

SPANISH TRACES



OLD SPANISH TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Volume 1

Fall 1995

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No. 2

Annual gathering fruitful and fun

The Old Spanish Trail Association's second annual meeting on May 20-21 revealed that the group is on solid footing, with steady growth in membership and research projects underway.

OSTA members gathered for a weekend in Colorado's San Luis Valley to attend events in both Monte Vista and Del Norte. (Next year's meeting will be in Grand Junction, Colo.)

The members present voted on a number of issues, and though some hot air was generated, mercifully no shots were fired.

Reports by three chapters impressed the audience with the amount of work done in the past year to map portions of the trail, and to promote interpretive signage at particular trail sites.

Some new faces attended, and most members embarked on fieldtrips on the east and west forks of the near-by North Branch of the trail.

Did we mention that a lot of folks celebrated their heritage, worked toward preserving it, made new friends, and had a good time? As we go to press, the OSTA has 228 members from 19 states, Mexico and Germany. That's an increase of 60+ members in six months, or one new member every three days.

President Ron Kessler has remarked that he'd like membership to reach 400 by year's end, but that'll take some hustling by current members.

Down to business...

On Saturday morning, the group agreed to update and reprint the

Fall 1995

High, wide and lonesome...



OSTA President Ron Kessler guides his horse "Wixey" across the Rio Grande in Colorado's San Luis Valley in a re-enactment of New Mexico Governor Diego de Vargas crossing in July 1694. Governor Vargas traveled native trails that later became parts of the Spanish Trail's North Branch.

membership flier, and include a question on how people learn of the OSTA. (Members who are willing to stock or distribute these fliers should contact Ron Kessler.)

Apparently news items on OSTA in other trail newsletters has helped membership growth, continued help will be sought. OSTA will try to coordinate some efforts with the Daughters of the American Revolution.

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Inside...

- *Historian passes away*
- *Author interview*
- *Spanish Trail origins*
- *Books on the Trail*

ANNUAL GATHERING

(continued from page 1)

Archaeologist John Beardsley suggested placing an excerpt of *Spanish Traces* on the world-wide Internet, which stirred interest.

On Saturday morning's fieldtrip Ron Kessler guided the group to the Spanish Trail ruts in rock and prairie west of Monte Vista. Les Southern filmed the occasion for a Denver television special.

An OSTA committee is working with Bureau of Land Management and Rio Grande National Forest staff to develop an interpretive site for areas of the trail accessible from Colorado Highway 160. The Rio Grande Lodging Tax Board has granted \$7,000 for that project.

Chapter reports...

In an afternoon session at the Rio Grande County Museum in Del Norte, three chapter presidents reported on trail work.

Jack Nelson, president of the Mesa County Chapter of OSTA, proposed Grand Junction as the site of next year's annual meeting, and discussed his own research into the trappers' trails of western Colorado and eastern Utah.

Jerry "JR" Hancock, president of Rio Grande County Chapter, presented a county map with the Old Spanish Trail traced on it with the aid of the San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's Global Positioning System. Hancock suggested several sites suitable for interpretive signage.

Yvonne Halburian, leader of the Saguache County Chapter, and her sidekick Mugs Batchelder reported that their group had grown to 24 members, made five fieldtrips in six months, and were whipping out special t-shirts and neckerchiefs to raise funds. (That Saguache is a hot-bed of activity!)

Halburian added a reminder that Saguache Creek in the northern San Luis Valley was early on considered the headwaters of the Rio Grande — not the true headwaters as we now know them west of Del Norte.

(Details in Chapter News, page 13.)

Vernell Rowley of the Emery County (Utah) Historical Society (and OSTA member) discussed his group's retracing of the Old Spanish Trail in

his area, and offered fascinating photographs of trail sites. The historical society possesses one of the early "Spanish Trail, 1800-1850," signs erected by the "Spanish Trail Association" in 1950.

That seminal group, led by the late William R. Palmer of Cedar City, Utah, placed those signs along the trail in Utah in the 1950s.

Artistic mysteries...

Jordan Houston, an OSTA member from Durango, said she's researching George Douglas Brewerton's paintings of scenes on the Spanish Trail, which he traveled with Kit Carson in 1848. Houston showed some examples of Brewerton's art in hopes members could identify the scenes.

The membership voted to maintain members' fees at their current level and make June 1 everyone's membership renewal date.

(Many are now overdue! Please remit your annual dues so we can send you *Spanish Traces*.)

Janet Evans stepped forward for the treasurer's job, and Earl Casteel was elected as Colorado's representative to OSTA's board of directors. (The board needs one representative from each of the six trail states.)

On financial matters, it was decided to place OSTA's officers in charge of the organization's budget.

Pat Richmond and John Koshak guided Sunday's tour of the east fork of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail in the San Luis Valley.

(Please see Pat Richmond's account of that fieldtrip on page 7.)

ROAD APPLES

OSTA officers serve on the steering and advisory committees for the San Luis Valley Trails Coalition. The coalition, national forest, BLM, and state and county agencies are pursuing a GO-Colorado grant to identify, mark, and develop trails in the valley. The east and west forks of the North Branch of the trail are just two of many trails in the valley's network.

An updated membership roster is available to any OSTA member who requests one. Send a dollar to OSTA, P.O. Box 521, Monte Vista, CO 81144.

FOR THE RECORD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Memberships:

Life membership	\$100.00
Institution	\$25/year
Family	\$15/year
Individual	\$10/year
Student	\$5/year

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

Send all inquiries and membership checks to:

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

OSTA President:
Ron Kessler, c/o Adobe Village Press, P.O. Box 510, Monte Vista, CO 81144

SPANISH TRACES Editor:
Phil Carson, 2012 W. Kiowa, Colorado Springs, CO 80904

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Ron Kessler

I'm encouraged by the growth of the Old Spanish Trail Association and the solid research and field skills of our members. And I'm heartened by the enthusiasm and interest shown by the public and the media for long-distance trails, particularly the OST.

Let's hope we can convince Congress to study and protect the trail. But let's not count on it. The job is ours.

The annual meeting in May showed that we've grown, that the mapping of the North Branch is well underway, and that up-to-date interpretive signs along the trail are imminent.

Thanks to all our members and supporters who traveled to the annual meeting — especially Vernell Rowley, who came over from central Utah — and for your positive reception to our purpose and our first newsletter.

We've got another fascinating issue of *Spanish Traces* here for you, so grab a chair and enjoy it!

Spreading the word...

On April 15, Ruth Marie Colville, Pat Richmond, and I attended the 36th annual Arizona-New Mexico Historical Societies Convention in Tucson, Ariz. Together we presented a program on "Two Spanish Governors: Their Trails from Santa Fe into the San Luis Valley of Colorado," and "Trails East and West of the Rio Grande."

Mrs. Colville is the author of *La Vereda: A Trail Through Time*, a book in press on colonial New Mexico's 17th century governor, don Diego de Vargas. Pat Richmond authored *Trail to Disaster*, a groundbreaking study of John Charles Fremont's disastrous 1848-49 expedition that foundered in winter in La Garita mountains.

As usual, Ruth Marie (who is 90-something) made a big hit with her witty commentary on don Diego. I presented my research on Governor Juan Bautista de Anza's ride through the San Luis Valley in 1779, on his victorious campaign against the Comanche chief, Cuerno Verde.

Pat told how the Indian trails traveled by these governors became the

east and west forks of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail. She also described later travelers on these trails.

South of the border...

On April 17 we left Tucson at 6 a.m. and traveled south to Tumacacori National Historic Park, where we picked up Don Garate, a scholar also interested in Governor Anza, who commanded the presidio here prior to his New Mexico governorship. Earl and Connie Casteel, OSTA members from Alamosa, Colo., accompanied us.

