

SPANISH TRACES



OLD SPANISH TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Volume 2

Fall 1996

Scanned Reprint 2007

No. 2

Retracing The Spanish Trail: Across Colorado's San Juan Basin

By Steven K. Madsen

Eager treasurehunters exploring the historic Spanish Trail will likely stumble across riches in the scenic highlands of southwestern Colorado. Not a cache of doubloons or gold bars stacked like cordwood, but valuable trail discoveries and luxurious landscapes: emerald grasslands, flower-gemmed valleys, golden groves of aspen, and silver-tinted mountains. For those who pause to marvel at the view, the experience of Spanish Trail pathfinding can be exhilarating. The adventurous, who choose to explore the route through the backcountry, may find even greater treasures. Follow along as we retrace the old trail through southwestern Colorado to Utah's eastern border. To enhance the journey we will use historical accounts which describe scenic trailside features and prehistoric cultural sites.

After climbing out of the Rio Grande Valley, the Spanish Trail makes a wide swing northward from New Mexico, passing through the mountains of southwestern Colorado. It forms a slight arc as it curves through lush uplands, skirting the lower slopes of the San Juan and La Plata mountains, and descends to the semi-arid tablelands of the Four Corners region. Throughout this 130-mile reach, the historic trail crosses a vast, elevated area drained by the waters of the San Juan and its major branches. The flavor of the Spanish Trail is preserved in the colorful names of the streams along its route. Spanish colonial exploring and trading parties, notably the Dominguez-Escalante and Juan Maria de Rivera expeditions, applied lyrical names to the San Juan (Saint John): Rio Piedra (Stone River), Rio de los Pinos (River of Pines), Rio de La Plata (The Silver River), Rio Florida (Flower River), Rio Mancos (Cripple River), and Rio de las Animas (River of the Souls). Many if not most of these and other Spanish names in that area remain in use today.

Spanish Trail researchers on their own explorations of discovery across Colorado will find the literature, documents and maps of the Hayden Survey a vital resource. Ferdinand V. Hayden directed one of the Great Surveys of the West, 1867-1878. Some of his most important scientific work was done in Colorado where he mapped the

continued on page 4

Fall 1996



Governor don Juan de Onate... This compelling portrait of Governor Onate, founder of New Mexico in 1598, is the work of artist Jose Cisneros. Writer Marc Simmons commissioned the painting; it adorns the cover of his outstanding biography, *The Last Conquistador: Juan de Onate and the Settling of the Far Southwest* (1991). For a review of that book, please turn to page 14. Mr. Simmons graciously provided this graphic.

Inside Spanish Traces...

- OSTA President visits Mexico
- 'New' 1745 records describe Navajo frontier
- Book Bag
- Spanish Trail video shown on television

Annual meeting draws faithful to Grand Junction: Visit to ford on Colorado a highlight

Dozens of members of the Old Spanish Trail Association availed themselves of fine weather to travel the North Branch of the trail to Grand Junction on June 8-9.

Visitors from New Mexico, Colorado and Utah all made the journey to vote on OSTA issues, learn of the latest research and visit trail sites.

In OSTA business, current officers were re-elected. Next year's annual meeting site is Saganache Colo., and will be held June 21-22 to give more folks a chance to attend. (More on the '97 meeting in the next issue.)

At the meeting a number of researchers shared their work.

Jack Nelson spoke on Antoine Robidoux' role in exploiting the upper Green River area in the 1820s and '30s and his use of the North Branch from New Mexico north through Colorado to Green River.

Bill Chenoweth shared information on numerous historical crossings over the Colorado River at present-day 28 1/4 Road — a site later visited by OSTA members.

Author Steve Madsen gave a slide program on the portion of trail between Abiquiu, New Mexico and the Colorado-Utah border. His amazing photographs included a pictograph of a Spanish Trail caravan on rocks near Las Vegas, Nev., and rust-stained rocks at river crossings in Colorado.

That rust came from iron-shod mules and horses on the trail, and Madsen generously gave OSTA two horseshoes of historic value found on Cajon Pass, north of Los Angeles, near the trail's western end.

Katherine Nelson of Grand Junction told how she button-holed Senator Ben Campbell this spring and demanded action on a bill to study National Historic Trail status.

