

# SPANISH TRACES

VOLUME 26 ♦ NO 1 SPRING 2020





*Mount Blanca — on the east side of the San Luis Valley — as seen from the Elephant Rocks BLM area near Del Norte, on the west side of the Valley.*

*Photo by John McEvoy*

(IMAGE CONTINUES  
ON INSIDE BACK COVER)



## 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 Trail (OST), Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT) and closely related historic routes.*

We encourage you to join OSTA, help in trail preservation, and increase appreciation of the multicultural heritage of the American Southwest.

| [oldspanishtrail.org](http://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.



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SPRING 2020

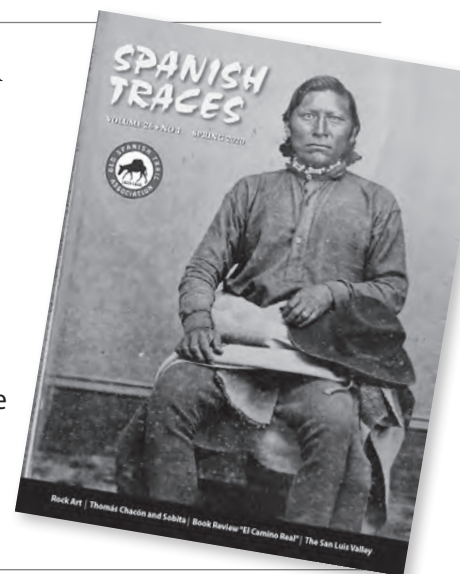
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## ON THE COVER

Photo of Sobita, Ute leader.  
W. G. Chamberlain  
photo (ca. 1866-67)

## BACK COVER

An assortment of rock art found on the Old Spanish Trail. Top three rows by Al Matheson. Bottom photo by John McEvoy



## SUMMER 2020 DEADLINE

We would love to receive your comments, suggestions, and ideas for future issues. The deadline for submissions for the Summer 2020 issue is July 15, 2020. Send to Kitty Nicholason, [kitty.n@bresnan.net](mailto:kitty.n@bresnan.net).



# LOS SENDEROS

By Lynn Brittner, Executive Director

Tibetans say that tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength. What we are facing today nationally and in communities across the globe has put us in a state of emergency due to fear of the spread of COVID-19. This is certainly a massive tragedy and a massive challenge.

As each of us confront the life changes occasioned by the coronavirus, we wish you all well and hope that our OSTA community can be a support for you during this challenging time. We know how much the Old Spanish Trail means to all of you and hope that the part of the Trail in your community can be a place of solace and comfort. In case you are unable to get out along the Trail, we will continue to update our website with news and photos of current projects along sections of the Trail. In this issue, I am pleased to share some recent photos of petroglyph and pictograph sites on portions of the Trail in Colorado and Utah.

While in the San Luis Valley during a brief stretch of spring weather, I was able to visit corridors of the Old Spanish Trail. The San Luis Valley with its encircling mountain range is a

stunning area that induces people to travel these trails. Decades of shifting soil and sand have left no visible trace on the ground, so instead of looking for evidence of the Trail, we focused on the pictorial stories written across the surrounding cliffs and boulders.

Scattered petroglyphs are pecked onto the flat surface of rocks in areas designated today as the East Fork of the Old Spanish Trail's North Branch, which courses through the open sage country along the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range. The West Fork traverses the San Luis Valley along the base of the San Juan Mountains. Pueblos, Navajo, Comanche, Paiute, and Mojave ancestors traded and — in some cases — raided along them for thousands of years. During the 19th century Spanish, French, and Anglo traders used these rock sites as trail-markers. So did explorers, herdsman, prospectors, soldiers, and slavers.

Whether or not we were actually on a portion of the Old Spanish Trail at any given moment, we knew that we were looking at the same cultural archive of stories in stone of what Native Americans had once experienced and how they lived across the millennia.

Fourth-generation San Luis Valley resident and career archaeologist Ken Frye (President of La Vereda Chapter) knew the stories of the various rock sites.

He recalled how he once stood among Jicarilla Apache, Ute, and Pueblo elders who recognized the deities and excitedly related stories associated with these sites. Many of these sites were on the very ancient trails used by Native Americans as far back as 12,000 years ago, as confirmed by the Clovis and Folsom points discovered in the corridor during previous archaeological surveys.

In some portions of the Cochetopa Hills area, there is only



JOHN MCEVOY

*"Ceremonial bedrock metates with rubbing marks (from grinding of ceremonial corn) visible in the center and sunburst below. Mt. Blanca or Sisnajini, sacred mountain of the east to the Navajo is visible in the background. The mountain was an important landmark for travelers through the San Luis Valley thousands of years ago and at the time of the travelers along the Old Spanish Trail and it is believed to be just east of the locations of petroglyphs."*



JOHN MCEVOY

Ken Frye and Lynn Brittner touring petroglyphs in Dry Creek Canyon, San Luis Valley, CO

one corridor through which to travel, therefore also the likely route of the Old Spanish Trail. The Ute word “Cochetopa” means Buffalo Pass or Buffalo Gate. The Utes followed the route while hunting buffalo and other animals hundreds of years ago. Ken has re-discovered many Ute campsites scattered throughout the Cochetopa Hills, and continues to explore this area. Stories from Ken and other residents of the San Luis Valley will be recorded as part of an upcoming video project with multi-media journalist John McEvoy.

~ ~ ~

Along with the San Luis Valley Oral History Project, we are planning to conduct additional oral history interviews along other portions of the Old Spanish Trail. During the last OSTA conference held in Cedar City, Utah, Southern Utah Chapter member Al Matheson led a field trip to the Wolfskill-Yount Party Rock Art Site. Located in the vicinity of Winn Canyon, Utah, the site included an inscription thought to be made by the Wolfskill-Yount party during the 1830s, pecked out on a flat surface of a black

volcanic rock. If it wasn't for Al's passionate interest, this site may have never been re-discovered. Years ago, that rock was “re-positioned” when a dynamite explosion threw it upside down into a tangle of scrub oaks at the bottom of the canyon. After years of searching, Al was able to re-identify this site. He encourages us all to get out on the Trail, where there is still a lot to be re-discovered.

*For more information regarding William Wolfskill, see “In Search of William Wolfskill's Journey to Find the Legacy” by Conchita Thornton Marusich of the Decedents & Travelers of the Trial Chapter, self-published in 2017. ♦*





## PRESIDENT PATHWAYS

By Paul Ostapuk, OSTA President

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*A great stone was cast into the pond of humanity with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The response to this once-in-a-generation crisis will define our national character. We know from history that lives will be impacted in many different ways. The extent of these consequences are yet unknown but there's no doubt that society has changed. Thank you for being part of the Old Spanish Association family. We wish you comfort and support in these trying times.*

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It's no secret that unspoiled natural desert areas are fast disappearing, especially near urban areas. That is why I recently ventured into the desert northeast of Las Vegas, Nevada, to camp out under the stars at the site of the proposed Gemini Solar Project. This project could become the nation's largest solar facility, using up to 44,000 acres of BLM land. The initial phase would generate 690 megawatts of power and disturb 7,100 acres — with adverse impact to several miles of a "high potential segment" of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

The impact to the OSNHT is of concern. We stand to lose another piece of the Trail, another expanse of landscape, and another chance for the public to vicariously experience this historic setting.

It was a chance for me to experience an infamous segment of the Old Spanish Trail known as "La Jornada del Muerto" (Day's Journey of the Dead Man).

Historic travel across this stretch of parched landscape with its prolonged dearth of water was similarly regarded as the most difficult part of the entire OST journey. Caravans had to endure fifty-five waterless miles between the Muddy River and the wondrous, artesian springs that once erupted out of the ground at the site known as *Las Vegas* (The Meadows).

I found the lack of water along the California Crossing High Potential Segment attributable to vast, hard-pan alluvial sheets of gravel, sand, and silt that splay across the desert landscape. The shallow layers of loose sand and cemented cobblestone stunt vegetative growth. Here, the ecosystem is comprised largely of flat plains of stubby creosote and white burro bush with an occasional grouping of catclaw growing near the washes. The washes are subject to occasional flash flooding that remove the struggling vegetation and expose flat areas of "caliche cement." Such

dry washes provided an obvious travel corridor.

Eating dinner, I watched a blazing sky unfold at sunset. At night, the moon cast eerie shadows across the desert and I reflected on historic caravan travelers, who were compelled to travel long days well into the night in order to complete the *jornada* between water hole campsites.

John C. Fremont, who travelled this reach from the springs at Las Vegas on May 4, 1844, wrote:

*"We crossed a gap in the surrounding ridge, and the appearance of skeletons of horses very soon warned us that we were engaged in another dry Jornada, which proved the longest we had made in all our journey — between fifty and sixty miles without a drop of water."*

*"Hourly expecting to find water, we continued to press on until towards*

*midnight, when, after a hard and uninterrupted march of 16 hours, our wild mules began running ahead; and in a mile or two we came to a bold running stream — so keen is the sense of that animal, in these desert regions, in scenting at a distance this necessary of life.”*

Sleeping outside on my cot after the moon had set, I could see evidence of today’s Las Vegas with its resorts and lively night life as a distant glow in the western horizon.

In his diary, Fremont lamented that the greater part of the Old Spanish Trail “was found to be only a tissue of falsehoods,” adding:

*“Travelers through countries affording water and timber can have no conception of our intolerable thirst while journeying over the hot yellow sands of this elevated country, where the heated air seems to be entirely deprived of moisture. We ate occasionally the bisnada [sic] (barrel cactus), and moistened our mouths with the acid of the sour dock, (Rumex venosus\*).”*

Enjoying the luxury of fresh-brewed coffee in the morning, I reflected on the need for OSTA to better document the various OST high potential segments listed in the 2017 *Comprehensive Administrative Strategy* prepared by the Department of the Interior for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. This important document includes a list of high potential sites and route segments for the Trail, as required in the National Trails System Act (C.A.S. Tables 2 and 3). The stated purpose of these high potential sites and segments is to assist decision-makers and the public in evaluating the relative merits and impacts of future site-specific actions, such as the Gemini Solar Project.

A total of forty-three high potential route segments are identified for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. I challenge each local OSTA chapter to become intimate with the segments in their backyard. Additionally, I urge federal land managers to accelerate recreation development plans for the Trail so the public can better experience and appreciate the rich historic landscapes that remain. Together, we must take action or risk the ongoing loss of these important national resources.

I’m one of the group of people who believe that enjoying vicarious trail experiences can change a person’s life. The late

Hal Steiner often talked about this and his personal epiphany while exploring the Old Spanish Trail. It motivated him and empowered him. With an autographed copy of his book — *The Old Spanish Trail Across the Mohave Desert* — in hand, I took a moment to savor the message he had scrawled on the title page:

*“May every trail be an adventure and each footstep a memory.”*

Camping out in the dry Nevada desert, I found out what he meant.

