

JUANA SUASO SIMPSON

When: 1827–1916

Where: Born in New Mexico, settled in Trinidad, Colorado.

Why Important: Simpson did charitable work at churches, schools, and hospitals. She also taught Spanish-speaking students.



Juana Suaso Simpson was born the daughter of Teresita Sandoval in 1827. She taught herself to read and write and soon was passing on her knowledge to others. Juana started a school in Trinidad, CO and was known for her kindness.

JUANA SUASO SIMPSON

Juana Suaso was born in 1827 in Taos, New Mexico. She was the daughter of Teresita Sandoval, a notable female pioneer. In 1835, when she was eight years old, the Suaso family moved a short distance away to Mora, New Mexico. Her parents had received land there from the Mexican government. In Mora, Teresita met Matthew Kinkead. In 1841 her mother and Kinkead decided to move the family north and settled in Fort El Pueblo.

At Fort El Pueblo Juana met George Simpson. He was one of the men who helped build the fort. Juana wed George one month before her fifteenth birthday. They were married at Bent's Fort by a notary public. The couple soon moved to Hardscrabble. This was a new farming community co-founded by George.

In 1844 they traveled to Taos to be married by a priest and to baptize their daughter, Isabel. In late September the couple left for Taos on horseback. Simpson carried her baby in a sling made from a shawl. Juana's sister, Cruzita, and her husband, Joseph Doyle, also made the trip. The group was caught in a terrible snow storm. During the storm Simpson's horse fell. She and her baby were thrown into the snow. On October 6, 1844 the group arrived safely in Taos.

The Juana and George settled their family in Trinidad in 1865. Trinidad was a young but growing town on the Santa Fe Trail. Juana wanted to be independent. So, she taught herself to read and write. In Trinidad she taught Spanish-speaking students and helped recruit people to build a bigger school.

Juana had the love and respect of all who knew her. She did charitable work at the church, school, and hospital. Because of her kindness and accomplishments, the people of Trinidad called her "Doña Juanita." Juana Suaso Simpson died in 1916 while with her daughter, Isabel, in California.

Sources:

Adapted from "A Frontier Life: The Trails and Trials of Juana Sauso Simpson." By Paula Manini, Director, Trinidad History Museum.