

SPANISH TRACES™



VOLUME 25 ♦ NO 1 **SPRING 2019**



Trees Along the Trail | Routes of the North Branch | Comanche Empire | Ft Uncompahgre

SAVE THE DATE – ANNUAL OSTA CONFERENCE

OSTA 2019 Conference

The Annual OSTA Conference will be held
at the Southern Utah University campus in Cedar City, Utah
October 11-12, 2019

T H E M E

“Travelers Along the Old Spanish Trail”

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10

OSTA Board meeting in the Charles Hunter Room

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11 & 12

Annual conference and general membership meetings in the Great Hall

This conference will introduce us to the diverse people who have traveled over the Old Spanish Trail, usually described as the route followed by traders and trappers from 1829 to 1848. The conference will expand this historical view and share the interesting stories of the men, women, and children who traveled the Trail.

We will hear from historians, descendants of the travelers, and other lovers of history as we explore those people who had the bravery and spirit of adventure to cross the trail called the “longest, crookedst, and most arduous pack mule route in the history of America.”



Al Matheson leads a field trip discussion.

PAUL OSTAPUK



COURTESY CONCHITA MARUSICH

Wolfskill Boulder, which is located near Summit Utah, just north of Cedar City.

More info - and registration - available soon at oldspanishtrail.org



OLD SPANISH TRAIL ASSOCIATION

The Old Spanish Trail (OST), one of America's long-distance pioneer trade routes, is recognized by Congress as a National Historic Trail. From 1829 through 1848, traders and pack mules followed the OST on a typically six-week trek from northern New Mexico to Southern California, where woolen goods from New Mexico were swapped for horses and pack stock raised on California's ranchos. Many took the trail — traders, frontiersmen, trappers, families, military expeditions, and Indian guides.

The mission of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA) is to study, preserve, protect, interpret, and promote appropriate use of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT). OSTA promotes public awareness of the OSNHT and its multicultural heritage through publications, a website and interpretive activities; by encouraging research; and by partnering with governments and private organizations. We encourage you to join OSTA, help in trail preservation, and increase appreciation of the multicultural heritage of the American Southwest.

| oldspanishtrail.org |

The OSTA website is the place to go for both general and comprehensive background and recent news on the OSNHT and OSTA. The site contains maps, an overview history of the trail, and a bibliography of relevant books with links for purchases of books and other OSTA merchandise from the Association. There is also a regularly updated news page that contains links to government reports, activities of OSTA members, and other news related to the trail. The web page links to National Park Service (NPS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sites, where public documents and maps related to the OSNHT can be found. Memberships (new or renewal) may be paid on the OSTA website, and donations, both general and for specific projects, can be made through the OSTA website as well.



Spanish Traces is the official publication of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, incorporated under the laws of the State of Colorado. *Spanish Traces* welcomes submission of articles, book reviews, and Old Spanish Trail-related news. OSTA assumes no responsibility for statements or opinions of contributors. *Spanish Traces* is copyrighted to OSTA in its entirety, but copyright to individual articles is retained by the author. All matters relating to *Spanish Traces* should be directed to the OSTA Designer/Editor (Kitty Nicholason, kitty.n@bresnan.net).

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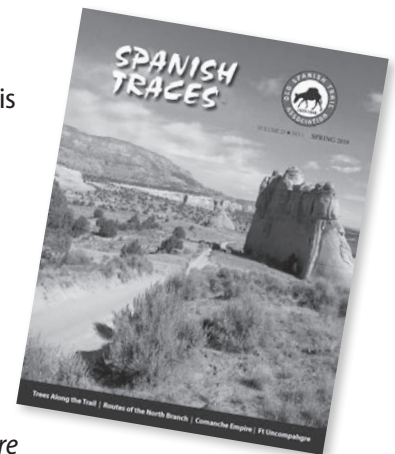
ON THE COVER

Looking northeast at the route through the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. The route, as a modern road, passes through Castle Rocks, which matches Loring's description of "rocky buttes." See p. 10

Cover: Mike Prouty

Back Cover:

Courtesy Ft Uncompahgre Interpretive Center



SUMMER 2019 DEADLINE

We would love to receive your comments, suggestions, and ideas for future issues. The deadline for submissions for the Summer 2019 issue is July 8, 2019. Send to Kitty Nicholason, kitty.n@bresnan.net.



LOS SENDEROS / Weekend in Santa Fe

By Lynn Brittner, Executive Director

Our March OSTA board meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was productive, addressed some important issues, and engaged the local Salida del Sol Chapter members. We also attended an evening reception at La Fonda Hotel (*thank you, La Fonda, for all your support!*), and a tour of the San Miguel Chapel.

At the board meeting an important issue included re-invigorating the Stewardship Committee and the importance of protecting high potential sites and route segments along the trail. Paul Ostapuk will be re-instating this committee and has asked for volunteers to assist in stewardship issues in their state. Also helping to recruit is Nancy Melendez, chairman of the newly-formed Nominating Committee. We are asking for your help to join in these important issues of stewardship. So much has already been done, but we must increase our service and positive impact.

Stephanie Moulton gave an update on the next conference, Utah on October 11-12. She has

recruited archivist Paula Mitchell from the Southern Utah University, and plans are being put forth for a unique historical event.

On Saturday over 35 chapter members joined us on a fun and informative field trip to Los Luceros Historic Site in Alcade, New Mexico. A well-informed docent's tour focused on the Mexican period of New Mexico history, 1821-1846, when it was a sustainable working farm and ranch. Situated on the bank of the Rio Grande River, the 148-acre ranch (just east of the OST) has old-growth apple trees, churro sheep, and historic adobe structures.

After the tour, internationally-recognized weaver Lisa Trujillo talked about the Rio Grande style of weaving and its economic significance during the time of the OST. Lisa is adept at spinning and weaving with churro wool, and — with husband Irvin (seventh generation weaver) — has received recognition from articles and awards from museums, galleries, and competitions. Lisa says many of her clients come all the way from Japan to see and purchase their weavings in Chimayo, New Mexico.

Claudio Chacon, OST descendant, prepared an authentic traditional New Mexican meal of posole, beans, rice, and some spicy green and red chili. See page 43 for a recipe and brief history of posole.

After lunch, Pablo Vigil (Salida del Sol Chapter president) and

Chacon told stories of ancestors along the trail. One fascinating story in particular was Chacon's re-telling of the story of his great-great-grandfather, Santiago Chacon, whose family settled in New Mexico in the 1600s. Santiago's son, Serafino Chacon, tried to join the OST caravan. His father, however, took him back home. Santiago escaped and caught up with the caravan heading to California from New Mexico. He was later killed while watering horses at Resting Springs. Claudio's father, Charles Chacon, ranched in northern New Mexico, not far from where his ancestors settled long ago.

A professor and longtime colleague of Claudio's from the videography department at the Northern Community College in Espanola, NM mentioned this story to his students, who then volunteered to professionally record the ninety-eight-year-old Charles Chacon. Once the interview and editing is completed, they will donate the audio to the OSTA archives. Story-telling makes history come alive and adds to the value of written stories. To keep history lively, plans are being made to continue interviews throughout the trail with potential grant funding.

I look forward to hearing your stories or suggestions of potential interviewees to seek ways to record more of these stories for our future generations. ♦

JOIN THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL ASSOCIATION!

Join, renew, or purchase a gift membership on-line at oldspanishtrail.org. Or, make your check out to OSTA and send this form to:

OSTA Membership Coordinator
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First Chapter Affiliation (no charge)

☐ New member ☐ Renewal

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____



The National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management co-administer the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. OSTA closely consults with the Co-Administrators and other land managers and landowners.
oldspanishtrail.org



If desired, please **indicate additional chapter memberships** by checking below. First chapter affiliation is included with basic membership fee. Second or more chapter affiliations at \$5 each. You are free to join any chapter you have an interest in without regard to where you live.

- ☐ **Southern Utah** (Cedar City, UT area)
- ☐ **Red Pueblo** (Kanab, UT area)
- ☐ **Fish Lake** (Central UT area)
- ☐ **Salida del Sol** (New Mexico area)
- ☐ **Nevada** (Nevada area)
- ☐ **North Branch** (Central CO area)
- ☐ **La Vereda del Norte** (South-central CO area)
- ☐ **Tecopa** (East Mojave Desert CA area)
- ☐ **Mojave River** (West Mojave Desert CA area)
- ☐ **Agua Mansa** (Riverside/San Bernardino CA area)
- ☐ **Armijo** (Arizona area)
- ☐ **William Workman**
(Special interest chapter / Great Britain)
- ☐ **Descendants and Travelers of the Trail**
(Special interest chapter)

Membership Benefits

■ **Spanish Traces** The OSTA journal published three times per year, with well-researched, well-written articles about the trail. Members also receive web-based access to archived, past editions of *Spanish Traces*.

■ **Conference Discounts** on registration fees for OSTA conferences or other events. Speakers, panels, and field trips offer a great opportunity to share, network, strategize Trail management, and enjoy learning more about the Old Spanish Trail.

■ Eligibility to Participate

- Join local chapters to learn, help efforts to preserve and promote in your community.
- Various committees focused on stewardship, research, education, and interpretation.
- And much more!

Visit oldspanishtrail.org today!

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CHAPTER REPORT

The Iconic “Muddy River Crossing” along the OST

By Ashley Hall, Nevada Chapter / Past President, OSTA

One of the most iconic locations along the Old Spanish Trail is the intersection of the OST and the Muddy River, located just south of the Mormon Mesa where OST traders, migrant caravans, and historic mountain man figures like John C. Fremont and Kit Carson conducted rendezvous with members of the Moapa Tribe on their way to and from California. There are three OST Markers within the small basin of the Muddy River. Marker #8 is in front of the AM/PM store at Glendale; #9 is along the railroad spur that runs between Glendale to the Reed Gardner Power Plant; and #10 is along Hidden Valley highway,

which runs from I-15 just south of Glendale to the Moapa Indian Reservation.

The Muddy River was the final watering hole the travelers had as they moved toward the Las Vegas Springs. This is the longest space along the OST without water — 50 miles. The California Wash and Muddy River were very important locations along the OST through what is today southern Nevada.

With this bit of history in mind, we were pleased to have one of the Eagle Scout candidates who volunteered to help replace two of the three OST Markers along the Muddy River Crossing. Derek Cope from Logandale, Nevada, along with his Boy Scout Troop and

leaders and friends gathered to replant Marker #8 and Marker #10.

The Nevada Chapter of the OSTA made the Marker Replacement a 10-year project, from 2010 to 2020; we are excited to inform our friends that we have only two more Eagle Scout Projects left prior to our completion (27 in all). The remaining Eagle Scout candidates are the sons of Nicole Marie Dominguez, the President of the NV Chapter and grandsons of yours truly — Jay and Deivy Dominguez. They were with us at the beginning when they were just seven and five years old! Like other iconic OST projects, this has been a process, not an event! ♦



Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval and Eagle Scout Candidate Thad Erickson unveil the new Old Spanish Trail Replacement Marker at the kickoff ceremony for Nevada's Sesquicentennial Celebration (2014) on October 30, 2013 at the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Parks in Las Vegas.

The new markers will replace the damaged, stolen, or destroyed Centennial Markers that were placed along the OST through southern Nevada as part of the state's Centennial Celebration in 1964.



L to R: Dr. Elizabeth V. Warren (NV past-director), Ashley J. Hall (OSTA past-president), Samantha Kost (recent archaeology graduate from UNLV)



*Old Spanish Trail Marker #22 replacement
March 29, 2014, southeast of Blue Diamond, NV*

L to R: Nicole Marie Dominguez (NV Chapter president), Stan Plum (BLM archaeologist), Ashley Hall (OSTA past-president)



OST Nevada Centennial Marker #7, located on the southwest edge of the Mormon Mesa, adjacent to I-15 just north of Glendale, NV. Photo taken October 19, 2014 as part of a tour from Las Vegas to the Mormon Mesa during the 2014 OSTA Conference in Las Vegas.

L to R: David Fallowfield and Bill Ramsey, secretary and president of the British OSTA Chapter in Penrith, England; also Ashley Hall, (OSTA past-president)



Hidden Valley Ranch near Glendale, NV (location of John C. Fremont's camp in 1844 at the crossing of the Muddy River and the California Wash along the OST).

Derek Cope (kneeling), Eagle Scout Candidate along with his Eagle Project Committee, including: his father Mike Cope (far left), his Scout Master Lynn Jensen (sixth from left), advisor Rolland Leavitt (second from right), members of his Scout Troop Committee, and Ashley Hall, (OSTA past-president, far right).

The Case of the Missing Obelisk

By Nicole Dominguez, President, Nevada Chapter

Many have heard the story of Scoop Garside and the 31 obelisks he cemented into the ground in 1964 to mark the Old Spanish Trail in Nevada. Over the years, these obelisks have been shot at, run over, displaced by the government, and — who knows? — perhaps even stolen. Keeping track of them has been the hobby of many people over the years. Finding them all has been nearly impossible. Until now.

Ashley Hall of the OST Nevada Chapter (also my father) has made it a priority to find, and replace if necessary, those 31 original obelisks. With the help of Harold Steiner, Old Spanish Trail expert and late Nevada Chapter member, Ashley had succeeded in finding all but one original obelisk: the one located in Pahrump, NV.

In late January, 2019, I received a phone call from an out-of-town area code. Wondering who it was, I answered. The woman on the other end sounded friendly. She asked for me and identified herself as Marilyn Davis, the director of the Pahrump Valley Museum in Pahrump, Nevada. She then began telling me a story.

A long-time resident of Pahrump had recently passed away, and his house and several acres of property sold. The new owner was now busy cleaning out the house and extensive acreage. Workers using bulldozers had come upon a six-foot-tall concrete obelisk. Engraved into it was “Old Spanish Trail, 1820-1849.”

The thought of the missing obelisk flashed into my mind. Could this actually be it?

Not knowing exactly what the object was, but believing it to be some sort of historical marker, the workers contacted the museum. Marilyn then contacted the Nevada Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail. She knew about OST because the museum has an extensive display, explaining the beginnings, purpose, and evolution of the trail and its many facets involving traders, emigrants, and eventually the modern American traveler. The display also includes maps, pictures, and a few artifacts. I could tell Marilyn had a respect for our dear old trail, and I was happy to hear that the Pahrump Museum was telling people about it.

I told her a short version of the story of Scoop Garside and how we had replaced obelisks, with the exception of the missing one from Pahrump. I told her I believed this to be that missing obelisk.

That the obelisk had been in someone’s backyard for the past few decades, no one knowing it was there, was unreal. That it had been happened upon during excavation and upheaval was even more unreal.

Hesitatingly, Marilyn asked me what the Nevada Chapter wanted to do with it. The thought came to my mind right away — what better place for it than the Pahrump Museum? So I asked her what plans she might have for it.

“Well,” she said cautiously, “we’d love to put it in our museum, along with the rest of our display on the Old Spanish Trail.”

I told her I thought that was a perfect idea, but I’d have to ask the rest of our Chapter officers to make sure we were all agreed. She said we’d have to ask quickly, as the property owner didn’t want to hold on to it for very long. I told her I would call her later that day when I had the answer. As luck — or destiny — would have it we were having a meeting that very afternoon. I told my fellow officers the amazing story, and also asked my dad if he thought this was the missing obelisk.

“Yes Nicole, I believe it is,” was his happy reply.

As soon as we all agreed to let the Pahrump Museum take the 55-year-old obelisk, I called with the good news. The man who answered the phone said that Marilyn was busy at the moment, but that he could help me. I told the man who I was and that I was calling to let Marilyn know that the Nevada Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail had unanimously agreed the obelisk would find a good home at the Pahrump Museum.

“Oh good!” he exclaimed, “‘cuz we already moved it here and that thing sure is heavy!”