\*It is interesting to note that the Latin word “rumex” describing the sour dock is derived from rumo which means “to suck” — apparently in reference to the Roman practice of sucking these leaves to ease thirst. ♦

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# CHAPTER REPORT

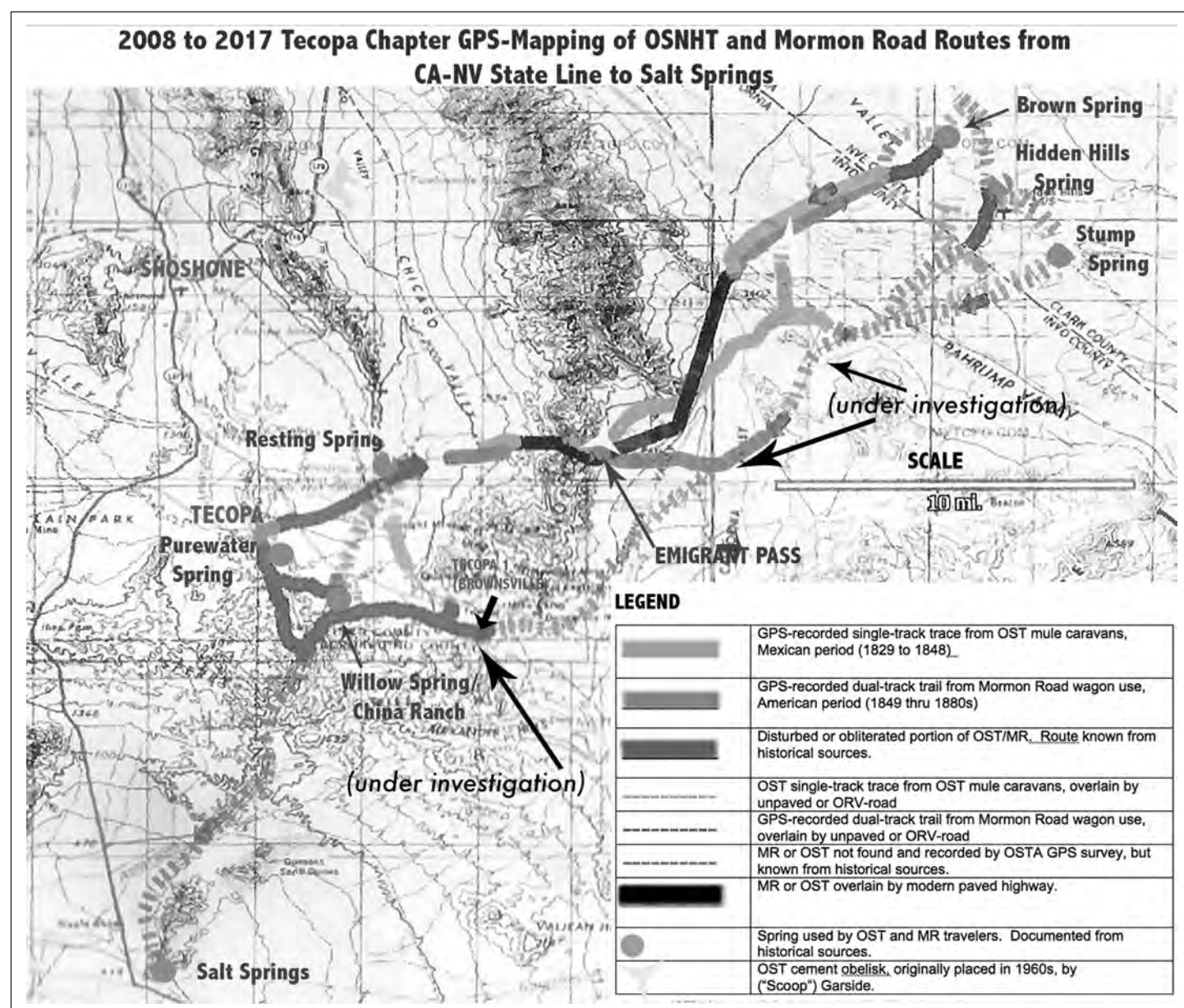
## Tecopa

By Jack Prichett, Chapter President

The Tecopa chapter's territory extends from the Nevada state line to Salt Springs, at the northern end of California's Silurian Valley. Since 2008, the chapter has documented — through use of historical maps,

19th century documentary sources, and on-the-ground GPS recording — some 40 miles of Old Spanish Trail mule trace and wagon ruts of the later Great Salt Lake or Mormon roads, which followed its route beginning

in 1849. The GPS data are significant, because earlier trail documentation, such as Harold Steiner's 1999 *The Old Spanish Trail, Across the Mojave Desert*, did not have accessible the GPS resources available today. At the



2017 OSTA annual conference, we presented our results in a presentation that included the preliminary mapping shown here.

Today, the chapter has largely concluded our GPS field recording excursions, and are looking ahead to formalizing our results for hand-over to the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the federal agencies responsible for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. Our efforts fall into three main areas.

- Conversion of our GPS waypoints into Geographical Information System (GIS) files, which will then be consistent with USGS maps and government agency data standards. In this project, we are working cooperatively with NPS staff in the Santa Fe office.

- Resolving issues concerning a likely site of apparent OST-period graves, right alongside the Trail route. In 2016, we formally reported to the NPS and BLM our finding and initial recording of this site. Our report recommended a formal archaeological site survey; a program of remote sensing to seek subsurface artifacts, such as metal buttons; and that the BLM, on whose property the site is located, take measures with OSTA to achieve those two tasks. Finally, our report recommended that the BLM protect the site as a potential historical resource. In early 2019, our chapter found that the site had been disturbed, with clear evidence of excavation, which we reported to the local BLM regional office, who said they would investigate. In August, 2019, we learned from

the manager of that BLM office that BLM itself had conducted the excavation, as a result of "law enforcement issues." However, because of these issues, they informed OSTA they could not disclose to us information about the excavation nor any results it had yielded.

- Establishing a better working relationship between our chapter and the Barstow BLM office. In November, 2019, we met with the BLM manager of that office. The meeting resulted in a set of working points to be formalized and enacted that will ensure clearer and mutually trustworthy communications, on a regular basis, between the two organizations. ♦



*Ever wonder how the  
Old Spanish Trail came to be?  
Who traveled on it?  
Where did they come from?  
Where were they going?*

Our Research Committee explores all of these questions - and more! Join us - We're looking for volunteers to help us.

- Find sources of information ■
- Review journals, articles ■
- Refer expert resources ■

And much more!

Contact Tom Sutak, Research Committee Chair at [ostarescom@gmail.com](mailto:ostarescom@gmail.com) today and let's get started!

# CHAPTER REPORT

## Descendants & Travelers of the Trail

By Conchita Marusich

The Descendants & Travelers of the Trail chapter had a busy and exciting start to 2020. We published our fifth newsletter in February which highlighted several interesting articles from our members. Elaine Martinez reported about the "Travelers Along the Old Spanish Trail" conference that took place in October, 2019. Don Garcia from Seattle, Washington wrote a fun article about his trip to Santa Fe where he celebrated Christmas by returning to his New Mexican "roots." If you would like to read our newsletter, please go to the OSTA website and click on <https://oldspanishtrail.org/news>. We mailed our newsletter out in the beginning of February, feeling that the year was off to a good start for our Old Spanish Trail activities.

Then the Coronavirus started rearing its dangerous head in late February and early March. Concerned about the emerging crisis, Cecelia Peña unfortunately had to cancel an Old Spanish Trail event at the Peña Adobe that was scheduled for March 7. With the virus continuing to grow, by mid-March California governor Newsom issued a stay-at-home order for the entire state, having seen around the world and within our own borders how quickly the virus

can spread and how dangerous it can be.

Because the Descendants chapter is primarily an internet-based chapter, we have been able to continue communicating through the internet or phone. Even with these unprecedented times, our chapter members have seen the positive side to these challenges and have used it to engage in creative stay-at-home activities. One member started a vegetable garden with the help of a neighbor and practiced social distancing while doing it! Another member is teaching piano to young students through video calls on FaceTime. A member in New Mexico attends Mass in her home via Facebook from a church in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Other members are researching and writing books in addition to working from home. I was filled with hope as I listened to how our members have been dealing with the pandemic and keeping busy during the stay-at-home orders.

Just as I am doing now with this update to the larger OSTA community, I also sent out a letter to our chapter, updating our members on the activities of others. I was deeply touched with the number of positive emails and phone calls I received



back.

One member wrote: "Thanks for this report! Boosts my morale, you guys are wonderful! Proud to be a member of the club!"

Just as I said to my chapter, I wish you all, as part of our larger OSTA community, the very best over the next few months as we all continue to deal with this national and global pandemic. We can all do our part to slow down the virus spread by staying at home while continuing to help our communities through creative ways. These are unprecedented times but we need to remain positive and hopeful as we face this crisis. As Amma, a spiritual leader in India wrote: "Courage is the antivirus to the mind." Be courageous, be strong and be positive. We can get through this together.

Stay safe and stay healthy!! See you on the Trail. ♦

*The Peña Adobe — California historical landmark #534 and the former home of the Peña family — is the center of attraction at the 1½-acre Peña Adobe Park, located on Peña Adobe Road in Vacaville, California. It is the oldest structure built in Solano County.*

CONCHITA MARUSICH



# CHAPTER REPORT

## La Vereda del Norte

By Ken Frye

**L**a Vereda del Norte chapter of Southern Colorado is pleased that we had a portion of our signage project completed in Costilla County. We are also planning a rock art video

about rock art along the OST, especially in Costilla County. Many of the rock art sites in the area are thousands of years old and indicate that people traveled through the same area because

it is the easiest route. We call it a "Trail Through Time" and the Trail is located where ancient Native Americans could travel along side lakes, meadows and creeks. ♦

### Did you know you can get back issues of *Spanish Traces*?

- Available back issues for \$6 per copy or \$150 for all back issues.
- In addition, a CD of all back issues is available for \$30.

#### **MARK FRANKLIN**

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## Bringing the Old Spanish Trail Back to Life in Utah

By Isobel Lingenfelter & Carly Lansche

Rob Sweeten, the BLM's Co-Administrator for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, recently contracted two Recreation Planning Associate's, Carly Lansche and Isobel Lingenfelter, to work on implementing the Recreation and Development Strategies for the Old Spanish Trail in Emery, Grand, Piute, Sevier, and Garfield counties.

Lingenfelter and Lansche have been working with jurisdictions to gain approval, secure funding, and develop partnerships to install the National Historic Trail signage. In addition, the two have been working to draft interpretive signage in fifteen locations spread between Emery, Sevier, Piute, and Garfield Counties. These efforts are on-going and are expected to be completed over the course of the next two years.

While signage is standard for highlighting a National Historic Trail, the duo has initiated expanding interpretation into a digital format. They are working to demonstrate how an app for your cell phones — called Explorer for ArcGIS — can be used offline to guide people on heritage tours related to the Old Spanish Trail.

The app will geo-locate the user's location within a mapped area that the user downloads, and will provide them with a variety of choices for having a vicarious experience on the trail including 2WD, 4WD/OHV, equestrian, biking, and hiking experiences. In addition, the map will help people find points of interest, such as water sources used by travelers, rock formations used for navigation, and more. Each point can be clicked on to show images and text to provide the user with a rich interpretive guide of the landscape's Old Spanish Trail history. The development and release of these maps for each county mentioned should be available in ESRI's Explorer App before the end of 2020. The app and its corresponding Old Spanish Trail maps are free to download and will be available in the Google Play Store and the Apple App store.

