

SPANISH TRACES



Volume 1

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No. 1

Missed it by THAT much!



Alert OSTA members persuaded Rio Grande County, Colorado officials to reroute a new dump road, at right, to avoid destroying a portion of the Old Spanish Trail's North Branch, at left.

OSTA's RAPID GROWTH REFLECTS BROAD INTEREST

The rapid growth of the Old Spanish Trail Association during the past year shows that long-distance trails strike a chord in a diverse group of people, wherever they live.

One year ago, historian, trail buff, and author Ron Kessler called a meeting at the Rio Grande County Museum in Del Norte, Colo. to gauge interest in identifying and preserving remnants of the Old Spanish Trail.

Today the Old Spanish Trail Association claims about 165 members

from 16 states and Germany. The OSTA's membership includes historians, archaeologists, public land managers, educators, writers, photographers, and interested people from the Southern Utes to federal land managers to Hermann and Hanna Bender of Frankfurt, Germany.

The OSTA was officially formed in June 1994, which means that it has grown to 165 members in six months, or nearly one new member each day.

Part of the OSTA's success is due to

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SENATOR CAMPBELL PUSHES LEGISLATION

A federal bill that directs the National Park Service to study the Old Spanish Trail for possible inclusion in the National Historic Trail system has made rapid progress in Washington.

In January 1995 the bill may be debated by the full Senate, after its fall 1994 passage by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. If the Senate passes the bill, a similar bill will be introduced in the House of Representatives. The Senate bill was introduced in May 1994.

Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, D-Colo., has taken the lead on this bill, which was initiated by attorney James Robb of Grand Junction. Sen. Campbell has been supported by Senator Hank Brown, R-Colo., and Representative Scott McInnis, R-Colo. An OSTA letter-writing campaign during early hearings proved crucial to the bill's progress.

OSTA members are urged to write to their elected officials, including but not limited to Senators Campbell and Brown, and Rep. McInnis, to encourage passage of this legislation.

Sen. Campbell's legislative assistant, Trudy Kareus, and Rep. McInnis' Windsor Laing have been gracious and helpful in managing the bill's progress and maintaining contact with the OSTA.

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Inside...

- *Detecting wagon tracks*
- *Spanish Trail origins*
- *Books on the Trail*

RAPID GROWTH

(continued from page 1)

the lure of long-distance trails in general, which seems to beckon to the frontier spirit. But the Old Spanish Trail in particular has attracted attention for other reasons.

Of all the major Western trails, the Spanish Trail is the last to be identified, studied, and protected. Because it winds through some of the West's ruggedest and most pristine country, people are gripped by the challenge it presented to early travelers — as well as the opportunities it offers for modern journeys. After all, the Spanish Trail winds through country left relatively untouched by the centuries (except Las Vegas and Los Angeles!), and trail sites of high integrity remain undocumented and unprotected.

The formation of the OSTA also has enabled people to gain insight into the depth and diversity of the West's human and natural heritage.

"The point of studying the trail, its travelers, and their varied uses is not to romanticize or glorify any particular peoples, or aspects of Western heritage," says OSTA historian Phil Carson, "but to illuminate the West's reality, even the trail's use in this region's early slave-trade. The OSTA will provide its members with a glimpse of life in the trail's various eras. Perhaps a sober view of the past will help us better understand the present."

Intense public interest in the Spanish Trail and the OSTA has been reflected by media coverage. Articles have appeared recently in *The Denver Post*, *Rocky Mountain News*, *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, *The Pueblo Chieftain*, *Grand Junction's Daily Sentinel*, and *New Mexico's Albuquerque Journal*, to name just a few.

"Ultimately," Carson says, "the OSTA's newsletter and reference center will promote research, preservation, interpretive efforts, and, finally, understanding about what the trail can tell us about our past, and ourselves."

LEGISLATION

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The bill, S. 2078, directs the Park Service (which has an existing budget for studies of this sort) to evaluate the trail according to historic trail criteria. The bill carries no appropriation, which could stop it.

Three basic criteria must be met: 1) the trail must have been established by historic use and be historically significant, and its location known; 2) it must be of national significance by its influence on American culture; and 3) it must possess well-preserved sites for historic interpretation.

The Park Service's involvement would provide a comprehensive assessment of the trail's eligibility according to those criteria, and a report that cites the best available literature on the trail itself.

Officers of the Old Spanish Trail Association hope that the Park Service's first stop in this regard will be the OSTA's Archives and Reference Center at the Rio Grande County Museum, Del Norte, Colo. Also, the typical Park Service study on historic trails includes an advisory committee that requires involvement by the general public. Thus the OSTA will have a chance to observe and participate in the evaluation process.

In introducing S. 2078 to the Senate, Sen. Campbell used a text provided by the OSTA, and noted that "already a number of independent scholars have begun examination of portions of the trail," and that "grassroots support is strong for continued study and recognition of this historic trail."

(The trail's main branch passes through Sen. Campbell's hometown of Ignacio, Colo., on the Southern Ute Reservation.)

Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., supported Sen. Campbell's statements and explained to his non-Western colleagues the significance of long-distance trade routes like the OST. Sen. Brown emphasized the economic rewards of preserving trail sites.

The Senate's Committee on Energy and Natural Resources approved the bill and passed it on to the full Senate in October 1994, where it stalled.

FOR THE RECORD

OSTA is dedicated to the study, preservation, and protection of the trail's historical integrity.

OSTA's purpose is to promote public awareness, encourage research efforts, work with local, state, and federal agencies, assist local chapter formation, obtain National Historic Trail status, and recognize the multi-cultural heritage of the trail.

Meetings of the national association will be held at least once every two years, and special meetings may be called by OSTA officers.

Officers are elected for two-year terms, and are nominated by a committee of five members selected by the general membership. No one may hold more than one office at a time, and no officer other than a director may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

OSTA bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the membership by majority vote, provided the amendment has been submitted in writing to the president or board of directors at least 30 days prior to a meeting.

Meeting agendas are set by the president. Items forwarded at least 30 days prior to a meeting will be included; each member may introduce only one item of business for a vote. Otherwise, open discussion of unscheduled items will take place at the end of a meeting.

SPANISH TRACES is published by OSTA for its members. Contributions may be accepted, rejected, and/or edited by the editor. OSTA accepts no responsibility for unsolicited contributions. Those wishing their materials returned must provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope with sufficient postage. *SPANISH TRACES* reserves the right to republish at a future date any of its contents in any form.

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Life membership	\$100.00
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Family	\$15/year
Individual	\$10/year
Student	\$5/year

(Life, institutional, individual, and student memberships entitle holders to one vote on OSTA business at annual meetings; family membership allows two votes. Members must be present to vote.)