Soon after, Campbell's office announced that the Senate had passed a bill for a three-year, \$250,000 study by the National Park Service. That bill now languishes in conference committee. Rep. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., who is running for the Senate this fall, is on that committee.

Katherine Nelson said that that appropriation is too high, given the amount of research already done on the trail. Many agreed.

On Saturday the group traveled to Clyde "Dusty" Forsgren's ranch on the north side of the Colorado River where the North Branch forded that mighty stream.

Another trip was made to the gully on the river's south side where horse and wagon traffic came down to the ford.

The next day was packed with opportunities: dedication of the trail signage at Lion's Park east of Grand Junction; a stop on Fool's Hill on Highway 50 to see wagon ruts; and a visit to Fort Uncompahgre near Delta, Colo. to see fur trade-era demonstrations.

See you next year!

Editor's corner

Here's our fourth issue of *Spanish Traces*, and we sincerely hope you find articles and photographs here that you'll enjoy.

Our friend, author Steve Madsen, has again generously contributed his scholarship and photos on the Spanish Trail through southwestern Colorado, from New Mexico to Utah.

Once again, this editor asks that people come forth with suggestions, good photographs, article ideas, and criticisms or corrections. If the same authors run articles every issue, this newsletter cannot move forward to better days.

We also need to hear from members and chapter presidents! The entire membership must know what's going on all along the trail, and this newsletter is the best way to spread knowledge of trail sites, research, chapter field trips and local public interest in the trail.

The next issue is due in April 1997. Get in touch by February if you'd like to contribute.

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, 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.

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 shall be included; each member may introduce only one item of business.

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.

Membership:

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 memberships allows two votes if two family members are present. Members must be present to vote.)

Send all inquiries and membership dues to:

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

OSTA President:
Ron Kessler
P.O. Box 510
Monte Vista, CO 81144

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

El Presidente's Column

By Ron Kessler

The Old Spanish Trail Association keeps growing as new chapters are formed. The New Mexico chapter, *Salida del Sol*, is the latest. Chapters are also forming in Arizona, Utah and California!

Thanks to Jack and Katherine Nelson in Grand Junction for making our annual meeting in June a success. We felt right at home and the programs were wonderful.

I encourage all of our members to stick with us, maintain your memberships and keep *Spanish Traces* coming to your door. Trail sites need identification and preservation as the modern world intrudes on them.

I made a fascinating trip in late May to the first world conference on colonial New Mexico's governor, Juan Bautista de Anza, in Sonora, Mexico. On May 23 several OSTA members and some of my family traveled there with 90 folks from all over the Southwest joining us at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

First evening

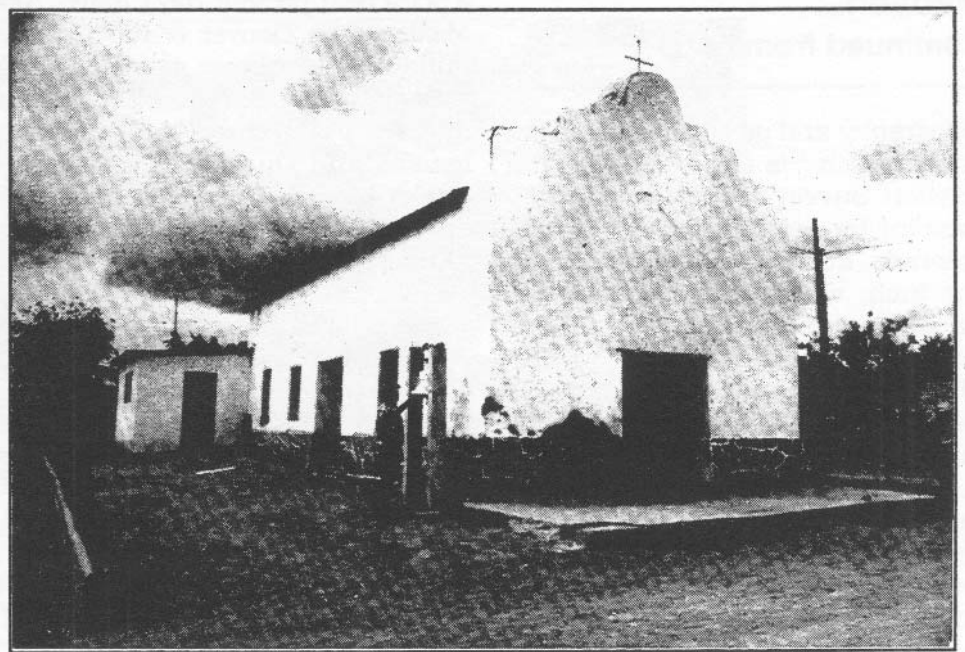
The first evening we met at the local Cattlemen's Hall and were welcomed by a representative of the Governor of Sonora. We walked to the nearby plaza and had dinner and listened to *mariachi* music. Visiting with friends old and new was most enjoyable.

