

THEY WERE AND NO LONGER ARE...

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

Pinos Altos

By: Magdalena García Ramírez

The town of Pinos Altos arose spontaneously and haphazardly due to the gold and silver deposits discovered there in the second half of the 19th century. It is located in the state of Chihuahua, about 220 kilometers west of the city of Chihuahua, the state capital.

The town of Pinos Altos does **not appear** in García Cubas' Atlas (1856), but in Fig. 1 the location of Pinos Altos is highlighted with a red dot, in the upper left part of the map, and in his Geographical Dictionary (late 19th century) he mentions that Pinos Altos is a mineral, located in the (political) District of Guerrero, north of the district capital Santa Rosa de Uruchi, in the state of Chihuahua.



Fig. 1

Partial map of the state of Chihuahua, showing on the left, outlined in pink, the Guerrero District and the red dot indicating the location of Pinos Altos
(Source: Atlas de García Cubas)

In the **philatelic field**...

Pinos Altos was a sub-office of the Chihuahua **Postal District**.

Karl H. **Schimmer** shows **1 cancellation** (Fig. 2) and indicates that Pinos Altos received stamps from the following series: **Foreign Mail 1879**, **Hidalgo Medallions 1884**, **Numerals 1886**, and **Multas 1895**. And in Fig. 3, you can see the map of the state of Chihuahua presented by this author in his book.

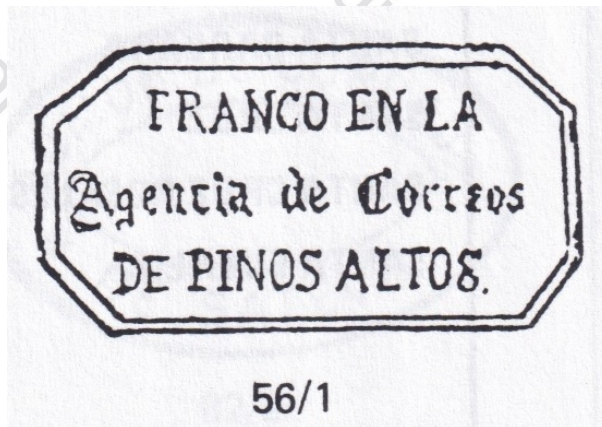


Fig. 2
Pinos Altos postmark,
its identification number appears at the bottom
(Source: Karl Schimmer)

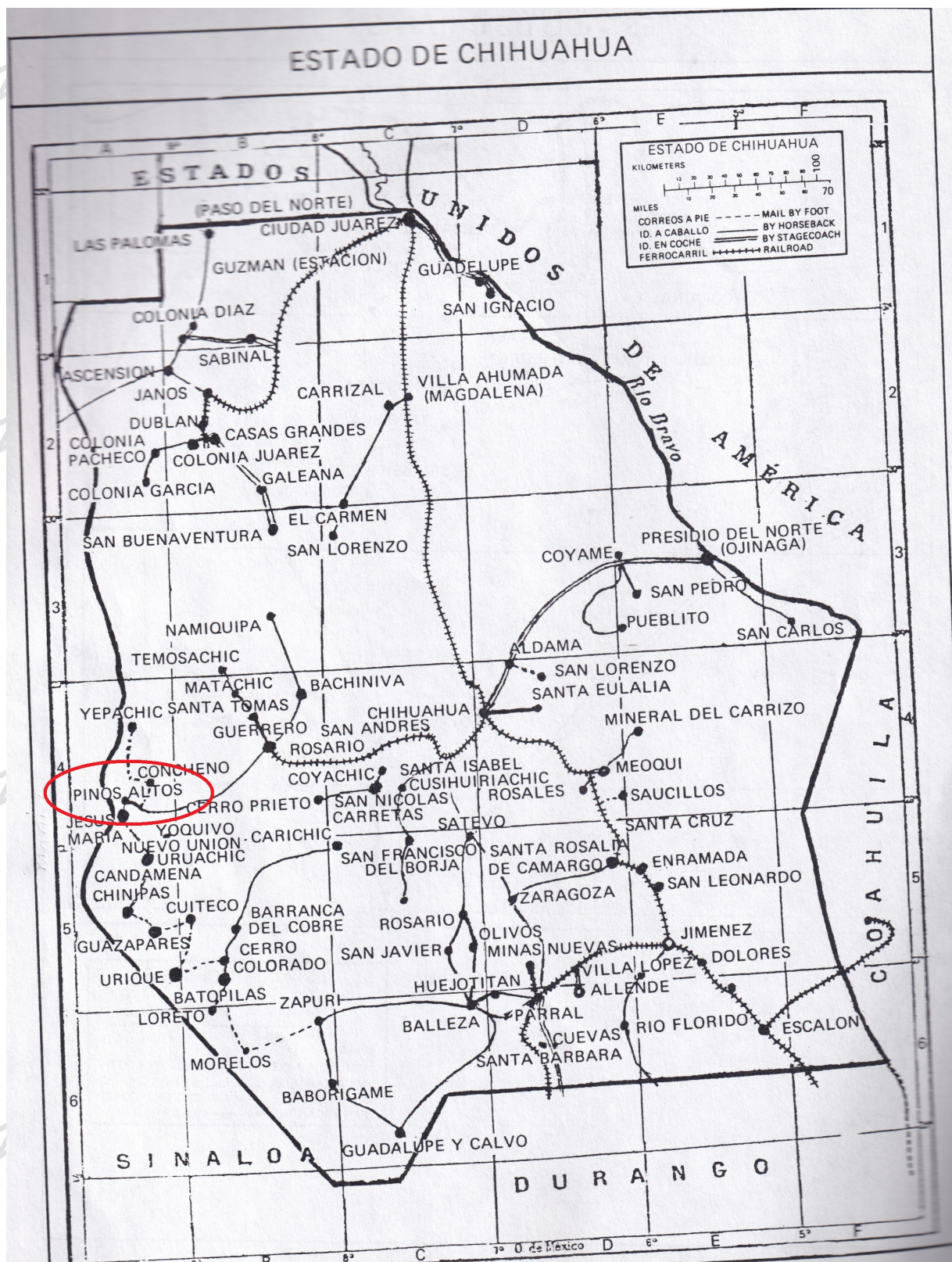


Fig. 3

Map of the state of Chihuahua,
Pinos Altos is highlighted in the red circle on the left, in the center.
(Source: Schimmer)