The no-longer-missing obelisk can now be seen in its new home, Pahrump Valley Museum, at 401 E. Basin Ave., Pahrump, NV. ♦

CHAPTER REPORT

DESCENDANTS & TRAVELERS OF THE TRAIL CHAPTER

By **Conchita Marusich**, Chapter President

We would like to update the OSTA membership on the very full and exciting first year of our new Descendants & Travelers of the Trail Chapter, formed in October of 2017. Highlights of the chapter since its beginning 15 months ago:

- We gave our PowerPoint presentation *Discovering the Descendants & Travelers of the Trail* at the 2017 OSTA conference in Barstow, CA. Very successful, it brought in a number of new members.
- The chapter started with 10 charter members and has grown to 26! Our members span the globe from England through the United States.
- Our Profiles Project, which included 10 profiles written by our members, was published on the OSTA website and has been shared on the Chapter's Facebook page as well as on others.
- The Descendants & Travelers of the Trail Chapter (D&TTC) Facebook group now has 429 members and is steadily increasing. We have raised the public's awareness of the Trail through our many posts and discussions.
- The chapter Newsletter, *In Our Own Words*, launched its third edition, filled with interesting articles and poetry written by our members. We look forward to publishing another soon.
- Our officers: Conchita Marusich, President; Cecelia Peña, Vice-President; Elaine Martinez, Secretary; Rich Marusich, Treasurer

Our chapter is open to both descendants as well as anyone who has an interest in those people who traveled the Old Spanish Trail. If you would like to receive our newsletter or join our chapter (we are a fun group!), please email us at ancestortraveler@gmail.com. ♦



Descendants & Travelers of the Trail Chapter members enjoying dinner at the 2017 Barstow conference. L to R: Cecelia Peña, Alex King, Suzanne Mecklenborg, Mary Anne Pentis, Lenny Trujillo, the late Pat Kuhlhof, Conchita Marusich, Lisa Valdez-Bonney, Nancy Melendez, Rich Marusich

CHAPTER REPORT

TRIBUTE TO PAT KUHLMHOFF

From Lisa Valdez-Bonney



L to R: Pat Kuhlhoff and
Lisa Valdez-Bonney

My good friend Pat Kuhlhoff passed away on November 20, 2018. We will all miss her. I joined the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA) 12 years ago at her encouragement. She was my traveling

companion for all our national conferences, as well as being the driver. Without exception I learned so much from her.

I want to express my gratitude for Pat. She was an invaluable part of OSTA and served as the president of the Salida del Sol chapter for many years. Her volunteer work throughout Santa Fe was

a great help to numerous organizations. She took on the task of helping to organize the Three Trails Conference in Santa Fe, which was a huge success thanks to her hard work and communication with members of the other Trails.

Pat's accomplishments and contributions to the history of New Mexico are exemplary. Although she struggled for the past two years with health issues, she continued to be an active participant in field trips and conferences.

On December 15, 2018, we had our final farewell to Pat. The Kiva Chapel of Light, where services were held, was full of friends and family. Her tributes and contributions were expressed by members of her organizations and friends.

There will never be another Pat. She deserves a million thanks for all the work and contributions she made to OSTA. I know I speak for others as well as myself. ♦

The author is a member of the Descendants & Travelers of the Trail Chapter and the Salida del Sol Chapter.



Thinking about giving to the Old Spanish Trail Association?

We have several opportunities for you to help your trail - research, preservation, education!

- The Pat Kuhlhoff Education Fund
- General fund for research, preservation
- Publications
- Remember us in your Estate Planning

Visit ostastore.com today

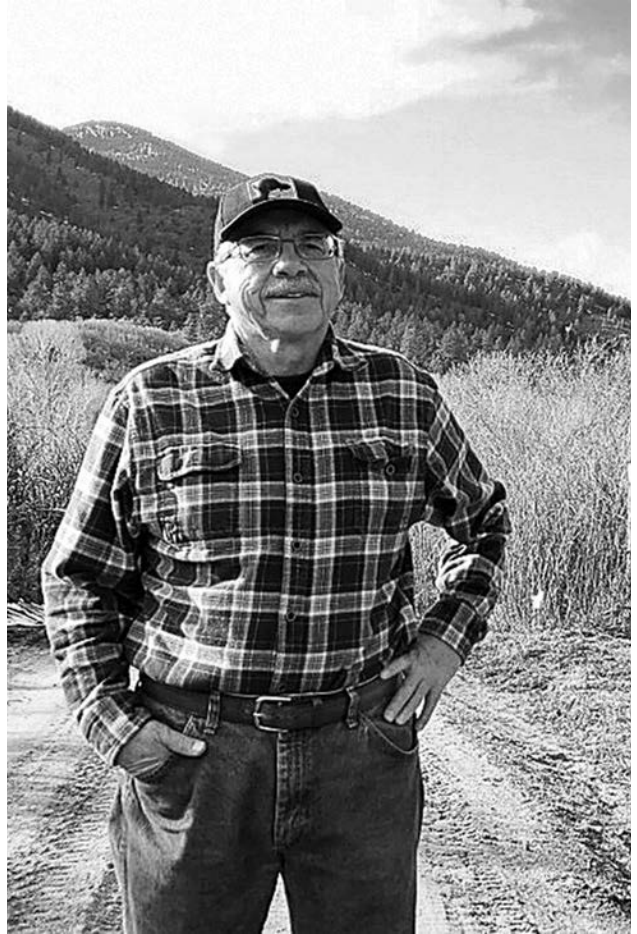
All donations are tax deductible within the guidelines, regulations, and requirements of the Internal Revenue Service. Always seek the advice of your accountant or financial planner.



Pablo Vigil, Salida del Sol Chapter President

Newly-appointed president Pablo Vigil says of his association with OSTA, "The main reason I got interested in OSTA was when I found out that my great-great-grandfather's brother was a commandante on two caravans that brought more than 4,000 horses and mules over the Old Spanish Trail in 1841 and 1848. To think about the amount of men and hard work involved in accomplishing such a task is very mind-boggling to me. To keep this history alive and let people know that these events actually happened is something I want to do. I feel very proud that my ancestors and those of many other New Mexicans were able to do these things."

Pablo Vigil, M.D. was born in Espanola, NM. He graduated from UNM School of Medicine in 1976. Pablo has lived and worked in Las Vegas, NM for the past 30 years. He is married and has three children and five grandchildren. His free time is spent outdoors, hiking and fishing. According to Pablo, "New Mexico has been extremely good to me and my family. I love living here and thank God I do."



OSTA Awarded Gold Seal

The Old Spanish Trail Association was recently recognized for our transparency with a 2018 Gold Seal on our GuideStar Nonprofit Profile! GuideStar is the world's largest source of information on nonprofit organizations. More than 8 million visitors per year and a network of 200+ partners use GuideStar data to grow support for nonprofits. In order to get the Gold Seal, The Old Spanish Trail Association shared important information with the public using our profile on www.guidestar.org. Now our community members and potential donors can find in-depth information about our goals, strategies, capabilities, and progress. We're shining a spotlight on the difference we help make in the world.

Recent Documentation of Routes of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail in Colorado

By Jonathon C. Horn, Michael J. Prouty, and Connor C. Johnen
Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc. / Montrose, Colorado

Introduction

In 2010 and 2011, Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (Alpine) of Montrose, Colorado participated in the National Historic Trails Project as a consultant for AECOM. A large part of this project was examining high priority segments of the Old Spanish Trail (OST) on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land in California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. Alpine examined 204 miles of high priority sections of the trail in Utah and 69 miles in Colorado. Because the project focused only on select areas of BLM land, this left a large number of potential trail segments unexamined on private, state, U.S. Forest Service, and BLM lands. Interest in documenting these unexamined portions of the trail has been high, particularly on U.S. Forest Service and BLM lands. Alpine has continued to have an interest in documenting unrecorded sections of the trail and has been given numerous opportunities to do so through contracts with the federal agencies, most of which were facilitated by the Interpretive Association of Western Colorado (IAWC) and the PaleoCultural Research Group (PCRG). Following are summaries of work carried out by Alpine on five sections of the North Branch

of the Old Spanish Trail (North Branch) from 2015 to the present, some of which are along the designated route and some that are on trail routes that could be considered variants of the North Branch (Figure 1).

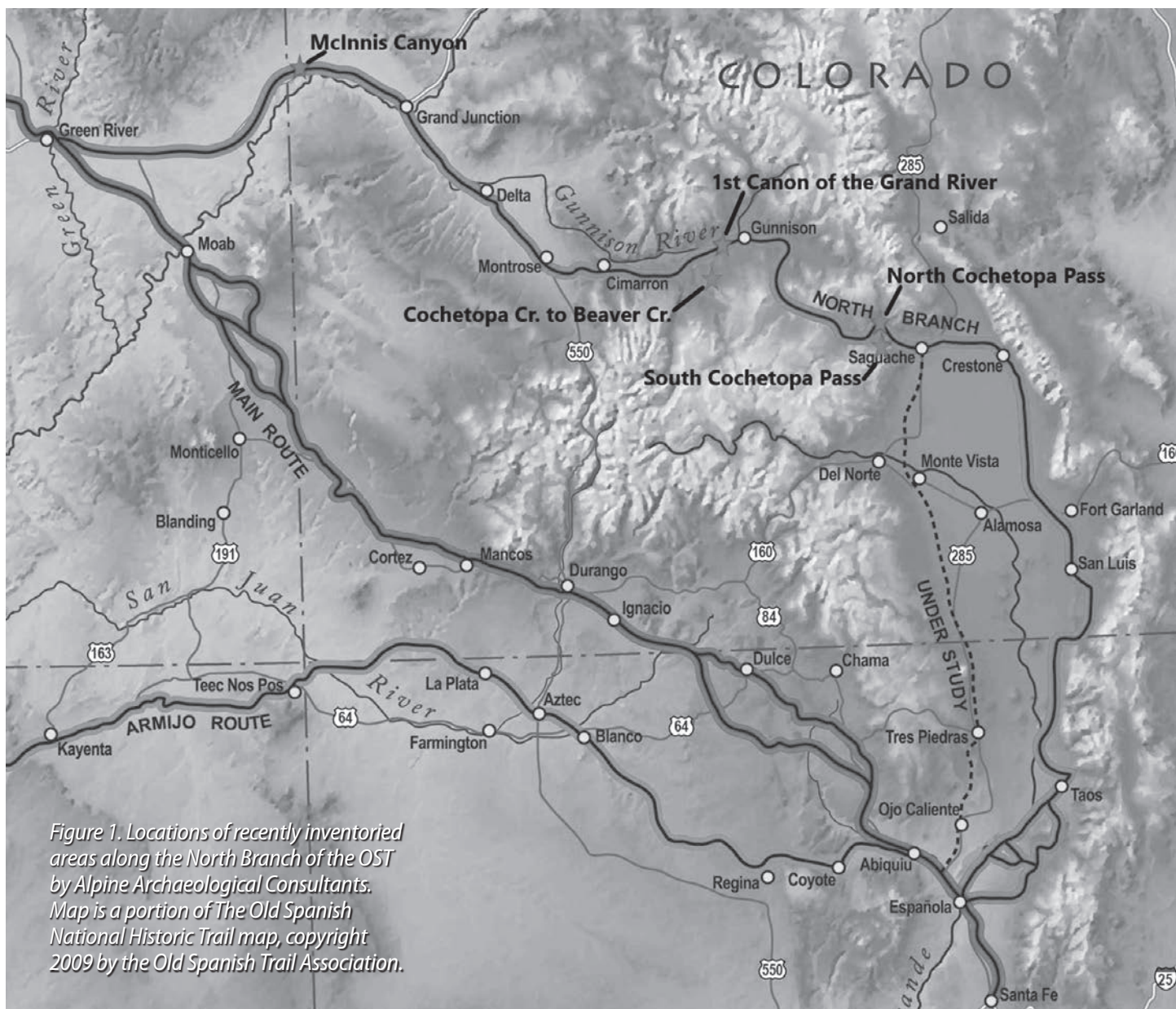
Historical Background

The North Branch is somewhat problematic in the whole scheme of the OST because it does not fit the strict definition of the OST as a National Historic Trail, which is that the OST was a commercial trade route between New Mexico and California by which woolen goods were taken to California and horses and mules were brought back (slaves actually went both directions).¹ Although it was never a caravan route, the North Branch was certainly an important travel route for trade with the Utes all along the route, for trappers, for exploration, for military movement and communication, and, later, for local transportation. Early trade focused on Utah Lake as an important trade center with the Ute and other Native American groups with the North Branch serving as a funnel for trade to the Wasatch Front and beyond from New Mexico.

The North Branch of the OST was established by trappers moving north from Taos through the San

Luis Valley into the mountains of Colorado and continuing northwestward into the Uintah Basin and onward to Utah Lake/Salt Lake.²⁻⁷ Clearly they were using a linkage of Indian trails that date into prehistory that were also used by residents of northern New Mexico to trade with the Utes farther north in what is now Colorado and Utah. Although a few travelers may have used the North Branch as part of the route to make a complete crossing from New Mexico to southern California (as demonstrated by Gwin Harris Heap in 1853), others, like the Whitman Party and several of the military expeditions, used it to travel to and from the Salt Lake Valley and continue westward on other routes. Fur traders were mostly interested in using it to access trapping/trading areas and not as a thoroughfare.^{3,5,6,7} Antoine Roubidoux used it to supply his posts at Fort Uncompahgre near present Delta, Colorado, and Fort Uinta in the Uintah Basin of Utah.^{8,9} Some movement of horses and mules probably took place, along with some movement of slaves, but this was probably minimal in comparison to transport of trade goods into the area and furs and hides out of the region.¹⁰

After the collapse of the fur trade in the early 1840s, the



route probably saw little use until the early 1850s. Beginning in about 1851, large bands of sheep were moved along the route to supply California miners.¹¹ This may have lasted only until approximately 1853. Lt. Edward Beale used the route on his way to become the Indian Agent for California in 1853.^{12,13} This was only a couple of months before the Gunnison Expedition that was tasked with surveying a potential transcontinental railroad route.¹⁴

The Gunnison Expedition was the first to traverse the general route with wagons. Deviations from the North Branch were necessary because of the wagons, but Gunnison stuck tightly to established North Branch routes when he could and varied from them when necessary. The account of the expedition is the best known of the early descriptions of travel through the region. The route used by the Beale Expedition on the western side of Cochetopa Pass

diverged westward at Cochetopa Creek from the route used a few months later by Gunnison. Beale and Heap crossed Cebolla Creek and the Lake Fork of the Gunnison on their way to present-day Cimarron and over Cerro Summit into the Uncompahgre Valley.¹³ The Gunnison Expedition took a more northerly route from Cochetopa Creek, generally following Razor Creek to Tomichi Creek through present-day Gunnison and continued westward

along the Gunnison River to the Sapinero area, now under Blue Mesa Reservoir. To that point, the expedition seems to have been on a legitimate variant of the North Branch. When they turned southward to avoid entering the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, they were on a route of their own making that took them onto Sapinero Mesa, across the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River, and onto Blue Mesa where their route connected a short distance east of Cimarron with the more regularly traveled pack trail route taken by Beale.¹⁴

The continuation of the North Branch variant that Gunnison had taken as far as Sapinero probably exited the Gunnison River Valley northward and crossed Black Mesa through the present-day Crawford area and down the North Fork of the Gunnison to rejoin the trail from the Uncompahgre Valley near the ford of the Gunnison River in the vicinity of Roubidoux's Fort Uncompahgre.^{5,7} Such a trail is depicted on the Hayden Expedition map of 1877. This northerly route passes through very rugged country, more so than to the south along the route that Gunnison devised. It was not until the 1880s that a wagon road north of the river was established following the general course of the existing trail.