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Ron Kessler

In October 1993 I phoned writer Phil Carson concerning an article he'd written on a Spanish governor of colonial New Mexico, Juan Bautista de Anza. (We'd both been researching Anza's 1779 Comanche campaign.) I suggested the need for an association to study the Old Spanish Trail. He was reluctant to launch another project, but agreed to help. Ruth Marie Colville, a Del Norte, Colo. historian, spurred us on.

We decided to bring together people genuinely interested in the Old Spanish Trail, study it, protect it, and make people aware of it. We're sadly aware that people with knowledge of OST remnants are few and becoming fewer.

The first meeting to organize an Old Spanish Trail Association was held at the Rio Grande County Museum in Del Norte, Colo., on Jan. 15, 1994, and it drew a good crowd. One of our first goals was to save a portion of the OST that ran through Rio Grande County, but was threatened by a new landfill.

Both goals were met. The OSTA is launched, and the landfill's access road has been routed around the OST.

Since that time the OSTA has grown tremendously, and reached out to include others who have researched portions of the trail. And folks from other trail associations, particularly the Santa Fe Trail Association and the Oregon-California Trails Association, have encouraged us and lent a hand.

Last August my wife, Franis, and I attended the OCTA convention in Salt Lake City, Utah. On our way we stopped in Emery County, Utah to visit with folks who've been marking "their" portions of the OST. I met Vernell Rowley and Montell Seely, who kindly showed me portions of the trail that run through Emery County, and signs they've erected.

Our hats are off to those in Emery County who've spent so much time researching and marking the trail. They've used primary sources such as the A.D. Ferron Township plats and survey notes and Captain John W. Gunnison's notes, plus secondary sources. The Emery County Historical

Society sets a standard for all of us.

While in Salt Lake City I met Professor C. Gregory Crampton and Steven K. Madsen, authors of an outstanding new book, *In Search of the Spanish Trail*. Crampton has spent a half-century searching out the Old Spanish Trail! Madsen, like myself, is a newcomer by comparison, but he's very knowledgeable about the trail. Their work concentrated on the OST's main branch, while mine has focused on the North Branch.

Organizing the OSTA has been fun, especially finding other interested people and learning of their trail explorations. Over the years there've been numerous local attempts to find and mark the OST, but until now no one has coordinated such work over the entire trail. We'd eventually like to see OSTA chapters in all of the 28 counties crossed by the trail.

Today the OSTA has more than 165 members, and more write in each week. Thanks to all our current members for your interest and patience. Hope to hear from you "trailblazers" soon!

EDITOR'S CORNER

Thanks to all involved in this initial newsletter for their efforts, especially Yvonne Halburian (OSTA logo), Tim Acosta (layout, typesetting), and Ron Kessler (articles). And thanks to all OSTA members for their patience.

Henceforth we plan to bring you one newsletter every six months. If resources permit, we'll go quarterly and beef up the number of pages. (There's certainly no shortage of material on the trail.) The next issue is due in July 1995, after OSTA's next national meeting.

The aim of this newsletter is to bring OSTA members news, information, and the latest research on the trail, and to provide a forum for discussion of issues involving the Old Spanish Trail. This newsletter should provide a useful vehicle to bring together people living and working along the trail, and those (located anywhere) interested in its preservation and interpretation.

With that purpose in mind the editor welcomes contributions, suggestions, and criticism. We'd like to hear from you about your reaction to *SPANISH TRACES*, OSTA's direction, your trail

experiences with sites and people, new books, reports, and fun esoterica.

As you'll see, this newsletter has (or will have in the next issue) several departments: OSTA-related news, research reports, scholarly articles, chapter news, membership news, legislative updates, letters, book reviews, a calendar of events, photographs, and tidbits that don't fit elsewhere. We also hope to bring you in-depth interviews with researchers, authors, and other crusty characters.

While the editor reserves the right to accept/reject and edit contributions, most well-written, solidly researched, and informative pieces will run as space allows. Corrections to errors found here will run if accompanied by proper citations.

As a rule contributions should be typed and double-spaced, and adhere to the following guidelines:

Letters (under 100 words) must be signed with name and address; news (500 words or less) must answer the who, what, why, where, when, and how questions; research reports and scholarly articles (1,200 words or less) must be cleared by the editor at least two months prior to publication, must be original, and must be footnoted (with copies of any hard-to-find sources); photographs must be clear, with a thorough caption, and delivered in a B & W, 4 x 5 print.

We accept no responsibility for unsolicited materials. Materials you wish returned **MUST** be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The editor prefers that people write in, since long distance calls cannot be returned.

Hope to hear from you. Enjoy!

ROAD APPLES

The Bureau of Land Management's Anasazi Heritage Center in Dolores, Colorado, led by Director LouAnn Jacobson and Interpretive Specialist Tom Vaughan, has been especially helpful in featuring OSTA brochures and spreading the word in Southwest Colorado.

* * *

OSTA has registered with Colorado's Secretary of State, whose office has confirmed that no other such organization exists in the Centennial State.

DETECTING WAGON TRACKS

By Ron Kessler

The Old Spanish Trail was used primarily by pack trains during its heyday (1829-1848), and so remnants from that period are difficult to locate and identify.

But those who traveled portions of the trail after 1848 — say, traders on the North Branch through Colorado's San Luis Valley, or Mormons heading from Salt Lake to California — did use wagons, which cut ruts into parts of the OST's route.

Because these remnants of bygone trail days are often some of the most exciting, and because they can indicate the location of earlier foot and pack trails that leave less certain signs, this article will give readers an idea of what to look for, and how.

To locate old wagon tracks you need to know where to look. Begin with old maps that reflect local historic trails and roads. For instance, for my work in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, I've used the Wheeler U.S. Geographic Survey of 1873 of Southern Colorado.

Township plat maps also are useful. On the plats dealing with the San Luis Valley, for example, the OST's North Branch is referred to in the late 19th century as the "Del Norte-Conejos Road," and the "Del Norte-Saguache Road." The towns of Conejos, Del Norte, and Saguache, situated as they are some 50 miles apart in the vast San Luis Valley, obviously needed a reliable road to connect them.

Because older maps weren't always precisely accurate with respect to modern township and range coordinates, transferring the location of trails and roads on old maps to modern topographic maps can be tricky. But once you've located an old trail or road on the ground, you can begin to retrace it and look for wagon tracks and other remnants.

