History of the East Mountains and Sandia Park

Fox Hills neighborhood is located on the east side of the Sandia Mountains — the "green side" at an elevation of 6,873 feet. The Sandia Mountains are on the south end of the Sangre De Cristo (Blood of Christ) section of the Rocky Mountains. The Sandias and the nearby Manzano Mountains to the south are rich in history and very diverse in culture. These two mountain ranges are divided by the Tijeras ("Scissors") Canyon which has been the pathway of human activity throughout the ages:
Native Americans, Conquistadores, missionaries, settlers, and other travelers.

A few miles northeast of us, in Las Huertas Canyon, is the Sandia Man Cave - an archaeological site first discovered and excavated in the 1930s. Archaeologists believe the site exhibits evidence of human use from 9,000 to 11,000 years ago. It was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1961.
Both Folsom and Sandia hunting points were recovered. Animal remains include extinct Pleistocene mammals such as mammoth, mastodon, sloth, horses, and camels.

Ancestors of the modern pueblo Indians fust settled in the East Mountains about 700 A.D. Numerous archeological sites remain throughout the area including Tijeras Pueblo, the Tewa Indian Pueblo of Pa'ako and many others.

Spanish missionaries arrived in the early 1600s, and founded missions at six locations in the Manzano Mountains including Chilili, Tajique, Quarai and Abo. Drought and Apache raids forced the settlers to retreat in about 1670. In 1763 the Spanish Colonial government created a buffer community for Hispanic settlers, primarily from Albuquerque, at the Canon de Carnuel Land Grant.
In 1770 an Apache attack drove the settlers back to Albuquerque. In the early 1800s the plaza at Carnuel at the mouth of Tijeras Canyon was established in spite of the raids that continued into the mid-1860s.

The brave souls who pioneered life in the East Mountains made it a top priority to establish places of worship for their fledgling communities. Many churches were established representing the rich Hispanic and Catholic heritage of the early East Mountain people. Just to the north of the intersection of Frost Road and Highway 14 is the San Antonito Catholic Mission which has been in continual use since it was built in 1885.

The Mission church is located at the historic village of San Antonito. The postal area is known as Sandia Park. The history of San Antonito began with a Land Grant from the Spaniards petitioned by Juan Jose Garcia, Gaspar Atencio and twenty five associates on March 16, 1840. The village grew with farming and woodcutting. It had its own church, schoolhouse, store, and cemetery.

In a remote area a few miles northwest of there is the ghost town of Hagan - built in 1909 as a coal mining district. Gold was discovered in the nearby town of Golden in 1825. The mines at Golden represented the first gold rush west of the Mississippi River. The historic Turquoise Trail National Scenic Highway passes through our community, known locally as North Highway 14. Between 1933 and 1941 the Civilian Conservation Corps made many improvements in this area. There are many more interesting historical and cultural sites in the East Mountains.

In the early 1900's summer cabins were built in the area and after WWII the East Mountains became a bedroom community for Albuquerque.