

THEY WERE, AND NO LONGER ARE...

National locations that served as post offices during the Classical Period (1856-1883), canceled stamps, and are now abandoned or nearly vanished sites

GÜICHAPA

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Güichapa is located in the central part of the state of Durango, approximately 154 kilometers north of the capital. The region where it is situated is known as the Palmitos Valley. This area was populated by the Spanish starting in 1596 due to its rich fertile land and abundant water, but settlements were irregular due to attacks by indigenous peoples. In 1704, the haciendas of Palmitos de Arriba and Palmitos de Abajo were established, and by the second half of the 18th century, **Palmitos de Abajo was renamed Güichapa**. The hacienda was a transit point on the **Camino Real de Tierra Adentro** (1). See Fig. 1, map of the Camino Real, where Güichapa and its surrounding areas are highlighted with a red circle.

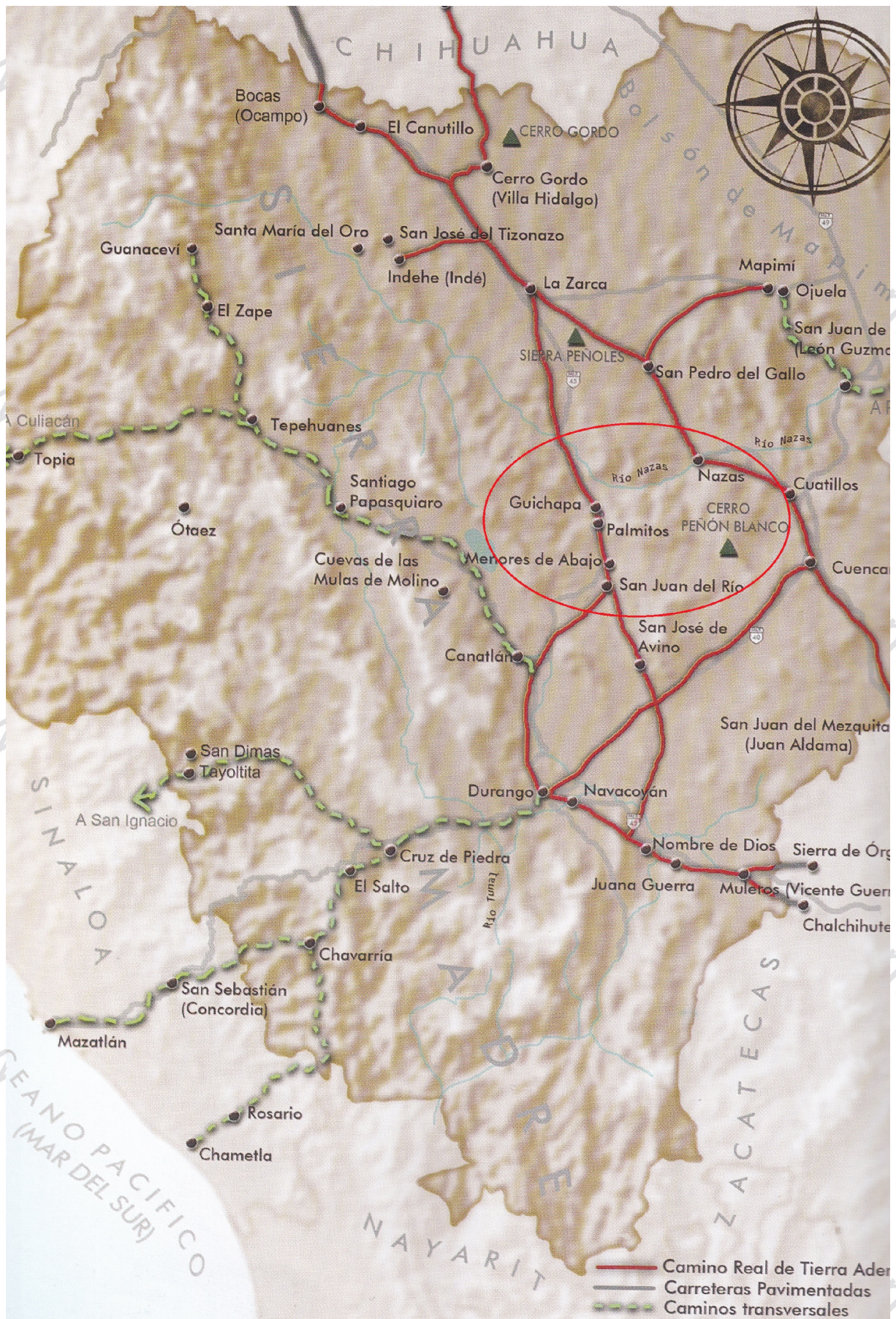


Fig.1 Map of the *Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* in the state of Durango
 (Source: *El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, Travesía histórica y cultural del Septentrión Novohispano*)

The hacienda had a sufficient population to operate as a post office, as it had its own cancellation system, as can be seen in the 1853 cover letter shown in Fig. 2, which bears the postmark that Schatzkes identifies as No. 259 (Fig.3).