If you know of tracks worn into the bedrock, that's an excellent place to start. Such is the case between Monte Vista and Del Norte, Colo., where the ruts are nearly ten inches deep. (These tracks are located south of Hwy 160 on the Limekiln Road, on the southwest end of Coyote Hill.)

There, wagons approached the south



North Branch tracks in San Luis Valley

end of the hill, then circled west of it, and crossed the "Fish Canyon tuff," a soft, volcanic rock. Although the "tuff" is soft, it undoubtedly took many wagons and many trips to wear ruts that deeply into the rock.

I first saw these wagon ruts in the 1950s. Searching for their origins was rewarding, because it led me to a learned San Luis Valley historian named Ruth Marie Colville, and to LeRoy and Ann Hafen's wonderful book, *Old Spanish Trail*. From both sources I learned that use of the west fork of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail had created those ruts.

Beyond the ruts worn into rock at this site, wagons had cut north and south across the open prairie. In those cases wagons had packed the soil so firmly that the impressions retained moisture, causing the grass and brush to grow in heavier, or in a different pattern from the surrounding vegetation. Thus these "tracks," while sometimes not obvious at first, can be followed.

If you're having difficulty locating known tracks, or "lose" them, try crossing them in a direction opposite to the line of travel. Or circle the area, as if you're tracking an animal.

Springtime, when vegetation greens-up, often reveals color contrasts in

vegetation marked by wagon tracks. It's a good time to search for tracks.

That search can be aided by flying over the area in an airplane. While that can be relatively expensive, wagon tracks are often so obvious from the air that you'll save time, money, and effort on exhausting fieldtrips on the ground. Of course, you'll have to plot what you see from the air onto modern maps, no small trick in itself.

In retracing the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail through the San Luis Valley, I flew from Monte Vista's airport northwest toward Del Norte. As we crossed the area where I knew the trail used to run, we could see several miles of trail heading north and south, to the right and left of our path.

Then we circled around and headed south along the direction of the trail, heading towards the Colorado-New Mexico border. It was exciting to see the tracks so clearly from 800 feet altitude, and to know what they represented!

Wagon ruts and other trail signs often disappear due to modern disturbances such as plowed fields. (Though Santa Fe Trail ruts sometimes remain visible even in fields farmed for more than a century.)

Should you encounter an area where civilization has covered, even paved over tracks, don't be discouraged. You may have to skip over an area and look farther on. For instance, around Las Vegas, Nev. and Los Angeles, Calif., the Old Spanish Trail has been completely obliterated. But by studying a good topographic map, the lay-of-the-land, and using 19th century common sense and a heavy dose of persistence, your search should be successful.

Remember this: The wheels of an ordinary farm wagon are set 57 inches apart. A Ford Explorer's wheels are 58.5 inches apart, while older pickups may have longer axles. In some cases, the narrower a trail is, the more likely that it was formed by a wagon in historical times.

Joining a good trail organization like OSTA, SFTA, or OCTA will provide more leads, historical background, and — most importantly — experienced individuals who can guide you in your field research.

FROM FOOTPATHS TO MULE TRAINS: ORIGINS OF THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

[First of a three-part series]

By Phil Carson

A comprehensive treatise on the origins and development of the Spanish Trail has yet to be written. But a concise summary of the trail's prehistoric and historic phases is provided here to orient readers and stimulate future research.

The Spanish Trail early in its development linked pre-existing, ancient native footpaths that connected water holes and springs, summer and winter hunting grounds, and traced inter-tribal trade routes and paths of migration.

These footpaths originally were local or regional in nature, though they may have extended hundreds of miles. Native paths, in turn, typically followed pre-existing game trails.

Examples of these prehistoric footpaths have been found in at least three of the Spanish Trail's six states.

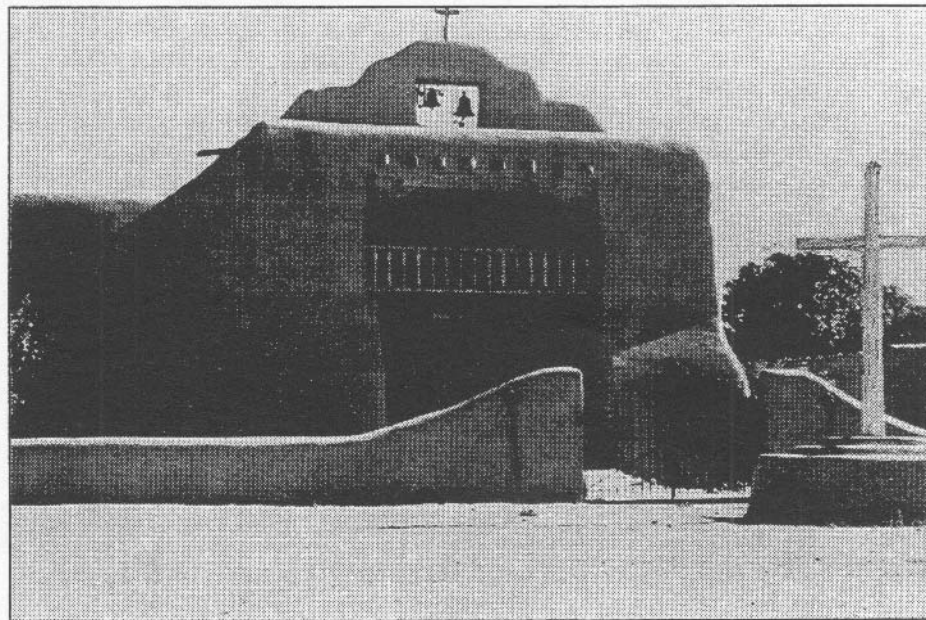
Archaeologist F. Richard Hauck has located and identified prehistoric and proto-historic footpaths and equestrian trails northwest of Green River, Utah, and north of Monticello, Utah, that preceded the Spanish Trail.¹

E. Henry James, of Barstow, Calif., has identified three traces in the Mohave Desert: footpaths, equestrian traces, and wagon roads.²

According to archaeologist Sally Crum of Collbran, Colo., prehistoric footpaths are identifiable because they are narrow and worn, and sizeable rocks have been brushed aside.³

Author G. Clell Jacobs of Las Vegas, Nev. (who's working on the unpublished diaries and route of the 18th century Spaniard, Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera), refers to the path that connected the native pueblos on the upper Rio Grande of present-day New Mexico with the Colorado Plateau country as the "Ute slave trail."⁴

This trail used the Rio Chama northwest of Santa Fe, and crossed the seven rivers draining the southern flank of Colorado's San Juan Mountains to reach the Rio Dolores and a traditional crossing of the



The Plaza and reconstructed church at Abiquiu, New Mexico, where caravans organized for the trail.