At the **end of the 19th century**, the mine was in foreign hands; the miners' discontent over physical abuse by the foremen, grueling workdays, and the fact that their wages were partly paid in cash and partly in vouchers or tokens that they were **forced** to use at the **Tienda de Raya** (company store) (1), sparked a tragic revolt on **January 20, 1883**; in the initial confrontation, a miner and a guard were killed; hours later, on the **21st**, the English manager was mortally wounded, and two miners died; when the political chief of a nearby mining town arrived, he staged a mock trial, ordered the execution of five miners, and arrested 43; hours later, authorities from the municipal seat of Uruachi arrived to restore order. This tragic event is considered the first miners' strike in the country and on the entire continent.

During the **20th century**, the highest number of inhabitants was in **1900** with **785 inhabitants**, then during the Civil War period it decreased considerably, to resurface a little in **1940** when **463 inhabitants** were reported, and from there each ten-year census its inhabitants decreased until reaching in the General Population and Housing Census of the INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática) of **2005** to have only **1 inhabitant**.

In **2006**, operations at the Pinos Altos mine resumed under the management of the Canadian company Agnico Eagle. The mine operates primarily underground for the main metals and open-pit for complementary products. It has gold deposits, which is the primary product, and silver as a byproduct; an on-site refinery produces gold and doré silver ingots (2). The company reports that it acquired the mine in March 2006, construction began in August **2007**, and commercial production was achieved in **2009**; they estimate the mine's lifespan to extend until **2028**.

The Pinos Altos mining area is **currently** part of the **municipality of Ocampo**. (See Figs. 4 and 5).

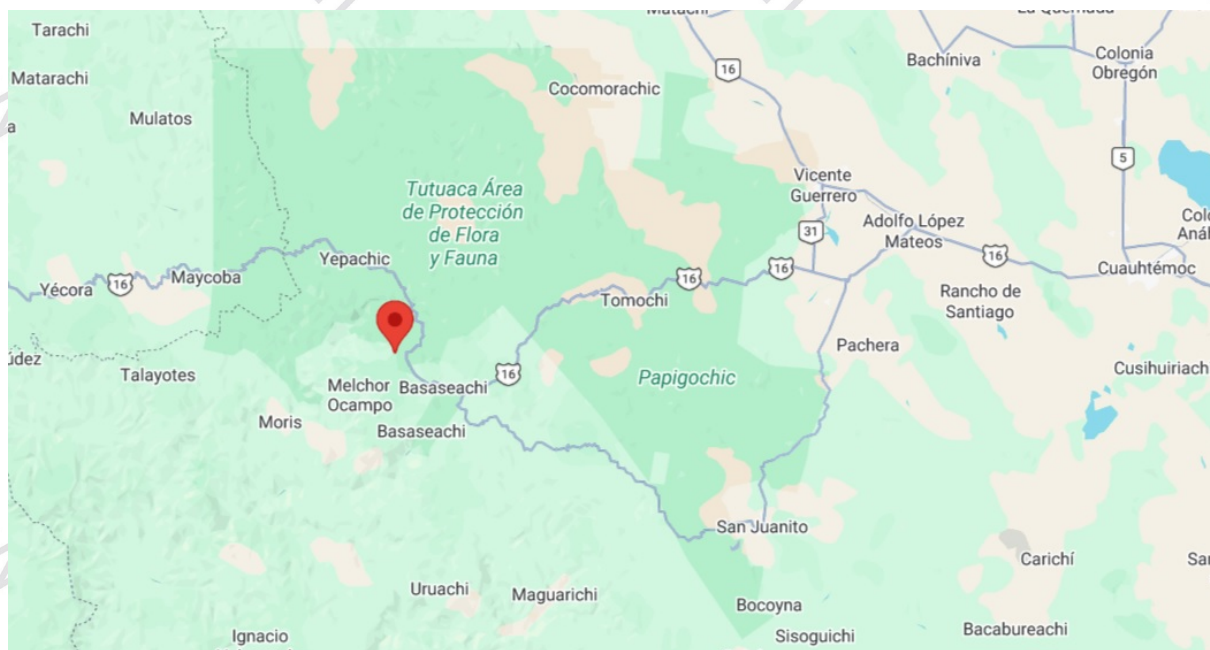


Fig. 4
Current map showing the geographical location of Pinos Altos
(Source: Google Maps)



Fig.5
Current satellite map of the Pinos Altos Mining
(Source: Google Earth)

Notes.-

- (1) *Tienda de Raya* (company store): an establishment that the employers had within the hacienda or factory; there, basic products were sold to the laborers and workers at high prices, so that the laborer ended up in debt; these were unpayable debts, which were even inherited when the worker died, preventing his heirs from seeking other job opportunities.
- (2) Raw alloy of gold and silver.

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