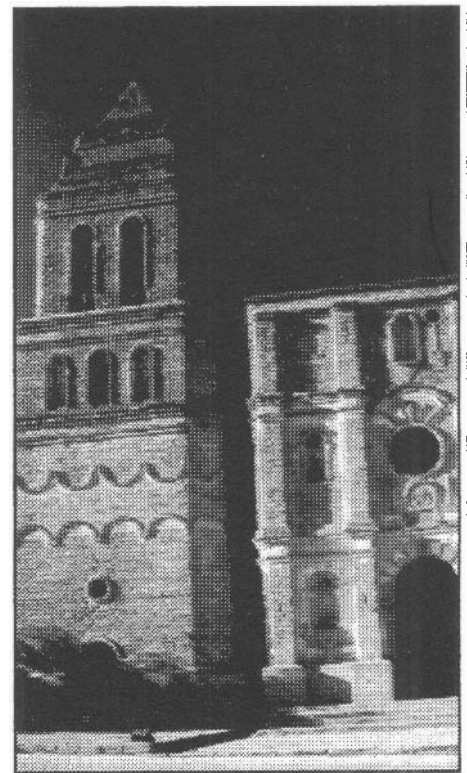
We traveled across the border at Nogales, then on to Cananea, Sonora, where we met a helpful Mexican tourism official, Humberto de Hoyos Felix. Together we visited a Mexican ranch with an impressive museum room, which had one wall filled with cruciform stirrups, one wall with Spanish spurs, and yet another with Spanish bits. On the dining room table sat a pair of brass plated, Moorish style stirrups similar to ones shown on page 26 of Marc Simmons and Frank Turley's *Southwestern Colonial Ironwork*.

We stopped at Humberto's ranch to deliver medicine to his father, who was vaccinating calves. They had one of the nicest pens of Hereford calves I've ever seen. The ranch had an antique, mule-powered water pump that supplies water to troughs in the corral.

We continued south in my Ford Explorer to Arizpe, Sonora, where we visited with the mayor, and stopped at the church of Santa Iglesia Nuestra Senora de las Asuncion, where Governor Anza lies buried.

Anza is buried under the floor of the Chapel of Our Lady of Loreto, not under the main church floor, as was believed until recently.

By this time the sun was setting, so we had to abandon our plans to pass through Fronteras on our return to Tucson. Fronteras, where Anza grew up, lies in the San Luis Valley of Sonora. This raises a question: Did Anza name Colorado's San Luis Valley in 1779, after his boyhood home? I can hardly wait to return to Mexico to do more research!



The church of Santa Iglesia Nuestra Senora de las Asuncion, where New Mexico Governor Juan Bautista de Anza lies buried. Anza lies under the floor of the Chapel of Our Lady of Loreto, not under the main church floor, as was believed until recently.

We arrived back in Tucson at 2 a.m. the next day. So much had passed in a flash.

Anza world conference...

Don Garate and I discussed holding an Anza World Conference in Arizpe in May 1996. If you're interested, contact him at Tumacacori National Historic Park, P.O. Box 67, Tumacacori, AZ 85640.

I drove from Tucson back to the San Luis Valley of Colorado with Ruth Marie. We stopped at the Geronimo Springs Museum in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, where Ruth Marie entertained some ladies by playing the piano and singing in Spanish. At Santa Fe we ate lunch at the famous Tomacito's.

The return with Ruth Marie was an educational and enjoyable trip, the memory of which I will treasure always.

PROFESSOR CRAMPTON PASSES AWAY

Prolific historian capped career with Spanish Trail work

C. Gregory "Greg" Crampton, Ph.D., passed away at his home in St. George, Utah on May 2, 1995 at the age of 84. The cause of death was cancer.

Professor Crampton led a distinguished life, writing many books, innumerable articles, teaching, and raising a family.

His survived by his wife, Maria, daughters Patricia and Juanita, numerous friends and colleagues, and countless admirers.

His most recent work was the acclaimed volume, *In Search of the Spanish Trail* (1994), written with co-author Steven K. Madsen.

This book described for the first time the entire length of the 1,120-mile Spanish Trail between Santa Fe and Los Angeles. The volume is one of only two indispensable works on the subject, and one of the major pieces of Western historical scholarship to reach publication in the 1990s.

The book's rock-solid scholarship, clear prose, and animating spirit capped a life spent studying the natural and human heritage of the Colorado Plateau and Great Basin.

Crampton was born in 1911 and grew up in farm country at Kankakee, Illinois, 50 miles south of Chicago. He traveled West over the Lincoln Highway as an 11-year-old in 1922, with his father at the wheel of an open touring car.

On that journey Crampton and his dad camped in school yards, which offered a grass lawn, a privy, and a drinking fountain.

He told his co-author Steve Madsen that the Lincoln Highway was only paved for a mile outside each town, and elsewhere it was just a rugged dirt road. The group stopped in Salt Lake City, where the young Crampton dangled his feet in the Great Salt Lake.

Crampton's family settled in Delhi, Calif. in the San Joaquin Valley. His father and mother were both



**C. Gregory Crampton
1911-1995**

osteopaths by profession, but turned to fruit growing in California just before the the Depression hit.

Crampton later recalled that the family sold its harvests from a roadside stand on the nearby highway. Eventually they built a store dubbed "Crampton's Trading Post."

Crampton and his father explored their surroundings, bought Indian crafts to sell at their store, and harvested cactus in the desert. The Cramptons camped under the stars, and one senses that Greg Crampton's love of the outdoors translated later to an abiding attraction to historical fieldwork.

Crampton attended the University of California at Berkeley, where he earned his doctorate degree. In 1945 he visited the University of Utah, and began his professional career the following year.

In 1945, while performing graduate work at the University of California at Berkeley, Crampton drove the "father" of Spanish Borderlands studies, Herbert Eugene Bolton, from Berkeley to Mexican Hat, on the San Juan River in south-east Utah.

Crampton later credited the trip with sparking his own fascination with the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau.

Professor Crampton taught at the University of Utah from 1945 until his retirement in 1979.

In 1956 Crampton persuaded the National Park Service that a historical study of Glen Canyon should be performed along with a scheduled archaeological survey, since the canyon was to be flooded for Lake Powell. The Park Service assigned him the job.

In the course of that work Crampton traced and photographed the "Crossing of the Fathers," where in 1776 the Spanish priests, Dominguez and Escalante, cut steps in the steep rock banks of the Colorado River. That priceless site in south-central Utah near the Arizona border is now lost under the waters of Lake Powell.

Crampton's exhaustive field research and archival investigations at Glen Canyon between 1956 and 1963 resulted in numerous monographs.

Of those years, Crampton wrote *Standing Up Country* (1965), which earned the National Cowboy Hall of Fame's Best Western Non-Fiction Award.

His subsequent study of the Grand Canyon region resulted in *Land of Living Rock* (1972). Later books included *Lee's Ferry: Desert Crossing* (with W.L. Rusho), *Colorado River: Robert B. Stanton and the Denver, Colorado Canyon and Pacific Railroad* (with Dwight L. Smith), and, of course, *In Search of the Spanish Trail* (with Steven K. Madsen).

Between 1966 and 1972 Crampton coordinated the nationwide Duke Program in Indian Oral History. He helped found *American West* magazine, directed for two years the U. of U.'s Western History Center, and in 1967 co-founded the Utah Westerners.

In 1994 Crampton told co-author and long-time friend Steve Madsen that 1995 would mark his 50th year in "Zion," the Mormon's name for their Promised Land.

"In fact it was his 50th year of living in Utah when he passed away earlier this year," Madsen said.

On June 17, 1995 Professor Crampton's wife and daughters held a celebration of life in his memory at Marble Canyon, near Lee's Ferry in north-central Arizona.

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

[Second of a three-part series]

By Phil Carson

Beginning about 1720, peace between the Spaniards of colonial New Mexico and the Navajo-Apaches on the province's northwest frontier allowed regular Spanish travel up the Rio Chama to Ute country.

In the preceding century Spanish soldiers and missionaries had taken the Rio Chama route into Navajo territory, clear to that tribe's "Rio Grande," today's San Juan River. An imposing sierra loomed on the north — today's La Plata and San Juan mountains.

But until 1743 no record survives of Spanish penetration beyond the San Juan River, though such journeys probably took place.

When the French traders Paul and Pierre Mallet returned to Louisiana in 1740 after reaching Santa Fe from the Missouri valley the previous year, the brothers carried a letter written by a Spanish priest named don Santiago Roibal.

Don Santiago wrote to a French counterpart, Father Beaubois, that "we are not farther away than 200 leagues from a very rich mine, abounding in silver, called Chiquagua, where the inhabitants of this country often go to trade ..." ¹

In 1743 don Santiago joined other men in a journey northwest up the Chama to seek those silver-laden mountains beyond Navajo territory.

Apparently restless frontiersmen from New Mexico had preceded don Santiago, and had had only modest success finding silver on the far side of the San Juan River. Some had doubtlessly initiated trade with the Utes who inhabited that country.