Colorado River at present-day Moab, Utah. Utes used it to reach the Pueblo peoples on the upper Rio Grande for trade, often in human slaves.

Two other prehistoric trails run north-south along the eastern and western margins of the great San Luis Valley of Colorado, which also connected Ute country and the Pueblo villages.⁵ Archaeological sites in the SLV contain Folsom period artifacts dating back 10,000 years B.P. (Before Present), though a relationship between Folsom peoples and these trails hasn't been established.

Still, petroglyphs and pictographs located along these San Luis Valley trails may date back to about 1,500 A.D., according to archaeologist Ken Frye.⁶ Peoples who used these trails in that period may differ from the historically known Utes and Pueblos.

In any case, these myriad footpaths were in use prior to Europeans' arrival in the region. The earliest documents to mention them date to the decades following Spanish colonization of the province of New Mexico in 1598.

In the 1620s the Franciscan Fray Geronimo de Zarate Salmeron wrote of "Quazula," land of the "Qusutas," perhaps the earliest reference to Yutas,

or Utes, who inhabited the Spanish province's northern frontier.⁷ Undoubtedly the Utes were reached via their ancient routes along the margins of the San Luis Valley.

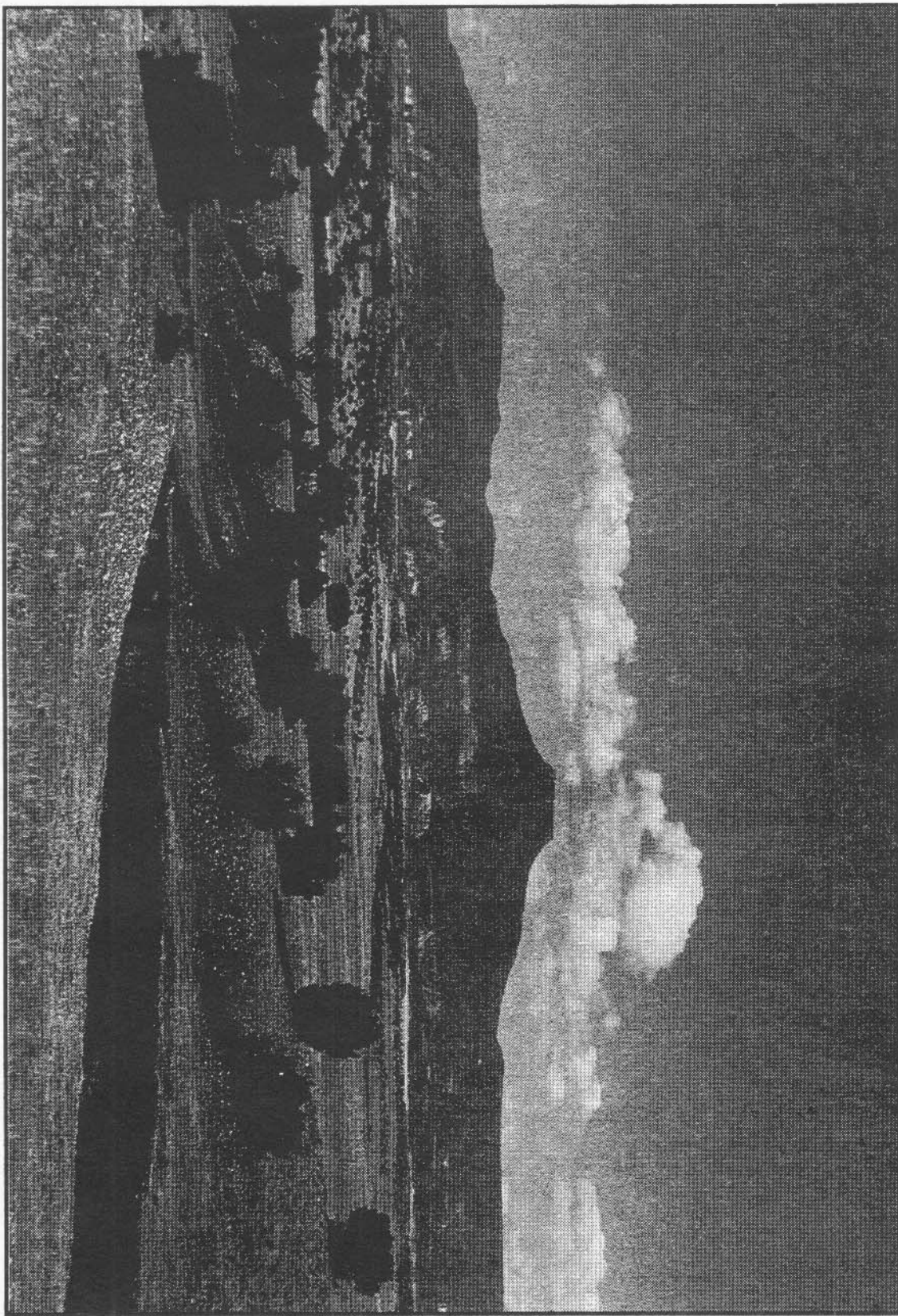
Fray Alonso de Benavides arrived in New Mexico in 1625 and almost immediately traveled northwest to the Navajo-Apache to tend to a wounded native named Captain Quinia. Captain Quinia evidently traveled to the Spanish settlements in 1627 and, according to Fray Alonso, sought baptism. Fray Alonso in turn visited the Navajo-Apache again in 1628 for that purpose. And in 1629, the Spaniards sent an expedition to the Navajo-Apache to establish a mission.

Fray Estevan de Perea wrote later of that expedition: "To the nation of the [Navajo] Apaches of Quinia and Manases went the Father Fray Bartolome Romero, reader of theology, and Fray Francisco Munoz, preacher. And since it was the first expedition to that bellicose nation of warriors, Don Francisco de Sylva, governor of these provinces, went along, escorting them with twenty soldiers. Although this precaution was not necessary, because ...[the Navajo-

(continued on page 8)



Editor's Note: Each issue of *SPANISH TRACES* will bring readers two pages of photographs, contemporary artwork, or modern graphics depicting the Old Spanish Trail. Over the course of the next several issues, we'll travel the trail from east to west, from Santa Fe to Los Angeles.



Here we begin following the trail with two photographs from the Rio Chama in New Mexico, about 50 miles northwest of Santa Fe. The view at left looks southwest, down the Chama toward Abiquiu. The view at right looks south to Cerro Pedernal, 9,862 feet elevation, which towers over the upper Chama by present-day Abiquiu Reservoir.