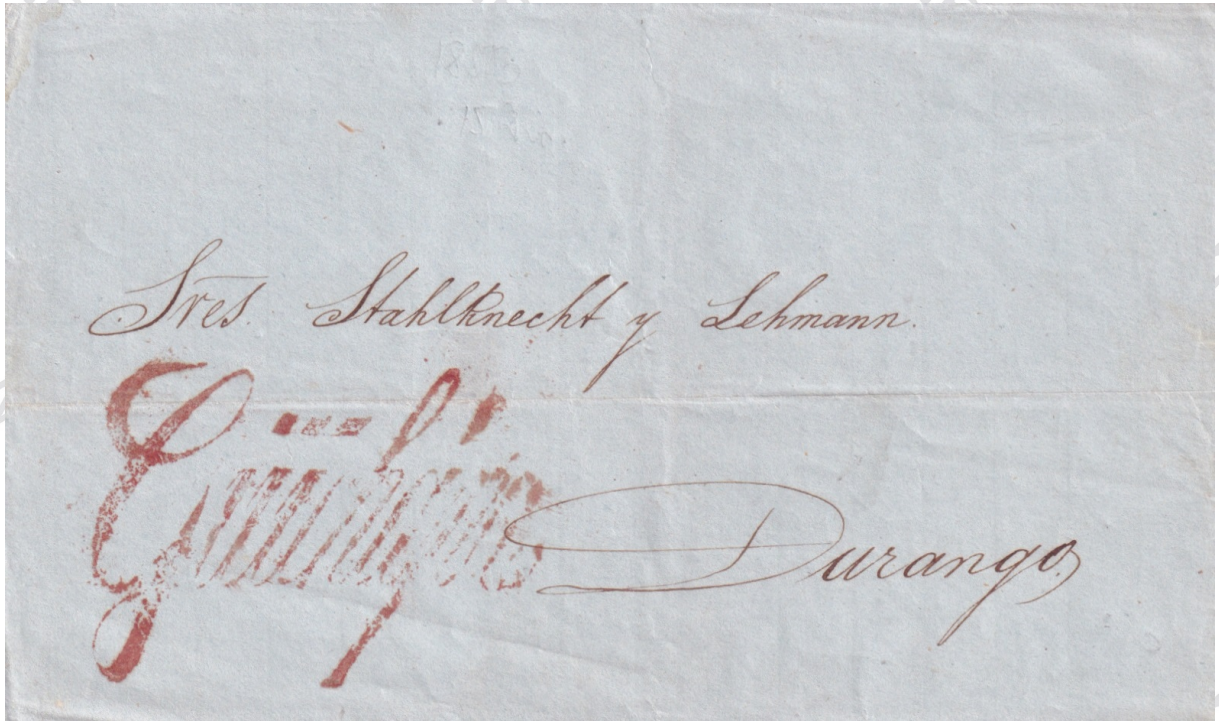


Fig.2 Letter of 1853 (pre-stamp) with the cancellation of Schatzkes No.259

Since 1856, when the first Mexico postage stamp was issued, and during the Classic period, Güichapa received stamps of the Hidalgos 1856, 1861, Imperial's Eagles (1864) and Hidalgos series of 68, 72 and 74. The stamps received and the fact that it has 4 postmarks (Fig.3-6) indicate its importance as a population community.