The Mayor of Arizpe, Ignacio Pesqueria Taylor, talked to me and Don Garate, a scholar from Tubac, Arizona, and requested that we bring the conference back in 1997. We plan to do so.

In ensuing days we explored an Opata village on the Rio Sonora, the precursor to Arizpe. Presentations on Anza's life and career were spell-binding. Fortunately for those who could not attend, the papers will be bound into a published book.

Anza birthplace

We visited Tetuachi, home of Anza's father in 1720, and stopped at a still where Bacanora is produced. It must



Church on a forgotten frontier... This humble church in Cuquiarachi, Sonora, Mexico, witnessed the baptism of New Mexico's Governor Juan Bautista de Anza on July 7, 1736. The young Juan Bautista followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps and helped maintain New Spain's northern frontier against Apaches, hostile at European incursions. He became governor of New Mexico in 1777 and in 1779 secured peace on that province's northern frontier by vanquishing the Comanche threat, thus producing an era of peace that allowed the Spanish Trail to flourish.

have been a breathtaking drink; several people who tried it had trouble catching their breath!

On May 26 we attended a special mass at *Nuestra Senoria de la Asuncion*, then traveled by mountain road to Fronteras, to hear more presentations on Anza and visit the local presidio where Anza was born in 1736.

In southern Arizona, en route back to Colorado, we visited the historic sites of San Xavier del Bac mission, Tumacacori and Tubac, site of the presidio commanded by Anza early in his career.

The entire journey showed us the hospitality of northern Mexico, the inter-connections of events there and in my part of the American Southwest, and afforded us a chance to make new friends and learn more about a Spanish colonial governor of New Mexico.

Well, enough about my travels! Let's hear from OSTA members on doings in their areas and new information on the Spanish Trail.

Mrs. Crampton passes away

Maria Crampton, wife of the late Southwest authority C. Gregory Crampton, succumbed to cancer on Friday, July 19. The Presbyterian Church in St. George, Utah, held memorial services. Professor Crampton himself passed away May 2, 1995, after the publication of the remarkable book, *In Search of the Spanish Trail*. Our condolences to family and friends.

* * *

Madonna in Grand Junction

A statue of a pioneer woman, akin to the "Madonna of the Trail" statues placed along the Santa Fe Trail earlier in this century by the Daughters of the American Revolution, will soon be placed in Eagle Rim Park in Grand Junction, thanks to the efforts of the DAR, according to OSTA and DAR member Katherine Nelson.

topography and geology of the state, published in his famous *Atlas*. The Hayden Survey produced an outstanding topographic contour map of Colorado, at a scale of four miles to one inch, which extended into an adjoining strip of Utah and included the Four Corners region.

To compile the resource, Hayden's men, most notably photographer William H. Jackson and topographer W. H. Holmes, led field parties into the mountains of southwestern Colorado during the years 1874-76. They reconnoitered much of the territory through which the Spanish Trail passed, mapping and studying the topography, geology and archaeology, and developing gold and silver mines. In Hayden's *Atlas*, the Spanish Trail stretches across southwestern Colorado. Atlas Sheet IX shows the "Old Spanish Trail" from the Carracas area on the San Juan River to Arboles and thence west-northwest to Ignacio and beyond. The map depicts the trail as it enters Colorado, crossing the San Juan River at the site of Carracas, a deserted station on the abandoned Denver & Rio Grande Railroad.

The manuscripts, publications, and maps of the Macomb military survey of 1859 also provide useful information. Charles Dimmock's manuscript map gives us precise trail locations. The Macomb party drifted from the Spanish Trail in northern New Mexico, but reentered the overland path in Colorado's San Juan River basin, closely paralleling the later route of the D&RG Railroad.