(continued from page 5)

Apaches'] opposition was lacking and with exceeding pleasure they besought the Holy Baptism."⁸

These anecdotes indicate that as early as the late 1620s, Spaniards became familiar with a route that led up the Rio Chama into the province of the Navajo-Apache.

The Navajo-Apache lived northwest of New Mexico's Spanish settlements, but south of their own "Rio Grande," today's San Juan River, north of which lay Ute country.⁹

Despite pious intentions, the Spanish colonizers of New Mexico warred almost constantly with the Navajo-Apache (and other Apache bands) from the province's founding in 1598 until 1720.¹⁰

That period witnessed many Spanish forays against the Europeans' northwestern neighbors, particularly by Captain Juan Dominguez de Mendoza in the period 1650-1680, by Captain Roque de Madrid in 1693-1709, and by Madrid and Cristobal de la Serna in 1713-1716.

Finally, the Navajo-Apache made peace in 1720, as they were pressed by Spaniards from the southeast, and by Utes on the north. In ensuing decades, as-yet undocumented Spanish expeditions apparently began to use the Rio Chama corridor to reach the Utes, La Plata mountains, and the Colorado Plateau. These journeys preceded documented travel over what would become the Old Spanish Trail.

(End of Part One)

NOTES

[1] personal letter to author, July 24, 1994

[2] personal letter to author, June 20, 1994

[3] conversation with U.S. Forest Service archaeologist Sally Crum, July 1994

[4] Jacobs, G. Clell, "The Phantom Pathfinder: Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera and his Expeditions," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 60(Summer 1992):204

[5] Kessler, Ron. *Anza's 1779 Comanche Campaign* (Monte Vista: Adobe Press, 1994):13

[6] conversation with the author, July 10, 1994

[7] Thomas, A.B. *After Coronado* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935):10

[8] Bloom, Lansing B., "Pray Estevan de Perca's Relation," *New Mexico Historical Review* 8(1933):226

[9] See three articles: Frank D. Reeve, "Early Navaho Geography," *New Mexico Historical Review* 31(October 1956):290-309; and for an updated understanding, Curtis Schaafsma, "Ethnic Identity and Protohistoric Archaeological Sites in Northwestern New Mexico: Implications for Reconstructions of Navajo and Ute History," Museum of New Mexico, 1994, and Schaafsma's "The Piedra Lumbre Phase and the Origin of the Navajos," 58th Annual Meeting of Society for American Archaeology, St. Louis, MO 1993. Mr. Schaafsma is New Mexico State Archaeologist.

[10] For Spanish expeditions in this period see: Forbes, Jack D. *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960; reprinted 1982); McNitt, Frank. *Navajo Wars: Military Campaigns, Slave Raids, and Reprisals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972); and Frank D. Reeves, "Seventeenth Century Navaho-Spanish Relations," *New Mexico Historical Review* 32(January 1957):36-52; "Spanish-Navaho Wars, 1680-1720" *New Mexico Historical Review* 33(July 1958):204-31

RESEARCH NEEDED ON NORTH BRANCH'S LOCATION AND USE

In light of the publication of *In Search of the Spanish Trail*, the trail's 1,200-mile "main branch" has finally been located and retraced, though interpretive work and protection has only begun.

But the OST's crucial variant, the so-called "North Branch," remains largely unknown and unmapped, despite ongoing efforts by Colorado researchers.

The North Branch traces the western margin of the Rio Grande's valley north from Santa Fe, New Mexico, through Colorado's San Luis Valley, over Cochetopa Pass west of Saguache, Colo. to the Gunnison and Colorado river valleys en route to rejoining the main branch near Green River, Utah.

Human use of this region covers the gamut of archaeological and historical time.

Human habitation sites near the north branch in the San Luis Valley date back 10,000 years, and pictographs and petroglyphs of 1-1,400 years' age are known on the route.

Spanish Governor Diego de Vargas' 1694 expedition beyond the frontier of colonial New Mexico used parts of the North Branch, as did Governor Juan Bautista de Anza's 1779 campaign against the Jupe Comanche.

Later, Mexican and American traders and fur trappers used it to reach the Green River country — an era made famous by Antoine Robidoux, who established a trading post on the North Branch near Delta, Colo. in 1828.

During the Spanish Trail's heyday, pack trains apparently used the North Branch to use unexploited pasturage not found on the main branch. But the relative amount of use seen by either branch remains to be documented, though many have assumed the main branch saw more.

After the trail's heyday ended with the Mexican War, Lt. John W. Gunnison in 1853 traveled the North Branch scouting for a railroad route across the Rockies and Great Basin.

Finally, in the last decades of the 19th century, portions of the North Branch were used by wagon roads between Denver and Salt Lake.

The authors of *In Search of...*, C. Gregory Crampton and Steven K. Madsen, have created a useful model for ferreting out the trail's location: begin with contemporary, manuscript maps, journals and reports, plot out known trail sites, then get into the field with the documentary evidence and "connect the dots," using an understanding of packtrain travel and local topography.

Now the same task awaits researchers on the elusive North Branch. Ron Kessler has over past decades traced the trail from Santa Fe to Cochetopa Pass, via foot, horseback, motor vehicle, and airplane. He plans to publish a book on the OST in the SLV. (Try saying that three times, fast!)

Grand Junction OSTA member Bill Chenoweth penned a 1991 paper that refers to several early reports and maps describing portions of the North Branch, which in the late 19th century became known as the Salt Lake Wagon Road.

Chenoweth cites five 19th century sources that researchers will find helpful: E.G. Beckwith's 1854 report; H.E. Gannett's 1877 topographic report; F.V. Hayden's annual report and map; D.G. Major's 1881 field notes and map; and R.J. Reeves' 1879 field notes.

(For full citations, write to Bill Chenoweth, 707 Brassie Dr., Grand Junction, CO 81506)

Also in 1991 archaeologist Sally Crum (now with Grand Mesa National Forest) performed a cultural resources survey of 12 miles of U.S. 50 northwest of Delta, Colo., for the Colorado Department of Highways. She found historic wagon ruts, and a route marked by rock cairns.

The upshot: major trail discoveries are possible along the North Branch, the precise location of which presents a pressing challenge. Fortunately, OSTA chapters are forming in Gunnison, Conejos and Rio Grande Counties, Saguache, and Grand Junction.

The OSTA will assist with local chapter formation, membership drives, field and archival research.

The North Branch beckons! Let's map it, mark it, and protect it!