As for don Santiago, neither he nor his group found promising signs of silver, though they spent time with the local Navajos. In later testimony regarding this expedition, don Santiago made the earliest known reference to the "La Plata" mountains. ²

Another two decades elapsed between don Santiago and the next documentary mention of the La Platas



The "Escalante Ruins" at Dolores, Colorado reveals Mesa Verde, left, and Sleeping Ute Mountain, right. The Spanish Trail crosses the valley below.

by someone who traveled there.

By the 1760s rumors of silver and mysterious peoples said to lie beyond the San Juan River provoked an official effort to discover the truth. In 1765 New Mexico's Governor Tomas Velez de Cachupin sent don Juan

Rivera's two relatively well-documented expeditions would make connections critical to the eventual development of the Old Spanish Trail.

Maria Antonio de Rivera, a member of the Royal Corp of Topographical Engineers, on two journeys across the northwestern frontier.

Rivera's two relatively well-documented expeditions would make connections critical to the eventual development of the Old Spanish Trail.

Though evidence in later documents has portrayed Rivera's expeditions as a search for silver, in fact those journeys were more ambitious.

Governor Cachupin ordered Rivera to find the Indians' traditional cross-

ing of the Rio del Tizon, or Colorado River, and ascertain the nature of the tribes and any Europeans found on the opposite shore. It appears Rivera was authorized to prospect for silver after fulfilling his primary mission.

Though Monterrey on the distant Pacific coast would not be founded for another four years, we find here the seeds of Spanish efforts to connect New Mexico and California, and a precursor of the "Old Spanish Trail" that would develop two-thirds of a century later.

For 200 years historians and researchers had only the Dominguez-Escalante diaries of 1776 through which to view the 1765 journeys of Rivera — a view that obscured as much as it revealed. But in 1969 researcher Austin N. Leiby located the near-mythical diaries of Rivera in Madrid's Archivo del Ejercito and, in 1985, Leiby published the journals as part of his Phd dissertation. ³

Between Leiby's work, and subsequent analyses by researcher G. Clell Jacobs and Professor Donald Cutter ⁴, we have a fairly clear view of the earliest well-documented Spanish journey to the traditional ford on the Colorado River at present-day Moab,

(continued on page 6)

ORIGINS

(continued from page 5)

Utah — the first leg of the east-to-west trending Old Spanish Trail. (It should be noted that Greg Crampton and Steve Madsen have examined the Rivera diaries and do not believe that Rivera reached as far as the Colorado River.)

Rumors alone did not send Rivera beyond the frontier. In spring 1765 a Payuchi Ute traded a lump of virgin silver to a blacksmith at Abiquiu on the Rio Chama, creating a stir. And a Mouachi Ute named el Cuero de Lobo (Wolf Skin) met Rivera in Santa Fe and said he could lead the Spaniard to silver deposits.

Perhaps, then, silver impelled Rivera's first expedition, which took him up the well-known route along the Chama in June that year, only to bog down west of Dolores, Colorado when Wolf Skin did not materialize. But later evidence suggests that locating the Rio del Tizon also figured in this first entrada.

Rivera also returned empty-handed to Santa Fe in July, but with the Utes' assurance that they would lead him to a great river, if he returned in cooler, fall weather.

Rivera did so. In October he again set out with a handful of companions and rode for an earlier campsite just northwest of present-day Dolores. Subsequently, several different Ute bands quarreled over whether to lead Rivera to the ford on the Colorado. Several tried to mislead him, but eventually — according to Leiby and Jacobs — he found the ford at present-day Moab, Utah and crossed.

The local Utes then regaled Rivera with tall tales about terrors he would encounter should he push on — peoples who ate their children, whose ears drooped to the ground, etc. — all designed to turn him back and preserve the locals' trading relations with their neighbors, and stop further Spanish penetration of their territory. More likely it was the season (November) that turned Rivera homeward that fall, having reached the great Rio del Tizon and its ford and with little sign of silver to inspire a mining rush.

After 1765 the Spaniards of New

Mexico were poised to ford the Colorado River and turn southwest to cross its northern tributaries to reach California — a simple, if unimaginably arduous undertaking for that day. But Rivera's purported geographic breakthrough served only illicit Spanish traders seeking furs and slaves over the next half-century.

The Franciscan fathers Dominguez and Escalante followed in Rivera's footsteps 11 years later. Though much celebrated — perhaps due to the survival of their detailed journal⁵ — the fathers erred by turning northeast at the Dolores River. They made a great but ineffectual loop through western Colorado, eating up precious time, before turning west and reaching western Utah too late in the season to

*After 1765 the Spaniards of
New Mexico were poised to ford
the Colorado River and turn
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survive a trek to California.

Though Dominguez and Escalante have been credited with many things, they passed up (perhaps purposefully) an opportunity to convert Rivera's discovery into a practical route to the Pacific. In retrospect it appears Dominguez and Escalante were more interested in surveying new mission fields north of New Mexico than they were bent on reaching California.

But Spanish traders and slave-raiders henceforth would make profitable use of the rough trails that led northwest from Santa Fe, across the Colorado River, and deep into the broken mesas and canyons of central Utah. That regular, though illegal traffic by Spanish frontiersmen would create a body of contemporary, geographic lore that eventually led travelers of the mid-19th century to think of the route as the "Old Spanish Trail."

The illicit trade from 1777 to 1829 (when annual traffic over the OST to

California began) will be the focus of the next and final installment of this essay tracing the origins of the trail.

NOTES

1) Henry Folmer, "Contraband trade between Louisiana and New Mexico in the 18th century," *New Mexico Historical Review* 16(July 1941):262

2) Frank D. Reeve, "The Navajo-Spanish Peace, 1720-1770," *NMHR* 34(January 1959):11-12

3) Austin N. Leiby, "Borderland Pathfinders: The 1765 diaries of Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera," *Northern Arizona University*, July 1984

4) G. Ciell Jacobs, "The Phantom Pathfinder: Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera and his expedition," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 60(Summer 1992):200-223; and Donald C. Cutter, "Prelude to a Pageant in the Wilderness," *Western Historical Quarterly* 8(January 1977):5-14

5) Ted J. Warner and Fray Angelico Chavez, *The Dominguez-Escalante Journal* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1976)

ROAD APPLES

The Colorado Historical Society has launched a Roadside Interpretation Program (RIP) and provides information on interpretive signs, materials, even contractors. It's worth looking into, so no one reinvents the wheel. Call Dianna Litvak, (303) 866-2038.

* * *

A book titled, *Signs, Trails, and Wayside Exhibits*, provides a useful survey of interpretive signage. It's available from College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, WI 54481 for \$20.

* * *

Yvonne Halburian is designing an OSTA logo that might work for roadside markers and interpretive signs. While signage across the six trail states is unlikely to be uniform, a universal logo would help travelers recognize OSTA interpretive sites.

* * *

Thanks to Susan Eskew of Crested Butte, who in researching a cultural heritage inventory for Gunnison County has unearthed and passed along to the OSTA numerous articles and maps valuable to study of the North Branch.

FIELDTRIP AT NATIONAL MEETING VISITS TRAILS AND CULTURAL SITES

By Pat Richmond

On Sunday, May 21, several carloads of trail enthusiasts drove south from Monte Vista to view the North Branch's west fork in sageland from the Conejos River toward the Rio Grande at La Loma del Norte, an early village site.

After stopping at Diamond Springs and a pre-railroad site known as La Jara (southwest of present-day town of La Jara), the caravan headed east toward San Luis along a route now designated as Los Caminos Antiguos by the federal Bureau of Land Management. The BLM is developing interpretive materials and sites along that route.

At a stop at the juncture of the Culebra River with the Rio Grande, I explained the importance of geology and geography upon early San Luis Valley history, and the reasons for the development of two forks of the North Branch. (Essentially the center of the valley once was composed of marshlands, so trails hugged the valley's margins.)

The caravan proceeded along a segment of New Mexico Governor Diego de Vargas' route between the Rio Grande and Old San Acacio, where we all stopped to examine the old church. (Where Vargas traveled east to west in July 1694, we traveled in the opposite direction.)

As in many settlements on the northern frontier of New Mexico, settlers at San Acacio couldn't afford a bell for their church. According to lore, settlers here prayed to their patron saint in the face of an impending Indian attack, and promised to place a bell in the church's belfry if the village was spared.