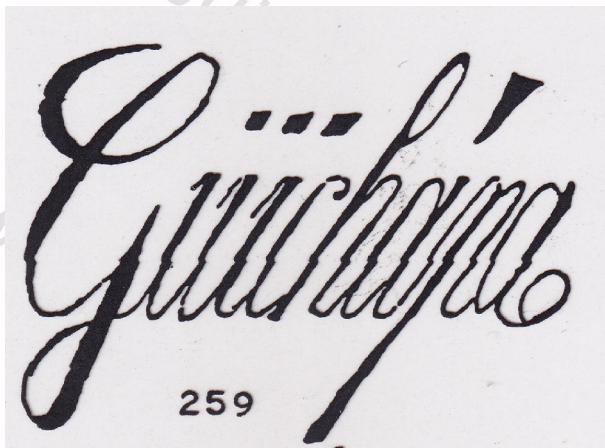


Fig.3 Schatzkes No.259

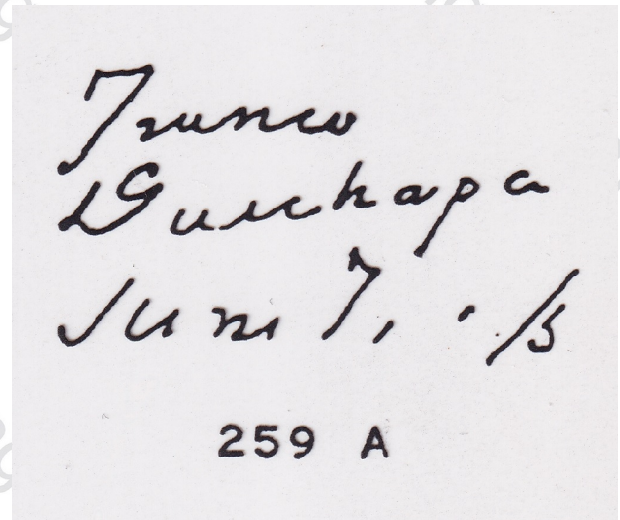


Fig.4 Schatzkes No.259A

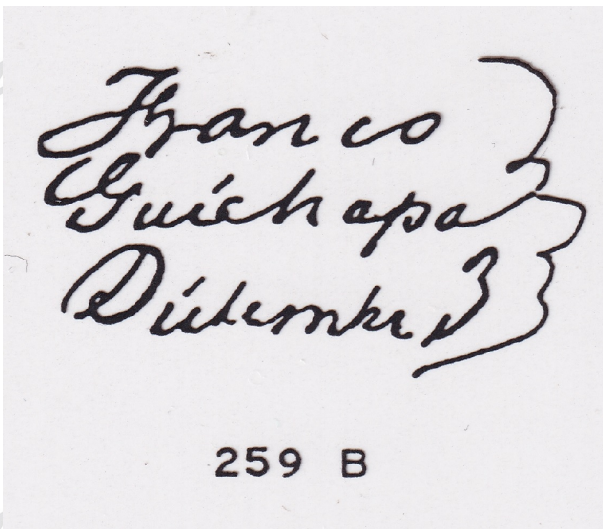


Fig.5 Schatzkes No.259B



Fig.6 Schatzkes No.259C

The name **Güichapa** changed over time and it began to be called **Huichapa**, and it is still known by that name today, although for a long time the two names were used interchangeably, because printed works refer to it as Huichapa, and postmarks from the same period still designated it as Güichapa. Here are some examples: In the book of Itineraries and Routes of the Mexican Republic, printed in 1856, it appears as *Molino de Huichapa*, an intermediate point on the route from Durango City to El Oro, 32 leagues (2) from Durango City, the name Molino (Mill) comes from the fact that there was a mill in the area since the 17th century, as the main crop was wheat. In the Atlas by García Cubas of 1856, it appears in the Itineraries section as an intermediate point on the route from Durango City to Mapimí, 32 leagues (2) from the capital, and is identified as *Huichapa*. In García Cubas' Geographical Dictionary of 1888-1891 it appears as *Huichapa*, indicating that it is "a hacienda of the municipality of Rodeo, Party of San Juan del Río, Dgo. 360 inhabitants, right bank of the Nazas River, 40 kilometers north of the Party capital and 35 kilometers WSW of the city of Nazas." (3) (4).

Güichapa transitioned from a hacienda to a small village, but gradually became deserted around the mid-20th century as its inhabitants migrated to larger towns with better living conditions. Currently, Huichapa is located within the municipality of Rodeo and is reported to have three inhabitants. The Chapel of the Immaculate Conception of Huichapa, built in the 19th century, has been restored and remains as a tourist attraction. (Fig.7).



Fig.7 Chapel of the Immaculate Conception of Huichapa
(Source: El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, Travesía histórica y cultural del Septentrión Novohispano)



Fig.8 Güichapa, (Huichapa) today. (Source: Google Earth)

Notes.-

(1) The Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, also known as the Silver Route or the Santa Fe Road, is a route that was established during the Spanish colonial period, stretching over 2,000 kilometers. It begins in Mexico City and crosses what are now 11 states of Mexico and two states of the United States.

(2) 1 league = 4.82803 kilometers.

(3) The political division in the state of Durango in the 19th and part of the 20th century divided the state into Parties and under each Party there were the municipalities, unlike today in which a federal entity is politically divided into Municipalities (the equivalent of a Party) and Municipalities divided in localities (the equivalent of municipalities of that time).

(4) WSW= West south west

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