The route taken southward from the Sapinero area of the Gunnison River by the Gunnison Expedition was improved as a military wagon road by Col. William W. Loring in 1858¹⁵ and was often referred to as the Government Road or Salt Lake

Road.¹⁶ It included the new connection that Gunnison had established across the Lake Fork of the Gunnison that was not a route of the North Branch, but linked variants of the North Branch.

Gunnison's Route around the First Cañon of the Grand River

On May 24, 2015, Jack Pfertsh, Mike Prouty, Jon Horn, and Seth Frame documented a 2.52-mile-long segment of the route taken by the 1853 Gunnison Expedition that is now on land administered by BLM-Gunnison Field Office.¹⁷ Land east of the documented segment is on land administered by the National Park Service as the Curecanti National Conservation Area and private property, so it was the western portion of the route that we were able to record. The route bypasses what the Gunnison Expedition referred to as the "First Cañon of the Grand River," which is the canyon that U.S. Highway 50 traverses along the Gunnison River between the eastern end of Blue Mesa Reservoir and the town of Gunnison. At the time that the Gunnison Expedition passed through the area, it was not possible to follow the river through the canyon with wagons as the highway does today. Instead, on September 7, 1853, the expedition crossed to the southern side of the river at the head of the canyon, near the current Cooper Ranch fishing access where South Beaver Creek enters the river from the south, and climbed southwestward onto the eastern side of Big Mesa. The undulating mesa top on the northern portion of the mesa was

not difficult to traverse, except for the "everlasting sage, which was large and rank..." (Beckwith 1854:50). Beckwith described this portion of the journey:

After making 3.25 miles over the hills, passing the heads of ravines, we came upon a precipitous descent, the first cañon having terminated, and an open grassy valley succeeding for two miles. We had ascended, in this short distance, 735 feet above the head of the cañon, or 715 feet above our morning camp. We had, therefore, to make, in a few hundred yards, a descent nearly equal to this ascent, on a natural grade of about one foot in five, full of igneous rocks of all sizes, from fragments and projecting masses, to mighty ledges. The loose surface stones removed, we attached ropes to the first wagon, which, to prevent accidents, was held by a number of men. It arrived safely at the bottom of the hill, 547 feet below, and half a mile distant; and we dispensed with ropes, and descended with the remainder of the wagon, separated by a few yards, and soon reached and again crossed the river.¹⁴

When Colonel Loring reached this section as he improved Gunnison's route in 1858, he noted the steep section on the western side of Big Mesa and the gradual descent beyond back to the Gunnison River. He described the route as an "ascent of a mountain ridge, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to its crest, steep in four places. A gradual descent of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles to Grand River [Gunnison River] (just before reaching the river crossed Phantom creek [South Beaver Creek], it comes out of a canon near camp and runs

northerly into the river)."¹⁵ A scout group of the Loring Expedition, led by Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois, provided an account of the route as well. Du Bois noted that the route diverged south "by another long detour to the right [which] avoided a deep cañon through which Grand River breaks. The descent to the river again was dangerous."¹⁸

the pass and to explain where the confusion originated and what the historical reality is.

Three distinct routes were documented from the top of the pass to the forest boundary at private land several miles to the west. These were distinctly separate routes at the top of the pass, became overlapping near the base of the pass, and then became

differentiated into separate routes again. The oldest of the routes was that of the North Branch of the OST/1853 Beale Expedition Route/1853 Gunnison Expedition Route/1858 Col. Loring Military Wagon Road/Salt Lake Road and will be referred to hereafter as simply the North Branch. As can be seen by the name, the route was used extensively during early travel over the pass and certainly originated as an Indian trail. The route is known to be present on the east-southeast side of the pass, but was not recorded in 2016 because it is on the Rio Grande National Forest. The section we documented begins about 400 ft. below the top of North Cochetopa Pass and about 50 ft. from a pullout on the west side of Highway 114. The upper portion of the route is traceable as a U-shaped, 8–9-ft.-wide wagon road swale that has an average depth of 1–1½ ft. (Figure 4).



Figure 2. Undulating top of Big Mesa along the route traveled by the 1853 Gunnison Expedition to bypass the First Cañon of the Grand River.

Routes on the Western Side of North Cochetopa Pass

Jack Pfertsh and Jon Horn looked at routes on the western side of North Cochetopa Pass for the Gunnison National Forest on September 26 and 27, 2016.¹⁹ There has been considerable confusion by some of the identification of the historic Cochetopa Pass. In addition to allowing us to document three different routes on the western side of the pass, the project gave us the opportunity to look into the history of travel over



Figure 3. Steep, rocky drop off of Big Mesa toward Willow Creek and the Gunnison River. Note Blue Mesa Reservoir and a section of State Highway 149 to Lake City near Iola at the far right. View is to the west.



Figure 4. Upper end of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail/1853 Beale Expedition Route/1853 Gunnison Expedition Route/1858 Col. Loring Military Wagon Road/Salt Lake Road just below the crest of Cochetopa Pass.

Water running downslope in the wagon road has eroded the swale to a depth of 2–3 ft. in places giving it more of a V-shape profile. The route runs relatively straight down the densely forested hillslope on the northern side of an ephemeral drainage. As the slope begins to lessen, it passes through an aspen stand. Here, the route is traceable as a mostly level, 10–12-ft.-wide path cut through the aspens. As the route continues through the aspen stand, its northwestern end converges with the Saguache to Gunnison Wagon Road, a parallel route that also becomes visible near the top of the pass.

The Saguache to Gunnison Wagon Road was evidently built in 1878 or 1879, but was not heavily used after completion of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad to Gunnison in 1881. It is first visible near the top of the pass, about 180 ft. south of the upper end of the North Branch on the

pass; it runs generally parallel to, and about 50 ft. southwest, of the earlier route. It is a direct route that was not graded and was probably necessary because of rutting and erosion of the earlier route. The initial 0.3 miles of the route appears as a shallow, dish-shaped alignment up to 1½ ft. deep and about 12 ft. wide with very small trees growing up in its path. Water runoff down the road has resulted in it becoming more in-filled with rock and up to 2½ ft. deep after

about 300 ft. Farther downslope, the route decreases in steepness and becomes somewhat difficult to follow because it is a shallow swale and covered in places with fallen trees. At some time in the past (perhaps in the 1960s or 1970s), the route was used as a recreational trail, as several i-blazed trees (standard Forest Service tree blazes) mark the route and sections of some fallen trees have been cut to allow passage. After about 950 ft., five carved aspen trees were encountered on a 125-ft.-long section of the route. The southernmost of these includes a very clear 1893 date (Figure 5), and the northernmost has a very clear May 17, 1895 date and a possible 1896 date. As the route enters the aspen grove, it intersects with the route of the North Branch and takes over the earlier roadbed for about 575 ft., appearing as a 10-ft.-wide, 1-ft.-deep swale with rocks cleared from its path along the southern side. This section is crossed by the more recent, graded route of the Old Cochetopa Pass Road.



Figure 5. Carved aspen tree along the Saguache to Gunnison Road with a clear 1893 date.

The Old Cochetopa Pass Road begins on the western shoulder of Highway 114 about 675 ft. down the northern side of the summit of North Cochetopa Pass. The initial section of the road is 18 ft. wide with an uphill cut about 4–5 ft. tall and downslope fill along its southwestern edge about 6 in.–1 ft. deep. This upper portion of the route is wider than downslope, farther west, probably to allow wagons or automobiles to pass one another more easily on the steeper grade. Small trees are growing in the roadbed and, where the road passes just below the current highway, the eastern portion of the roadbed has been partly covered by highway fill. Once beyond the steep upper section, the road makes a pronounced bend to the west and crosses a small tributary of West Pass Creek. After the westward bend, the 12–14-ft.-wide, 1½-ft.-deep roadbed passes through a stand of aspen. Several aspen have fallen in its path and many carved aspen trees are present on both sides of the road. Dates associated with the inscriptions range from 1897 to 1957. It is important to note that trees along the Saguache to Gunnison Wagon Road have dates of 1893 to 1896, indicating that the Saguache to Gunnison Wagon Road was replaced by the Old Cochetopa Pass Road in 1897. Near the western end of the aspen grove, the road crosses and then intersects the two earlier routes.

Westward from the aspen grove, the combined routes enter the eastern end of a broad,

open, linear park along the northern side of a narrow valley formed by a small tributary of Lujan Creek. It is quite pronounced as a 10-ft.-wide cut excavated into the slope of a southwestern-facing hill. The road continues northwestward through the park on contour midway along the hillslope. The route is easily followed farther to the northwest through the open park, and sagebrush lines the downslope edge of some sections, probably due to concentrated moisture from road runoff. Where the road bends more northward to reach the upper portion of Lujan Creek, the North Branch turns westward down a rather steep slope to reach the southern side of the creek. Just beyond this divergence, the Old Cochetopa Pass Road continues in a north-northwestward direction and the Saguache to Gunnison Wagon Road diverges from the western side and runs parallel immediately downslope, both on their way to crossings to the northern side of Lujan Creek.

Upon diverging westward from the two more recent routes, the North Branch runs 720 ft. down a rather steep slope and terrace to reach the southern side of Lujan Creek. This more direct travel down steep terrain is typical of early routes that began as pack trails. Diverging sections of the route on both sides of the central trail route show the difficulties of traveling on the steep slope. Short alternative sections of trail developed where erosion of the original route made travel difficult or impossible. On the very western

edge of the terrace, is a 3-x-3½-ft. pile of loosely stacked native stones just over 1 ft. high with an axe-cut post lying to the south that likely marked the route as it ascended/descended the terrace. By turning westward down the steep route, the North Branch did not have to cross Lujan Creek and stayed on the southern side of Lujan and West Pass creeks for several miles to at least the forest boundary.

Once at the base of the slope, the route can only be traced for a short distance onto the floodplain on the southern side of Lujan Creek. After crossing an unnamed tributary of Lujan Creek, a hard, compact surface was observed at the toe of the northwest-facing slope. It is likely that this compact surface is the result of travel. Travel along the toe of slopes above drainages was typically the route taken by travelers along drainages, as they were the most level courses above boggy areas of the valley bottoms. These areas are also prone to slope wash that obscures evidence of travel routes by covering them with soil. The entire route from the upper floodplain of Lujan Creek and beyond its junction with West Pass Creek to the western end of the forest boundary was examined. No evidence of the trail or wagon road was found for 2.8 miles until just northwest of Salaya Creek. Along that stretch, the route crosses tributary streams Pine Creek, Spring Creek, and Salaya Creek. Even though physical evidence of the route is not visible, probably because of soil covering it from slope wash, the route is easily

traversed along its entire length. Where grazing is extensive, it is kept clear by grazing cattle and is used by them as a primary travel route. The only access point from Highway 114 along this stretch is Pine Creek Road, below the confluence of Pine Creek and above the confluence of Spring Creek. Where Pine Creek Road turns eastward along the toe of the slope above Lujan Creek, it is probably on or just above the

are growing and the main valley of West Pass Creek is returned to, whereupon the remains of an axe-cut-log hay enclosure is encountered that was built sometime after about 1900.

From the log enclosure westward, a 6-ft.-wide pathway can be seen at the toe of slope with sage above and some sage and shrubby cinquefoil in and to the sides. Its visibility is probably the result of the historic route

be seen about 200 ft. farther west as a 6–8-ft.-wide faint path below the grade road that then passes through barrier boulders probably placed to protect a riparian area along the southern side of West Pass Creek. West of the barrier boulders, the route becomes very visible as a two-track in a shallow swale passing through sage and rabbitbrush. It continues to a grassy area where it becomes rather indistinct just before the crossing of the graded gravel County Road 17GG that extends south and southwestward from Highway 114; a large area map is posted on a sign board at the approximate intersection. On the west side of County Road 17GG, the route continues, rather indistinctly at first in a grassy area, then more prominently as two parallel paths through the sagebrush. Where the route exits the sagebrush and again enters a grassy area just northwest of County Road 17GG, it cannot be seen for about 0.2 miles until it intersects with the eastern end of a former two-track road heading west and northwest for 0.6 miles to the forest boundary at private land (Figure 6).



Figure 6. The rutted route of an old two-track road through open flats near the western end of the recorded route near the forest boundary.

historic route for about 0.3 miles.

As Salaya Creek is approached from the south-southeast, the valley is constricted by heavy willow growth and a rocky ridge. The nose of the ridge appears somewhat truncated, which may indicate passage of the route. The route could not have passed through a very boggy area at the mouth of Salaya Creek, so had to have turned westward up the drainage for a short distance to a point where it could be crossed where several large spruce trees

continuing to be used since the early 1900s to access the hay enclosure from the west. The route becomes more and more distinct with distance westward. After about 0.85 miles, the route intersects a dirt road from the west and a road heading upslope to the south where flashers prevent access by vehicles eastward on the historic route. From this point, the historic route is obliterated for about 100 ft. by the dirt road from the west, then diverges from the northern side of the road and can

History of Routes over Cochetopa Pass

Formal U.S. government exploration of the route of the North Branch of the OST through the Rocky Mountains and into Utah can be tied directly to the interest of Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, who was convinced that the best and most direct route through the Rocky Mountains and to the

Pacific was through Colorado by way of Cochetopa Pass on what was termed the Central Route. As a result, when different alignments were proposed for exploration to determine the best route for a transcontinental railroad, Benton made sure that the Central Route was included. Lt. Edward Beale used the route on his way to become the Indian Agent for California in 1853, just a few months before the Gunnison Expedition also followed the general route of the North Branch.^{12,13} The Beale Expedition, traveling on horseback, had little difficulty traversing North Cochetopa Pass on June 19, 1853, hardly making mention of the crossing beyond noting it as a divide that separated water flowing east to the Gulf of Mexico from those flowing west to the Gulf of California. Passing quickly westward to Cochetopa Creek, mention is only made of the rounded hills and the grassy, well-watered meadows.¹³ Within three months of the Beale Expedition, the Gunnison Expedition with 18 wagons passed through the region using Antoine Leroux as their guide. Their final ascent of Cochetopa Pass was on September 2, 1853 and required lead work parties to cut out aspen trees on both sides of the pass. After removing trees from 0.25 miles of the route on the western side, they entered an "open prairie" and camped a mile farther downslope "in a fine field of grass, where two or three mountain rills, coming from as many small valleys, unite."¹⁴ The next day, they

noted that the route down "Pass Creek" was crossed by several side drainages and, after 4 miles, opened to a wide valley on the south. This valley is what is now known as Cochetopa Park, east of Cochetopa Dome.

In 1858, Colonel William Loring was tasked with improving a route from Camp Floyd, near Salt Lake City, to Fort Union, New Mexico to facilitate troop movement during what has been termed the Mormon War.¹⁷ Traveling from west to east from Camp Floyd with 50 wagons and 300 men, Loring improved much of the route of the North Branch as a wagon road that became known as the Government Road or the Salt Lake Road. Traveling up West Pass Creek, they crossed the pass with little difficulty, noting only that they cut out "thick pine, balsam and aspen" in order to drive their wagons through. This was necessary because the Gunnison

Expedition had cut just enough trees to get their wagons through.