Lastly, the project team is working to paint the Old Spanish



*Carly grabs a selfie of the authors on the trail.*

Trail logos on shared-use, paved trails in Grand Junction, outside of Moab, and in Sevier and Piute Counties. The team is excited to have the opportunity to work to bring remembrance and recognition of the Old Spanish Trail to life in Utah.

Outside of the work of the project team, another exciting development on the trail is the installation of Old Spanish Trail silhouettes along the Moab Canyon Bike Path. The funding for this project was raised by the Back Country Horsemen of America working with the Trail Mix Committee of Grand County. The combination of digital map and physical signage will surely draw increased attention to this trail's unique and fascinating history. ♦

## San Juan College Encore Program: Old Spanish Trail Course

By Lynn Brittner

In February and March of 2020, the San Juan College Encore Program offered a course on the Old Spanish Trail taught by Linda Wheelbarger. Wheelbarger has worked as a professional archaeologist in the Four Corners for over 40 years, most of them working for San Juan College. She was inspired to teach the class because of the Old Spanish Trail event held at Aztec Ruins in the Fall of 2019. For the class,

she traced the portion of Antonio Armijo's route from Largo Canyon to Barker Arroyo west of the La Plata River where the land jurisdiction becomes Ute Mountain Ute territory. After the lectures, the class enjoyed two field trips, one in which they explored the Largo Wash to the town of Blanco to the town of Aztec section of the trail. The second field trip explored the section from the town of Aztec to



*Linda Wheelbarger*





the town of La Plata continuing to the Barker Arroyo section.

The class was enthralled to find an historic inscription panel near the trail in an area northwest of the town of Blanco. The faint inscription displays the name ANTONIO and perhaps the word SANTA FE. Unfortunately, the writing underneath, which may have included a date, is unreadable. Situated as it is in Largo Canyon, the inscription is worth investigating and whether or not it could be linked to historic travel associated with the Old Spanish Trail. ♦



# BOOK REVIEW

Prepared for *Spanish Traces* by Julianne Burton-Carvajal, Ph.D.  
Salida del Sol Chapter, Santa Fe

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A book about the origins, present state of recognition, and future possibilities of El Camino Real in both Alta and Baja California — written by a New Mexican with impressive credentials as author, archival map sleuth, founder of the Spanish Colonial Research Center, longtime editor of its bilingual journal, and recently retired National Park Superintendent — warrants the attention of many members of the Old Spanish Trail Association. That attention will be both richly deserved and richly rewarded.

One of the book's many virtues is recognizing the roots of Alta California settlement in Baja — or Antigua — California. In 1769 as Founding President of the Alta California missions, Junípero Serra trekked the arduous overland route from the former Jesuit headquarters at Loreto. So did Governor Gaspar de Portolá who, soon after arriving at the designated rendezvous for the paired land and sea expeditions, sent Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada right back down the desolate, boulder-strewn Peninsula to collect livestock and other emergency supplies. Means of sustenance were sorely needed at incipient San Diego after one ship went missing and surviving members of the two other crews were at death's door due to scurvy. Hardly an auspicious beginning for the "Sacred Expedition."

This is primarily a boots-on-the-ground narrative. Its three central chapters trace the trek from the precarious beachhead at San Diego northward in search of Monterey Bay, distressingly elusive despite having been named and described in 1602. The Portolá Expedition notoriously missed the mark even when skirting the rim of that much-touted bay. Deceived and befuddled by its wide mouth, they struggled onward, eventually stumbling upon the sprawling Bay of San Francisco that had eluded mariners for over a century due the persistent fog and perilous cliffs masking its narrow mouth. Physically and morally depleted by their failure and reduced to

butchering their mules for sustenance, the scraggly band faced the arduous challenge of retracing their steps. Many no doubt dreaded the welcome awaiting them from Father Serra — who reportedly demanded, "Am I to understand that you went all the way to Rome yet failed to see the Pope?"

Each core section of this handsomely designed, remarkably compact volume — preface, seven chapters, epilogue — begins with a gem of a quotation, the entire assortment spanning the 16th to 21st centuries in testimony to the author's wide compass. In addition to his own detailed commentary, Dr. Sánchez provides glosses of two different Camino Real itineraries by influential 20th century scholars. Franciscan Maynard Geiger of Mission Santa Barbara reconstructs Camino Real locations that Father Serra (now Saint Junípero) would have traversed while traveling south to San Diego from his headquarters at San Carlos Borromeo/Carmel Mission. Professor Herbert Bolton of the University of California–Berkeley brought Crespí's locations into accord with current topographical analysis and nomenclature.

This is a scholarly work in the very best sense — a rich compendium analyzing first-hand expeditionary accounts, supplemented with valuable contextual information, and assembled by a leading scholar at the height of his powers. Eight appendices leave no worthy stone unturned. One is dedicated to presidios and associated ranchos, two others to the missions of Alta and Baja California. Rich in family surnames, the most extensive details regional land grants pertinent to El Camino Real. To the surprise of many readers, there is even an appendix identifying sea lanes that supplied Alta California in the early days and continued to link its four presidios — all of which doubled as ports and points of distribution for the surrounding region. Alta's California's Camino Real is unique in having a fundamental maritime component as well as overland supply networks that radiated from every presidio.

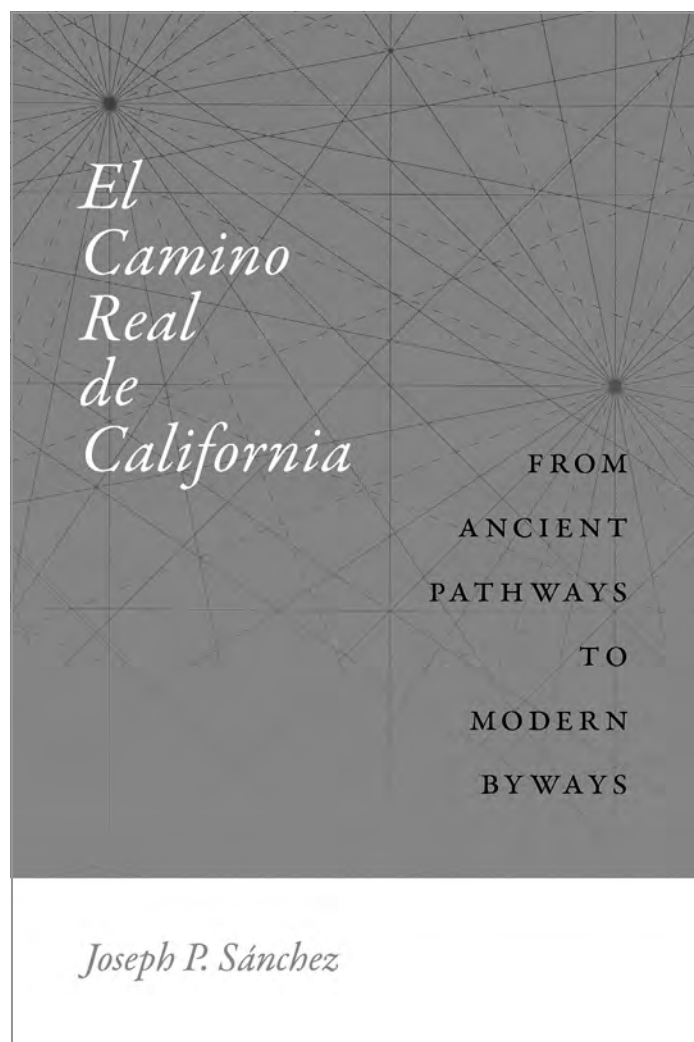
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This publication is well-timed. San Diego institutions, residents and their guests commemorated the 250th founding anniversary in 2019 with a series of conferences and public events both religious and secular. Monterey plans to mark its corresponding anniversary this June, and the sequence of commemorations will continue at missions, presidios, and their associated cities and towns as each in turn attains that significant milestone.

*El Camino Real de California* also completes a significant cycle in its author's prolific publishing career: his fourth and crowning examination of a western National Historic Trail with tri-national roots. Published in 1997, *Forging the Old Spanish Trail* was followed in 2011 by *Guide to the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro*, and in 2016 by *An Historical Guide to El Camino Real de los Tejas*.

Dr. Sánchez's long career with the National Park Service encouraged a focus on practical and procedural fundamentals such as authentication, the theme that opens this most recent book. Achieved through a combination of historical and archival research, archaeological surveying, rigorous documentation, and careful collation, authentication verifies the significance and integrity of a site or an entire corridor, thereby ensuring its preservation and place in our national story — which must acknowledge Mexico, Spain, and myriad Native American groups that proudly and loudly proclaim: "We are still here."

Members of these four western National Trail Associations have many qualities in common. Foremost among them should be the shared conviction that "*the spirit and direction of our nation are founded upon and reflected in its heritage,*" and that "*the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest — so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations.*"\*



Like many of our National Historic trails, our shared history is best understood as a braided rather than linear phenomenon. As Westerners and Americans at large broaden and deepen our understanding of the national story, its pre-national, bi-national, hemispheric, continental, and international dimensions will be increasingly acknowledged. Along with many other books and essays by the author, in print and forthcoming, these four exemplary efforts are a uniquely valuable contribution to that trend. ♦

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\*From Section I of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, as cited in the Epilogue and footnotes to this volume.

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*El Camino Real de California: From Ancient Pathways to Modern Byways* by Joseph P. Sánchez.  
Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019;  
274pp, b/w maps and illustrations, appendices,  
notes, index. Hardcover.



## Forgotten Voices Along the Old Spanish Trail: Tomás Chacón, Frontier Scout and Sobita, Ute Leader

By Robert J. Torrez

Following the occupation of New Mexico by American military forces in 1846, the United States government moved promptly to pacify New Mexico's embattled frontiers by negotiating treaties with the territory's various Indian tribes. Although current histories of the Southern Utes say very little about Abiquiú, much of the government effort to deal with the Capote and Weeminuche band of Southern Utes, and to a lesser degree, the Jicarilla Apache, centered around this eighteenth century settlement. For nearly three decades following the American Occupation, Abiquiú, and eventually the region known as Tierra Amarilla, forty miles north, played important roles in the history of these tribes.<sup>1</sup> The United States government established the first Ute Agency at the military post in Abiquiú in 1850, and appointed Cyrus Choice as its first Agent.<sup>2</sup>

For more than two decades, several men who achieved

prominence in the history of northern New Mexico were assigned as agents at Abiquiú. Michael Steck, Lorenzo Labadi, Albert H. Pfeiffer, Diego Archuleta, José Antonio Manzanares, Henry Mercure, and W. F. M. [William Frederick Milton] Army were among those who struggled with varying degrees of success to administer a federal Indian policy that aimed to settle all of New Mexico's tribes on reservations, so they could be taught "to cultivate the earth" and raise livestock.

One of the tragedies and ironies of the way history is written is that we seldom hear much about many of the men and women who did so much to make New Mexico the fascinating place it is today. As one reviews the thousands of primary records of the Abiquiú agency and the U. S. government's dealings with the Utes, two names which seldom appear in the books and articles on Indian scouts, so-called frontiersmen, and Ute leaders, stand out — Tomás Chacón and Sobita.

