienda of Tome Domingo de Mendoza and near Belen was the Hacienda of Felipe Romero."*

## 1982

Albuquerque. A Narrative History. Simmons, Marc. University of New Mexico,  
Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1982. ISBN: 0-8263-0627-6

p. 87

*"One nucleus of settlement, predating the founding of Albuquerque, was the village of Atrisco, located on the west bank of the river and facing the site of the future villa. At least by 1703, the place was recognized as a community even though in form it was no more than a collection of farms."*

*"Throughout the remainder of the colonial period, the village was a satellite of its larger neighbor, and, in fact, was often spoken of as "Atrisco de Albuquerque." 19"*

P 390. *"Footnote 19: Greenleaf, "Atrisco and Las Ciruelas," p. 6."*

## AFTER 1993

Don Fernando Duran Y Chaves's Land and Legacy. Sanchez, Dr. Joseph P.  
Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, Tucson, Arizona. ISBN: 1-58369-  
005-0 [www.spma.org](http://www.spma.org)

p. 1

*"The Valley of Atlixco, 1540-1681."*

*"It is not known who first applied the name Atrisco of Atlixo to the valley of present Albuquerque. The place name derives from the nahuatl work Atlixo, another variant spelling is Aixco. Its literal meaning is "surface of a body of water."<sup>1</sup>*

*"They wrote, "Across the river [near present Albuquerque] was a settlement known as Atlixco (later Atrisco). Atlixco, in the Nuhua language means, 'near the waters.' Probably the vicinity was originally settled by the Mexican Indians who accompanied Oñate [in 1598] from the valley of Atlixco, in Mexico."<sup>3</sup>*

Footnotes for page 1:

1. Frances Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 15.
2. Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain: A Revised Edition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 56
3. Gilberto Espinosa and Tibo J. Chavez, *El Rio Abajo* (Belen: Pampa Print Shop, no date), 12.
4. 1998
5. The Place Names of New Mexico. Revised Edition. Julian, Robert. The University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque. 1998. ISBN: 0-8264-1689-1
6. pp. 24
7. "... was known as Atrisco, but the name itself may be much older. It is likely derived from Atlixco, a Nahuatl word meaning "across the river."
8. "Alternatively, the name Atlixco could have been transferred to NM from Puebla, Mexico, where it appears on a valley and a city."

2008

Between Two Rivers. The Atrisco Land Grant in Albuquerque History, 1692-1968.  
Sanchez, Joseph P. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8061-3902-9

p. 4

*"By the mid-1600s, Spanish people had settled along the Rio Grande in Alameda, Atrisco, and Pajarito."*

*"Although Atrisco and Albuquerque are closely interrelated, Atrisco is undeniably older than Albuquerque. So are most of the places in Albuquerque's south valley – places that appeared along the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, or Royal Road of the Interior, decades before the founding of the Villa de San Felipe de Neri de Albuquerque."*