The Indians (tribe unspecified), did turn away without attacking, so the settlers kept their promise.

According to Valley historian Luther Bean, the settlers later learned that the Indians had fled upon seeing an army approaching the village. However, no army was known to be in that location at that time. Speculation has attributed this "miracle" to a mirage, common in the Valley's deep distances.

Upon arrival at San Luis, Colorado's oldest incorporated town, OSTA members visited the world famous Stations of the Cross. Local artist Humberto Maestas used San Luis residents as models for the bronze statues that mark a nearby hillside trail that leads upwards to a chapel.

The hilltop provided a good vantage point for studying the geography of the east fork of the North Branch, over which New Mexico Governors Vargas and Anza, and other personalities of historic note, passed.

From San Luis, modern Colorado Highway 159 toward Fort Garland follows fairly closely the east fork of the Old Spanish Trail's North Branch, as does Highway 150 north of Fort Garland toward the Great Sand Dunes National Monument.

In the 1820s to 1840s the road off Mosca Pass was known as Robidoux' Road, due to pioneering use of the route by Antoine Robidoux.

A sidetrip over a new county road to spectacular Zapata Falls again gave OSTA members an opportunity to overlook the east fork, and the terrain along the base of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, with the trail's approach to the western base of Mosca Pass. In the 1820s to 1840s the road off Mosca Pass was known as Robidoux' Road, due to pioneering use of the route by Antoine Robidoux.

After a picnic lunch beside Zapata Creek, the assembled "trail fanatics" headed toward Casselman Memorial Rock at the buffalo viewing turnout north of Zapata Ranch. San Luis Valley members of OSTA are working with BLM officials to place an interpretive trail sign at this site near the Old Spanish Trail.

Antoine Leroux, Kit Carson, and many other mountain men, traders, or military parties followed the east fork past the sand dunes to reach the north end of the San Luis Valley. Travelers could then choose either Poncha Pass

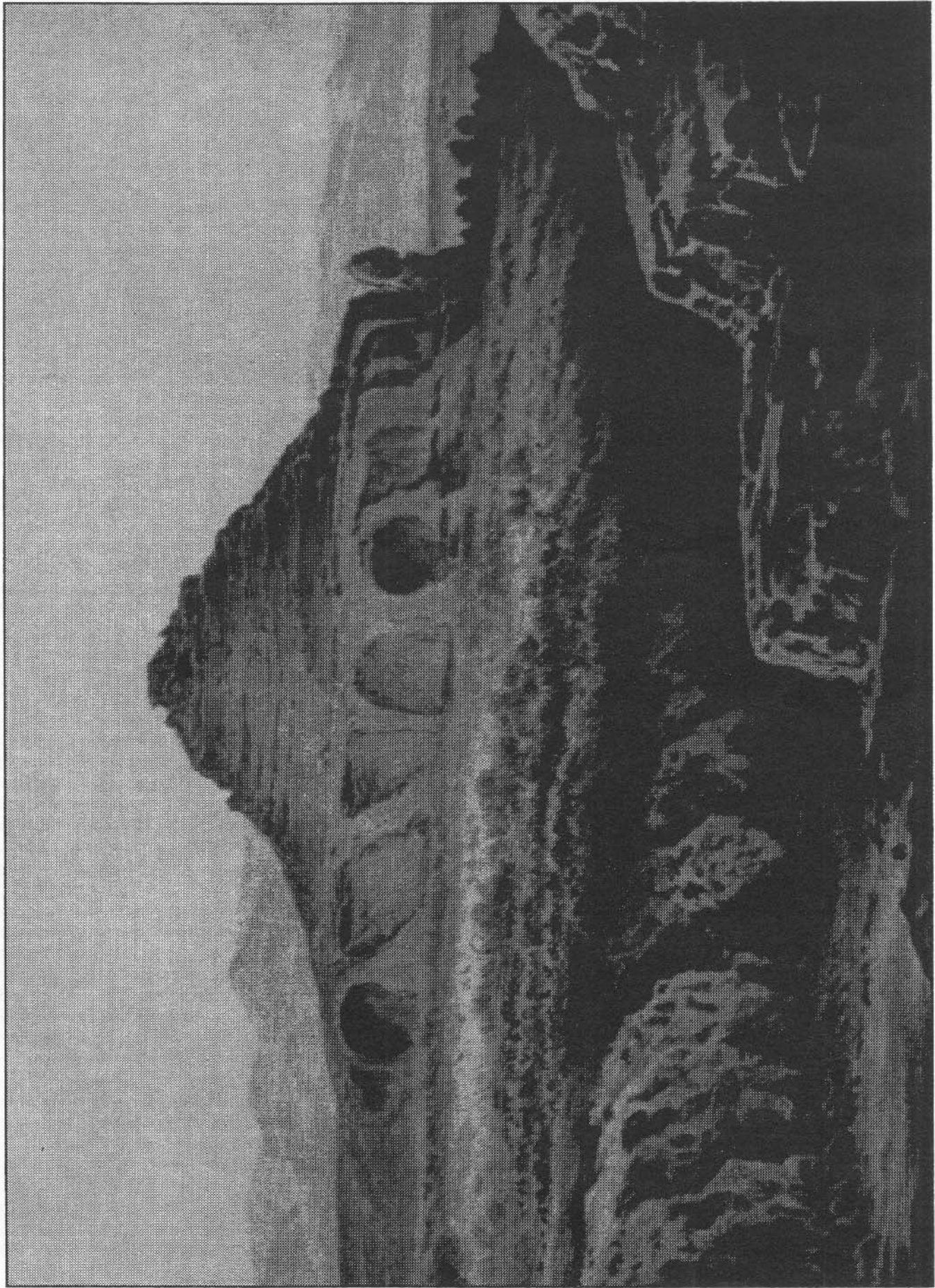
into the upper Arkansas Valley, or swing west near present-day Rito Alto Creek toward Saguache Valley. A short distance up the Saguache Canyon, the east fork of the ancient trail connected with the west fork to approach the Cochetopa complex of passes that lead into the Gunnison Valley.

At San Luis Lakes State Park, Ranger John Koshak (OSTA's secretary) met the caravan and discussed the trail and local history concerning San Luis Lake. The lake, now augmented with water from the Closed Basin Project, is the remnant of an extensive cienega — the shallow marshlands and ponds that marked the virtually flat floodplain of the Saguache and San Luis rivers before they disappeared into the Valley's silts and sands, known locally as "the sump."