During much of the nineteenth century, beginning with New Mexico's Mexican era (1821-1846) through the early

U. S. territorial period (1846-1872) it is clear that Tomás Chacón was one of New Mexico's most sought-after interpreters and guides. His name often appears in the same reports and correspondence alongside that of Sobita, a prominent Capote chief who led his people through a critical period of change in tribal history. The lives of these men were intimately linked through events that took place in that part of the Greater Southwest through which the Old Spanish Trail wound.

### **Tomás Chacón, Frontier Scout and Ute Interpreter**

We know little about Chacón's early life. The baptism records for Santo Tomás Apostol de Abiquiú show one Tomás de Jesús Chacón was baptized on 23 December 1793, the son of José Antonio Chacón and María Juana Guadalupe Archuleta. If this baptismal record is the correct one for the Tomás Chacón of frontier New Mexico fame, then it is possible he is the same person listed in the Rio Arriba County census of 1850 at age 59 with his wife María and three children. However, it should be noted that baptism and census records for

the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries list several Tomas Chacones of varying ages living in the same region. With that in mind, note that the genealogy of our Tomás Chacón is beyond the scope of this essay; here we will instead review what the public record reveals about the man who achieved fame as a scout, guide, and Ute interpreter.

An early mention of our Tomás Chacón shows up in an 1835 *ayuntamiento* (municipal council) report of a celebration held at Santo Tomás Apostol de Abiquiú on 21 April 1835 to commemorate Santa Ana's victory over rebels at Zacatecas. Chacón and Pedro Leon Luján, serving as members of the council, are signatories (their signatures affixed with an "x") to the report.<sup>3</sup> An 1836 listing of property owners for the Plaza de Santo Tomás shows Tomás Chacón and Pedro Lion (spelling on document) Luján living in the same jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup>

This early association with Pedro Leon Luján places this Tomás Chacón squarely among those Abiquiú residents who developed an intimate knowledge of and relationship with the Utes of that rugged frontier, especially as it relates to the trade in Ute captives. This relationship with the Utes and his role in the acquisition and possible trade in captive children is demonstrated in the baptism records of Santo Tomás Apostol de Abiquiú. A random search of the Abiquiú sacramental records for the period from the early 1830s through the early 1840s shows

at least eight baptisms of Ute children as "servants of Tomás Chacón." This clearly indicates that Chacón, like Pedro Leon Luján and many of his neighbors, was deeply involved in the acquisition, trade, and raising of *cautivos* (captive Indian children), a prevalent practice in New Mexico at that time.<sup>5</sup>

Chacón shows up frequently in the historical record following the American occupation of New Mexico in 1846. In the summer of 1850 he served as the guide and interpreter for the William Z. Angney expedition that traveled to California over the Old Spanish Trail. The journal of this expedition, published in the *Missouri Daily Republican* and later serialized in the *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, notes that Chacón's "intimate acquaintance with the Yuta country and its wild inhabitants and their language, [were] of no small service to us."<sup>6</sup> The Daniel W. Jones book *Forty Years Among the Indians*, which chronicles this same journey, credits "old Thomas" with seeing them through several "close calls" because he was always able to "talk the Indians into peace." Jones credits Chacón with saving his life on more than one occasion and mentions that Chacón told him he had accompanied, and presumably guided, the Mormon Battalion from Santa Fe to California in 1846-47.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to guiding the Angney trading expedition to California that summer of 1850, he was among the group of

traders from Abiquiú that were arrested that Fall for attempting to trade with the Utes without a license.<sup>8</sup>

In August of 1854 Chacón was sent in pursuit of a band of Jicarilla that had stolen livestock from Pablo Trujillo in the Abiquiú region. The report indicates that Chacón boldly entered the Jicarilla camp and by threat of force or persuasion secured return of the livestock. He may have succeeded by offering to negotiate some type of peace treaty or agreement because the same reports indicate the Jicarilla soon thereafter sent word to Abiquiú that they wanted meet the resident agent in order to "solicit peace."<sup>9</sup>

By the 1860s Chacón's familiarity with the Utes and their language had earned him a position as interpreter with the Abiquiú Indian Agency under William F. M. Arny. Arny's reports indicate Chacón "began service under my employment on the 1st day of July 1867" with the salary of five hundred dollars a year.<sup>10</sup>

On or about 19 June 1868 Chacón accompanied Arny and a group of Ute and Jicarilla chiefs to Santa Fe to meet with General George W. Getty and the peace commission. At the meeting Getty advised the assembled Utes and Jicarilla of the recently concluded Navajo treaty and that the Navajo were going to be moved back to their "old country." Getty reiterated that the Navajo had stated they "desired to be at peace with the Utes" and urged them of the



1 Whero Mudo } Apaches.  
 2 Pabstalon }  
 3 Hm & Army  
 4 Capt H. M. Davis.

5 Piquitigon. } Ute Indian  
 6. Vicente.  
 Picardes Apache Lawyer.  
 with Orator.  
 7 Martine Ute Capote Band  
 W. F. Mc Army.  
 Indians Talla

9. Corinea.  
 Ute Capote Thief  
 10. Sobatar  
 Chief of the Capote  
 women at the bands  
 Ute Indians of New M.  
 11 Curwitche.  
 white mans friend

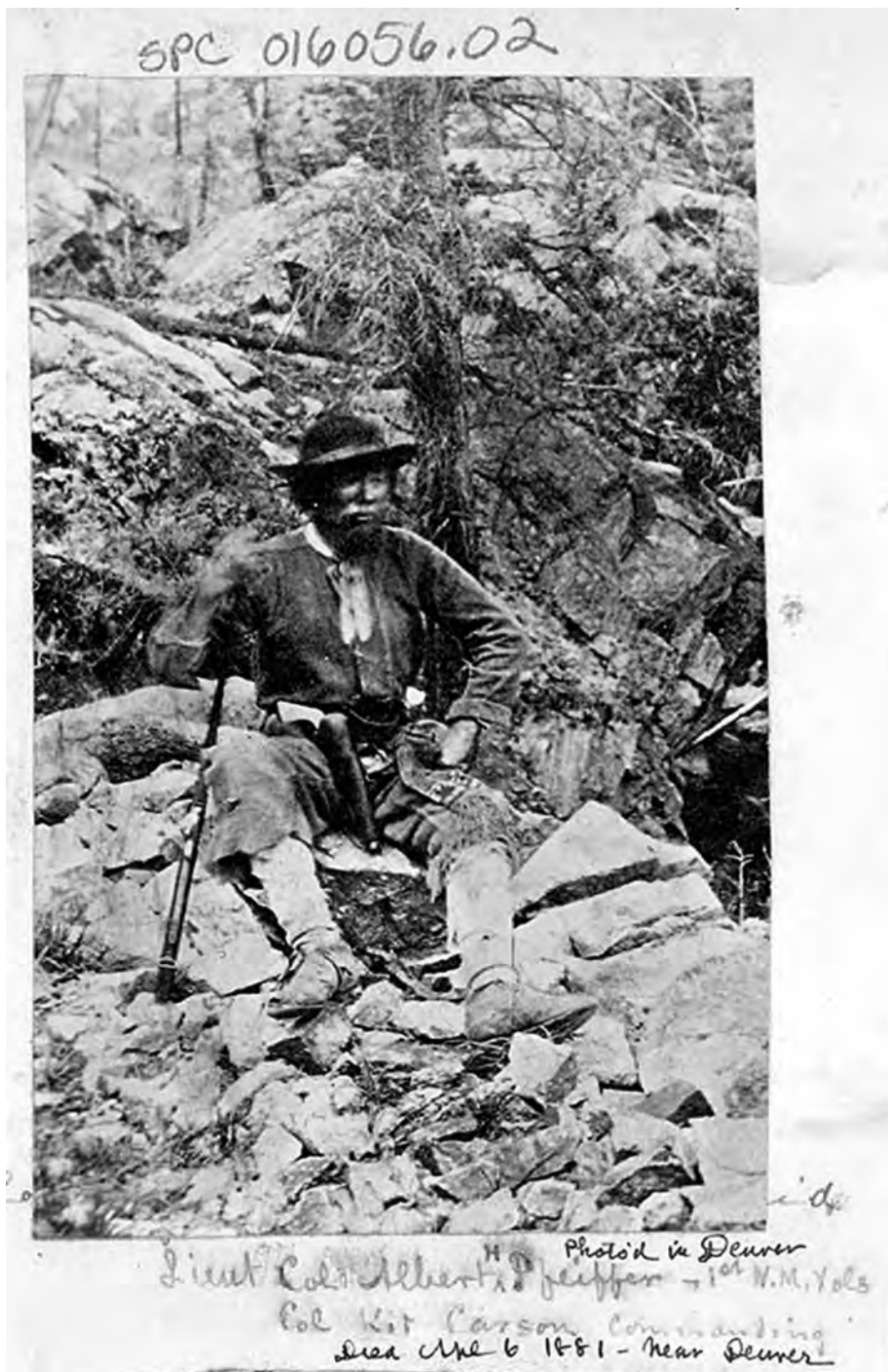


necessity" of their living in peace" but the Utes and Jicarilla leaders declared they had no confidence in any treaties the Navajo made with the Americans, Mexicans, or any other tribe and "took their leave."<sup>11</sup> It is while in Santa Fe with the Ute and Jicarilla leaders that Army may have taken the opportunity to pose with his charges for the **well-known photo taken by Nicholas Brown**. The photograph shows Tomás Chacón (No. 12) peering from the back row between two Ute chiefs, providing us with a rare image of a true New Mexico frontiersman of that generation alongside the Native American peoples with whom he had an intimate acquaintance.<sup>12</sup>

Following the meeting with General Getty and the peace commission, Army, heeding the advice of the Capote leader Sabatar (Sobita), decided to go to the Rio San Juan country and meet with the Weeminuche and other Ute leaders who were not present at Santa Fe. Army's report indicates the "council" was held on 19 August 1868 at the Rio San Juan near Pagosa Springs in the Colorado Territory. Records of the council show Tomás Chacón was present as interpreter as well as one of the signatories and witnesses to Army's report.<sup>13</sup>

A final mention of Chacón's service is during the spring of 1872

W. F. M. Army with Apache & Ute delegation, 1868. Edward Ayer Collection, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. AP 3438.465. Sobitar (Sobita) and Tomás Chacón are to the left of Army.



Albert H. Pfeiffer, Sobita's good friend. James E. Taylor Scrapbook, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution MS4605

when he was called to interpret for the U. S. Army during negotiations with Sobita and his Capote band of Utes at Nutritas (present-day Tierra Amarilla). When the negotiations broke down, the commanding officer sent

Chacón to try and convince Sobita to return but as we shall see in the following paragraphs, this time Chacón's powers of persuasion apparently failed.

I have not searched for what became of Tomás Chacón

after 1872. The 1868 Nicholas Brown photo shows a rugged-looking individual of advanced years. If he is the same Tomás Chacón born in 1793, he was nearly eighty years old when called to negotiate with the Utes at Nutritas in 1872. It is likely he did his duty, returned to his home in the Abiquiú region and quietly melded into undeserved anonymity. In his own time, Tomás Chacón was as well known as any of the more famous personages of frontier New Mexico. One hopes his descendants realize the important role he played in New Mexico's history.