Long stretches of rail coincide with the Spanish Trail. Following the Civil War, rails followed trails many places in the American West. The D&RG built its rail line through Colorado paralleling much of the Spanish Trail route. The D&RG had planned to build a railroad from Denver to the south and southwest and possibly on into the Republic of Mexico, via the Rio Grande and El Paso. But with the opening of mining in the San Juan country, it was built westward from

a point near present-day Chama, New Mexico. The Denver & Rio Grande, building its narrow gauge railroad westward, reached Carracas in 1880 and then continued the line on to Ignacio and Durango. Many of the tracks have been removed — they are merely ghost rails today.

From the railroad site at Carracas, we encounter the San Juan River, another prominent feature on the Spanish Trail. Following down the north bank of the San Juan below Carracas for about eight miles, the trail crosses the tributary Piedra River above its mouth near Arboles and then veers to the northwest. (Hayden's *Atlas of Colorado* shows the old trail crossing the Rio Piedra 1.5 miles above its confluence with

***The manuscripts and maps of
Macomb's expedition of 1859
provide useful information
for trail hunters.***

***The maps give us precise
trail locations***

the San Juan River.) An unpaved Archuleta County road, Route 500, parallels the trail westward along the San Juan River to Arboles, a former railroad depot near the confluence of the Piedra and San Juan rivers. Piedra crossing is today covered by Navajo Lake, a reservoir on the Colorado-New Mexico border.

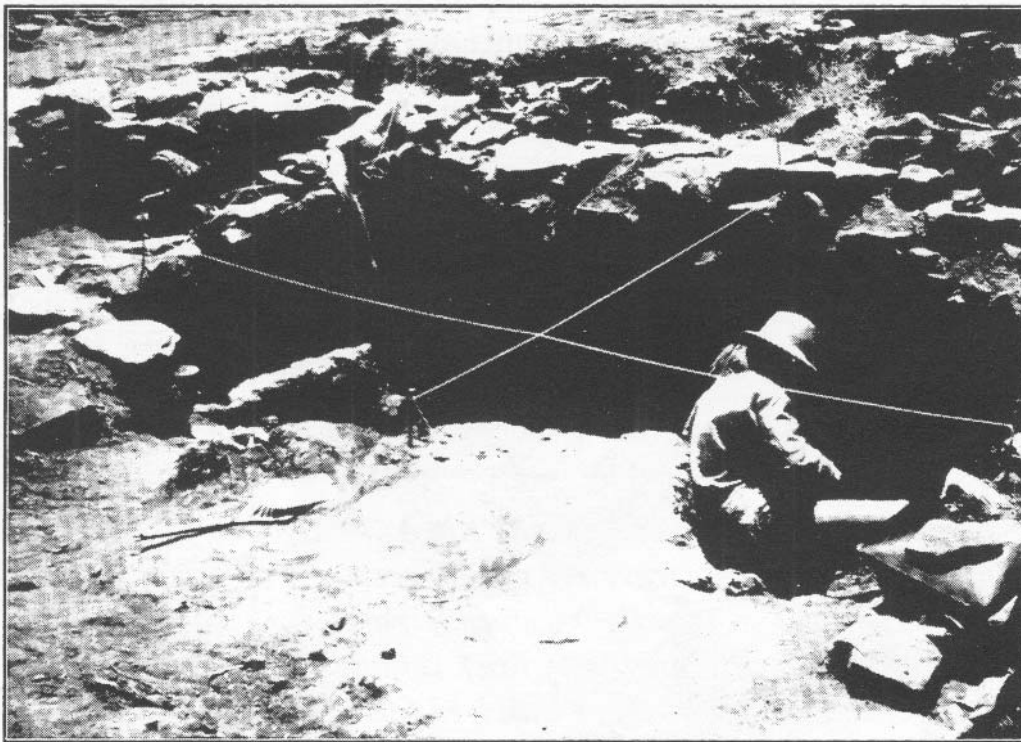
Beyond Navajo Lake, the Spanish Trail crosses open, rolling country, dotted by many ranches and fields, outlined by low hills covered with piñon, juniper, oak and sagebrush. The trail passes north of Tiffany and Allison, settled after 1899 by homesteaders occupying the surplus lands of the Southern Utes.