In 1869, the Los Pinos Agency on the Ute Reservation was placed west of Cochetopa Pass in a very isolated location that was not on any main trail or road. Access to the agency by wagon was over North Cochetopa Pass and then southward on a very rough route along the western side of Cochetopa Dome that was developed solely to access the agency.²⁰

A survey of Township lines was performed in 1873 that included the Cochetopa Pass area (Figure 7). That map shows the route over North Cochetopa Pass, referred to simply as "Cochetope Pass" with the route then turning southward and westward on the eastern and southern sides of "Pass Creek," now known as Lujan Creek, which is a tributary of West Pass Creek. A route farther south simply shows an "Old Indian Trail" over what

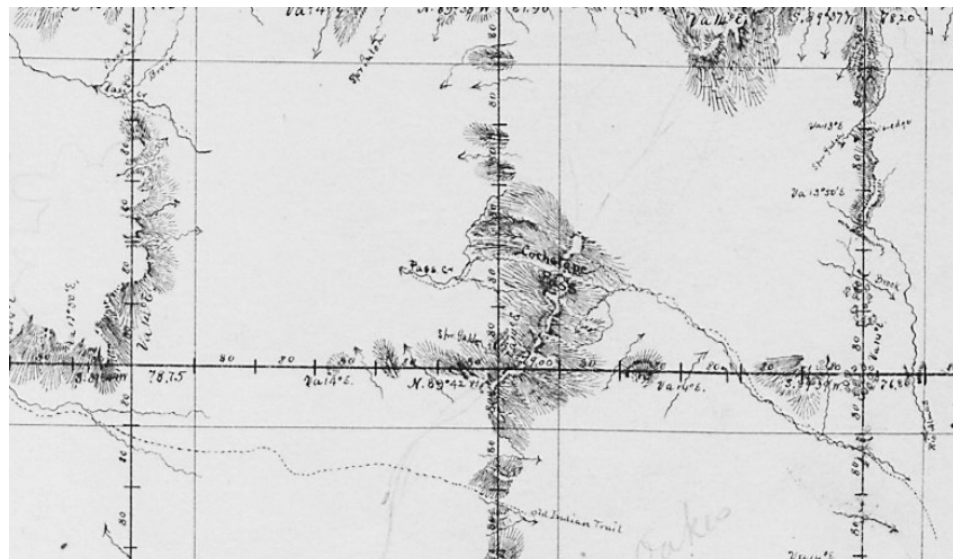


Figure 7. Township line survey of 1873 showing the North Branch of the Spanish Trail/Gunnison Expedition/Loring wagon road route over "Cochetope Pass" and indicating the route as following the southern side of "Pass Creek" (current Lujan Creek and West Pass Creek).



Figure 8. Portion of the 1879 General Land Office plat showing the Saguache to Gunnison Wagon Road crossing North Cochetopa Pass, labeled "Cochetope Pass." The "Old Road" alignment southeast of the pass likely corresponds to the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail improved as the 1858 military wagon road. Also note that by this time, the wagon road route is shown staying on the northern side of Lujan Creek/West Pass Creek on the far left side of the map.

Heap referred to as Carnero Pass in 1853 when the Beale Expedition passed through the area. Heap used this more southerly pass over the Continental Divide on his resupply mission to Taos after the expedition lost all of their supplies in the Gunnison River near Delta, Colorado. In 1874, the Saguache & San Juan Toll Road was built from Saguache over (South) Cochetopa Pass (Heap's Carnero Pass) and became a primary route traveled over the Continental Divide through the region. This route passed by the Los Pinos Agency to the mines of the San Juan Mountains through what became Lake City in 1875 on its way to the upper Animas River, including Animas Forks and Silverton.

In the December 1, 1877 issue of the *Saguache Chronicle*, they

noted that the rapid growth of the Gunnison Valley, including Tomichi and Ohio Creek, had created quite a demand for goods that the merchants of Saguache were anxious to supply. They noted that "the road over the old Government Military Pass, which leads directly into the Gunnison Valley can be made a good road by a little work." It noted that the Cottonwood Pass Road from Colorado Springs was blocked by snow for half the year, so the pass above Saguache should continue to be the main route used to access the Gunnison area.²¹ A few years later, it was noted that the road from Saguache to Gunnison was not a toll road (obliquely referring to the Saguache & San Juan Toll Road to the south, which was a toll road) and was the best and only practical route to take to Gunnison.²¹ This

is graphically shown on Hayden Expedition map of 1877 that used their 1873-1874 data.

Section lines were surveyed for T46N R3E during the fall of 1879 (Figure 8). This shows the Saguache to Gunnison Road built over the pass in 1878 or 1879. The road shown on the 1879 GLO map shows the improved road taking a route on the northern side of West Pass Creek instead of the earlier route on the southern side of the creek shown on the 1873 township line map. This route competed with the toll road Otto Mears built over Marshall Pass to Gunnison in 1880, which was then used as the route of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad to Gunnison in 1881.

The railroad made the road over North Cochetopa Pass obsolete as a commercial route, relegating it to local traffic. Our recording of routes on the western side of the pass shows that the upper portion of the Saguache and Gunnison Road was replaced by a well-graded cut-and-fill road in 1897 that took a slightly different route across the top of the pass and across Lujan Creek/West Pass Creek; we refer to that improved route as the Old Cochetopa Pass Road. The various travel routes in the area are shown on a 1905 map of the area that still shows the northern pass referred to as Cochetopa Pass. In 1914, a state highway, known as the Salida-Gunnison Highway, was constructed across South Cochetopa Pass (the former Carnero Pass); it was designated State Highway 114 in 1923. It is very important to note that until

the highway was routed over the more southerly pass in 1914, North Cochetopa Pass was always referred to as simply Cochetopa Pass. In 1963, the State Highway 114 was changed from South Cochetopa Pass (the former Carnero Pass) to traverse North Cochetopa Pass, most commonly referred to since that time as North Pass, and final paving was done in 1964.²²

The North Branch through McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area

Between October 11 and 28, 2016, Mike Prouty and Randy VanLandingham examined a 408-acre corridor along a 3.5-mile-long section of the North Branch/Salt Lake Wagon Road (SLWR) within the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area west of Fruita, Colorado.²³ The work was done for the BLM–Grand Junction Field Office. This project was different from the other trail projects that Alpine has conducted in that it was a block survey that focused on revisiting and recording sites of all sorts along the trail route in order to get a thorough understanding of all of the cultural resources in the area, not just the trail and its associated sites. Nine of the segments of the North Branch/SLWR had been previously recorded by BLM archaeologist Aline LaForge in 2011²⁴ and were revisited. One new, nearly 5-mile-long, section of the North Branch/SLWR was recorded that continues to be used for transportation. It passes a major landmark along the route known as Castle Rocks that

have inscriptions that date to the later part of the use of the route as the SLWR.

The route through the area is described in two historical accounts. The first was the report of the Beale Expedition through the region in 1853. Heap¹³ described that the journey west of Salt Creek was over “arid hills of sand and sandstone.” Although not detailed, the description does apply to the general topography and setting of the general route. A more detailed description of the area was provided by Loring in 1858 as he improved the route as a wagon road from the west:¹⁷

From here [near the Utah-Colorado state line] to the top the ridge it is two miles, ½ mile from the top of the ridge there is a steep descent and then, one mile of gentle descent to the valley [just east of the Colorado state line]... In advance one mile the road passes through two rocky buttes resembling huge pillars of agate [Castle Rocks], back of them a short

distance water is in an arroyo, where men can get it and animals may be led to it. In the distance of five miles you first pass through a short canon [along McDonald Creek], and then over a soft road, in places sandy...

In the description, Loring notes topographical features along the route through the area that can still be seen. The steep descent that he describes matches the topography in the southern portion of the project area. The description of the “gentle descent to the valley,” the “rocky buttes,” which correspond to Castle Rocks, and “a short canon” (Figure 9), all match identifiable areas along the route. Finally, Loring also describes the route as sandy, which is similar to Heap’s description. The route crosses through stabilized sand dunes and along exfoliating sandstone canyons, both of which contribute to the sandy description of the Beale and Loring accounts.



Figure 9. Looking south at the “short canyon” as described by Loring.

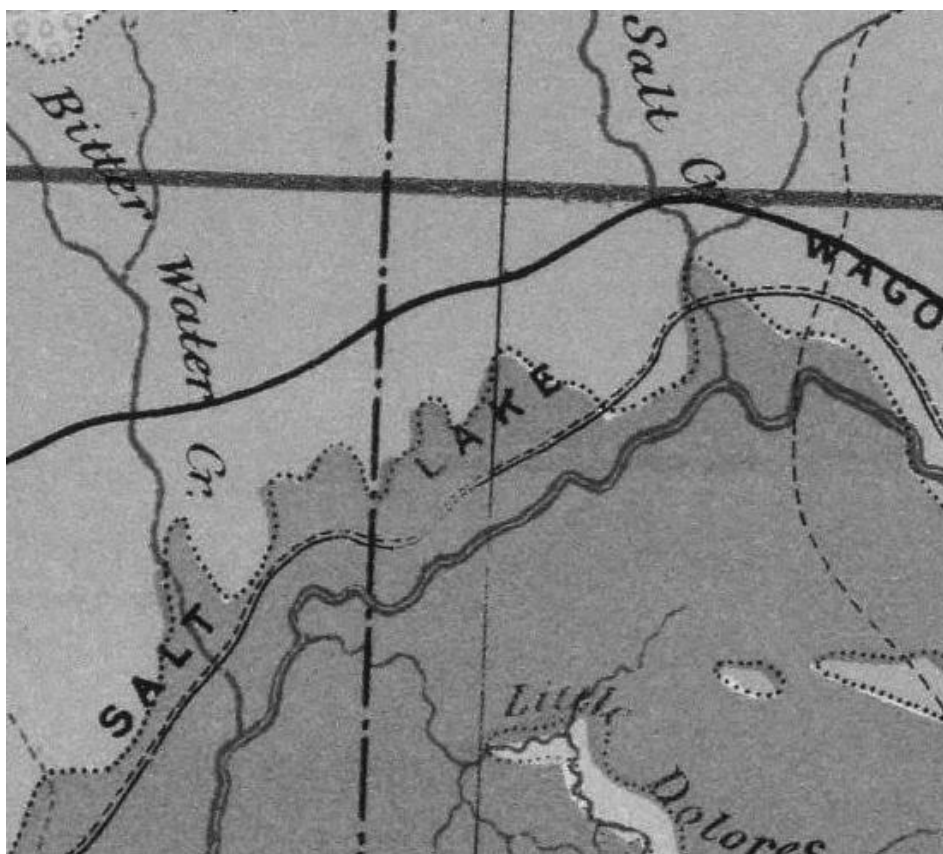


Figure 10. Portion of the 1877 Hayden Expedition map showing the SLWR north of the Colorado River between Salt Creek in Colorado and Bitter Water Creek in Utah.

For a short time, from 1874 to 1878, miners in Ouray, Colorado, found it easier to obtain supplies from the Salt Lake Valley than to bring them across the mountains from Denver or Canon City. They built a wagon road northward along the Uncompahgre River that intersected the military wagon road improved by Loring in 1858 at what became the town of Montrose. They then used Loring's wagon road from that point eastward. The wagon road from Ouray to the Salt Lake Valley then became known as the Salt Lake Wagon Road (often confused with Loring's longer Salt Lake Road), a name used into the 1880s on the General Land Office Plats of the townships through which the

route passed in western Colorado and eastern Utah, as did the 1877 Hayden Expedition (Figure 10).

The historical inscriptions on Castle Rocks include dates that span from 1884 to 1959. The earliest dates correspond to when the SLWR was a major freight and transportation route through the region. Although a prominent landmark, it does not have any inscriptions from the Beale Expedition in 1853 or from Loring's improvement of the route in 1858. Gunnison by-passed this section of the North Branch in 1853 by taking a route farther north because it was not possible to take wagons through the rough canyon country before the route was improved by Loring. No prehistoric rock art is

evident on Castle Rocks. Nearby, a rock art panel along the still-used road through McDonald Canyon has historic inscriptions that date as early as 1888 and Archaic and Historic Ute pictographs, indicating that the canyon served as a travel route into prehistory. Prehistoric sites in the area along the documented route segments further demonstrate the long prehistoric use of the area and as a travel corridor that dates into prehistory.

Filling a Gap between Cochetopa Creek and Beaver Creek

Between September 27 and 29, 2017, Mike Prouty and Shannon Landry examined an 8.2-mile-long gap of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail on the Gunnison National Forest in Saguache County.¹³ The segment was originally identified in 2011, when only the portions that extended onto BLM lands on the eastern and western ends were recorded. The segment is part of the route taken by the 1853 Beale Expedition along the North Branch and was chronicled by Gwinn Harris Heap, who provided abundant details.¹³ The party crossed Cochetopa (North) Pass by way of East Pass Creek and West Pass Creek. After reaching Cochetopa Creek on the western side of the divide, the party reached a division point where a decision was made on which route to take. Here Heap¹³ reported on June 19, 1853:

We were here compelled, by the necessity that we were under of selecting the shortest

route, to go by the trail which takes the most direct course to Grand [Gunnison or Colorado] River, though there was a more circuitous route to the right, leading over a level country, but which would have lengthened the journey by two days.

The route to the right went northward over the divide between Cochetopa Creek and Razor Creek leading to Tomichi Creek. It was the route that the Gunnison Expedition took a few months later because of its ability to accommodate wagons. The Beale Expedition opted for the route to the left that headed in a more direct westerly direction. Heap reported that they traveled 10 miles along the route the same day they reached the division point. The following day, they traveled an additional 22 miles in a “south by west” direction by noon over increasingly hilly country. Later that day, they crossed two branches of what he called the Jaroso, which Heap reported as not appearing on any map and was a strong stream that was a tributary of the Gunnison River.¹³ From his description and the creek’s proximity to the Lake Fork of the Gunnison, which he described the following day, the two forks of the Jaroso are clearly Cebolla Creek and Powderhorn Creek. Because they crossed both drainages, they must have entered the Cebolla Creek Valley by way of Huntsman Gulch or Deldorado Creek, a short distance upstream of the present community of Powderhorn. It is at this point that Heap¹³ relates that:

About a mile before reaching the Jaroso, we crossed a valley where a party of

Americans were cruelly murdered by the Utahs, in the spring of this year. Five Americans, and a few Mexicans, were driving sheep to California by this route, and from some cause which I did not ascertain, a disagreement arose between them and a band of Utahs, who were still here in their winter-quarters.

This is important because it demonstrates that the route was being used as an overland route to California, as would be expected of a branch of the OST. The Beale expedition was on horseback, which afforded them the ability to use the more direct route across the landscape than subsequent travelers using wagons. In contrast, the Gunnison Expedition, later in 1853, had to bypass this direct route because it was not feasible to traverse with wagons. However, Gunnison rejoined Beale’s route farther west on Blue Mesa. Eventually, the route traveled by Beale from Cochetopa Creek to Beaver Creek was, for the most part, abandoned and not utilized for through travel as a result of Loring’s improved wagon route. Some segments of Beale’s route were improved as wagon roads were eventually constructed along the hills just west of Cochetopa Creek and along Beaver Creek for local use. These wagon roads were constructed in a north-south alignment, as the terrain prevented construction of any east-west wagon thoroughfares. East-west travel through the region continued on horseback along the route taken by the Beale Expedition between Cochetopa Creek and Beaver Creek, presumably by sheepherders and cattle ranchers.

The alignment we examined between Cochetopa Creek and Beaver Creek was originally identified using the account of the Beale Expedition, examination of historical maps, and a preliminary assessment of a likely route using USGS maps and aerial photography. The previous work done on BLM land to the east and west in 2011 provided definable points on the ends of the examined route.²⁶ Google Earth aerial images were inspected to create shapefiles of potential trail routes in the area. Important in the preliminary assessment was forest cover. Routes that stayed out of the woods or crossed through forested areas at their narrowest points were considered to be more likely routes of historic travel because down timber is difficult to traverse on horseback. The conjectured trail route identified by the preliminary research served as the project’s reconnaissance inventory corridor. The inventory area varied in width and was created to enable examination of open parks and tree lines in close proximity to the possible trail routes. These areas were thought to have the best potential for trail routes, historical inscriptions, and camp sites associated with the trail.