### Sobita, Capote Ute Chief

The Utes, or Yutas, as they are referred to in Spanish and Mexican period documents, played an important part in the history of New Mexico. Of the seven distinct Ute clans or bands that ranged throughout much of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, two of the Southern Utes bands — the Weeminuche and Capote — played a major role in the history of Abiquiú and northern New Mexico and appear most frequently in documents of the Abiquiú Indian Agency. While these documents occasionally mention individual Utes, few are mentioned as often as the nineteenth century Capote chief identified as Sabatar, Sobatar, Sobator, and most commonly, Sobita, the spelling which

will be used in this essay for convenience. This Ute leader stands at W. F. M. Arny's left shoulder in the 1868 Nicholas Brown photograph, along with Tomás Chacón.

Sobita attained the rank of chief sometime after 1854, when Ute agency reports list the Capote head chief as A-oh-ka-sach.<sup>14</sup> In early 1859 Sobita is mentioned prominently in the correspondence of Albert H. Pfeiffer, who indicated Sobita was very active in Pfeiffer's campaigns against the Navajo during this period. In mid-September, 1860, Pfeiffer led twenty New Mexican militia and a large band of Ute warriors in pursuit of some Navajo raiders. When the expedition overtook the Navajo later that month, they killed six Navajo and captured nineteen others in the ensuing battle. They also recovered 5,000 sheep, 500 horses, and two Mexican captives. As soon as the battle ended, most of the Utes immediately abandoned the campaign and took all the horses. Pfeiffer reported that the New Mexican militia and Sobita were the only ones that had stayed with him to take the remaining stock and the prisoners back to Abiquiú. Pfeiffer proudly indicated Sobita had told him that he would rather die than abandon an old friend.<sup>15</sup>

Pfeiffer's relationship with Sobita is also clearly stated in an undated letter Pfeiffer wrote to an unidentified friend in which he noted there was "not much

politeness" between him, the Navajo, and Apache. He indicated he had built a "blockhouse" along the Nacimiento which the Navajo or Apache burned down and that he and Sobita followed their trail "and they were remarkable (sic) quiet afterwards."<sup>16</sup>

In 1859, Sobita was also credited with delivering supplies and mail for Captain J. H. Macomb's expedition to northwest New Mexico. J. S. Newberry, the expedition's geologist, noted in one of his letters that "Everyone says Sobata (sic) is a great Indian."<sup>17</sup>

Sobita continues to be listed as a Capote chief through 1868, when his name appears as a signatory to a treaty by which all the Ute bands allegedly agreed to give up their claim to traditional lands in New Mexico and Colorado and enter reservations.<sup>18</sup> Later that year, Sobita was among the Ute chiefs who repudiated that treaty, claiming it had not been negotiated by authorized members of their tribe.<sup>19</sup> That same year, he is listed as "head chief" of the 312 men, women, and children that constituted the Capote band at that time, with exception of sixty-one others that followed another Capote leader identified only as the "renegade Chaves."<sup>20</sup>

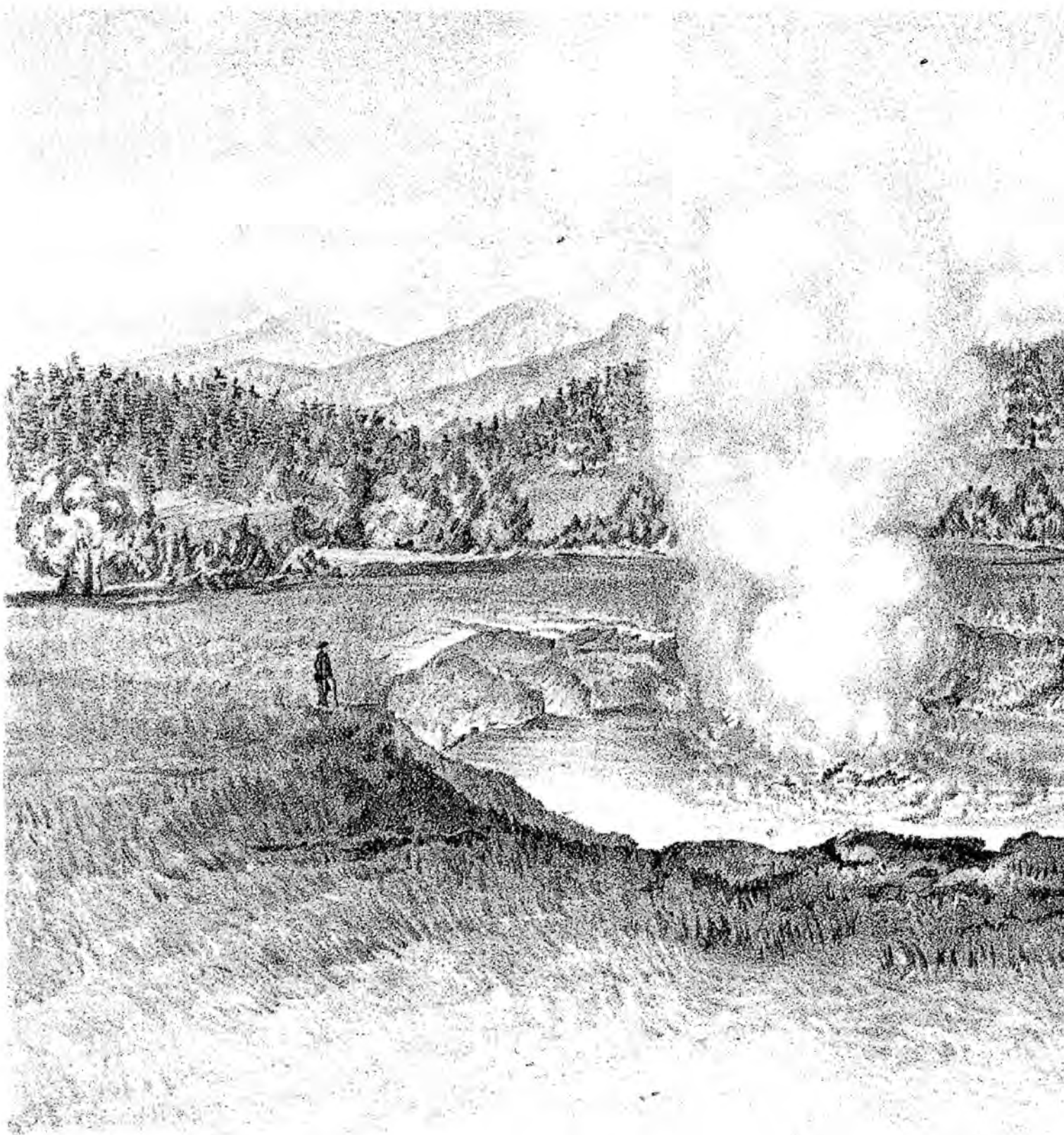
In late 1870 the government decided to institute some "get tough" measures designed to force the Capote and Weeminuche to relocate to the Ute reservation which had been

established for them in southern Colorado. When Agent J. B. Hanson inquired whether goods for the Capote and Weeminuche had been purchased, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs H. R. Clum responded that the goods had been acquired but were being sent to the Indians' "respective agencies in Colorado." If the Utes wanted anything from the government, they had to go to Los Pinos and settle.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Ute's "Last Stand" at Tierra Amarilla**

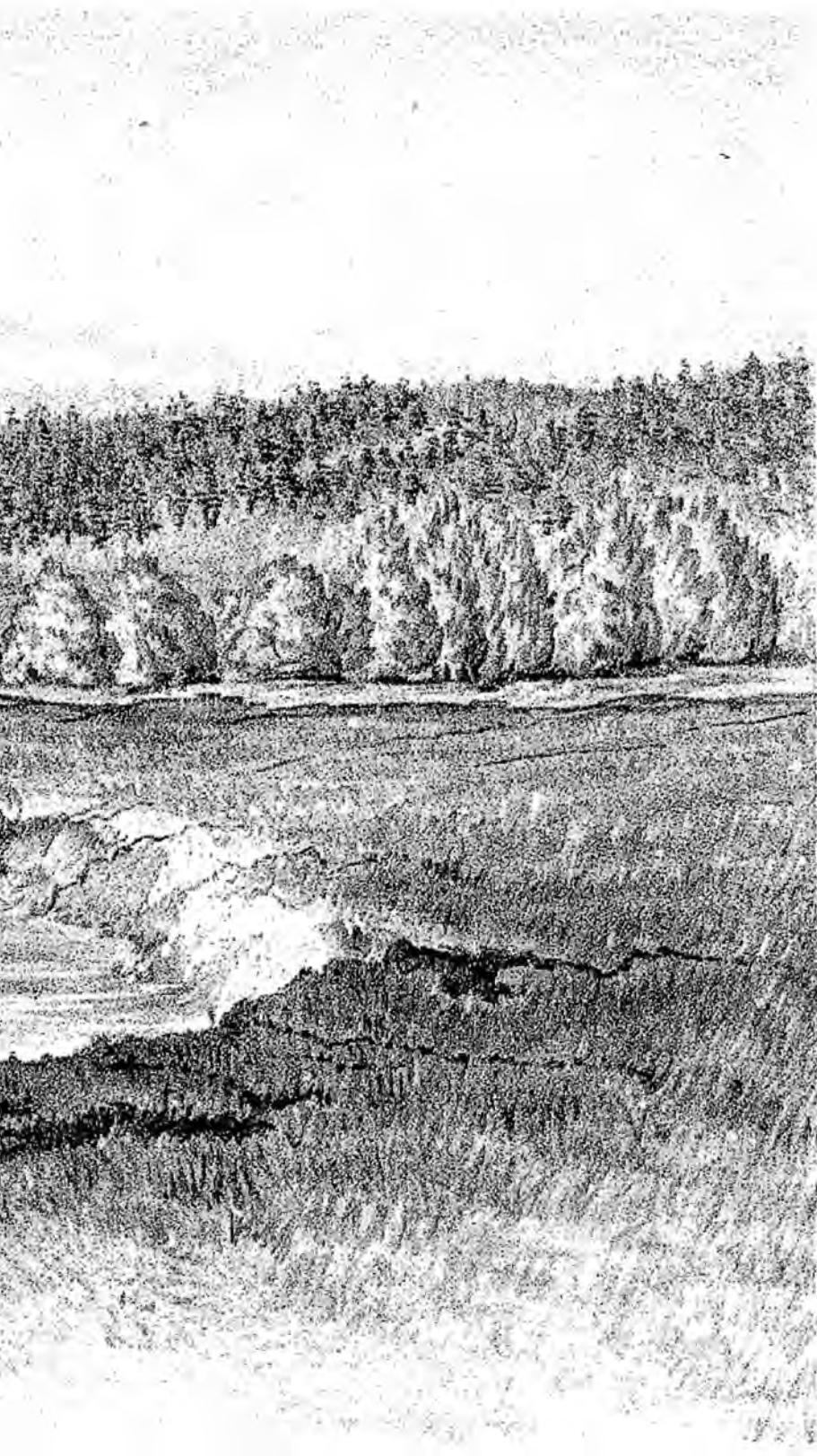
Most of the Capote and Weeminuche, however, refused to move to Colorado. According to numerous Abiquiú agent reports, many of those who did go to Colorado did so only to receive their annuity goods and promptly returned to New Mexico. Consequently, in the absence of the goods which were so important to the Ute's subsistence, there was a significant increase in reported depredations throughout northern New Mexico during the spring of 1871.