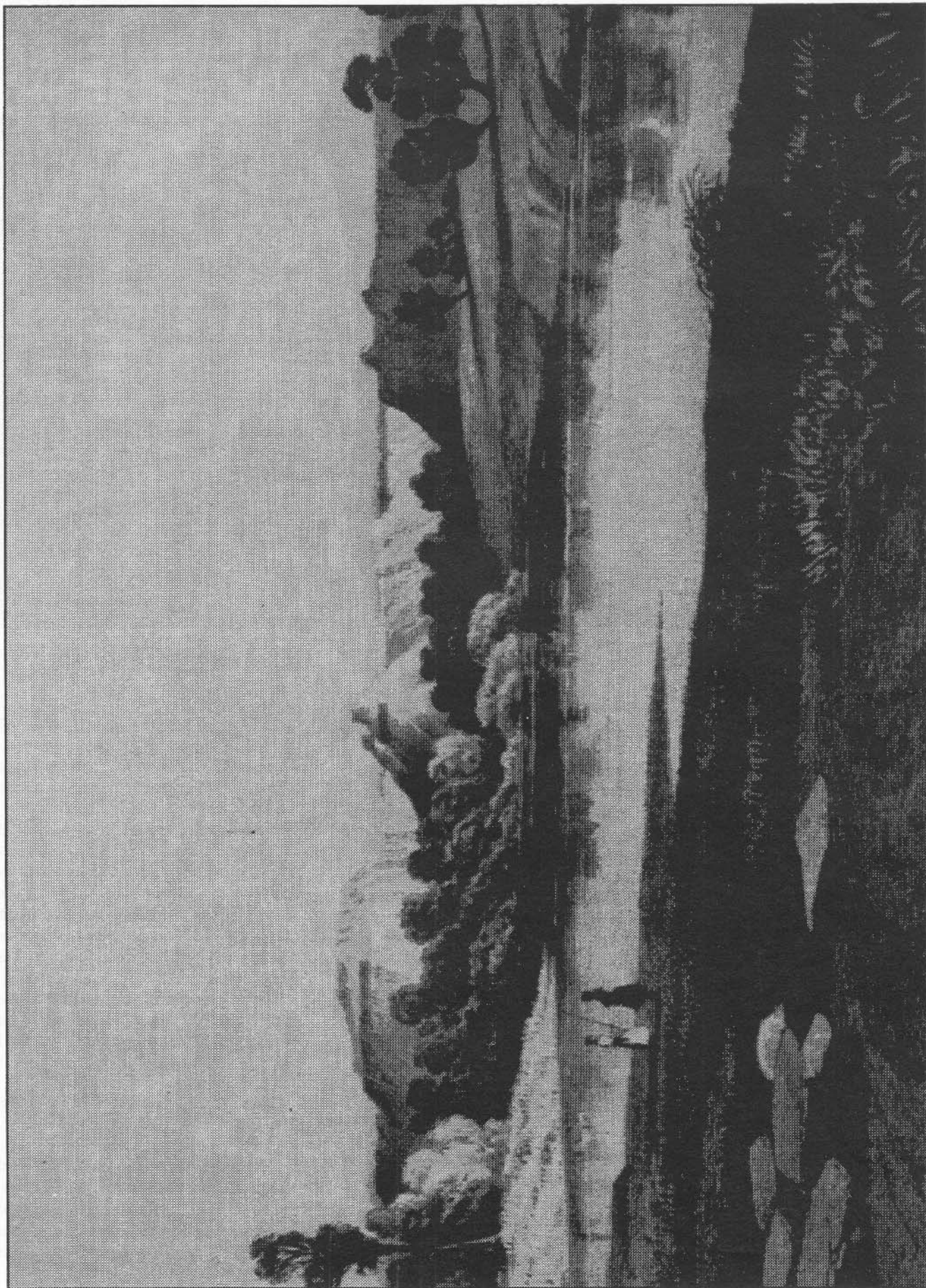
The highlight of the day came in a visit with Medano Springs Ranch foreman, Bil Homeyer. (Bil explained that he and his granddaddy had the same name, so Bil dropped one l to help the local bank keep their accounts straight.) After listening to Bil discuss the history of the ranch, and sharing an interest in locating traces of the Spanish Trail through the ranch, OSTA members drove past pens holding buffalo of varied sizes before heading their separate ways.

With next year's annual meeting slated for Grand Junction, OSTA members and guests will have an opportunity to follow other stretches of the North Branch as it passed through western Colorado. The North Branch and the main branch connected near Green River, Utah before winding west toward California.

[Editor's note: Pat Richmond is the author of Trail to Disaster, an authoritative reconstruction of John C. Fremont's route on his disastrous 1848-49 expedition into La Garita Mountains of southern Colorado. This book is published by the Colorado Historical Society. Richmond serves as vice-president of OSTA.]



J.S. Newberry's depiction of Casa Colorado (Red House), a redrock landmark on the Spanish Trail in southeastern Utah. Prehistoric natives used the site, and tinajas, or rock water holes, at its base drew travelers in historic times. Newberry drew this on Captain John N. Macomb's expedition of 1859. *Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Utah.*



Richard H. Kern drew his "Green River Crossing" in September 1853 as an artist on Captain John W. Gunnison's ill-fated expedition. One month later, both Kern and Gunnison lost their lives when Paiutes attacked their detachment. This traditional ford across the Green is just upriver from the present-day town of Green River, Utah, within sight of the Book Cliffs and the Beckwith Plateau. Illustrations on pages 8-9. *Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Utah Libraries.*

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: STEVE MADSEN

The co-author of *In Search of the Spanish Trail* describes a book 20 years in the making

Steven K. Madsen, 45, grew up in the Salt Lake valley, and today is a historian, author, and high school history teacher. For many years he served as historian for the National Independence Day Parade in Washington, D.C. Prior to writing *In Search of the Spanish Trail* (1994) with the late Professor C. Gregory Crampton, Madsen researched the history of navigation on the Colorado and Green rivers. Crampton and Madsen wrote two government reports on that subject. One of those studies, *Boating on the Upper Colorado*, is soon to be published.

[The following interview was conducted by Spanish Traces editor Phil Carson on June 21, 1995.]

ST: Congratulations on your book. We raved about it in our first newsletter.

Madsen: Thank you. Professor Crampton was thrilled by that review.

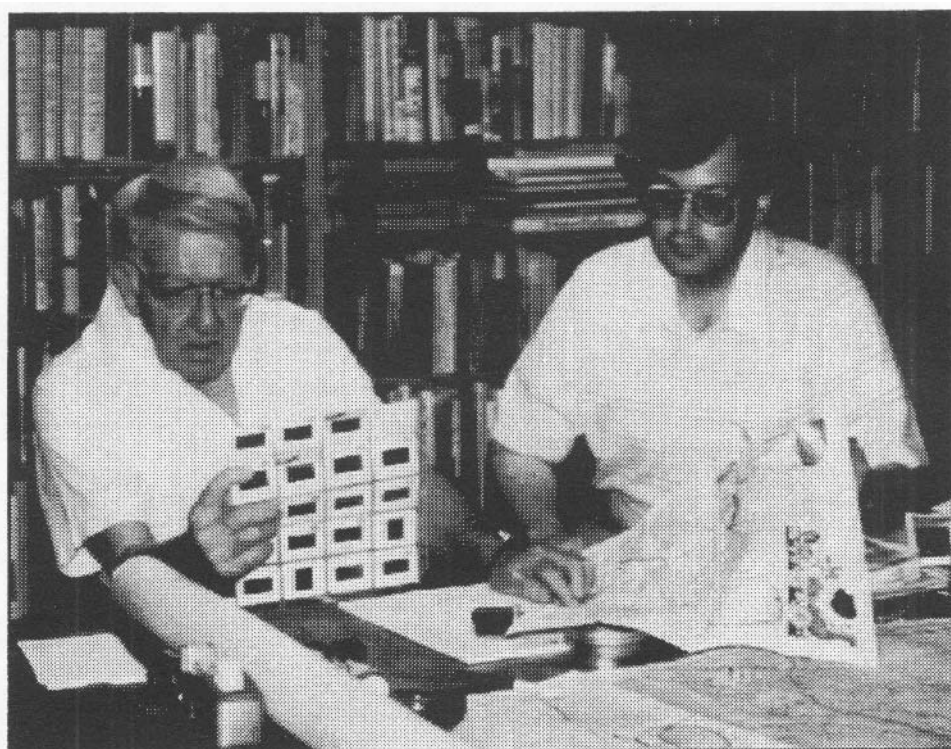
ST: Do you prefer "Spanish Trail" or "Old Spanish Trail"?

Madsen: Actually, the first person to use the term "Spanish Trail" was Fremont. We thought we'd stick with Fremont's earliest usage. He didn't use the term "old." That post-dates Fremont's third expedition.

ST: When did you become interested in the Spanish Trail?

Madsen: In June 1976 Professor Crampton and I drove out to Pinnacle Point, overlooking the San Rafael Swell south of Price, Utah. As we gazed down on the Spanish Trail a thousand feet below us, we looked at each other and said, 'Wouldn't this be an interesting topic to research?' Little did we know the work would go on for nearly 20 years.

Crampton had been interested in the trail back in the 1940s. He had investigated the Mormon Trail, segments of the Hastings Cut-off on the Oregon Trail. So Crampton had a fas-



Greg Crampton and Steve Madsen at work on *"In Search of the Spanish Trail"*.

cination with trails early on. But then in 1949 he was invited along on a boating trip down the Colorado through Glen Canyon. That turned his interest toward the Colorado Plateau. He said he was hooked after that. That year is significant to me: I was born in 1949.

In 1954 Crampton reviewed LeRoy and Ann Hafens' book, *Old Spanish Trail*, in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*. He was very much impressed with the Hafens' work, and still was when we were working together. We've always considered it the 'bible' of the Spanish Trail.

ST: So you and Crampton worked together before the current book ...

Madsen: I met him in 1975 as a student in one of his history courses. By 1975 he was a towering figure in the academic world. He'd already written several landmark works. He had directed the historical archaeology at Glen Canyon, he'd directed the

national Duke Program in Indian Oral History from 1966 to 1973 ... I learned as much as I could from him. I was well-known for my copious notes, and that's what I think impressed him.