In addition to Gunnison National Forest land, the segment crosses two parcels of private land that were not examined and through which extrapolated routes were projected. The segment crosses various topographic settings, including open parks and gentle to moderately steep slopes, including crossings of Bead

and Lick creeks. Vegetation varies across the route and includes aspen and conifer forests with a mixed understory and open sagebrush parks. The route crosses or incorporates five modern access roads, the most important of which are Forest Road 789.2A that crosses the middle portion of the segment and Forest Road 786 that crosses the western portion of the segment.

The eastern portion of the segment was originally surveyed in 2011, during the BLM's National Historical Trails project.²⁶ It was originally documented as a 7–10-ft.-wide wagon road, visible as an earthen swale, which corresponds to the route of an 1879 GLO trail beginning on the western side of Cochetopa Creek near the confluence of Alkali Creek and continuing northwestward across Rock and Muddy creeks. At Bead Creek, the route turns westward, does not follow any mapped route, and continues across Lick Park. It then crosses Lick Creek, climbs to a saddle on a moderately steep ridge, crosses Long Park, descends an unnamed drainage to East Beaver Creek, and finally crosses South Beaver Creek. Much of the route passes through open sage parks, and, coupled with modern impacts from cattle ranching, very little evidence of the trail is present. A single intact portion of the trail was found that is visible as a worn path through the aspens; it appears to represent a section of the pack trail as described by the 1854 report of the 1853 Beale Expedition (Heap 1854). Elsewhere, the majority of the recorded route

follows the most likely trajectory of the trail accounting for topography, vegetation, and the historical description.

Three carved aspens were observed dating to the 1910s and 1920s. One was noted along a wagon road segment and dates to 1926 and one was noted along the intact portion of trail and dates to 1918. The final aspen was noted along an approximate alignment and dates to 1916. Although the aspens do not date to the period of significance of the OST (1829–1848), they do represent continued use of the route for travel or sheep herding.

Least-Cost Analysis GIS Model

One of the more interesting aspects of the project was conducting a least-cost path analysis of the trail to see how well the recorded route corresponded to Geographic Information System (GIS) modeling. For this analysis, a model was created using the ESRI's ArcGIS software package and two different Digital Elevation Models (DEM) from the USGS National Map Viewer.²⁷ The beginning point was chosen as the westernmost end of the proposed survey area. This analysis was run with both the easternmost and westernmost points as beginning points to see if the path changed depending on the start point; however, there were no significant changes to the final model. Least-cost path analyses were run with both DEMs (10-x-10-m and 30-x-30-m resolutions) to illustrate the effect that DEM resolution has on the paths. The resulting models

identified two distinct paths that the trail might have taken based on slope (Figure 11). The finer-grained raster modeled a route that nearly matches the overall route recorded during fieldwork, aside from a few slight variations. The model based on the 30-m raster identified a route that followed the eastern and western ends of the field-identified route, but varied to the south significantly. The differences clearly show that higher resolution elevation DEM cells probably result in more accurate path models. Overall, the analysis models account for these steep hills, indicating a higher cost path through the steeper area.

A critical element that was not accounted for in the model was forest or forest density. This is considered to be an important variable, as sparse aspen might not have been a hindrance to travel on horseback, but dense aspen or other forest cover may have been avoided. Although the least-cost route suggested by the 10-m DEM model and the recorded route diverge in some areas, the paths are roughly similar. The most significant variation is near the western end where the route follows more of an on-contour route that passes through more heavily wooded areas than the inventoried route, which follows the drainage west of Long Park and avoids forested areas. The 30-m DEM path traverses even more densely forested land. In both instances where there is significant variation from the inventoried route, the computer-generated routes pass through heavily

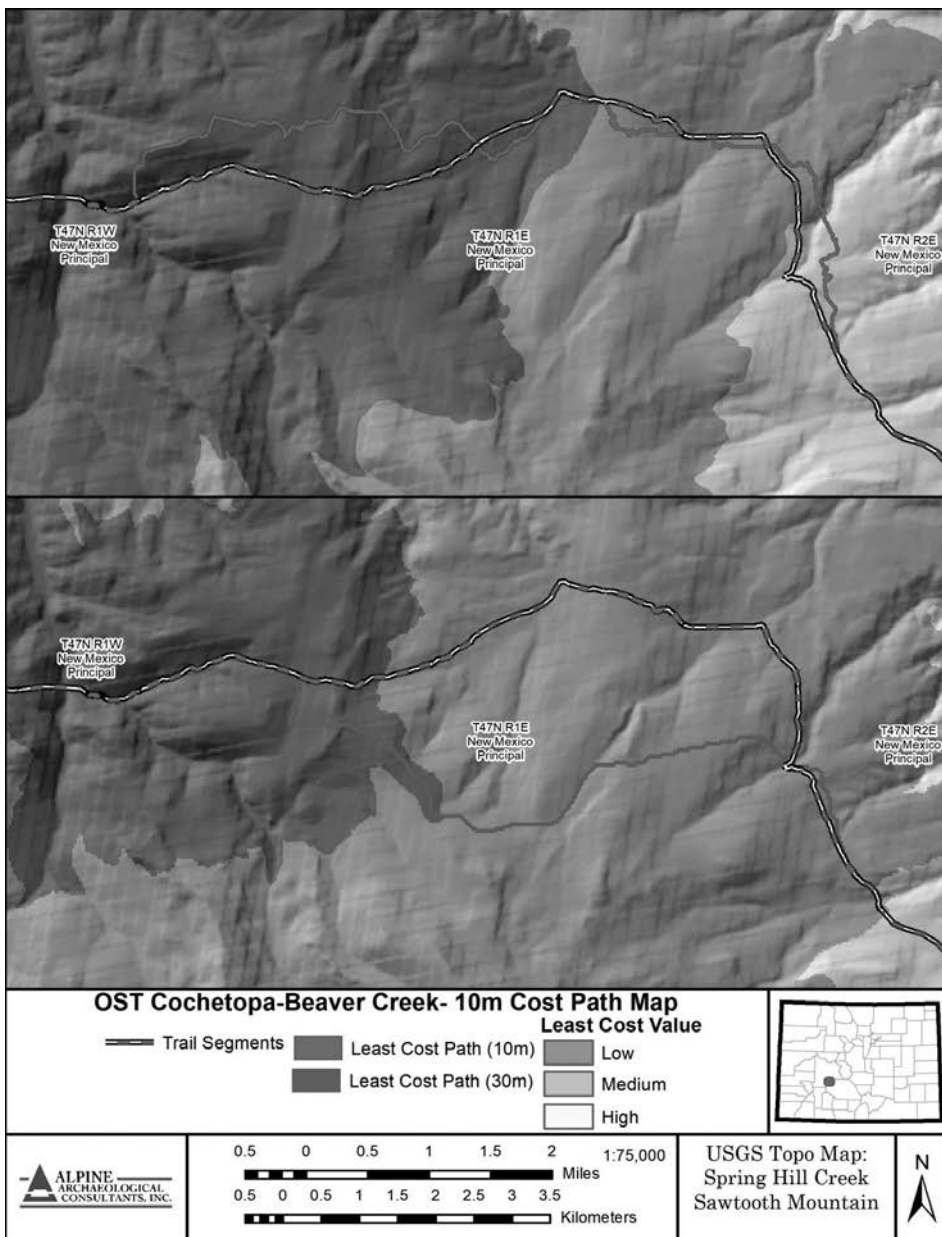


Figure 11. Least-cost analysis models of the Cochetopa Creek to Beaver Creek section of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail.

forested areas that do not match the historical account provided by the Heap journal and would have created difficulties in travel not accounted for by slope alone. As such, the divergent paths do not represent the route of the Beale Expedition, but might indicate potential secondary routes if forested land was not present.

We recommend that future GIS analysis of potential routes should take into account other variables in addition to elevation and topography, such as vegetation and aspect, and model longer segments of the trail. A multivariate analysis would further refine the model and have potential to provide more accurate representations of likely routes.

Modeling has the potential to assist in future fieldwork in that it can provide a high probability of route alignments. Still, GIS modeling should serve only as a tool in identifying potential trail locations. Field verification of routes will still be needed, as will continued use of historical journals and maps, to define trail routes.

A Potential North Branch Route on the Western Side of South Cochetopa Pass

On October 4 and 5, 2018, Mike Prouty looked at the route of the Saguache & San Juan Toll Road on the western side of South Cochetopa Pass for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest.²³ This is a variant of the North Branch of the Spanish Trail that likely corresponds to the route taken by Gwinn Harris Heap on his resupply mission back to Taos for the Beale Expedition in 1853 after they lost all of their supplies trying to cross the Gunnison River near Delta.¹³ At that time, Heap related that the pass was known as Carnero Pass and noted that it was used by traders from northern New Mexico to reach western Colorado. It is shown on the 1873 GLO township line map as an “Old Indian Trail,” which was the trail used by Col. Ruffner in 1873 during his reconnaissance of the Ute country.²⁸ The route was improved as part of the Saguache & San Juan Toll Road in 1874. The toll road extended from Saguache across the pass to the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River, passing the Los Pinos Indian Agency on the

way, followed the river southward through what became Lake City in 1875, and crossed over the divide using Cinnamon Pass to Animas Forks, Mineral Point, and other mining camps in the San Juan Mountains in the Silverton area. Because of Heap's mention and use of the trail in 1853, the section from Saguache to the Lake Fork is thought to be a variant of the North Branch. In 1914, a graded automobile road was constructed over the pass that was designated a state highway. At that time, the name of the pass was changed to Cochetopa Pass (*see the information and maps provided about Cochetopa Pass in the previous section about North Cochetopa Pass for more details*).

A 3.5-mile-long section of the route from the top of the pass to the western boundary of the Gunnison National Forest was examined. Where the route crossed private land (an 0.8-mile-long section) the conjectured route was plotted but not examined in detail. The route begins near the top of the pass where it diverges southwestward from the south-trending Forest Road 740.1B, a small road south of County Road NN14, the former state highway route. The route varies in condition, sometimes being highly visible as a 12-ft.-wide, 6-12-in.-deep swale through aspen and conifer forest with some small trees and shrubs in the route and at other times being obscured for short sections by erosion. On its steepest portions, it is highly visible and appears to have been graded for short sections. After it emerges from the woods, it appears as a

10-12-ft.-wide, 6-12-in.-deep swale through grassy hills with some sage and cinquefoil growing along the edges or within the route. It is crossed a single time by County Road NN14 about midway along the recorded route. About half of the way down from the pass, the route passes through a patented mining claim and an associated group of log cabins that was known as Perry's Camp. The camp operated as a small mining camp with a post office that probably provided supplies and lodging for miners during a rather unspectacular mining boom in the area from the middle 1890s to 1905. The camp demonstrates continued use of the wagon road after its primary period of use as the Saguache & San Juan Toll Road in the middle 1870s to the early 1880s.

Conclusions

Alpine's recent work along routes of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail in western Colorado has resulted in the documentation of nearly 25.5 miles of trails and wagon roads that are along the designated route of the North Branch or on routes that conceivably could be considered variants of the trail. This is a substantial increase in the number of miles of the North Branch that have been documented since the original National Historic Trails Project, but still leaves a considerable amount of work still to be done. Many more miles of the designated route and variants of the trail remain to be examined on National Forest, BLM, and National Park Service lands, not to

mention state and private lands. We hope to be able to continue looking at these travel routes not only because they are challenging and interesting, but because they also tie into the history of later travel and allow us to dive into the history of wagon roads that facilitated agricultural and industrial development of the state. It has also allowed us to delve into remote sensing techniques that are very interesting in themselves, including least-cost path modeling, that we think can be refined and become useful tools if the variables can be controlled for well. ♦

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Stop Invasive Species in Your Tracks

PLAY/CLEAN/GO

By Hannah Bowers

Photos Courtesy *PlayCleanGo*

What's 'bugging' you? Or what's invading your space? Seems like a simple question when asked on a personal level. But if someone were to ask about how "invasive species" bug us or our surroundings many of us draw a blank. So let's talk "Invasive Species 101" and how you can help protect the places you love.

What are invasive species?

A species that is not native to a specific location, and that has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, human economy, or human health.

Invasive species can be any kind of living organism — an amphibian, plant, insect, fish, fungus, bacteria, or even an organism's seeds or eggs — that evolved in some other part of the world.

You probably are much more familiar with invasive species than you realize, especially if you spend a lot of time admiring plants and animals outdoors or working in your garden.

Invasive species are usually hardier, more demanding, grow and reproduce quickly and spread aggressively. Because they are new to a habitat, they don't have any natural predators. That means there aren't any species to stop them from taking over an area.

A few invasive species you may have heard of or battled yourself: Asian carp, Zebra mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, Kudzu, Cogongrass, Buckthorn, Garlic

mustard, European starlings, Asian long-horned beetle, Spotted lanternfly, and the Emerald ash borer. There are hundreds others you could check out at the bugwood website (bugwood.org/ImageArchives.cfm).

How do invasive species invade?

Invasive species are primarily spread by human activities, often unintentionally. Thanks to people's love of travel, we have brought some plants and critters to new parts of the world.

Seeds hitchhike on the bottom of our shoes. Plants and aquatic animals are left in the ballasts of boats or on boating gear. Insects can get into wood, shipping palettes, and crates that are shipped around the world. Some ornamental plants can escape into the wild and become invasive. Some invasive species are intentionally or accidentally released pets. For example, Burmese pythons are becoming a big problem in the Everglades. And they probably didn't get there by plane.

When we put our shoes back on and paddles back in the water in a new area, the checks and balances that keep these species under control (like native predators) are not there. So these organisms grow and out-compete other species in their new habitat to the point where many natives can't survive.

How bad are invasive species?

Not all nonnative species are harmful. Wheat is an example of a nonnative whose introduction has been

very beneficial. The term “invasive” is reserved for the most aggressive nonnative species capable of changing site or living conditions for native species where they establish.

Can we blame these little critters for our fault of transporting them where they aren’t from? Not really. They’re just trying to make a living like everyone else. But human health and economies are at risk. The impacts of invasive species on our natural ecosystems and economy cost billions of dollars each year. Many of our commercial, agricultural, and recreational activities depend on healthy native ecosystems. Approximately 42% of threatened or endangered species are at risk due to the impacts of invasive species.

How can I protect the places we love?

PlayCleanGo is a campaign to prevent invasive species from entering recreational or other pathways in nature: hiking, boating, hunting, fishing, biking, and worker pathways such as timber management, road maintenance, and more. The campaign’s goal is to protect valuable natural resources while encouraging recreationists to enjoy the great outdoors and to remind them of their role to be stewards of the places they love.

Our objective is to slow — and where possible, to stop — the spread of invasive species by changing public and worker behaviors at risk of spreading harmful pests living on land or in water.

PlayCleanGo promotes awareness, understanding, and cooperation by providing a clear call to action to be informed, attentive, and accountable for stopping the spread of all invasive species.

What can you do to stop the spread of invasive species?

No matter what your favorite activity is, to prevent the accidental spread of invasive species, *PlayCleanGo!* *Play* in the outdoors, then *clean* your gear before you *go* to your next adventure.

- Give invasive species the brush-off: clean your boots, gear, boat, tires, and any other equipment you use outdoors before you leave the trail or boat landing to remove insects and plant parts that may spread invasive species to new places.

- When camping, buy firewood near your campsite (within 30 miles) instead of bringing your own from home, and leave any extra for the next campers. Insects and plants can easily hitch a ride on firewood you haul to or from a campsite—you could inadvertently introduce an invasive to a new area.
- When gardening, plant native plants and remove any invasive plants in your garden. There are many good native plant alternatives to common exotic ornamental plants.
- You can also learn to identify invasive species in your area, and report any sightings to your county extension agent or local land manager.
- Join forces with like-minded individuals, organizations, and businesses across North America. Become a *PlayCleanGo* partner at PlayCleanGo.org/join. Each partnership opportunity provides a variety of benefits to support shared goals at the level that feels right for you. Benefits include customized graphics including posters, rack cards, and images for social media, boot brushes, webinars, boot brush kiosk signs, and a network of individuals spreading the same message. ♦



A young hiker uses the boot brush kiosk at the Minnesota State Fair.