DUSTING OFF THE SPANISH TRAIL: HISTORIANS AT WORK

By Phil Carson

After the Spanish Trail's heyday ended in 1848, nearly three-quarters of a century passed before historian J.J. Hill first dusted off the trace for public consumption. By 1994, 146 years after the last commercial pack train traversed this route, Gregory Crampton and Steve Madsen finally had retraced the entire trail.

Despite prodigious research and trail-related publications in the 73 years between Hill's 1921 article and Crampton and Madsen's 1994 volume, *In Search of the Spanish Trail*, a definitive work has yet to appear.

Until a comprehensive work on the trail is published, researchers, trail buffs, and readers must make sense of the materials at hand.

The following account retraces the work of American researchers and writers who have published the most useful work in English on the Spanish Trail. Works by Spanish and Mexican writers, in Spanish, remain obscure. (Can readers of *SPANISH TRACES* supply citations to, or copies of, such works?)

Of course, a number of newspaper, magazine, and book accounts of travel over the trail were published while the trail was still in use. In fact, our old friend John C. Fremont made both the Spanish Trail and Kit Carson famous in his 1845 account of his western explorations in 1843-44.¹ But more analytical work, while no less enchanting, awaited the 20th century.

After J.J. Hill's initial essay in 1921 in *Hispanic American Historical Review* (can a reader supply a copy of this article?), William Snow documented in the *Utah Historical Quarterly* in 1929 how two centuries of slave trading by Utes and Spaniards formed the commercial basis for the trail's east-to-west genesis.²

The following year J.J. Hill again weighed in with two pieces, one showing how the Spanish slave trade gave rise to later Mexican and American slave and fur trading between New Mexico and the Great Basin, and another tracing trader Antoine Robidoux's use of the North

Branch to establish commercial primacy in the early 1800s on the upper Green River.³

In 1930 Eleanor Laurence completed a master's thesis at the University of California, Berkeley, on the Old Spanish Trail, and the following year published an abstract of her work in the *California Historical Society Quarterly*.⁴

Also that year, Lt. George D. Brewerton's narrative of travel over the trail with Kit Carson in 1848 appeared in book form, having been published serially in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1853-62. This stirring narrative remains available in reprinted form. (See *The Book Bag* for a review.)⁵

Related work appeared in the 1930s and '40s, as Eleanor Richie completed a master's thesis at the University of Denver on Spanish-Ute relations, 1680-1822, and Leland Creer took another look at the slave trade between New Mexico and the Great Basin in 1800-1853.⁶

Finally, in 1950, the prolific LeRoy Hafen brought to light the "aggravatingly brief" 1829 diary of Antonio Armijo, who is generally credited with igniting annual commercial packtrains between New Mexico and California. Four years later Hafen and his wife, Ann, published their landmark work, *Old Spanish Trail* — the benchmark work of modern historical scholarship on this trade route.⁷

Meanwhile, useful related work continued apace.

During this same period, 1920-1950, work on the Spanish colonial period in New Mexico — and the expeditions northwest into the Great Basin that later lent the sobriquet "Old Spanish Trail" to that route — appeared in print. (See this issue's "Origins of the Trail" for details and citations.)

From 1965 until 1972 the Hafens produced their monumental, 10-volume set on *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, which detailed the movements of trappers whose work in the 1820s preceded establishment of the Spanish Trail.⁸

(Very few researchers own this priceless set in complete form, and most must consult it in leading research libraries.)

Precisely two decades after the Hafens' landmark book appeared, researcher Elizabeth Warren completed her master's thesis on Armijo's ground-breaking journey.⁹ Warren's unpublished work used a multi-disciplinary approach to provide new insights into Armijo's actual route in 1829 (revising Hafen's version), and took a harder look than the Hafens had at the scantiness of documented trade during the Spanish Trail's heyday.

Warren's work on Armijo's route is a model of trail reconstruction, although her write-up requires patience and painstaking mapwork by the reader.

Most recently, the 1990s have witnessed publication of several tightly focused studies on distinct portions of the trail, as well as one ultimate volume on the location of the entire route.

In 1990, Las Vegas Bureau of Land Management archaeologists performed an exemplary study of 30 miles of the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road between Las Vegas, Nev., and the California border.¹⁰ Keith Myhrer and Stan Rolf walked this segment and reported on several forgotten but quite pristine sections of the trace, while William White described the archaeological evidence for Mormon-era wagon trains that used that section of trail.

In 1991 archaeologist Sally Crum reported on cultural sites that might be impacted by reconstruction of part of U.S. Highway 50 northwest of Delta, Colo., on the trail's North Branch. She found wagon ruts believed to be the result of the Denver-Salt Lake wagon road, a late 19th century route that followed the earlier Spanish Trail.¹¹

The following year, researcher G. Clell Jacobs of Las Vegas, Nev., published the first treatment on the diaries and route of Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera, the Spanish colonial explorer who in 1765 made the earliest recorded journey from New Mexico to the traditional native crossing of the Colorado River at present-day Moab, Utah. Rivera's

(continued on page 10)

HISTORIANS AT WORK

(continued from page 9)

(even then venerable) route formed the basis for the first third of the Old Spanish Trail. ¹²

Then this past summer, perhaps the most exciting volume ever published on the trail appeared.

Veteran historian C. Gregory Crampton and his assistant, Steven K. Madsen, produced *In Search of the Spanish Trail: a retracing of 1,100 miles of the main branch*. The authors' painstaking work over decades resulted in maps and prose as crisp and clear as a desert morning. (See **The Book Bag** for a review.)

Finally, veteran trail researcher and OSTA President Ron Kessler, of Monte Vista, Colo. expects to publish in 1995 a small volume on the Old Spanish Trail in the San Luis Valley. Wagon ruts and scenes along this portion of the North Branch, as retraced by Kessler, are found in photographs printed in this issue.

As the Old Spanish Trail Association ties together researchers along the trail, and a possible study by the National Park Service looms, it's evident that work really has just begun on the trail, its history and heritage.



Ron Kessler, right, and Montell Seely, left, with Emery County Historical Society sign marking the trail.

BOOK BAG

IN SEARCH OF THE SPANISH TRAIL, SANTA FE TO LOS ANGELES, 1829-1848

By C. Gregory Crampton, Steven K. Madsen
Peregrine Smith Books, Layton, UT
Softcover, 144 pp., 1994; \$24.95
ISBN: 0-87905-614-2

The publication of Crampton and Madsen's amazing book is a historical event in itself: not since LeRoy and Ann Hafen's landmark work, *Old Spanish Trail* (1954), has such a useful and thorough piece of research been performed on the OST.

Rather than concentrate on the OST's voluminous history, however, these authors have traced virtually every mile of the OST from Santa Fe to Los Angeles, a tremendous feat. Their description of trail geography, and its relevance to traders who once used it, is utterly fascinating.