At that time he was involved in the Dominguez-Escalante trail study for the Bicentennial. At the end of my senior year I approached him with the possibility of working with him on that project. He said those positions had been filled, but that he had other projects for me.

He was working at the time at the American West Center on the University of Utah campus, where I became a researcher under him.

ST: What attracted you to Crampton's work?

Madsen: He was a hands-on field historian. It was his personal observations of the region that he described that so enthused me. Most historians tend to be armchair historians. I was enthralled by his observations.

ST: Did you catch trail fever then?

Madsen: I caught trail fever by going out in the field with him and floating the Colorado River, making forays into southern Utah, to Denver, to various archives. But our interest in the Spanish Trail didn't crystalize until we stood at Pinnacle Point, overlooking the trail. At that time we were involved in creating a travel guide as a supplement to his book, *Standing Up Country*. But the idea of studying the Spanish Trail so impressed us that we decided to launch another project.

We approached the University of Utah research fund committee for funds to help us trace the trail through Utah and it supplied funds for our first research trips in Utah. The remainder we did on our own.

It was enormously difficult. We made virtually dozens of trips out onto the trail. Of course, we didn't follow all 1,120 miles in one attempt, but in segments.

ST: Tell us more about your methodology.

Madsen: First we did a tremendous amount of homework. We combed the holdings of research institutions, universities, archives, and libraries in search of original sources. Then we went out on the trail.

We started making trips as early as we could, based on the information we had. We plotted out the various routes of travelers using their logs and mileage, and we tried to match those logs and find key sites.

ST: Once you had specific sites, did you move east or west to 'connect the dots'?

Madsen: Yes, it was like a giant jigsaw puzzle. It was a tremendous headache. [Laughs] We were dealing with a trail more than a thousand miles in length, each segment with its own literature. So we had to do more homework.

Trail research is vastly different in California than in Colorado. In Colorado, for instance, we depended a great deal on the accounts of post-trail expeditions, like the Macomb

expedition, the Great Surveys. Much of that material was in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

ST: Did you and Crampton divide the chores? I'm curious how two historians work together.

Madsen: In the writing phase, we'd sit down together and each come up with paragraphs, ideas to throw into the text. Then we would weed out what we didn't like. We wrote it out longhand.

I would say, "Well, we need to include this material in the text." He'd say, "We need to include this." We'd come up with compromise solutions to the writing. Often we'd just run with text someone had proposed. It was sitting down, looking at the sources, saying "this is a great piece of material and it ought to be

It was like a giant jigsaw puzzle. It was a tremendous headache. We were dealing with a trail more than a thousand miles in length, each segment with its own literature. So we had to do more homework.

included." Especially the quotes. These early, post-trail travelers like Orville C. Pratt, S.N. Carvalho, and others would give us wonderful quotes. In many cases they gave excellent trail descriptions.

ST: It's remarkable to hear you describe the process, because the prose in your book is so seamless. Also, the book's simple design and organization was an achievement, considering the size of the project.

Madsen: Just providing the maps proved to be a challenge. Those maps required finding a suitable cartographer. We went through magazines and journals until we narrowed it down to Don Bufkin of Tucson, Arizona. We were delighted with his maps.

Of course, we supplied the trail data and prepared each of the maps.

We had to take our raw data from the field — we made notes right on the USGS 7.5 and 15 minute topographic maps — and transfer that onto the smaller scale U.S. Army Mapping Service topographic maps. From that scale we had to transfer the data down to the aeronautical chart maps — air flight maps, we called them, where you have one inch per 7.89 miles, or 1:500,000 scale.

That's a tremendous challenge. We spent an entire summer transferring that data to those smaller scale maps in the finest of detail. Then we submitted those maps to our cartographer.

ST: I noticed that the maps don't give precise site identifications.

Madsen: We did not want to see the trail destroyed by over-identification. For instance, you have segments of the trail being used by off-road vehicles that tear the trail to pieces and destroy its integrity and pristine nature. We didn't want that to happen.

Also, too much detail loses the reader.

ST: Will you follow this book with more Spanish Trail-related research and writing?

Madsen: Yes. There's a tremendous gap in trail literature on the eastern portion of the main trail. That segment isn't as recognizable as the western segment, which was followed by the Mormon wagon road to California.

There's much more literature covering the western segment of the trail. The eastern segment isn't as well known. I'd like to do some of that research and use *Spanish Traces* as the journal of publication. Could we do a series?

ST: [Editor chuckles] We sure could.

Madsen: I can provide you with details helpful to you and other researchers, that's just not available unless you get out into the field and

(continued on page 12)

MADSEN

(continued from page 11)

dig for the next ten years. I have it right here at my fingertips. I'd be delighted to see somebody benefit from it.

ST: We'd be delighted to have you publish in our newsletter. We're always eager to learn more, especially from a practiced hand.

Madsen: Let me just say that we meticulously reconstructed the entire Spanish Trail route. Greg and I both had a tenacious devotion to accuracy. The information we gathered, the local informants we used, the methodology we used, really paid off.

The methodology is particularly important. Our most important method, I think, was to try to determine the difference between those who simply followed the trail, and those who provided us with specific trail data. The greatest help came from those who traveled the trail and recorded their experiences. But precise trail locations are rarely given. That was our challenge: to find those diary entries, those historical records that could provide us with those precise trail locations. And those are very rare indeed.

ST: Not only are they rare, but to understand those early descriptions you often have to get into the mindset of the writer.

Madsen: A good example is Tierra Blanca, a site that is described by Orville Pratt in 1848. [Tierra Blanca today sits in Cross Canyon, just south of Dove Creek, Colo.] It was clear that we'd located that spot due to the alkali there. It was a tremendous find.

We used a number of sources, from the Hayden Survey to the early General Land Office township plat maps, that were extremely helpful. We even met a settler in that area who actually took us over the Spanish Trail. He was 90 when we met him. He had homesteaded the Paiute Spring portion of the trail. Naturally we were excited to have him accompany us over the Spanish Trail in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. His memory was keen. His ability to pinpoint seg-

ments of the trail were just magnificent. We benefited from all that.

If you do any trail research at all, you're going to be struck by "the fever," first of all. Secondly you're going to be making several return trips to the area to confirm your findings. Of course, you're using the historical method, which is using several sources to confirm your findings, and then going out into the field and investigating. That's what we did in each of these locations.

ST: So primary accounts, contemporary reports, maps and plats, and human informants provided your information?

Madsen: The human informants actually confirmed findings we developed in the field. If they didn't, we puzzled it out further, looking for additional sources to get a clearer picture.

*We have this great body of legend
about the Spanish Trail but all
these myths cloud the reality of
the trail.*

ST: What is the importance of documenting the Spanish Trail?

Madsen: It had never been done before. We have this great body of legend about the Spanish Trail and lost treasures and mines, gold along the trail — all these myths cloud the reality of the trail. Now that we know where the trail is, we can now debunk some of those myths and get about actually marking and preserving the Spanish Trail, and making it a National Historic Trail. You can't do that until you know where the trail is. We always had in the back of our minds that this would someday be a

National Historic Trail. That motivated us to a large degree.

I see so many books on the shelf that deal with lost treasures and mines on the Spanish Trail. The public has had this image of great treasures cached along the trail, that the Spaniards were carrying gold doubloons, dropping them here and there.

The fact is, it was a caravan route, a trade route for carrying woolen goods to exchange for horses and pack mules.

ST: A very gritty reality ...

Madsen: Yes, and we find no evidence of these people carrying gold doubloons. We don't find evidence of them prospecting along the trail. We don't find any evidence of gold mines along the trail.

Although that does sound intriguing. I love the concept.

The fact is, you're not going to find it. But you will find something even more fascinating: the trail itself. To me, to actually find the Spanish Trail and to walk pristine segments of it, is just amazing. Now you can do it. You couldn't do it before we wrote this book.

ST: To your mind, what is the trail's place in Western exploration and development?

Madsen: I would say it's the southern gateway to the Pacific. It was the first major corridor across the American Southwest. There's an obvious tie-in with the Santa Fe Trail, and the Camino Real that came in from Mexico City. You have there in Santa Fe three major trails leading into this trade center.

Today, however, if you walk the Plaza in Santa Fe you find no evidence of the trail, you find no reminders of the trail, which always perplexes me. They don't have in Santa Fe any official reminder — a plaque, a marker, a monument of some sort — that the Spanish Trail even existed. If you look in the official literature of the city of Santa Fe you find no mention of the trail, not a word. That amazes me and perplexes me.

