

Guadalajara

Founding to Independence

*Javier Moreno Rodríguez**

Founded in the early sixteenth century by the Spanish conquistador Nuño de Guzmán and his captains, almost from the beginning Guadalajara was the capital of the New Kingdom of Galicia —part of New Spain's Viceroyalty— seat of the Audience of New Galicia and seat of the Diocese of Guadalajara. Toward the end of the colonial period, in



1782, it became the capital of one of the 12 intendencies into which the Bourbon Reforms divided New Spain and, in 1792, the seat of the Royal Literary University of Guadalajara.

Guadalajara was founded in the context of the disputes between Hernán Cortés, conquistador of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and Nuño de Guzmán, who arrived in New Spain with the title of governor of Pánuco in 1526 and was appointed president of the first Audience of Mexico in

* Academic at the University of Guadalajara History Department.



Photos by Damié Barrera

The Cabañas Cultural Institute, one of Guadalajara's most majestic buildings.



The Degollado Theater, built on the site of the definitive founding of Guadalajara.

1528. With these appointments the Spanish crown intended to stop the abuses perpetrated by Cortés' captains, but Nuño de Guzmán's excesses were so great that instead of improving, the situation worsened during the year he held the post of president of the Audience of Mexico.¹

At the end of 1529, Nuño de Guzmán left Mexico City for western New Spain to attempt a series of conquests that would equal or surpass those of Hernán Cortés and thus conserve the royal favor. For this reason, Guadalajara was founded not once, but four times. The first founding took place when Nuño de Guzmán instructed Juan de Oñate to build a town in what is now Nochistlán, Zacatecas. On January 5, 1530, Oñate founded a village that was named Guadalajara in honor of the Spanish city where Nuño de Guzmán had been born.

However, Nuño de Guzmán was not pleased with the location and, when he visited it in 1533, he ordered it be moved. Some of the villagers suggested a place called Tlacoctlán or Tacotlán, north of the Santiago River gorge. Nuño de Guzmán accepted,

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but Juan de Oñate impetuously preferred to change the site to the town of Tonalá on August 8, 1533, where Villa de Guadalajara was founded for a second time.

The change lasted only two years, however, because Nuño de Guzmán, at that time residing in what was then the capital of New Galicia, Compostela, Nayarit, upon hearing that his instructions had not been followed, ordered that the settlement be relocated in the place he had originally authorized, Tlacoctlán. This change was made in early 1535.

In 1536, Nuño de Guzmán decided to travel to Mexico City on his way to Spain to face charges brought against him² and to try to buttress the king's opinion of his activities in New Spain. Nuño de Guzmán never returned to this hemisphere; he died in Spain, poverty-stricken and forgotten in 1544.

Meanwhile, in 1539 King Charles V gave the town of Guadalajara in Tlacoctlán the status of a city and a coat of arms. However, the royal decrees did not reach their destination until 1542, when the brand new city had already changed sites for a fourth time. So, Guadalajara was only in Tlacoctlán about six years, but during that time a great indigenous uprising, known as the Mixtón War,³ took place, whose climax came when the joint forces of New Galicia, headed by Cristóbal de Oñate, and of New Spain, captained by Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, defeated the Cazcan rebels and their leader Tenamxxtli on December 16, 1541.

Despite the victory of the Spanish conquistadors, Guadalajara needed a safer lo-



The Arts Museum houses two murals by well known Jalisco muralist José Clemente Orozco.

cation. In early 1542, a site was picked in the Atemajac Valley on the western bank of the San Juan de Dios River. The definitive establishment of Guadalajara took place February 14, 1542, the date its founding is still celebrated.

As a result of the indigenous war, New Galicia remained under the military authority of New Spain's viceroy, who rigidly controlled tax collection.

The city of Compostela continued to be the most important in New Galicia. In 1544, Pope Paul III authorized the creation of a bishopric in New Galicia, and the first bishop, Pedro Gómez de Maraver, arrived in 1547. Gómez thought that Guadalajara was a better seat for the bishopric than Compostela and began the paperwork for the change; he died, however, in 1551, before he could complete his aim. As part of that process, the Audience of New Galicia was established in 1547, naming its four judges, subordinate to the Audience of Mexico City in questions involving sums



A monument to favorite sons.

over 300 pesos (which would later be raised to 500) and in capital crimes. In addition, the judges were to act as mayors, so that besides their judicial duties, they had to exercise certain governmental functions.