The depth of Crampton and Madsen's scholarship is apparent when they mention that rust-stained rocks at one historic river crossing were analyzed in a lab. The result? The stains were made by mid-19th century horseshoes, which confirmed that the crossing belonged on the OST.

This volume's prose, maps, and bibliography provide a wealth of information and insight. For anyone interested in the OST, or any historic

trail, this book is a model and a guide.

The book's design is simple: 1,200 miles of trail are divided into a dozen chapters, each with a trail map to orient the reader. The bottom half of each page contains text, while the upper half provides black-and-white photos, early maps, and illustrations.

The book's lucid text and concise focus on retracing the trail make it a page-turner. The reader is sorry when it's over. Yet that's when the real adventure begins. One cannot read this book without catching trail fever.

Despite the authors' meticulous description of the Spanish Trail's route in modern terms, they are not overly explicit. To follow the trail using this book, buffs must do their own research and transcribe the results onto local maps. This allows readers to make their own discoveries, and protects trail remnants from wanton destruction.

The authors also provide a smattering of quotations from contemporary journals that lend a sense of the trail experience by those who endured it. And they weave in references to museums encountered en route, which can enhance a modern retracing.

This is a must-read for OSTA members.

OLD SPANISH TRAIL: SANTA FE TO LOS ANGELES

By LeRoy & Ann Hafen
University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Neb.
Softcover, 375 pp., 1993; \$12.95
ISBN: 0-8032-7261-8

This seminal work on the OST and its dramatic history has yet to be equalled for its affectionate and erudite treatment of its subject.

Although some information here is now outdated (especially Antonio Armijo's 1829 journey and route), this remains a well-rounded and enjoyable volume.

Noted historian David J. Weber's modern introduction offers insight into the Hafens themselves, who blazed so many paths in Western history.

But Weber's opening point that the trail "in its heyday in the 1830s and 1840s was neither Spanish nor old," is off-the-mark. Because of the trail's east-to-west orientation, those who traveled it in the 1830s (in New

NOTES

- [1] Fremont, John C. *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, etc.* (Washington: 1845)
- [2] Hill, J.J., "The Old Spanish Trail," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 444-73 (apparently reprinted in 1964); Snow, William, "Utah Indians and the Spanish Slave Trade," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 24(July 1929)67-73
- [3] Hill, J.J., "Antoine Robidoux, Kingpin of the Colorado River Fur Trade, 1824-1844," *Colorado Magazine* 7(July 1930)125-32; "Spanish and Mexican Exploration and Trade Northwest from New Mexico into the Great Basin, 1765-1853," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 3(January 1930)3-23
- [4] Lawrence, Eleanor, "Mexican Trade Between Santa Fe and Los Angeles, 1830-1848," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 10(1931)26-39; "The Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe to California," MA thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1930
- [5] Brewerton, George D. *Overland with Kit Carson: A Narrative of the Old Spanish Trail in 1848* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993)
- [6] Richie, Eleanor, "Spanish Relations with the Yuta Indians, 1680-1822," Masters thesis, University of Denver, 1932; and Creer, Leland, "Spanish-American Slave Trade in the Great Basin, 1800-1853," *New Mexico Historical Review* 24(July 1949)171-83
- [7] Hafen, LeRoy, "Armijo's Journal of 1829-30; the Beginning of Trade Between New Mexico and California," *Colorado Magazine* 27(April 1950)120-31; and Hafen, LeRoy and Ann. *Old Spanish Trail* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953, 1954); quote on page 158
- [8] Hafen, LeRoy, ed. *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1965-72) 10 vols.
- [9] Warren, Elizabeth. *Armijo's Trace Revisited: A New Interpretation of the Impact of the Antonio Armijo Route of 1829-1830 on the Development of the Old Spanish Trail*. Unpublished master's thesis, 1974, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- [10] Myhrer, Keith, Wm G. White, Stan D. Rolf. *Archaeology of the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road, from Las Vegas, Nevada to the California Border* (Las Vegas: BLM, Feb. 1990) Technical Report #17
- [11] Crum, Sally. "Cultural resource survey of 12.1 miles of U.S. Hwy 50, northwest of Delta, Colorado," Colorado Dept of Hwys/BLM, February 1991
- [12] Jacobs, Clegg G., "The Phantom Pathfinder: Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera and his Expedition," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 60(Summer 1992)200-223
- [13] Crampton, C. Gregory, and Steven K. Madsen. *In Search of the Spanish Trail, Santa Fe to Los Angeles, 1829-1848* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1994)

Mexico's Mexican era) certainly looked upon their path up the Rio Chama as old and Spanish, since it had been used by Spanish colonialists for two centuries.

The book's chapters deal with distinct periods in the trail's history, beginning with a description of the trail itself and its terminal towns, and stretching from Spanish traders to the eras of trappers, pack trains, emigrants, slavers and horse thieves, Kit Carson, and the trail's denouement.

Every page is packed with names, dates, places, and quotations from primary documents like trail journals, official reports, early newspaper accounts, and reminiscences.

Forty years after its initial publication, a few criticisms may be made: illustrations are not up to par with the text, and the map included on the frontispiece is no longer completely accurate.

On balance, however, readers will find this a worthy introduction to the trail, life along its treacherous route, and the people who traveled it.

OVERLAND WITH KIT CARSON: A NARRATIVE OF THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL IN '48

By George Douglas Brewerton

University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln

Softcover, 301 pp., 1993; \$12.95

ISBN: 0-8032-6113-6

While modern authors typically provide overviews of the trail, *Overland with Kit Carson* was penned by a young Army lieutenant who journeyed over the trail in the last year of its heyday.

Thus the reader of *Overland* sees through eyes that witnessed first-hand the trail and its hardships. Romance tends to peel away when the writer describes genuine pain and hardship, rather than the more appealing imagery of happy adventure.

Here is Kit Carson the man, not the legend. Here is the brain-baking sun, the waterless *jornadas*, the cinched belts of desperate hunger, the dust and danger that attended every mile. Here are Mexican packers in all their exotic glory, whipping their mules and defending their cargo with homemade bows and arrows.

Here are the politics of war between the U.S. and Mexico, and the actualities of transferring military dispatches across a continent via horseback.

Because Brewerton has proved to be a reliable reporter, his account — written from memory years after the fact — has survived as a dependable journal of life on the Old Spanish Trail nearly one and a half centuries ago. Consider his description of the Mohave desert:

"Our route for several days lay over a dreary waste, where the eye met the same eternal rock and sand. In fact, the whole country looks more like the crater of an immense volcano than anything else..."