On July 4, 1871, the farmers and stock raisers from the growing villages of the Tierra Amarilla area held a large public meeting to protest what they described as "the incessant depredations of the Utes." A committee drafted an angry resolution which protested government inaction and pledged that if necessary, they would take matters into their own hands to



J.S.N.

THE PAGOSA,  
S W. COLORADO, SAN JUAN



17. Sinclair A. 11. 1859

EXPED

bring an end to the depredations, even if it would lead to "a war of extermination."<sup>22</sup>

A few depredations were reported during the winter following this protest, but by the spring of 1872, residents in the vicinity of Abiquiú and Tierra Amarilla were once again complaining loud and clear of Ute depredations on their livestock. Typical of these was a sarcastic letter from William Duncan that was published in Santa Fe's *The Daily New Mexican*. Duncan reported pleasant weather in northern New Mexico, then continued, "But as the snow becomes less, and the grass more plentiful, that irrepressible cuss, 'lo, the poor Indian,' whose blood is bad in the Spring, caused by eating the fat beef of Tierra Amarilla, has had to take something...so he took the horses of Antonio and Jose Martin...and it evidently done him good, for he has repeated and increased the dose..."<sup>23</sup> The same issue of the newspaper printed a letter from "Observer" who claimed the Capote demanded a fee of twenty rams from the shepherds along the Rio de Las Gallinas west of Abiquiú to assure safe grazing. Those who refused to pay reportedly had their flocks killed or were assaulted.

*Pagosa Springs as pictured in 1859. Captain J. N. Macomb, Report of the Exploring Expedition From Santa Fe, New Mexico, to the Junction of the Grand and Green Rivers...in 1859 (1876: Government Printing Office, 1876), p. 75.*

In response to these depredations Ute agent J. S. Armstrong sent Tomás Chacón in pursuit of the Capote and Weeminuche in hopes of persuading them to return stolen livestock. After several days travel, he found the Utes deep in their territory but was unable to persuade them to return the livestock. They dismissed him, telling him to go home and that they would consider returning some stolen horses and go to Abiquiú when they returned from the Green River. Chacón also reported he had seen many Navajo with the Utes. Alarmed at these developments Armstrong pleaded with Nathaniel Pope, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New Mexico to immediately send two companies of cavalry to Abiquiú "for the protection of the place and the people and property..."<sup>24</sup>

Response was almost immediate. On 4 April 1872, orders issued at Fort Wingate dispatched Lieutenant J. D. Stevenson and twenty-five enlisted men of Company K, 8th United States Cavalry, to Tierra Amarilla. Lt. Stevenson was initially instructed to find the band of Indians which had been stealing livestock in the area, recover the animals, and warn the Indians of the consequences of "further disturbances." Stevenson was also cautioned not to take any actions which would "incite the Indians to an outbreak."<sup>25</sup> By the time Stevenson reached

Tierra Amarilla, however, his orders had changed. He was now given explicit instructions to not only find the Indians who had committed depredations, but to capture Sobita, one of the principal Capote chiefs. "No nonsense will be tolerated from the Indians," noted his new instructions, and if they refused to turn over stolen livestock, he was to "bring them all in."<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, additional orders were issued to the commanding officer at Fort Garland, Colorado Territory, to send reinforcements and rations for fifty men and two officers to Tierra Amarilla.<sup>27</sup>

The strong and immediate response to agent Armstrong's appeal for military action could easily be attributed to mounting public pressure for action against the Utes. The Santa Fe newspapers had been printing regular updates on reported depredations and published letters that expressed a sense of anger and frustration with government inaction. However, a hint as to the timing of orders to send troops to Tierra Amarilla may be attributed to an easily-overlooked blurb in *The Daily New Mexican* of 1 April 1872. The paper noted that T. B. Burns of Tierra Amarilla was in Santa Fe en route for home following a visit to Fort Union. Thomas D. Burns' reason for being at Fort Union has not come to light but it is no stretch of the imagination that Burns, a man of considerable influence in the economic and

political affairs of northern New Mexico, used some of that influence to encourage, if not convince, the military to take action to avoid an escalation of trouble in the Tierra Amarilla.<sup>28</sup>

The morning of 6 May 1872, Sobita and about thirty "well armed" warriors voluntarily came to the village of Nutritas, one of the principal settlements of the Tierra Amarilla area, where a meeting had been arranged with Lt. Stevenson and Ute Agent John S. Armstrong. Thomas D. Burns and Tomás Chacón were at the meeting to serve as interpreters. It must have been an interesting scene, with Stevenson and Armstrong's English being translated to Spanish by Burns, and then from Spanish into Ute by Chacón, and then the process reversed for Sobita's responses.<sup>29</sup>

Sobita and his men listened intently as Armstrong scolded them over their "perfidious conduct," and the government's demand that they return all stolen livestock and turn over those responsible for the thefts. But Sobita was noncommittal and refused to identify any of his people that may have stolen livestock. By late afternoon, Stevenson and Armstrong had become increasingly frustrated with the Utes over their "overbearing pride and self-reliant foolhardiness [which] prompted them to reject every proposition that did not suit them." In a show of force, Stevenson ordered his troops

to surround the house where the meeting was being held, and demanded eight warriors be chosen to be taken to Santa Fe as hostages to assure good behavior in the future. Sobita's men strung their bows, loaded their rifles, and prepared to fight their way out of the encirclement. Sobita, however, managed to calm his warriors and convinced Stevenson they would consider the matter overnight.

Stevenson agreed, and he and his troops escorted the Utes towards their camp, which they had set up west of Nutritas, possibly along the plateau that overlooked the abandoned site of Camp Plummer/ Fort Lowell, south of Los Ojos. As they neared the camp, Sobita and his men suddenly broke away from the troops and raced towards another group of Indians that approached from the west. They then turned and formed a "battle line" along a steep bluff which overlooks the Rio Chama. Chacón, the Ute interpreter, was sent to negotiate with Sobita, but to no avail. They horsewhipped Chacón and sent him back with the message that they were tired of talk. They were ready to fight!

Fully cognizant of his orders to "bring them all in," Stevenson decided drastic measures were necessary to prevent the Utes from escaping and ordered his men to open fire. For at least a half hour, the soldiers and Utes exchanged gunfire, but the Utes had positioned themselves

in an "advantageous position" among the rocks and brush along the bluff. Outnumbered and outmaneuvered, Stevenson could not prevent the Utes from retreating down the bluff, where they then crossed the Rio Chama and escaped into the unsettled vastness of northwest New Mexico.

When the smoke cleared, Stevenson's casualties consisted of one trooper who had been severely wounded in the leg. No Ute casualties were found, although Stevenson assured his commanding officer that at least one Indian "was seen to fall," but had apparently been removed from the battlefield by companions.<sup>30</sup>

For the next several weeks, there was a frenzy of activity throughout northern New Mexico. Reinforcements and supplies were rushed to Tierra Amarilla, and troops remained there through the summer. But no further incidents were reported as the government continued a futile effort to gather the Utes and convince them to turn over those who had stolen livestock.

Subsequent reports, however, tend to minimize the seriousness of the situation. Thomas D. Burns, who witnessed the clash, characterized the incident as "an immense amount of shooting done to little effect." General Phil Sheridan, after reviewing reports of the battle, concluded it was nothing more than a "little duello"

and indicated he expected no further problems.<sup>31</sup>

Relations with the returning Utes, however, remained tense, in part due to the government's insistence that all stolen stock had to be returned and those responsible turned over to military authorities. The issue was further complicated by additional demands that those who had killed Agapito Lucero on May 6 about ten miles west of the Rio Chama as the Utes retreated be turned over to military authorities.<sup>32</sup> There is no indication anyone was turned over to authorities or determined under what circumstances Lucero was killed. It is likely he simply happened to be along the path of an angry group of Utes as they retreated west.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Abiquiú Agency Moved to Tierra Amarilla**

Ute agent Armstrong remained in Tierra Amarilla for at least a month following the battle. During this period a number of Utes came to see Armstrong and returned some livestock, which Armstrong noted he was returning to residents who could prove ownership. He also reiterated the importance of having the agency closer to where the Indians were and requested permission to terminate rental of agency buildings at Abiquiú effective the end of June 1872, and move his agency's headquarters to Tierra Amarilla.<sup>34</sup> The date of official authorization

for this move has not been found in agency reports, but subsequent correspondence suggest the actual move of his agency's headquarters to Tierra Amarilla was made on June 15, 1872.<sup>35</sup>

Contrary to some sources, when the actual move took place, the Abiquiú agency was not moved to the abandoned site of Camp Plummer/Fort Lowell. When the post was established in 1866, it was built on private property leased from former Ute Special Agent Henry Mercure. According to terms of the lease, improvements made to the property by the military reverted to Mercure when the fort was abandoned in 1869. By 1872 military and agency correspondence make it clear that the buildings of the fort had been sold, dismantled, and moved to the surrounding villages by the time the Ute agency was transferred from Abiquiú in 1872. Instead, Agent Armstrong suggested they rent buildings in Nutritas from T. D. Burns at fifty dollars a quarter beginning 1 September 1872. This arrangement with Burns continued until the agency was closed nearly a decade later.<sup>36</sup>

Mention of Sobita tails off from this point. On May 21 Taputche, Sobita's son, and five or six of his warriors met with military officers at Tierra Amarilla and extended his father's desire for peace but also reiterated that the Capote were concerned with

the "preparations made to punish them."<sup>37</sup> Two letters from "T. D. B" in *The Daily New Mexican* indicate Sobita himself came to Tierra Amarilla in late June and met with Agent Armstrong to discuss the government's demands to give up the thieves and the killers of Agapito Lucero but nothing was apparently accomplished through these meetings.<sup>38</sup> A reason why Sobita's name may have faded from agency correspondence may be explained by a subsequent report that says he turned over authority to Ouray, as "chief of all the Utes."<sup>39</sup>

By the end of 1872, the situation in northern New Mexico had settled down considerably and the Capote and Weeminuche remained near the Abiquiú Agency in Tierra Amarilla until 1878. On April 10 of that year, the resident agent ceased issuing rations there in order to force the Indians to go to the Southern Ute Agency in Colorado. A few Utes persisted in remaining in the Tierra Amarilla area for several weeks, but in June, they too finally relented, and left New Mexico.<sup>40</sup>