BOOK REVIEW

Perhaps the most notable fact about this notable work is that it was written by a Finn. Pekka Hämäläinen is a native of Finland. He later emigrated to the U.S., and since 2012 he has been the Rhodes Professor of American History at the University of Oxford.

Comanche Empire is two intertwining stories, one from the Comanches' perspective, the other from the Spaniards and others in the Southwest. Hämäläinen, in readable style, walks the reader through the Comanches' fantastic history. They came onto the plains from the Great Basin in the early 1700s, first entering recorded history in 1706 when Taos, NM pueblo notified the Spanish government that the village expected an attack — which never materialized — from the Ute Indians and their new allies, the Comanches. It was this coalition that led the Comanches on the road to amassing great power in the Southwest. Further, it was the Utes who introduced them to the horse and to European crafts such as guns, knives, needles, and pots.

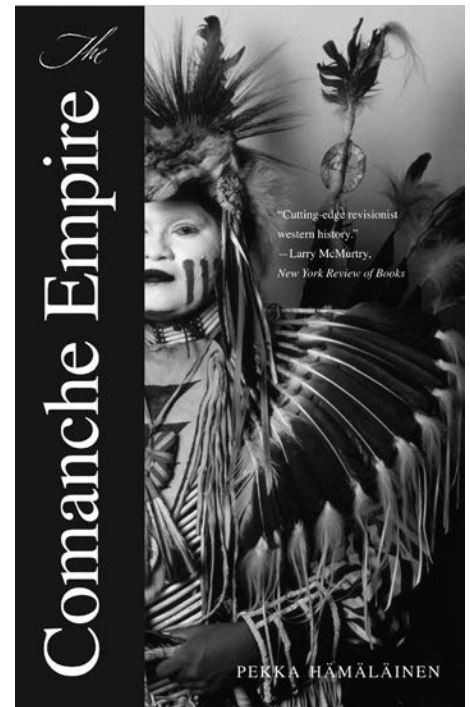
The Comanches quickly learned that the Great Plains provided the finest forage and weather for their horses. (The climate north of the Arkansas River was too harsh for equestrian cultures.) By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, they owned nearly four horses per capita. They were "Lords of the South Plains," controlling a fluid territory larger than that of any other local

Reviewed by Margaret Sears

culture. Known as Comanchería, it extended 600 miles north of Texas and 400 miles east of New Mexico. The Comanche empire never attempted to replicate a European-style imperial system. They sought to coexist, control, and exploit rather than conquer and colonize. Comanchería was inhabited by more than 20 tribes or sub-tribes whose fortunes were linked to the Comanches through cooperation, dependence, and extortion. Hämäläinen illustrates this system with a series of fine maps depicting the empire from 1500 to 1874, visually expressing what countless pages of text could not achieve nearly as well.

We have perceived the Comanches to be nomads; however, at least half of the year they lived in nearly stationary villages. This was not simply a response to their hunting and herding lifestyle, but to allow for centers of power and production to develop, both functions necessary to sustain an empire.

Relations between Spain and the Comanches during the two-and-a-half centuries of the former's occupation of Mexico vacillated across the spectrum of human relations. It was during Juan Bautista de Anza's reign as New Mexico governor (1779-1787) that an alliance between the two powers was forged, lasting until Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, although not without occasional tiffs. Surprisingly, the limits of the



alliance would be determined by the Comanches, not the Spanish. The nerve center of the Southwest was the western Comanche territory, not Santa Fe.

To Euro-Americans, the most revealing sign of Comanche power was the spread of their language. By the turn of the eighteenth century the language of choice at Southwest trade fairs was Comanche, and the midcontinent was being re-created in their image, not the other way around. They had evolved into a market-oriented embryonic capitalistic society. Yet from the outset, the Comanche nation seemed to lack a clear center necessary for an imperial power. It dominated because of its informal social organization, not in spite of it, so it seems. Such criticisms waged against the Comanches aside, the Republic of Texas Indian Commissioner lauded them as "the most perfect democracy on the face of the globe; everything is

managed by primary assemblies, and the people have the right to displace a chief and elect a successor at pleasure.” (p.271)

In 1821 Mexico won independence from Spain, and its doors were opened to the outside world. Immediately, American merchants began a vast trading relationship with Santa Fe, which soon extended as far south as Mexico City. An even more critical event was when the Mexican government significantly reduced customary gifts to the Comanches that had been in place for decades. In conflict with this view, Hämäläinen also states that during this period the New Mexico government went to great lengths to protect its alliance with the tribe.

Historians have ascribed Mexico’s subsequent surrender to the U.S. military and material superiority, but are missing a critical element — that Native American expansion paved the way for American incursion by destabilizing Mexico’s far northwest, culminating in the Mexican-American war (1846-48).

The Mexican-American War marked the climax of 150 years of Comanche power. The U.S. became the supreme power over the southwest, brushing aside all the peoples who had called it home for centuries. Quoting Hämäläinen, “freighting along the Santa Fe Trail grew into a large-scale industry in the early 1840s . . . along the Arkansas corridor, destroying vegetation, polluting springs, increasing erosion, and driving out the bison from their last ecological niches in the valley.” (p.296)

Concurrently, settlers streamed westward in an uncontrolled flood, indiscriminately pushing aside Native Americans. The Comanche population in the late 1840s was 20 thousand, half of what it was at its peak in the late 18th century. By the mid 1850s it had retreated further to less than half, and by 1870 to less than five thousand, and collapsed!

“Comanches had ruled the Southwest for well over a century,” again from Hämäläinen, “but left behind nothing to mark their dominance.” (p.342) He speculates that such was caused by the absence of a tightly-structured system continually threatened by political and societal conflict, and no desire to politically control territory, only the resources it possessed.

Americans wanted legal title. When the system began to crumble, so did the empire. Over the last few decades historians have altered their thinking that Native Americans were, in Hämäläinen’s words, either “bit players in imperial struggles or tragic victims of colonial expansion” (p.6) to the current portrayal of them as “full-fledged actors” in the shaping of early America. But this “revisionist” turn is not complete. Hämäläinen has attempted to correct that, and in my view, has succeeded. Specifically, he casts the Comanches as “full-fledged humans . . . neither shapeless nor formless . . . neither savage nor nationless.” (p.345)

This work is remarkably readable. Almost every sentence is quotable. Often, I was introduced

to new information. To wit: of the over 20 tribes inhabiting Comanchería, only several were familiar to me: Wichitas, Lipan Apaches, Kiowas. Unfortunately, neither the maps nor the numerous illustrations were listed in the table of contents. The text is augmented by 78 pages of notes, which at times were difficult to follow because a given note may contain numerous citations. However, it was generally worth the effort to plow through them. As expected, an excellent condensed New Mexico history is joined with the primary topic. The author introduced four of the eight chapters with brief synopses, which improved my understanding, and would have helped if this had been adopted throughout.

Hämäläinen’s most accurate analysis of the Comanches, in my view, states, “American imperialism in the Southwest can be understood only (reviewer emphasis) if placed in the context of the indigenous [Comanche] imperialism that preceded it.” (p.142) It is not likely that most Americans understand, let alone accept this.

I strongly recommend this book. The reader will forever be indebted to Hämäläinen for opening an exciting door to the southwest and the major players who trod the Great Plains. ♦

Hämäläinen, Pekka, *Comanche Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, 500 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, abbreviations.

Trees Along the Trail

By Ken Frye, President, LaVereda del Norte Chapter / Photos by Becky Donlan

There are trees along the Old Spanish Trail. Ancient trees with stories to tell. The Utes called them "Spirit Trees," as they were known to hold prayers and then they go on to their Creator.

The OST is an ancient path of Native Americans which has been utilized through the years by others seeking ways to cross the lands.

The Utes are a people who lived in the mountains of Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico. Their traditional hunting grounds extended far beyond that territory. Important to the Utes were the trail trees, rock art, and cairns that guided them on their travels. While many of these trees can live to be 300-600 years old, some are now near the end of their lives. Some have been destroyed by urban development and vandals.

The meanings of these trees are not completely known, as those who created them are all but gone. The Utes bent trees for directional markers, sometimes to a location of a sacred place. They also marked places where an important person was born or died. Ute burial trees hold a special meaning to the Utes, as the cedar tree has spiritual powers used by medicine people.

There were also other special-purpose trees. Directional marker trees are often bent only by about 30 degrees off of vertical, then allowed to grow vertically again. The techniques for bending trees into a particular shape have, for

the most part, been lost. Culturally bent trees were saplings tied down with yucca or sinew — linking Father Sky and Mother Earth as a prayer form and marking culturally important sites. A forestry expert who examined one such Grandfather tree stated the tree shape was not natural, and the bark color suggested the age was around 300 years or more. Possible tie-down marks could still be seen.

Native Americans traditionally transferred their culture and history orally from elders. Each year at family gatherings and

Marker trees might have shown the way to these sacred places. As the Utes traveled across the country, visiting and trading with each other and other tribes, these trees would have been their highway signs.

Some trees and stones are found marking old Indian trails. Others point to water, shelter, stream crossings, and more. Many point towards Pikes Peak, which is the most sacred site to the Utes. Dr. James Jefferson (a Southern Ute elder) tells us that Pikes Peak is called Sun Mountain (*Tavakav*) by the Utes. These "living artifacts"



COURTESY BARBARA DUNCAN, MUSEUM OF THE CHEROKEE INDIAN

Marker trees sometimes appear in pairs. Many contemporary roadways follow the ancient Indian trails. "The Cherokee found the best way to go, the easiest, most efficient routes to travel on," according to Barbara Duncan, Museum of the Cherokee Indian education director. Researchers believe the trees were shaped to form a system of signs pointing to things that hunters, gatherers, and warriors needed on journeys that could entail hundreds of miles.

festivals, the elders told stories of the tribes and mythological stories associated with their culture. Each spring the Bear Dance was held, and in the fall, the Sun Dance.

are a testimony to the skills and knowledge of the Indian people and their being one with nature.

Trails, such as the OST, were also used by the Pochteca,



A culturally bent tree in the San Isabel National forest

Aztec traveling salesmen, and traders from the Valley of Mexico. Exotic indicators of distant trade are macaws, cocoa beans, and chocolate residue found in a group of cylindrical containers in Chaco. These travelers walked great distances and traded widely.

Dr. Jefferson has been working with many scholars and researchers across the U.S. to find the mystery of the trees — studying what these trees are saying. Many stories are being told and people working on these mysteries are discovering what the old tribal spiritual leaders knew and what they are now trying to tell us. Old storytellers, like Dr. Jefferson, were told not to tell the secrets of the Native Americans. Now, new techniques are being used to help discover the mysteries of the trees.

One of these new techniques is dowsing. David Johnson uses metal dowsing rods, although ancestral Native Americans could have used a variety of

techniques to locate areas of higher permeability. For centuries, dowsing rods have been made out of forked wood sticks to locate ground water. During the last 40 years, Mr. Johnson has worked and lived with tribes in remote regions of the world whose lifestyles still resemble those of Natives Americans before 1492. Many of these cultures are located in dry regions similar to the southwest. He has observed alternate dowsing techniques of groundwater flowing beneath the surface. And so, some marker trees could be showing the way to where this groundwater surfaces.

Peeled trees, also known as medicine trees, are an excellent food source. The inner bark, cambium, is rich in carbohydrates, protein, calcium, and minerals. A stone tool would be used to hack through the outer bark, then the bark would be peeled off to expose the inner layer. Many of these trees, usually ponderosas, are still found in the forests.

Laura Leyba, of Spanish and Ute ancestry, says that for the past four years she has been learning about and seeing culturally modified trees (CMTs), not only in Colorado, where she lives, but also in Georgia, Alabama, and Arizona. In Colorado they're mostly ponderosa pine trees, but she has seen some douglas firs that were modified as well. Some were modified with peels, some were bent at precise angles, and a few totally defy logic. Her travels have taken her to many places throughout the state in search of CMTs: from a rare six-plank tree in the Weimenuche Wilderness area near Pagosa Springs to the 72 peeled medicine trees near the Great Sand Dunes that are the only living artifacts on the Historic Register. CMTs have been found from Weston, a community west of Trinidad, north along the Interstate 25 corridor all the way to Denver, and west to the mountains around Evergreen. There is a large concentration of

CMTs at the Fox Run Regional Park in Black Forest. One theory is that when logging was going on years ago, the bent trees weren't cut because straight trees were desired. Many are shaped with 90-degree angles, but there are several common shapes, as if to relay meaning, like the road signs that we have today. One dead modified tree near that park was

about as big as a dinner plate, and had over 300 rings (years), so size isn't a good indicator of age. Ponderosa pine bark turns reddish brown, almost orange, as it ages and there are many CMTs in this park that are considered old enough to have been culturally modified by the American Indians who lived there before forced assimilation. ♦



Ken Frye stands next to a peeled ponderosa tree found in an area of many others as well as lithic scatters. This tree was near a wickiup site later recorded by Curtis Martin/Colorado Wickiup Project.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken Frye has spent over 25 years with the US Forest Service, mostly in the Rio Grande National Forest in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado. A forestry technician for many years, and later an assistant in the heritage resource department, he observed thousands of ponderosa pines and recorded many culturally modified trees throughout the forest. At many locations, he noticed smaller pines that were bent over in an S-shaped pattern. At the time, he thought, "those are natural, the result of snow on saplings, wind or natural processes." Later on, he noticed that some of the "bent trees" were near CMTs and on archeological sites. After working with Dr. Jefferson in the field he concluded that some were intentionally bent over and tied down with ligature.

The author believes that CMTs need to be acknowledged and preserved for further study and research. He would like to hear from folks along the OST who have seen these bent trees along what may be the route of the OST.

Dr. James Jefferson is the Director-At-Large, Native American-Southern Ute Tribe and advisor to the La Vereda del Norte Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association in Southern Colorado.

Also contributing to this article is Curtis Martin, consultant with the New England Archeological Research Association and Narragansett tribe.

Years of extensive research on CMTs has also been done by archaeologist Marilyn Martorano. Many articles can be found online.

Prayer Trees Along the Old Spanish Trail

By Celinda Reynolds Kaelin / Photos Courtesy of the Author

"Aaaaawk!" Timekeeper (Blue Jay) grasps the nubby arm of Tuwap (evergreen) above the woman's head, and loudly proclaims that it is time for ceremony to begin. In the village of Standing Ones around them, the staccato call of Medicine Birds (Flickers) echoes his call and acknowledges the special status of the Two Leggeds who are gathering. The woman's white stallion snorts and shakes his long, shaggy mane as she swings her leg over and slides to the rocky ground beside him. Twenty other riders from the Ceremonial Circle, all Medicine People, silently dismount and circle around her as she unsheathes her eagle wing fan and approaches the Standing One. She is fourth generation Puwagudt (Medicine People), as is her Half Side, but she has been given the power vision from the Standing Ones and has Tree Medicine. It is she who must lead this ceremony. In her Vision Quest as a young girl, Tava (Father Sun) sent his Spirit into the finger-long pine needles of the Ponderosa, manifesting as a one-foot ball of yellow-white sunlight, shooting sparks in all directions. Filled with gratitude for this blessing, she aligned the stem of her Cuuci (Sacred Pipe) to the tree and prayed. Goosebumps and electricity flowed over and through her entire body as she received its Medicine Power. Then, fifteen years ago, this same power revealed itself as a sun-bright halo around this now-grown sapling, so she had her helpers bend it parallel to the ground, circling it just below the needled end with yucca rope and staking it to the ground. Now, it is waiting to hold the prayers of the Nuche (Ute), her people. They know full well the power of this Standing One to hold their prayers and send them to Sunawiv (Great Spirit) with each new breath of wind. Their prayers will remain alive for the hundreds of years that this Grandfather lives.