"Our general course was by the great Spanish trail, and we made as rapid traveling as possible, with the view of overtaking the large Mexican caravan which was slowly wending its way back to the capital of New Mexico.

"This caravan consisted of some two or three hundred Mexican traders who go once a year to the Californian coast with a supply of blankets and other articles of New Mexico manufacture..."

Characteristic of his day, Brewerton — an Anglo — looked down on native and Mexican alike. While our enlightened times have brought us a measure of understanding between different peoples and cultures, too often it is accompanied by hypocrisy. Prejudice, though abhorrent, can be refreshing in its honesty. There's no political correctness here.

Should you care to taste the dust and feel the friction between the West's early peoples, this volume will take you far from home in company with one of the West's great trailblazers.

ROAD APPLES

The OSTA's Reference Center at the Rio Grande County Museum & Cultural Center should be operational by our next meeting. It will contain a comprehensive bibliography of materials "at-large," as well as a list of its own holdings.

OSTA needs someone in Del Norte, Colo. to administer the Center, and answer inquiries for photo-copies.

ADOBE VILLAGE PRESS OFFERS ARRAY OF TITLES

OSTA President Ron Kessler has gone into the book business, as a distributor for several major publishing houses. Kessler's **Adobe Village Press** offers numerous books, posters, and maps, listed below.

BOOKS:

Anza's 1779 Campaign, by Ron Kessler (\$6.00); *Kit Carson's Autobiography* (\$7.95); *In Search of Spanish Trail*, by Crampton & Madsen (\$24.95); *Old Spanish Trail*, by Hafen & Hafen (\$12.95); *Overland with Kit Carson*, by Geo. Brewerton (\$12.95); *South West Expeditions of Jedediah Smith*, ed. by Geo. Brooks (\$8.95); *Trail to Disaster*, by Pat Richmond (\$9.95).

POSTERS:

(\$4.00 each): Old Spanish Trail; Anza's 1779 Trail; Anza's S.L.V. Trail.

MAPS:

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Both the Santa Fe Trail Association and the Oregon-California Trails Association and their respective newsletters, *Wagon Tracks* and *News from the Plains*, have greatly assisted OSTA membership by running stories or notices about us. Special thanks to WT editor Leo Oliva, and News editor Rose Ann Tompkins.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful formation of the Old Spanish Trail Association, the publication of *SPANISH TRACES*, and efforts to have the Trail designated a National Historic Trail, has involved many people. Our thanks to the following folks, and our apologies if we left you off the list: Suzanne Off, Mark Allison, Rio Grande County Museum & Cultural Center, Ruth Marie Colville, Pat Richmond, John Koshak, Franis & April Kessler, Yvonne Halburian, Ken & Barb Carpenter, John Beardsley, Tom Vaughan, Louann Jacobson, Anasazi Heritage Center, Stan Rolf, Bureau of Land Management (Alamosa, Dolores, Canon City, Colo., Moab, Utah, and Las Vegas, Nev. offices), Sen. Ben Campbell, Trudy Kareus, Rep. Scott McInnis, Windsor Laing, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources, Leo Oliva/*Wagon Tracks*, Santa Fe Trail Association, Marc Simmons, Oregon-California Trail Association, Rose Ann Tompkins/*News from the Plains*, C. Gregory Crampton, Steven K. Madsen, Juanita Moston, Jack Nelson, Sally Crum, Bea Collette, Dr. Eugene Majerowicz, Deborah Espinosa/El Pueblo Museum, Georgia Robertson, Stuart McDonald/*Colorado Trail News*, Emery County Historical Society, Vernell Rowley, Montell Seely, Aubrey Owen/Ghost Ranch, Chris Ribera/Southern Ute Tribe, Gretchen & Brian Orr/*Spirit Magazine*, Ed & Martha Quillen/*Colorado Central*, Hermann & Hanna Bender (from Germany, our first overseas members!), Susan Eskew, Gary Tomsic, Gunnison County, and all our

members in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, California, Missouri, New Jersey, Tennessee, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Kansas, Wisconsin, Texas, and Nebraska.

CHAPTER NEWS

Three local chapters have been established, in Rio Grande County, Colo. (president: John Hancock, 901 Acequia, Monte Vista, CO 81144), Saguache County, Colo. (president: Yvonne Halburian, Box 502, Saguache, CO 81149), and Grand Junction, Colo. (president: Jack Nelson, 2276 Windwood Ct, GJ, CO 81503).

Other Colorado members who've expressed interest include: Doug Bowman (c/o CU Center, 25 Market St., Cortez, CO), Roger Romero (Box 543, Romeo, CO 81148), Janice Downing (508 W. Virginia Ave., Gunnison, CO 81230), and Juanita Gurule (Box 657, San Luis, CO 81152).

We're hoping that members will rally around the following individuals in New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada: Aubrey Owens (Box 75, Abiquiu, NM 87510), Jean McDowell (c/o Dan O'Laurie Museum, 118 E. Center, Moab, UT 84532), Vernell Rowley (Box 428, Huntington, UT 84528), and Richard Brase (2080 Sutton Way, Henderson, NV 89014).

If you'd like information on forming a chapter, get in touch with Ron Kessler.

Note: The next Rio Grande County Chapter meeting is set for Thursday, February 9, 1995, at 7 p.m. at the Coop Community Room, 1901 E. Hwy 160, Monte Vista, Colo.

TRAIL NEWS

On Saturday, November 19, 1994, John Hancock, Jim Bearss, and Ron Kessler used Global Positioning System equipment loaned by the San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative to map the Old Spanish Trail's North Branch from Raton Creek to the Five Mile Road in the San Luis Valley.

GPS equipment allows researchers to accurately locate the trail on up-to-date topographic maps, and its use in this instance is the first work of its kind that we're aware of anywhere along the trail. Thanks to Jim Bearss and SLV REC for their help.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Charter members will need to renew their memberships in June 1995, and others by the month they joined. Reminder cards will be mailed out.

NEXT OSTA NATIONAL MEETING SET FOR MAY

Spend a couple days in Colorado's San Luis Valley for the next national meeting: 1 p.m., Saturday, May 20, 1995 at the Rio Grande County Museum, 580 Oak St., Del Norte, Colo., (719) 657-2847.

We'll set promotional, membership, chapter, interpretive, and financial strategies, hear reports on trail research, and discuss any issues submitted to President Ron Kessler 30 days in advance.

Spanish Traces

Old Spanish Trail Association
P.O. Box 521
Monte Vista, CO 81144