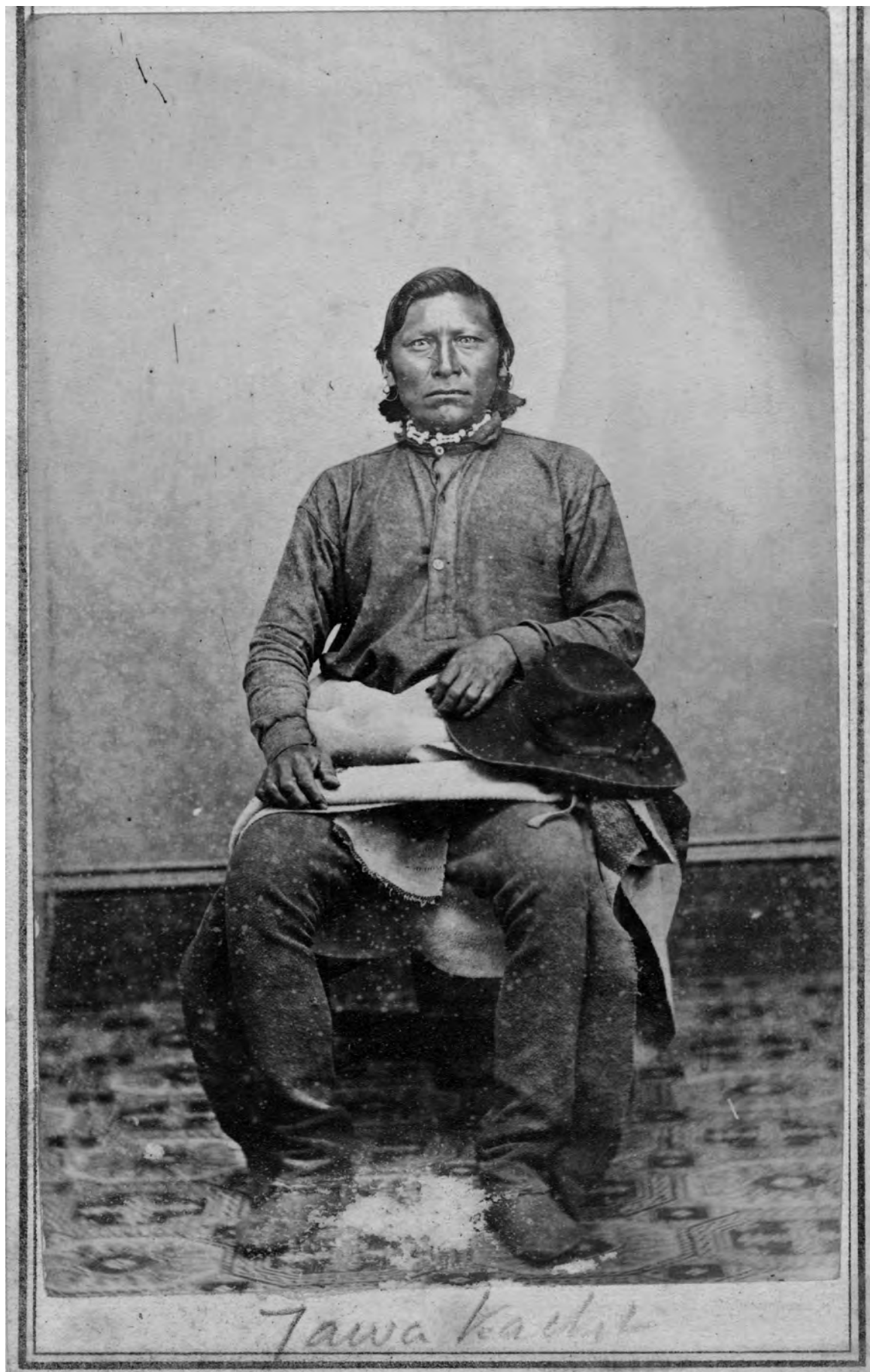
With the Utes gone, several hundred Jicarilla Apache remained assigned to the agency at Tierra Amarilla. Many Jicarilla had drifted to this area after 1876, when the Jicarilla Indian Agency at Cimarron in northeast New Mexico was closed and their reservation combined with that of the Mescalero near Fort Stanton in southern

New Mexico. The Jicarilla that refused to go to the Mescalero reservation instead remained in northern New Mexico, where they subsisted on their own by hunting, and according to many reports, committing minor depredations on livestock. When the Utes finally went to Colorado in 1878, most of the Jicarilla were officially placed under the care of the agent at Nutritas, where they received their rations until a reservation was established for them in 1881 at Amargo, west of Tierra Amarilla. On 20 December 1881, Frank W. Reed, the Farmer in Charge at Tierra Amarilla reported the Jicarilla had commenced their move to Amargo and closed the agency at Nutritas.<sup>41</sup>

The new Jicarilla Apache reservation, however, was short-lived. By 1883, powerful private economic interests in northern New Mexico forced their removal back to the Mescalero Reservation where they remained until 1887, when President Grover Cleveland issued an Executive Order which established their current reservation as the Jicarilla's permanent home.<sup>42</sup> Thus ended more than three decades of government efforts to remove the Utes and Jicarilla from their traditional lands in northern New Mexico. T. D. Burns' assessment of the 1872 battle at Tierra Amarilla had been prophetic. All the shooting of their last stand had accomplished little beyond delaying their relocation to a

*Sobita.*

*W. G. Chamberlain  
photo (ca. 1866-67).  
William Blackmore  
Collection, Album  
No. 9 Am. A9.154.  
Courtesy of the  
Trustees of the  
British Museum.*



reservation where they would no longer be considered an obstacle to development and settlement along New Mexico's rapidly advancing frontier.

However, this was the Capote's last stand in New Mexico. Despite Sobita's efforts, the Southern Utes were soon forced to leave New Mexico and settle in their reservation at what is now Ignacio, Colorado. The existing evidence seems to show that Sobita was not an ardent enemy of the "white man." In his 31 August 1868 report on the Ute and Jicarilla meeting with General Getty's peace commission, W. F. M. Army noted that Sobita had "expressed himself *in favor of peace with all mankind* (emphasis Army's) and had indicated that a permanent peace required that the government needed to assure that "all the Indians interested" should be represented in negotiations.<sup>43</sup> Under Sobita's leadership, the Capote attempted to accommodate the newcomers and fought them only when an advancing frontier and expanding settlement forced him into a desperate last ditch effort to resist encroachment on their traditional lands and do what he felt was best for his people. It is unfortunate that Sobita did not leave documents that could tell us about himself or his thoughts. However, his presence in the correspondence of so many others clearly shows the significant role this Ute chief

played in the shaping of New Mexico history.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this essay, Tierra Amarilla does not refer to the presentday village of that name, but to the Tierra Amarilla land grant and its original permanent settlements of Los Ojos, Nutritas, Los Brazos, Ensenada and La Puente. Nutritas was renamed Tierra Amarilla in 1880 when the territorial legislature moved the Rio Arriba County seat from Alcalde. "An Act to Change the County Seat of Rio Arriba County... Approved February 10, 1880" Chapter XXXIV, *Local and Special Laws: New Mexico, 1884*. (Santa Fe: New Mexican Publishing Co., 1885).

<sup>2</sup> James S. Calhoun to John Monroe, January 29, 1850. Annie Heloise Abel, *The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Myra Ellen Jenkins, Calendar of the Microfilm Edition of the Mexican Archives of New Mexico (Santa Fe: State of New Mexico Records Center, 1970). 1835 Legislative [Records], "Ayuntamiento proceedings, jurisdiction of Santa Cruz de la Cañada" Microfilm roll 19, frame 840. Hereafter cited as MANM. Also see Robert J. Tórréz, "A Celebration at Abiquiú" *Round the Roundhouse* (June-July 2012); Tórréz, "Celebrations at Tomé and Abiquiú, 1835: A Peek at the Workings of Local Government

in Mexican-era New Mexico," *Herencia* 25:2 (April 2017).

<sup>4</sup> "Mansana numero 1o que comprende los Departamentos o Plazas deste Santo Tomas ..." Jan. 14 - February [1836] "Assessment lists and records for special war levy..." MANM: 1836 Hacienda Records: Comisaria Substitua, m/f roll 22, frame 940.

<sup>5</sup> See Sondra Jones, *The Trail of Don Pedro León Luján, The Attack Against Indian Slavery and Mexican Traders* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2000). The relationship between Tomás Chacón and Luján is further illustrated when Chacón stood as Godfather (*padrino*) in the 1831 baptism of Pedro Leon's son. 9 February 1831, *New Mexico Baptisms, Santo Tomás Apostol de Abiquiú*, 1812-1821, 1829-1832. (Albuquerque: New Mexico Genealogical Society, 2018; Evelyn Langham Olmstead and Evelyn Lujan Baca, *New Mexico Baptisms, Church of Santo Tomas de Abiquiú, Vol. II, 1821-1850* (New Mexico Genealogical Society, 2000; Thomas A. Martínez, *Abiquiú Baptisms 1754-1870* (Self Published, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> "Notes of a trip from the town of Abiquiú, N. M. to Timpanog Lake Valley," *Daily Missouri Republican*, 2 September 1852; *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette* (SFWG), 5, 12, & 19 March 1853. The SFWG serial is presumably concluded in the 26 March issue but that issue is apparently missing from the microfilm version of the newspaper.

- <sup>7</sup> Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1960) pp. 23, 29.
- <sup>8</sup> Robert J. Tórréz, "Illicit Trade Along New Mexico's Old Spanish Trail" *Spanish Traces* (Autumn 2015) p. 24-25.
- <sup>9</sup> José Miguel Salazar to José María Chávez, 27 August 1854. William G. Ritch Papers, No. 675, Huntington Library, San Marino California (roll 5 of microfilm at NMSRCA).
- <sup>10</sup> W. F. M. Army to A. B. [Baldwin] Norton, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 31 December 1867. United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, Records of the New Mexico Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1849 1881. National Archives Microfilm Microcopy T 21, roll 7. Hereafter cited as T -21.
- <sup>11</sup> W. F. M. Army to Col. Luther E. Webb, 31 August 1868. New Mexico Superintendency No. 33, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, House of Representatives Ex. Document 1 (40th U. S. Congress, Session 3) Serial No.1366, pp. 166-171.
- <sup>12</sup> W. F. M. Army with Apache & Ute delegation, 1868. Edward Ayer Collection, The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. AP 3438.465. A glass negative of the image (sans the individual identifications) is held by the Museum of New Mexico, Negative No. 45814 and a print copy is also in the British Museum, Am.A41.4.
- <sup>13</sup> "Report of a Council held with the Weemenuche and Capote Utah Indians by U. S. Agent W. F. M. Army, on the San Juan River on the 19th day of August 1868," 1 September 1868. Al Shroeder Collection: Utes. NMSRCA; *The New Mexican* of 23 June 1868 relates some details of the Ute and Jicarilla visit to Santa Fe.
- <sup>14</sup> E. A. Graves, Indian Agent, Southern Apache Agency, Doña Ana, N.M., to George W. Manypenny, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Washington, D. C. 8 June 1854. Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854. Senate Executive Document 1 (33rd Congress, session 2) Serial No. 746. pp. 385-392.
- <sup>15</sup> Albert Pfeiffer, Abiquiú to Colonel Canby, 6 October 1860. National Archives RG 98, Records of U. S. Army Commands, roll 2 (1859-1860). Pfeiffer's comments on Sobita's loyalty are reported in the *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, 20 October 1860.
- <sup>16</sup> James E. Taylor Scrapbook, p. 114, NAA.MS4605-223. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.
- <sup>17</sup> J. S. Newberry to Pfeiffer & J. H. Macomb to Pfeiffer, 17 August 1859. T -21, microfilm roll 4; *Report of the Exploring Expedition From Santa Fé, New Mexico, to the Junctions of the Grand and Green Rivers...in 1859, Under Command of Capt. J. N. Macomb...* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876).
- <sup>18</sup> Treaty with the Ute, 1868. Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Laws and Treaties*, 2 Vol. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), II: 990-996.
- <sup>19</sup> "Proceedings of an interview in Santa Fe, N. M. on the 23rd of December 1868, with a delegation of the Chiefs and Head men of the Capote and Wenemnutche Utah Indians...." T - 21, Microfilm roll 8.
- <sup>20</sup> W. F. M. Army to Col. Luther E. Webb, Superintendent Indian Affairs, N. M., 21 August 1868. Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1868-1869, New Mexico Superintendency, No. 31. House of Representatives Executive Document 1, Serial 1366. Government Printing Office, 1869. pp. 619-640.
- <sup>21</sup> H. R. Clum to Clinton, 18 October 1970. T - 21, Roll 11 (1870).
- <sup>22</sup> "The Indian Question in Tierra Amarilla," *The Daily New Mexican* 13 July 1871.
- <sup>23</sup> "Ute Depredations" *The Daily New Mexican*, 29 March 1872.
- <sup>24</sup> J. S. Armstrong to Col. Nathaniel Pope, 3 April 1872. Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824 1881, New Mexico Superintendency 1849 1880. National Archives Microfilm Microcopy 234 (M234), Roll 559.
- <sup>25</sup> Lt. W. Sartle to Commanding Officer, Fort Wingate, 4 April 1872. Letters Sent by the 9th Military Department, the Department of New Mexico and the District of New Mexico, 1849 1880. National Archives Microfilm Microcopy 1072 (M1072), roll 4 (vol. 14, #158).
- <sup>26</sup> Sartle to Stevenson, 25 April 1872. M1072, roll 4 (Vol. 14, # 221).