I painted this fictional scene with my words in order to help the reader understand the context and importance of the Culturally Modified Trees (CMT) called Prayer Trees (Bent Trees). Although this scene is imagined, every aspect of the story is based on over twenty years of ceremony with Northern Ute elders and Puwagudt (Spiritual Interpreters/Medicine People). However, before you can fully understand the cultural significance of Prayer Trees, you must first understand the basics of traditional Ute cosmology. This view of humans and our place in the universe



Classic, "L" shaped Prayer Tree.

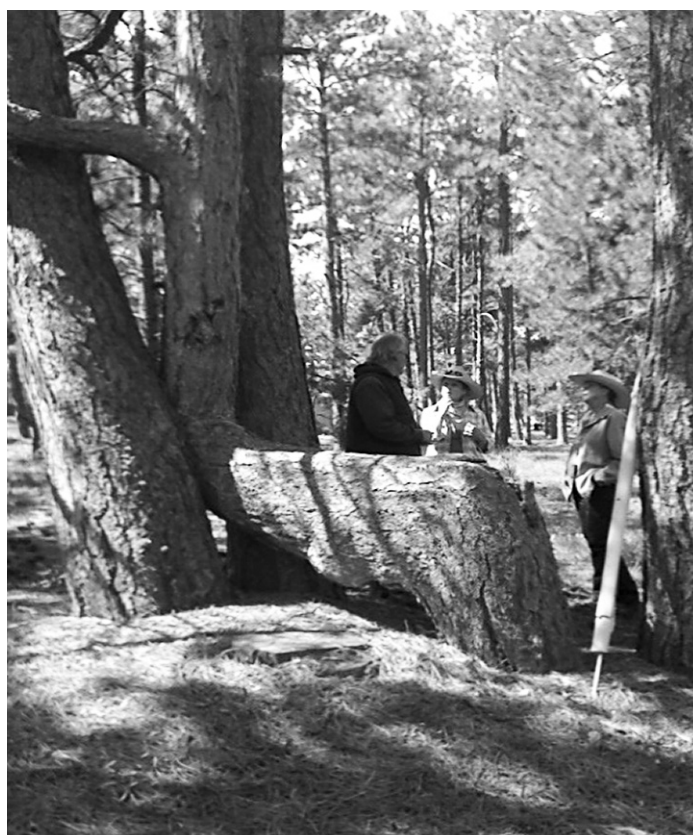
differs from the Judeo-Christian concept in that God/Great Spirit is thought to be an *energy* (not an *entity*) that is everywhere and within everything in the universe.¹ The Ute word for this force is *Puwa*, and individuals who are able to work with this force are *Puwagudt*. This "medicine" work has a strong biofeedback component. In ceremony, *Puwagudt* seek to establish a resonance with *Puwa*, and will feel goosebumps or electricity as confirmation of their success. Within the context of this ceremonial work, *Puwagudt* can communicate with Great Spirit through any aspect of the natural world — trees, stones, clouds, stars or the earth itself. Unfortunately, early ethnographers failed to understand this very basic concept and labeled the Ute as pagans and animists.

Currently, there is some controversy concerning Prayer Trees, with some individuals claiming they are "pseudo archeology." However, little documentation exists for these claims. Both of my Elder consultants passed away in 2014, but I have my contemporaneous field notes and a video of one of the Elders doing ceremony at a Prayer Tree stand as proof of their cultural importance. It is unfortunate that no one disputed the validity of Prayer Trees until after the death of these important consultants, even though they were highly publicized for the preceding twenty years.



This Prayer Tree stands along the Old Spanish Trail near U.S. Hill, about thirteen miles south of Taos, NM. It is different from the majority of recorded Prayer Trees, in that it is a compound of three different trees.

One highly unique form of these Prayer Trees stands prominently on the Old Spanish Trail, about thirteen miles southeast of Taos. This tree is actually a combination of three different trees into one distinct CMT. Two of the Ponderosas form a "V" shape, and the third is bent in the distinctive "L" shape and inclines through the center of the "V." Only two other Prayer Trees are known to have this unique configuration. One is in Ute Pass, but was burned during the Waldo Canyon fire, and the second is located on the north edge of Colorado Springs. All of these CMTs are within ancestral Ute lands, and stand along known Ute trails. However, Clifford Duncan (*Sowah Nanaen*, the *Puwagudt* that enlisted me as his assistant for over twenty years) was very clear that these Prayer Trees were not trail markers.² Instead, they were to hold the prayers of the Ute and were coincidental to their travels along Ute trails. He reported that the Ute used stone cairns as trail markers.



However...it has an almost identical counterpart just north of Colorado Springs, CO along another ancient Ute trail.

Duncan came from a long line of Northern Ute *Puwagudt*, including his mother and father, grandmother and grandfather. His grandfather, John Duncan (*Unkadavanikent*/Red Morning), was one of ethnographer Anne M. Smith's informants and his grandfather, also John Duncan, was the *Puwagudt* for Red Cap's band of Northern Ute who fled to South Dakota in 1906 following the survey for implementing the 1887 Dawes Act (which allotted each adult only forty acres of land), ensuring starvation.³ As I mentioned earlier, I was very fortunate to have been chosen by Duncan as assistant for his Medicine work, and we collaborated for over twenty years. He was chosen as Ute representative to the World Council of Elders, and we traveled extensively in North, South, and Central America for ceremonies with these Elders. When helping with his ceremonies, I witnessed the power of *Puwa* when he healed a woman who could not walk, and healed his own badly broken arm overnight. He also healed

me of my liver cancer. In addition, he was chosen to officiate at the opening of the 2002 Olympic ceremonies in Salt Lake City and has worked with the Dali Lama on sacred ceremonies. He worked as Cultural Liaison for the Northern Ute for the entire time of our association and possessed a brilliant mind and broad knowledge of Ute culture and history.

Even though traditional Ute territory covered all of Utah (named for these first people), most of Colorado, and northern New Mexico, there has been no comprehensive survey of their CMTs. In addition to their Prayer Trees, these "Living Artifacts" also include Medicine Trees (Peeled bark trees used in healing ceremony)⁴ and the Blanket Trees (Peeled bark trees used as emergency food).⁵ Duncan made a clear distinction between trees used by Puwagudt in their healing work (Medicine Trees) and those used for emergency food (Blanket Trees). The area of peeled bark on a Medicine Tree is of smaller proportions and is located on the tree in correlation to the area of healing needed on the patient's body. In contrast, the Blanket Trees bear a large scar about the size of a blanket (thus its name) and contains enough of the rich inner bark to feed a starving person. A large grove of over seventy of these trees can be found at Great Sand Dunes at the base of Medano Pass and probably fed a starving band stranded in a storm. In contrast, the Medicine Trees are interspersed throughout the forests of Ute ancestral lands and are not densely congregated like the Blanket Trees.

Virtually all the Old Spanish Trail through New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah winds its way through ancestral Ute lands and was most likely made by their ancestors; however, it is impossible to date the origins of these trails, but we do know that Ute ancestors arrived in the southwest around 500 C.E. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, many of the Ponderosa CMTs can live from 400-800 years. At Windy Pass, near Fairplay, Colorado, a grove of ancient bristlecone pine bear similar marks of cultural modification and have been documented to have lived over 2,000 years in the Rockies.⁶ Though not specifically made as trail markers, Ute CMTs (including Prayer Trees and Medicine Trees) present material documentation of Ute presence, if not creation, of these segments of the Old Spanish Trail.

Early Spanish explorers relied on Native American scouts to lead them in their quest for routes to Spanish settlements in California. The earliest of these expeditions, led by Juan Maria Antonio Rivera in 1765, utilized a *Moache* Ute scout, el *Cuero de Lobo* (Wolfskin) as his guide⁷ and reached the vicinity of Durango, Colorado before returning to Santa Fe. On his second foray (later in 1765) on the Old Spanish Trail, Rivera was guided by a *Payuchi*, *El Asigare*, and a *Moache* Ute, El Cabezón. This time he penetrated to the Colorado River (Rio Tizon) where *Tabeguache* (El *Tonampechi*) and *Sabuagana* Ute guides urged him to return to Santa Fe because of the great dangers further to the west.⁸ Rivera's *Sabuagana* guides told him of killing several Spaniards years earlier, indicating that Rivera was not the first Spaniard to have followed these same trails. The next expedition along the Old Spanish Trail came in 1776 when Fray *Silvestre* Velez de Escalante and Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez again utilized Ute scouts in their quest for a route to California. A final, successful effort to reach California was made in 1829 by Antonio Armijo. He left Abiquiu in the fall of that year with sixty men taking blankets and trade goods to barter for mules.

Perhaps the most consequential incursion along the Old Spanish Trail was made by Juan Bautista de Anza in 1779, again with the help of 200 Ute (and some Apache) scouts in a successful campaign against the Comanche. Unfortunately, the Spanish did not record the names of most of these Ute scouts, so band affiliation cannot be firmly established. Spanish documents are filled with reports of Utes at the Taos Pueblo trade fairs, bringing highly valued white, brain-tanned animal buckskins as well as captives from other Native American tribes for barter.

In 1637, Governor Luis de Rosas reported that his troops engaged a band of mounted Ute Indians in battle.¹⁰ This is the first recorded instance of the First Nations in northern New Spain in possession of horses. Mounted Utes are again mentioned in 1659 when they stole over 300 horses, successfully escaping into their mountain stronghold, the "land of the Yutahs," in northern New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. Many historians argue that the Ute "were the ones who possibly gave the Comanches

their first horses.”¹¹ This probably occurred before the Comanche split from the Ute/Shoshone in 1703 after an altercation at Abiquiu (according to contemporaneous Spanish historians).¹² Even after they split, Ute and Comanche remained allies, raiding settlements in northern New Mexico until the Comanche entered a treaty with the Spanish in 1752. However, this uneasy *peace* did not put an end to the lively trade at the Taos trade fairs, nor to their on again/off again alliance with the Utes. Both nations continued to raid one day, then to bring captives and trade goods to Taos trade fairs the next. The entire region was crisscrossed by a spiderweb of Indian trails, and the ubiquitous Ute presence continued well into the 1800s, long after their sometime Comanche allies had moved onto the eastern plains of Oklahoma and Texas.

After the war with Mexico in 1846-1848, the historic record provides much more information of Ute presence along the Old Spanish Trail. In 1850, the United States established an Indian Agency in Taos, where Kit Carson served as agent from 1853 until 1861, where his long friendship with Ouray, chief of the *Tabeguache* Ute, facilitated his work with that Nation. Around 1845, when Ouray was about eleven years old, he and his younger brother were left with a Spanish family in Taos, and this is where the two probably developed their early relationship. Ouray left Taos in 1850, when he turned seventeen, to join his father, *Guera Murah*, Chief of the *Tabeguache*.¹³ In 1856 Carson reported that several hundred *Tabeguache* under Chief *Augkapowerbran* appeared in Taos to collect government “presents.” Carson reported that the “*Taviwach*” were “by far the largest band of the Utahs,” numbering between ten to twelve hundred.¹⁴ The Prayer Tree on U.S. Hill may be the last remaining living artifact from this northern Ute band on what we now know as the Old Spanish Trail. ♦

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Celinda Reynolds Kaelin's love of the West began with her early life on a ranch in New Mexico. Celinda has written numerous magazine and newspaper articles and is a popular lecturer throughout the Pikes Peak region. Her most popular books include *Ute Legends*, *Journey Song: A Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*, and *Pikes Peak Backcountry: The Historical Saga Of The Peak's West Slope*. (Shown here with her Sundance sister, Northern Ute Elder Loya Cesspooch Arrum. Arrum was featured in the video *Mystery of the Trees*, narrated by Peter Coyote. In the video, Arrum performs traditional ceremony at a Prayer Tree and explains their cultural significance.)

2019 Board Nominations/Elections

It's that time again!



Time for OSTA members to nominate and elect officers and directors. There are several opportunities for ***you*** to nominate someone or to volunteer to serve yourself.

- **President** (2-year term)
- **Treasurer** (2-year term)
- **Arizona Director** (3-year term)
- **Nevada Director** (3-year term)
- **Director At Large** (3-year term)
- **Director At Large-Native American Affairs** (3-year term)
- **Director At Large-Conferences & Events** (3-year term)

This is ***your*** chance to speak your mind and influence the direction of OSTA. Don't sit on the sidelines, check yourself into the game, and help OSTA score a touchdown!

All candidates must be members to be nominated (but you may send your membership application and dues with nomination to become eligible).

Interested? But have a few questions on duties and responsibilities? Please call/email OSTA Executive Director, Lynn Brittner at 805.729.6588 or ostamgr@gamil.com.

Self-nominations or suggested nominations should be directed to OSTA Nominating Committee Chair, Nancy Melendez, at nancy.melendez@me.com or P.O. Box 266, Riverside, CA 92502.

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS IS JUNE 1, 2019

Fortifying Robidoux: A Brief History of Ft. Uncompahgre

By Dave Fishell / Photos Courtesy Ft Uncompahgre Interpretive Center

It is silent. And mostly dark. Except for a few stars gleaming overhead.

But not for long. Dawn is on the way.

Around 4 a.m., the cooks begin preparing for the two main meals of the day. Logs are fed into the adobe fireplaces. Pots bang and clang. Dozens of round loaves of bread and flat tortillas are soon ready to bake; large slabs of deer and elk are cleaned and carved; chili peppers are crushed and roasted.

As the first hint of pale rose begins to color the eastern sky behind the West Elk Mountains, birds nesting along the river begin to sing and fly. Penned livestock soon join in; roosters crow; chickens cackle; pigs snuffle; mules bray; horses snort, shuffle, swish their tails. Herders push some of the domestic animals outside the fortification to graze along the river banks.

The ringing clang of the blacksmith's hammer is soon heard above the loudest animals. There are shouts and the creaking of harnesses as a pack mule caravan arrives while making the long journey between Santa Fe and Los Angeles along the northern branch of the Old Spanish Trail.

Arguments or laughter comes from the trade room as the trader on duty tries to convince some potential Ute customers that a top grade beaver pelt is worth a single strand of European glass



Visitors to the Ft. Uncompahgre Interpretive Center in Delta, CO are treated to an authentic market experience.

beads. Some Utes have a short visit. Others have been living in the numerous teepees scattered nearby for several days.

In the hide room employees sort the high piles of beaver, coyote, deer, elk and bear skins. Others scrape and clean green hides before stretching the skins to dry under the sun.

More loud conversation comes from the middle of the fort "courtyard," where several men sit close to a large fire. Both Spanish and English winds skyward along with the smoke from the fire pit. Light wisps of tobacco smolder as many smoke their small clay pipes.

Some clean rifles and pistols; a few sharpen knives or tomahawks; others grease their buckskins so the clothing is more waterproof; some just enjoy the warmth of the

flames. A few walk several steps away from the structures and begin target practice. The boom from the muzzle-loading rifles carries for quite a distance.

Thwacks and cracks can be heard as wood-cutters topple trees and thin branches, trying to keep enough fuel on hand for seven fireplaces and the large outdoor horno. A much quieter task is underway nearby: men scything down huge amounts of riverbank vegetation. The greenery will be dried and stacked, ready for use by the fort animals or mules coming through with the next caravan.

Blacksmiths hammering; mules braying; horses kicking; rifles firing; axes cracking wood; loud conversations in Ute, Spanish, and English; smoke from several fireplaces spiraling skyward.

It's another day at Fort Uncompahgre.