ST: Let's see if we can change that.

Madsen: I hope we can. Maybe with this book out, and the OSTA's work, perhaps the towns along the route will put up markers and plaques recognizing the importance of the trail.

The fact is, with the Spanish Trail's connection to the Pacific, you have a connection with the whole world, with Mexico, the Asiatic trade. You have a connection [via the Santa Fe Trail] with the eastern United States. The Spanish Trail's origin at Santa Fe gave that town a tremendous tie-in with the rest of the world.

There's a tie-in with the Missouri frontier, for instance. I strongly believe that the Missouri mule originated in California. Those animals were driven from California to Santa Fe, swapped for other commodities, and driven on to Missouri.

ST: In your travels on the Spanish Trail, were there some particularly poignant places or moments when you felt close to earlier travelers?

Madsen: The San Rafael Swell [in southern Emery County, Utah] is one of those places where you get away from civilization, look up at night at a full canopy of stars, and pretend that you're right on the contemporary Spanish Trail with those drovers and packers. You try to imagine what things were like in days gone by. For me, camping under the stars with good companions on the trail is one of the most fulfilling experiences in life.

ST: In your book you concentrated on the main route of the Spanish Trail, and many of our members are now busy retracing the so-called North Branch in Colorado. Are there other alternate routes on the trail that need further study?

Madsen: Some people have expressed interest in Antonio Armijo's route in 1829. Maybe somebody could follow that up.

[Editor's note: Madsen ended the interview by reiterating his interest in publishing his research in a future issue of Spanish Traces. Stay tuned.]

CHAPTER NEWS

SAGUACHE COUNTY

(Located in the northern San Luis Valley of Colorado, along the North Branch.)

The Saguache County Chapter of the OSTA was organized Sept. 7, 1994 by nine founding "trail fanatics." The group elected Yvonne Halburian president, Mugs Batchelder, vice-president, and Simon Halburian, secretary/treasurer.

The group adopted by-laws on May 10 this year, by which time the membership had swelled to 24!

This chapter has conducted or participated in five field trips.

The first took place in November 1994 when Elmer Keck, 79, a Del Norte native and retired cowboy, guided our party to the East Pass Creek-area road. He'd run cattle there in the past.

This was the path of choice over North Cochetopa Pass before Hwy 114 was built. Remnants of Otto Mears' Tollhouse, and the stage station still exist. (Mears was one of Colorado's 19th century railroad and toll road magnates.)

Elmer identified the old road, visible above Dome Lake in Cochetopa Park, which was the principal route from Saguache to Lake City, the town Otto Mears founded.

Also that November Jim Bearss of the San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative brought his Global Positioning Equipment, which uses a satellite to pinpoint your location. We tried to map the North Branch from La Garita to Saguache, but had to retire after seven miles when snow drifts stopped us.

In January this year Pat Richmond led our party on a trip to locate a route used by travelers negotiating the valley from southeast to northwest. That trail crossed Mosca Pass, just north of Mount Blanca in the Sangre de Cristo mountains, passed the so-called Sand Dune Islands, and paralleled Medano Creek to reach the west side of the Great Sand Dunes.

In February, Ron Kessler guided a tour to the refurbished, recreation of Pikes Stockade on the Conejos River (in the southern center of the valley).

Carl Heflin provided an informative description of the stockade grounds.

(This is the site where the American Lieutenant Zebulon Pike was captured by Spanish Lieutenant Ignacio Sotelo on a bitter winter day, Feb. 26, 1807.)

[Editor's note: Sotelo saved Pike's bacon!]

Later we toured the Cross Arrow Ranch, a hamlet called La Sauces, settled in 1863, and visited five petroglyph and pictograph sites on both banks of the Rio Grande.

Ramon Mondragon, 78, a Saguache native, guided us in March this year along an old road that ran north from La Garita through Saguache, then turned west for Cochetopa Pass. The old road crossed Hwy 285 at County Road V.5, close by the east side of the volcanic spurs (aka "The Cuts"), just south of town.

That road entered Saguache via Cemetery Road, then departed town west to the passes. Ramon pointed out the Lower Saguache Creek crossing site and the road used to get over to the old Hoagland Stage Station before Hwy 114 was built in 1946.

We're planning a field trip on June 17 to Camp Rose, a former military installation on Cantonment Creek, circa 1880. In July Cecil Hall plans to guide us through a former CCC campsite (circa 1940) east of Saguache near Rattlesnake Hill. We'll also see the old Hotchkiss Flour Mill, built in 1873.

Maps, notes, and photographs from these fieldtrips are in the chapter's archives, on file at the Saguache County Library, and are open to the public.

To raise funds we've sold "Trail Fanatic" t-shirts and handkerchiefs, with a logo designed by Yvonne Halburian, and plaques with the OSTA logo crafted by Susan Bentley.

MESA COUNTY

(Located where the Colorado River winds west across the Colorado-Utah stateline.)

Jack Nelson, president of the Mesa County Chapter, has secured a \$5,000 research grant from GO-Colorado, to investigate the trail's

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CHAPTER NEWS

(continued from page 13)

ford on the Colorado, and trappers' trails north. Nelson is most interested in the trappers' trails, while member Bill Chenoweth is examining wagon trails.

Nelson reports that 15-20 "people" show up at his monthly chapter meetings. His meaning becomes clearer when he adds that chapter members include representatives from the Mesa County Commissioners' staff, Bureau of Land Management, Riverfront Trails Commission, Mesa County Historical Society, and, of course, the so-called public.

Those "people" are movers and shakers!

The Grand Junction *Daily Sentinel* published a lengthy feature about the trail this summer.

Some coordination between OSTA and the Daughters of the American Revolution may take place as the local DAR chapter is looking into placing a Madonna of the Trail in Marcus Whitman Park in Grand Junction. (The Madonnas, placed along both the Santa Fe Trail and parts of the Spanish Trail, celebrate the contribution of pioneer women.)

At the national meeting in May, Nelson invited the OSTA membership to bring the 1996 annual meeting to Grand Junction, and it looks like that's on for June 8-9 next year.

Nelson suggests a Saturday morning business meeting at the Mesa County Museum of Western Colorado, followed by a museum tour. Then the Mesa County chapter of OSTA may present findings on North Branch-related trappers' trails from Taos to the Uintah Basin and Green River country, and wagon trails from Cochetopa Pass and Ouray, Colo. to the Green River ford from 1853 onward.

Saturday afternoon would be given over to a fieldtrip(s), with possibilities ranging from Antoine Robidoux' inscription in Westwater Canyon, Spanish Trail ford on the Colorado River, North Branch interpretive sites, replica of Robidoux' fort at Delta, Colo.

Saturday night might be a barbecue at Cross Orchard Living History Farm in Grand Junction. Sunday so far is open to another fieldtrip(s), and

more presentations. Forward ideas/suggestions to Ron Kessler or Jack Nelson, 2276 Windwood Ct., Grand Junction, CO 81503.

RIO GRANDE COUNTY

(Located in the western San Luis Valley of Colorado, on the upper Rio Grande itself, encompassing the towns of Monte Vista and Del Norte.)

Jerry "JR" Hancock, president of the Rio Grande County Chapter, reports that with assistance from the San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative and their Global Positioning System, he has mapped the North Branch of the Spanish Trail through his county.

Hancock told an audience at the national meeting that his group has picked out four likely locations for OST signage and interpretive materials.

One site appropriate for signage is about six miles northeast of Del Norte, Colo. where Colorado Highway 112 crosses the North Branch. A second site further south is on Colorado Highway 374 at 7W Rd.

At a pullout on US 160 five miles east of Del Norte (at Rifle Range Rd.), Hancock and others are pushing for signage and an interpretive site. Another interpretive site could be located a bit further east at US 160 and Limekiln Rd, where the latter provides access to trail ruts.

BOOK BAG

RETRACING THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL: NORTH BRANCH

By Ron Kessler

Adobe Village Press, Monte Vista, Colo.
Softcover, 148 pp., 1995; \$12.95
ISBN: 0-9644056-1-X

Ron Kessler's latest book is the first devoted to the elusive North Branch of the Spanish Trail, and thus it fills a void in history and geography. Its detailed account of the route from Santa Fe north and west through Colorado, clear to Green River, Utah is a useful first step in documenting this much-neglected route.