- <sup>27</sup> Sartle to Commanding Officer, Fort Garland, C. T., 25 April 1872. M1072, roll 4 (Vol. 14, # 222).
- <sup>28</sup> For more on Burns' life see Robert J. Tórréz, "El Bornes: La Tierra Amarilla and T. D. Burns" *New Mexico Historical Review* 56:2 (April 1981), 161175.
- <sup>29</sup> Details of the meeting and ensuing battle are from J. D. Stevenson to AAG, 6 May 1872. M234, roll 559; J.S. Armstrong to N. Pope, 6 May 1872. T21, roll 15; letter from T.D. Burns in *The Daily New Mexican*, 17 May 1872. Also see Norman J. Bender, "The Battle of Tierra Amarilla" *New Mexico Historical Review* 63:3 (July 1988), 241256. Bender provides interesting details on the personal issues and the problems Agent J. S. Armstrong experienced in administering Indian policy at the Abiquiú Agency.
- <sup>30</sup> This casualty may have been Sobita's brother. A group of about fifty Ute men, women, and children that arrived at Tierra Amarilla in early June reported that Sobita was with his band of Capote at the Rio Piedra and would come in when his brother recovered or died from unspecified injuries or illness. J. W. Pullman to A.A. Adjutant General, 2 June 1872. M234, roll 560.
- <sup>31</sup> T. D. Burns letter published in *The Daily New Mexican*, 17 May 1872; Phil H. Sheridan to Headquarters, 23 May 1872. M234, roll 559. In an 1882 interview with William Gillette Ritch, Burns suggests he was an active participant in the battle. William G. Ritch papers, No. 1959, Huntington Library.
- <sup>32</sup> O. O. Howard, Special Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Nathaniel Pope, 13 June 1872. M234, roll 559.
- <sup>33</sup> Agapito Lucero's burial is noted among those recorded by Fr. José Valezy at the "capilla de Tierra Amarilla" during his early June *visita* from the parish church at El Rito. "Partidas de Entierro," San Juan Nepomuceno Burials, El Rito, NM (1870-1956) Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. LDS Microfilm 0016769.
- <sup>34</sup> J. S. Armstrong to Nathaniel Pope, 8 June 1872. T -21, Roll 15.
- <sup>35</sup> J. S. Armstrong to Pope, 31 August 1872, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872*, New Mexico Superintendency (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), p. 309. There are indications, however, that some of the functions of the agency had been transferred to Tierra Amarilla as early as June 1871. N. Pope to Francis A. Walker, 10 October 1872, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872*, p. 683.
- <sup>36</sup> Armstrong to Pope, 14 September 1872. T21, roll 15. Armstrong's letter confirms an oral tradition which says that some of the extant *fuertes* (buildings of horizontal log construction) in several villages of the Tierra Amarilla, came from "el campo," as Fort Lowell is known locally. Mercure's contract with the military called for a rental of one dollar per year, but gave him title to improvements made to the site and left behind after the fort was abandoned. See Torrez, "El Campo...." (1973), p. 84.
- <sup>37</sup> Colonel C. Granger to A. A. General, Department of the Missouri, 21 May 1872. M1072, roll 4, Vol. 14, No. 296. Taputche is listed as no. 13, "Ute son of Sobatur" standing next to Tomás Chacón in the accompanying photo of Army and the Utes. .
- <sup>38</sup> *The Daily New Mexican*, 25 June 1872.
- <sup>39</sup> Charles Adams, Los Pinos, to T. A. Walker, Commissioner of Indian affairs, 28 June 1872. M234, roll 559.
- <sup>40</sup> S. A. Russell, U. S. Indian agent to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 7 August 1878. Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1878: Reports of Agents in New Mexico, p. 106.
- <sup>41</sup> Frank W. Reed to Wm. H. H. Llewellyn, 12 August 1882. Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior, 1882, "Report of Agents in New Mexico (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), p.126.
- <sup>42</sup> See Veronica E. Velarde Tiller, *The Jicarilla Apache Tribe, A History* (Albuquerque: BowArrow Publishing Company, 1983; Fred Nicklason, "The American Indians 'White Problem': The Case of the Jicarilla Apache" *Prologue* ( Spring 1980), pp. 41- 55.
- <sup>43</sup> See footnote note No. 11 above. ♦

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## The San Luis Valley

By John McEvoy, Photographer/Visual Journalist  
Le Verada del Norte Chapter Member

The San Luis Valley (SLV), in southern Colorado, is nearly the size of Connecticut, stretching 122 miles north and south, and 74 miles wide east and west. From the headwaters of the Rio Grande at the Continental Divide in the northwest portion of the area all

the way south to New Mexico, it is one of the largest high desert valleys in the world, with an altitude of 7,000 feet. The SLV is bordered by the Sangre de Cristo mountain range on the east side of the valley and the San Juan mountain range to the west. Hundreds of years ago,

this valley was a vast wetland with lakes and marshland that was home to many species of birds and mammals. Now the valley is mostly agricultural, with crops of potato, barley, wheat, alfalfa, canola, and several other vegetables. ♦



### TWO IMAGES FROM SMITH RESERVOIR

*The mask petroglyph looks like Rio Grande Pueblo — possibly northern Tewa — and may date from the 1400s to the early 1600s. It is very rare in southern Colorado, and is similar to figures near Albuquerque and 3 Rivers in southeastern New Mexico.*



*These stick-like, elongated anthropomorphic (resembling humans) figures are believed to be approximately 500 years old and are associated with the Rio Grande Pueblos in northern New Mexico.*



*The Great Sand Dunes National Monument lies at the base of the rugged Sangre de Cristos on the eastern side of the San Luis Valley.*



*View looking west at Elephant Rocks BLM area near Del Norte. Like the volcanic San Juan Mountains on the west side of the Valley, these rocks are made up of Fish Canyon Tuff — ash formed after volcanic eruptions millions of years ago.*

## IN MEMORIUM

# Lou Ann Jordan

By Lynn Brittner

Lou Ann Jordan, along with Pat Kuhlhoff, were the masterminds of the *Old Spanish Trail Board Game*. Lou Ann used her graphic design skills to implement the concept of the game on a wooden board, which eventually was transferred onto fabric. The game has travelled to several venues, including the Abiquiu Visitors Center. A native of Toledo, Ohio, Lou Ann made Santa Fe, New Mexico her home, where she was active in numerous historical organizations and worked as a graphic designer. After a long battle with cancer, Lou Ann passed away at her home in Santa Fe on January 22, 2020. ♦



Lou Ann Jordan works on the Game Board.  
Photo courtesy Pat Kuhlhoff

*A young user intently plans her next move.*



## IN MEMORIUM

### Ronald E. Kessler

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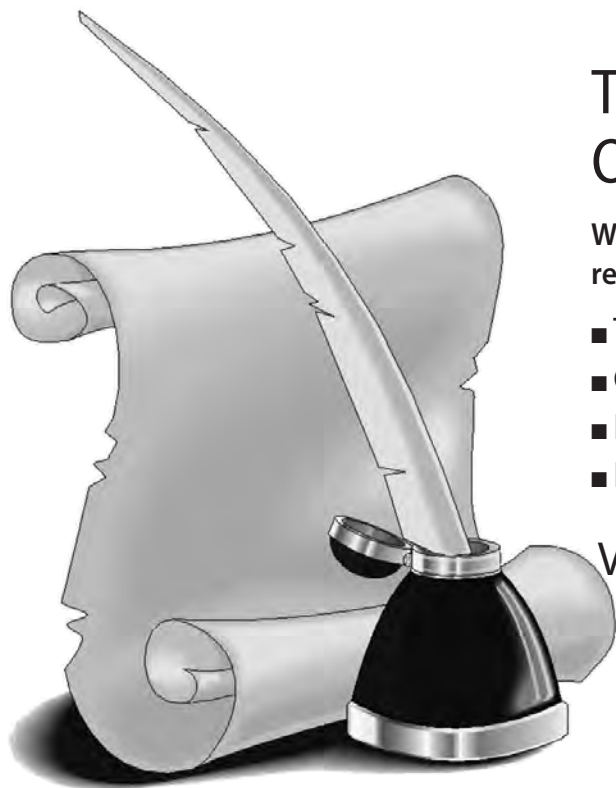
**R**on Kessler, husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, retired mechanic, rancher, trapper, author and publisher passed away on April 5, 2020, in his home in Monte Vista. He was born December 31, 1943, to Ernest & Lola (Brown) Kessler.

Ron is survived by his wife Francis; son Ron Jr. (Kris) and daughters; Debbie (Charlie) Harris and April (Duane) Harris; along with 9 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. His parents and sister, Marleen, preceded him in death.

A private family service will be held at a later date. Special thanks are extended to Dr. DeHerrera & staff for their extraordinary care. In lieu of flowers, please consider donation to Hospice Del Valle. ♦



*Ron Kessler was a founding member of the OSTA, and was the first president in 1994. He was a well-known author of historical books and wrote "Retracing the OST North Branch". More about Ron and his life will be included in a future edition of Spanish Traces.*



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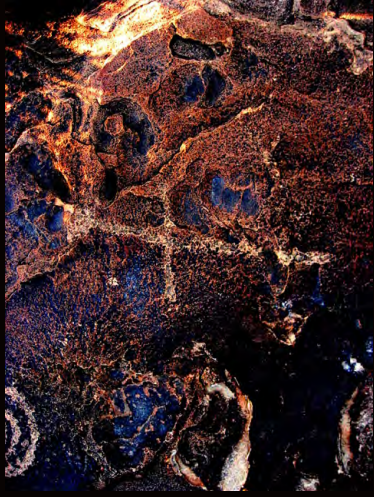
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