Antoine Robidoux's business seems to be doing well.

French-Canadian Joseph Robidoux moved to St. Louis, Missouri about 1770. He later married Catherine Rollet from Cahokia, Illinois. The marriage produced several children, including three daughters. Differing sources claim there were either six or seven sons. Most of the boys would eventually follow their father's lead and play a role in the western fur trade.

In the spring of 1824, two of the Robidoux boys, Antoine and Louis, bumped over the Santa Fe Trail and rode roughly 800 miles to the Mexican village of Santa Fe. After Mexico wrested independence from Spain in 1821, St. Louis, Missouri and Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico became important centers for the fur trade.

A few months later young Antoine joined a Santa Fe trapping party led by Etienne Provost. They meandered northwest through today's western Colorado and eastern Utah. They discovered streams filled with beaver as well as villages of friendly Ute Indians. For some unknown reason, Robidoux and five other men split from the main party. Near the Wyoming border they were discovered by a hostile Arapaho party. One trapper was killed and the four remaining men were robbed of everything, including underwear. Many of Provost's men were attacked and murdered in another battle with Shoshone warriors.

"Although the trip had proven a disaster," writes historian Ken Reyher "both Antoine and Provost saw great potential in the region, particularly the lands occupied by the peaceful Utes."

In order to legally work the northern streams, Antoine was required to become a Mexican citizen. Both he and brother Louis also claimed to be members of the Catholic Church, another helpful tactic. While Antoine was going through the probationary period, he was elected to the Santa Fe City Council. He then courted the Mexican governor's daughter, Carmel Benevides. The two were married in 1828. It wasn't long before Antoine also had official license to trap and trade in what would later be known as western Colorado and eastern Utah.

Spanish and Mexican explorers, fur trappers, and treasure seekers; "legal" and "illegal," had crossed western Colorado many times. So the region's geography wasn't

completely unknown. Utes had also worn trails across the vast area. All those factors probably helped Antoine Robidoux choose a site close to the junction of today's Gunnison and Uncompahgre rivers in western Colorado for his trading post or "fort." The town of Delta, Colorado would develop about 50 years later about two miles away.

Written material on Antoine's entire life is sparse. Details on his post is even more inadequate. Some claim that Fort Uncompahgre was constructed in 1826. But considering the dates of his Mexican citizenship and marriage, most agree that post went up in 1828.

To most Americans the word fort denotes a structure used to keep enemies at bay, a "fortification." However at Robidoux's Fort Uncompahgre the rough logs placed vertically into the ground were primarily a way to keep domestic livestock in and wild animals out. Most years, the



Re-enactor getting ready to trap at the Ft. Uncompahgre Interpretive Center in Delta, CO.

nearby Ute tribes were friendly and wanted to do business at the fort.

All animal furs had value; however, the main commerce at Fort Uncompahgre was, of course, beaver pelts. For hundreds of years beaver had been trapped in Europe and in eastern America for use in hats.

The fur was water repellent and long-lasting. Some armies specified hats made of beaver. Men on both sides of the Atlantic tried to stay fashionable with beaver tophats. A few wealthy Chinese leaders even coveted American beaver skins for trimming clothing.

Western Colorado and eastern Utah had many a beaver. At least for a few decades.

Once a beaver had been trapped and drowned, the Ute or white trapper would gut the animal. Then the hide would be pulled, tightened and tied to a round willow hoop. The inside of the hide was the scraped and cleaned as fast as possible. With the low humidity present in most of the region, it didn't take long for the willow-hooped hides to dry.

A lone buckskin-clad American with just a few hides; a Ute family with several horses loaded down with furs; they all had wait their turn. Clerks in the trade and hide rooms would examine each pelt, and then weigh the skins. A prime beaver pelt, depending on size and weight, might be worth five U.S. dollars during the early 1830s. A skilled trapper might collect up to five

pelts in one day. Back east, the average American wage earner of the era probably earned three to five dollars a week.

Once the furs had been weighed and examined, the trading commenced. During the early days of Fort Uncompahgre, Ute women would hand over one beaver pelt for a few glass beads. According to Reyher, a smooth bore trade rifle could be purchased in St. Louis for \$8 to \$10. In the fort trade room a Ute warrior might trade hundreds of dollars worth of furs for the same muzzle-loading rifle. The black gun powder, flints, and round lead balls needed to operate the firearm cost even more pelts.

Knives, tomahawks, bolts of cloth, twists of tobacco, solid blocks of pressed tea, cooking pots and pans, and sugar were just some of the wide variety of trade items stocked at the fort. While Utes composed the main customer base, small groups of Mexican or American trappers would occasionally do business at Robidoux's post as well.

Spain, and in turn Mexico, prohibited selling or trading alcohol and firearms to the Utes. Utes, along with other tribes, had been raiding and looting northern Mexican villages and ranches on and off for decades. The laws were supposed to lessen, or even stop, such attacks. They did not. And for several years Mexican officials never bothered the traders at Fort Uncompahgre over such business. After all, the nearest government official was about 300 miles away in Santa Fe.

According to one legend, a Ute warrior was introduced to Mexican/American drink when he traded a prime beaver pelt for one tin cup of raw alcohol at Fort Uncompahgre. It did not take long for Utes to become more astute in their trading practices; however, alcohol in differing forms became one of the most popular items for selling and trading at the fort. The drink often created trouble for tribes as well. Eventually Antoine Robidoux's law-evading gun, alcohol, and slave trading tactics did attract the attention of new officials in Santa Fe. The notoriety played a part in ending Robidoux's business.

During the 1830s, traffic over the Santa Fe Trail wheeled up to an all-time high. The Mexican government kept increasing the tariffs on goods imported from the United States until some items were taxed at a rate of 25%. At times Robidoux's caravans were able to avoid the tax officials in Santa Fe by using little-known routes through southern Colorado that joined the northern branch of the Old Spanish Trail in the San Luis Valley. The pack trains then traversed Cochetopa Pass and meandered down the Gunnison River Valley to the fort.

While there are very few details on the business at the fort, the post produced some profit for Robidoux. Besides the fur trade, men and mules freighting on the northern branch of the Old Spanish Trail also utilized the post. There are records that reveal some mule caravans carting

woolen goods from northern New Mexico to southern California took the northern route. No doubt having a business 300 miles out from Santa Fe that provided blacksmithing, harness repair, better food, and other needed services was appreciated. As the beaver trapping enterprise started to decline in the late 1830s, many former trappers turned to stealing horses from the huge Mexican rancheros in southern California. One time a herd of 1,000 stolen horses were pushed from California over the northern trail. It isn't known how the employees at the fort dealt with such a huge increase in livestock for a few days. Possibly Robidoux acquired some of the animals before the herders made their final drive into New Mexico. When times were good, the post probably had 15 to 20 workers. Most were Spanish speaking young men who were paid in trade goods or with company scrip that was cashed in at the end of each season at the Robidoux store or warehouse in Santa Fe.

For a few years trapping and trading was so worthwhile Robidoux also operated two smaller trading posts in the Uintah Basin in today's northeastern Utah. Forts Robidoux and Uintah remained in business from around 1832 until the early 1840s. Antoine didn't have much competition. As far as known, Mexican officials never authorized any other trading operation in the northern region of their country. Other posts did open up east of the Continental Divide, hundreds of miles from

Fort Uncompahgre and in another nation.

By the late 1830s, change was occurring. Beaver populations were declining due to decades of over trapping. The cost of shipping furs and other goods to Missouri was increasing. Beaver felt hats were slowly going out of style. Better quality Chinese silk helped American firms produce nicer, and less costly, silk hats. For those who still yearned for a fur hat, nutria fur from animals trapped and processed in South America could be turned into a cheaper but still fashionable topper. And according to author William Bailey, "the buffalo robe became the item of demand and the inter-mountain west was not the best place to acquire them."

The Panic of 1837-1838, one of the first national recessions, also meant that many people could not afford a fur hat or fur-trimmed clothing at any price. Mexican government investigations into Robidoux's illegal gun, alcohol, and slave business increased as well.

The actual downfall of Fort Uncompahgre began when a band of Navajo warriors raided some New Mexico ranches west of Santa Fe during the summer of 1843. New Mexican volunteers could not locate the Navajos and attacked a peaceful Ute camp instead. At least ten Utes were killed, and all of the livestock stolen. Young Ute warriors wanted revenge, but tribal leaders decided to send a delegation to talk with the New Mexico governor instead. During September, 1844, a

The "New" Fort

William "Bill" Bailey grew up in Delta, Colorado, hearing stories about the "old fort." He tried to find out as much as possible about Robidoux's post. He even utilized the archives at the University of New Mexico. In the mid-1980s he began talking with Delta city officials about constructing a replica fort at a river front park area being considered for the confluence of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre rivers.

In 1989 and 1990, Bailey and many volunteers worked 3,500 hours building a "new" Fort Uncompahgre. Because the size and shape of the original fort remains unknown, Bailey's group followed the layout of what would have probably been a southwest trading post of the 1820s, including a Spanish-style plaza. "It's about the right size for that time and place," said Bailey. "We wanted it as a place for historic learning."

Bailey not only attends mountain man events across Colorado, he continues to research the fur trade era. His book on Fort Uncompahgre was published in 1990.

Thanks to all the volunteer work, the "new" fort is becoming popular with tourists and school groups. Under the leadership of Chris Miller and the Interpretive Association of Western Colorado, local third graders, visitors from the East Coast, as well as from Europe are now learning about what was once old Mexico's northernmost trading post.



L: Bill Bailey at the "new fort."



Re-enactors at the Ft. Uncompahgre Interpretive Center in Delta, CO

meeting between the Utes and Mexican officials became violent. There was gunfire inside and outside of The Palace of Governors. A band of about 100 Utes had to fight their way down the streets of Santa Fe and then gallop out of town. The enraged Utes attacked additional New Mexico settlements and ranches in the San Luis Valley before riding to Fort Uncompahgre. Most likely Robidoux wasn't at the fort and was probably visiting Fort Bridger at the time. The late September, 1844 fight resulted in the death of almost all of Robidoux's employees and the theft of most of the fort's goods. One of two men who were downstream trapping at the time was also killed. After hiding from the Utes for a day or two, Jose Francisco Trujillo arrived barefoot in Santa Fe 14 days later.

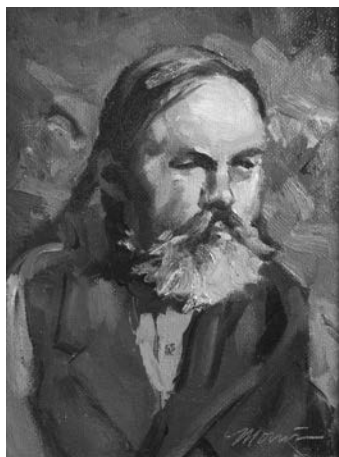
Fort Uintah was attacked and burned about the same time. The structures at Fort Uncompahgre remained standing but unused for about two years. Utes then burned the old post sometime around 1846. Robidoux probably never returned to the two locales.

He never really recovered financially in other ventures either. Robidoux continued to trade and

travel the Santa Fe Trail. He guided a few immigrant wagon trains to the West Coast via the Oregon/California/Mormon Trail, and was wounded in a California battle during the Mexican-American War. Along with a brother or two, he had some success in the buffalo hide trade. But there were more setbacks than profits in other fields. Unable to walk because of his war wounds and blind as well, Antoine Robidoux passed away in his brother's town of St. Joseph, Missouri August 29, 1860, at the age of 65.

His fort wasn't completely forgotten. During the late 1840s and early 1850s exploring parties led by men such as John Charles Fremont and Captain John Gunnison passed the location. It was noted that the ruins of "Robidoux's old post" could still be seen. ♦

Visit fortuncompahgre.org for more information about the "new" fort, and read more about the history in *Antoine Robidoux and Fort Uncompahgre* by Ken Reyher, and *Fort Uncompahgre* by William McCrea Bailey.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Fishell is a well-known western Colorado author and historian. He is also the volunteer historian at Fort Uncompahgre.

*Painting of the author
by Charles Morrison.*



Claudio Chacon told a fascinating story of his great-great-great grandfather, Santiago Chacon, whose family settled in New Mexico in the 1600s. Claudio prepared an authentic traditional New Mexican meal of posole, beans, rice, and some spicy green and red chili.

Posole

The name posole came from the Nahuatl word *pozoli* which mean “frothy,” similar to white corn when boiled. Brought by the Spanish settlers in the 1600s to New Mexico, posole is a traditional soup or stew from Mexico. It is made from hominy, with meat (typically pork). Pozole is typically served on New Year’s Eve to celebrate the new year.

Pozole can be prepared in many ways. All variations include a base of cooked hominy in broth. Typically pork, or sometimes chicken, is included in the base. Vegetarian recipes substitute beans for the meat.

The three main types of pozole are blanco/white, verde/green and rojo/red. White is the preparation without any green or red sauce. Green adds a rich sauce based on green ingredients, including tomatillos, epazote, cilantro, jalapeños, or pepitas. Red is made with a sauce made from one or more chiles, such as guajillo, piquin, or ancho.

When served, posole is accompanied by a wide variety of condiments including chopped onion, shredded lettuce, sliced radish, cabbage, avocado, limes, oregano, chicharrón, or chiles.

BASIC INGREDIENTS

Olive oil, pork, spices (salt, pepper, cumin, and garlic for example), hominy (dried, frozen, or canned, and water or stock

BASIC PREPARATION

As with any classic recipe, there are endless variations and methods. Check the internet for one that sounds best to you. Basic preparation is to simmer pork, hominy, and spices in water or broth until flavorful. Serve with any combination of traditional garnishes, and top with red or green chili (or do “Christmas,” which is both).

Dried corn referred to as hominy. If using dried corn, soak corn in a mixture of ground limestone and water to loosen the skins, which makes the corn healthier and easier to digest. Historically, since limestone wasn’t always readily available, ash from wood was used instead to cure it.



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2019 BOARD NOMINATIONS/ ELECTIONS



It's that time again!

Time for OSTA members to nominate and elect officers and directors. There are several opportunities for YOU to nominate someone or to volunteer to serve yourself.

This is YOUR chance to speak your mind and influence the direction of OSTA! Don't sit on the sidelines — check yourself into the game, and help OSTA score a touchdown! Volunteer to serve or nominate a candidate.

SEE PAGE 37 FOR DETAILS

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The Old Spanish National Historic Trail covers six states and 2,700 miles and can be traced over several routes. Map by Interpretive Designs, LLC 2019

The Old Spanish Trail has been called the most arduous and difficult trail in the United States. With Native American historical roots, the trail was used by the adventurous and opportunists bringing textiles from Santa Fe to trade for mules and horses in Los Angeles beginning in the early 1800s. Spanning more than 2500 miles, parts of the trail were used by fur trappers and later by railroad and military surveyors.

The Old Spanish Trail Association, its members, friends, and partners, are dedicated to protecting, interpreting, and promoting the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

The Old Spanish National Historic Trail was established by Congress in 2002. It has often been referred to as the most arduous, difficult trail in the United States. Its designated routes cover six states and some 2,700 miles, traversing mountains, deserts, rivers, and coastal valleys. It was historically used by curious and brave, enterprising, and sometimes nefarious men, forging trade routes between the Mexican cities of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Los Angeles, California. New Mexican woolen goods were traded for California mules and horses, but the trade also included furs, hides, and even Indian slaves.

[Read more about the trail's history](#)

Contact us today! Email: ostamgr@gmail.com



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Learn more about the Old Spanish Trail Association by visiting the website oldspanishtrail.org.

See page 37 for membership information.



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A re-enactor gets the horno ready to bake bread at the Ft. Uncompahgre Interpretive Center in Delta, CO. Learn more about the Center by visiting fortuncompahgre.org (see page 38).