Kessler's warm familiarity with his subject is the essence of local history.

After all, he lives along the North Branch at Monte Vista in the San Luis Valley of Colorado.

His delightful book does two things: it describes the North Branch's route in terms of modern-day features, and it digresses to describe natural, prehistoric, historic, and modern features found along the way.

Often scorned by historians reluctant to get their hands dirty in the field, trail reconstruction is demanding detective work and often critical to understanding events described in primary sources.

In that sense, Kessler is an able representative of a new breed of non-professional historian. These men and women are fully capable of careful archival searches and analytical work, but crave as well that pesky fieldwork with its blistering sun, bristling cacti, rattlers, arroyos, and dusty sage. And, of course, they savor the journey's rewards: a wondrous glimpse into the past.

Kessler conveys this spirit and more in his text, which is rough in places and would benefit by the hand of a hard-nosed editor. But the hallmark of true art is the blemish that reveals the creator's humanity.

This book is profusely illustrated with photographs that offer a window onto a land known by few.

When an author can shift effortlessly from detailed directions to a natural arch to extoll the virtues of the hamburgers at Old La Garita Store in the San Luis Valley, you know you're in good hands.

LOST TREASURES ON THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

By George A. Thompson

Western Epics, Salt Lake City, Utah
Softcover, 122 pp., 1992; \$11.95
ISBN: 0-914740-31-8

"There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens itself upon your mind," quotes the late Mr. Thompson at the start of his book.

The same may be said of bad scholarship.

Once historical falsehood enters your mind, it's hard to shake.

At least in *Lost Treasures*, warning signs abound.

In the preface Thompson makes a series of dubious statements. He says the trail was "followed by the first conquistadors" and "named by Don Antonio Espejo in 1580." Further, he

writes, "by the mid-1600s its many forks extended from Colorado and Utah far into Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada."

The first two statements are simply incorrect. The third may conceivably be true, but Thompson cites no evidence to support it.

In fact, his meager bibliography contains but few primary sources, all of them quite familiar, and none support his conjectures.

His bold statements, often in opposition to well-established facts, go without attribution. Questioning the status quo is welcome, but this book contains no footnotes.

Reciting lore can be a pleasant diversion when handled honestly. But when Thompson attempts to recount 16th and 17th century history in support of his fanciful ravings, he cannot keep his facts straight. The frequent use of exclamation marks and the word "treasure" are tip-offs to trouble, as are the staged photos of fake gold bullion etched with Spanish crosses lying in shallow holes.

Let the buyer beware.

THE SPANISH FRONTIER IN NORTH AMERICA

By David J. Weber

Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn.
Hardcover, 579 pp., 1992; \$35.00
ISBN: 0-300-05198-0

Precise and thoughtful scholarship carries its own, readily recognizable aura of authority.

David J. Weber's many previous works, each a gem of research and writing, all led to this volume.

In previous books he has focused rather tightly on topics such as *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the*

Far Southwest, 1540-1846 (1968), *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West, 1540-1821* (1979), and *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (1982). He has delved into the more ephemeral world of analysis and interpretation with *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* (1988).

In *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, Weber finally tackles the "big picture," an epic of imperial expansion played out on a stage that stretched from Mexico to Canada, from the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Chesapeake Bay.

Weber's introduction sets the tone for his sweeping narrative:

"Across the southern rim of the United States, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, aged buildings stand as mute reminders of an earlier Hispanic America that has vanished."

"Not only did Spain claim much of what is today the United States, but its sons and daughters settled throughout the continent's southern tier, building towns, missions, and fortifications from Virginia ... to San Francisco ..."

"Spanish subjects also found their way over trails that took them deep into the continent, pursuing treasure in Tennessee, fighting Pawnee and Oto Indians on the Platte River in Nebraska, and exploring the Great Basin."

"[Yet] the Spanish colonial origins of the United States have been dimly understood."

Weber then proceeds, over a dozen chapters, to enlighten us. His carefully crafted statements are methodically supported. The text unfolds at a

deliberate pace, a judicious weave of political context and frontier action.

The frequent illustrations augment the text to the reader's benefit. Footnotes occupy 127 pages, and the useful bibliography extends for 62 pages.

Readers who seek the background and impetus for the development and use of the Old Spanish Trail will find no better source in one place.

ADOBE VILLAGE PRESS OFFERS ARRAY OF TITLES

BOOKS:

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

POSTERS

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

MAPS

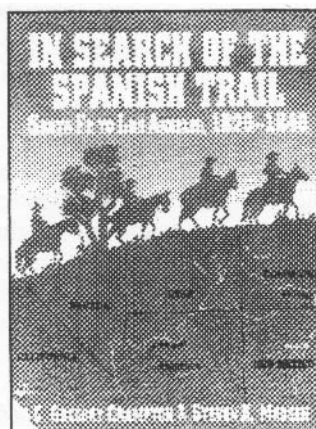
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ROAD APPLES

Hermann and Hanna Bender, OSTA members in Frankfurt, Germany write: "We've been interested in the West for many years, especially in its discovery and exploration. Therefore we are also interested in Western trails. We are members of OCTA and SFTA, and now with special delight, the Old Spanish Trail Association. In 1987 and 1989 we traveled in Arizona, Utah, and Colorado. We have been hiking and rafting on the Colorado River. Perhaps we will again journey to your area, when we would like very much to get in touch."

* * *

Folio, the newsletter of author Gregory M. Franzwa's Patrice Press, mentioned *Spanish Traces* and OSTA in its May 1995 issue.

A more in-depth piece ran in the Spring 1995 issue of *Trail Tracks*, newsletter of American Trails, a non-profit group based in Denver. Thanks to both editors.

* * *

Leo E. Oliva, editor of the Santa Fe Trail Association's outstanding journal, *Wagon Tracks*, generously ran another item on OSTA in *Wagon Tracks*' February 1995 issue. Thanks Leo.

* * *

OSTA officers serve on the steering and advisory committees for the San Luis Valley Trails Coalition. The coalition, national forest, BLM, and state and county agencies are pursuing a GO-Colorado grant to identify, mark, and develop trails in the valley. The east and west forks of the North

Branch of the trail are just two of many trails in the valley's network.

* * *

Author (and OSTA member) Marc Simmons writes: "Spanish Traces is a winner. May it have a long life!"

* * *

A tip of the hat to OSTA member John W. Pollock, of Madison, WI, who sent in a copy of J.J. Hill's groundbreaking article on the Spanish Trail, which appeared in the 1921 issue of *Hispanic American Historical Review*.

* * *

Spanish Traces Editor Phil Carson has a small book out, titled *Among the Eternal Snows: The First Recorded Ascent of Pikes Peak, July 13-15, 1820*. It's available for \$9.50 postpaid. Send check or money order to First Ascent Press, 2012 W. Kiowa St., Colorado Springs, CO 80904.

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Any OSTA member who has written a history book may get a notice into the next issue of *Spanish Traces* by sending the author's name, book title, publisher, price, and ordering information to the editor. If it pertains to the Spanish Trail, send a copy and we'll review it.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell and Representative Scott McInnis are waiting for a chance to attach OSTA legislation to some related bill with broad support. The OSTA bill directs the National Park Service to study the Spanish Trail for possible inclusion in

the National Historic Trail system.

The bill has passed out of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, but hasn't reached the Senate floor. In the House, the bill hasn't been voted out of the House Committee on Natural Resources.

Rep. McInnis' assistant, Windsor Laing, suggests writing letters to Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, who chairs the House Committee on Natural Resources. In the Senate, write to Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, chair of Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Laing also suggests letters to each member of Colorado's congressional delegation, reminding them of our interest, and apprising them of our letters to their colleagues from other states.

See the one-page insert in this issue for the names and addresses of the players, then make those typewriters smoke!

DUES ARE DUE

Please be certain your membership is renewed for 1995-1996, or send your dues today to: OSTA, P.O. Box 521, Monte Vista, CO 81144. The membership voted to make June the renewal date for everyone, so everyone who joined in the six months prior to that date is good for 1995-96. Others, including you charter members (but not lifetime members) need to ante up.

NEXT ANNUAL MEETING

Looks like Grand Junction, June 8-9, 1996! We'll have more details in our next issue, so mark your calendar. We aim to have a number of speakers, fieldtrips, and get-togethers.

Spanish Traces

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