At the same time, in Atemajac Valley, where Guadalajara was definitively set up in 1542, indigenous settlements already existed: Mezquitán, populated by Texcuans; Mexicaltzingo, founded by Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza in 1540, inhabited by Mexicas; and Tetlán, founded by the Franciscan Friar Antonio de Segovia. These

townships were the origins of the Mexican Guadalajara, which, in memory of the Spanish birthplace of Nuño de Guzmán, retains its name.

In 1560, Guadalajara became the undisputed capital of New Galicia when the president of the Audience, Pedro Morones, and the new bishop, the Franciscan Pedro de Ayala, moved there.

Even before it was the capital of New Galicia, Guadalajara had become involved in the economic, social, political, religious and cultural processes that the Spaniards imposed on all its colonies in the Americas. It developed economically, predominantly through agriculture and cattle ranching, and later, commerce. Mining was not important in what is today the state of Jalisco, but it was very important in what is now the state of Zacatecas, part of New Galicia until the late eighteenth century.

In that same century, the century of the Enlightenment, the Spanish monarchy and empire went through the deep political, social, economic and religious transforma-

tions known as the Bourbon Reforms, which affected the organization of the viceroyalties of both New Spain and New Galicia. In 1786, the territorial division of New Spain, in force for two centuries, disappeared,⁴ as did the areas called “provinces,” including the Yucatán Peninsula in the Southeast and the internal provinces of the West and the East in the northern part of the viceroyalty.

The viceroyalty was restructured into 12 intendencies: Mexico, Puebla, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Oaxaca, San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, Valladolid, Mérida (including what is today the state of Tabasco), Zacatecas, Durango and Arizpe (what are now the states of Sonora and Sinaloa).

The Intendency of Guadalajara included practically the same territories that had made up New Galicia, with the exception of Zacatecas which, because of the economic importance of its mines, became an intendency in and of itself.

Although the intendencies were relatively short-lived (from 1786 to 1821), it was in that period that the city of Guadalajara created two institutions fundamental to its history and for what is today the state of Jalisco and the West of Mexico: the San Miguel de Belén Hospital—today the Civic Hospital of Guadalajara—and the Royal Literary University of Guadalajara—today the University of Guadalajara. Founded by Bishop Friar Antonio Alcalde in 1792, they have both guided higher education, culture, art,



Guadalajara's cathedral took 300 years to build.

science and medicine in Jalisco until today.

Lastly, it is important to point out Guadalajara's pivotal role in the independence movement headed by Miguel Hidalgo, who spent almost half of the four months that his insurrection lasted (from September 1810 to January 1811) there. Hidalgo arrived in Guadalajara November 26, 1810, and only withdrew after his defeat at the Battle of the Calderón Bridge on January 17, 1811. While there, Hidalgo decreed the abolition of slavery (November 28); published the first independentist newspaper, *El despertador americano* (The American Awakening), edited by Francisco Severo Maldonado who put out seven

issues between November 1810 and January 1811; and organized an insurgent government with two ministries, the Ministry of Grace and Justice and of State, headed by José María Chico and Ignacio López Rayón, respectively. ■■

NOTES

- ¹ Nuño de Guzmán was one of the cruelest and bloodiest conquistadors in his treatment of the indigenous peoples in New Spain. [Editor's Note.]
- ² Hernán Cortés had brought charges against Nuño de Guzmán to strip him of both his authority and his property. Among the many charges were abuse of authority, slave trading, murder, invasion of conquered lands and appropriation of crown goods. [Editor's Note.]
- ³ After Nuño de Guzmán's departure, indigenous resistance to the conquistadors intensified and several towns rose up in arms. One of the most serious rebellions was that of the indigenous people from the Mixtón region; the Spanish forces of New Galicia could not put it down alone.

⁴ The new kingdoms were New Spain, New Galicia, New Vizcaya, New Leon and New Mexico.

FURTHER READING

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