

The Cabagata Binaciónal Villista – 2

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While our national leaders –Donald Trump and Claudia Sheinbaum – are struggling with each other, a coalition of horsemen and horsewomen are gathering near Palomas, Mexico and Columbus, the United States in a show of dignity and respect for each other's country. This is the Cabagata Binacional Villista or Binacional Villa Cavalcade.

On March 9, 1916, the Mexican General José Doroteo Arango Arámbula – known to us as Pancho Villa – sent his soldiers to cross into the United States and raid Columbus, partly in hopes of capturing US horses. They attacked the Third Cavalry Regiment and stole about 100 horses and mules. About 80 of the 100 Mexican riders were killed and as well as 18 Americans.

This seemed like a surprise. Previously Pancho Villa had appeared with US General John F. "Black Jack" Pershing at Fort Bliss, Texas and it has seemed like a friendship was developing. Then our President, Woodrow Willson became a supporter of Venustiano Carranza, Villa's rival.

Wilson responded rapidly, sending thousands of troops after Villa and using trucks and airplanes for the first time. The mission was a failure, yet several of the leaders, Pershing who later became the leader of the American Expeditionary Force in World War 1 and First Lieutenant George S, Patton both gained valuable experience for their futures.

Pancho Villa is still a local hero with the Pancho Villa Park in Columbus and the stature of him in the plaza of Palomas.

I first visited in 2012 and the eventual parade on Saturday was much different. The goal was to reunite the border, not cause mayhem.

In those earlier days, the Mexican riders could bring their horses across the border on Saturday to join American riders who have gathered in Columbus. They then passed in a huge parade the three miles to Columbus where there would be a fiesta and dances.

Now a flu has made it impossible for the Mexican horses to cross. What will that do for the continuation of this proud event?

Even so, on Friday, the Mexican horses coming north along the highway were enormous. Eventually they formed their own Cabagata to enter Palomas where many of the local residences were sitting by their cars and watching for them.

Earlier that Friday we had watched American riders unload their trucks a few miles north of Columbus and ride into that tiny town of 1,400 people. The contrast between the America riders going south to Columbus and the Mexicans coming north to Palomas was huge.

There is always at least one Pancho Villa. Several years ago, an Edgar Portillo was spotted in the Pink Store in Palomas holding his fake pistol. Unfortunately, he didn't have permission to cross the border.

There was also a Narciso Martinez Alvarado from Durango, Mexico who called himself the "Embajador Internacional de Villismo."

The main "Pancho Villa" for 2026 was able to cross on foot and lead the parade on an American horse.

I have now visited nine times beginning in 2012. There are always international issues dividing our two countries, perhaps now more than ever. It's a thrill, however, to see these riders from two countries creating their own friendship, essentially "Uniendo fronteras" or joining frontiers.

In case, I can't go again, here are photos from 2026 but also several of various "Pancho Villas" I have known there.

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