The Utes had developed an equestrian lifestyle well before the establishment of the overland trail. In passing through the basin of the San Juan River, the Spanish Trail can be identified with those natural pathways used by Indians centuries before the coming of white men. The first white men of definite record to traverse the mountain domain of the Utes were

the Spaniards. Over time, relations between the cultures became strained. But the easing of tensions between the Spaniards and the Utes in the latter part of the eighteenth century paved the way for the explorations of Rivera, Dominguez and Escalante.

By 1813 at least two trading parties from New Mexico had reached the Ute Indians living on the shores of Utah Lake in north-central Utah. In the Mexican period, trappers and traders ranged through Ute country, and travelers on the Spanish Trail were allowed passage. In 1848, at the end of the Mexican War, Mexico ceded the Southwest, including all of the Ute lands, to the United States. Thereafter, increasing numbers of westering American miners, railroad builders, settlers, and stockmen overran the upland domain of the Utes, pushing the indigenous people from their homelands. Ultimately, the Ute tribes in Colorado's eastern slope surrendered their holdings, moved west of the continental divide, and agreed to settle on reservations. The Southern Ute Tribe was assigned a narrow strip of land along the Colorado-New Mexico border. The Spanish Trail crosses the present-day Southern Ute Indian Reservation to reach the Los Pinos River 1.5 miles downstream from Colorado Highway 151 at Ignacio. Agency headquarters of the Southern Ute, Ignacio lies in the heart of the fertile Pine River valley and is the principal town on the reservation. Beyond the river crossing near Ignacio the Spanish Trail ascends Rock Creek a short distance, then angles off to the northwest through open country toward Florida, a former railroad station on the Florida River. Near the river, the paths of Dominguez and Escalante and the 1859 Macomb expedition converge with the old caravan route. The trail runs westwardly to reach the Animas River through Wilson Gulch.

Opposite the mouth of Wilson Gulch, on July 4, 1765, Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera's party reached the river and named it the Rio de las Animas. Here the Spaniards found the village of the Ute Chief "El



Digging in the hot sun... This photograph of an archaeological dig at the so-called "Macomb ruin," south of Yellow Jacket, Colo., (north of Cortez, in the southwestern corner of the state) was taken by author Steve Madsen in 1977. These and other, nearby ruins reveal that the area was an important regional center of Anasazi culture less than a thousand years ago. *Photograph courtesy of Steve Madsen.*

Coraque" where they camped for a day talking with the Indians and fording the river. Eleven years later, on August 8, 1776, Dominguez and Escalante crossed the river at the same location. Once across the river, travelers were forced to climb a steep terrace, covered by thick foliage, about 300 high. The next day the expedition climbed the steep gravel and boulder terrace and Escalante described the ascent in his diary: "We left the Rio de las Animas, climbed the west bank of the river which, although it is not very high, is quite difficult because it is very stony and in places very rugged." [1] Mid-19th century travelers also forded the river at this location. Nearly two weeks out of Santa Fe, on September 8, 1848, Orville C. Pratt crossed the river here. He reported a large number of Ute Indians at the crossing. Though peaceful, they were not willing to trade. The Macomb party arrived at the Animas River in August 1859. Expedition members, encamped on the banks of the stream "at the point

where it is crossed by the old Spanish trail," wrote that the crossing "is nearly a hundred yards wide, deep and rapid, and, at the present stage of water, not easily forded." [2]

Returning to railroads, the D&RG extended westward in 1881 when it laid track over the old trail down through Wilson Gulch and ascended the narrow Animas Valley, avoiding the steep Spanish Trail path above the river. The route was doubtlessly used by prehistoric Indians and today a highway runs through it. Upstream from the Spanish Trail crossing, near the mouth of Lightner Canyon — a natural opening to the west — the D&RG established the town of Durango. From the terrace top at the Animas on the outskirts of Durango, the Spanish Trail for about nine miles passes through a sparsely-wooded, open country to reach the La Plata River above old Fort Lewis. As Charles Dimmock of the 1859 Macomb expedition describes it: From the terrace, we "passed over into a broken valley shut in on the left by a high barren

ridge and on the right by gentle slopes." This is a good description of Ridges Basin, the high barren ridge on the south being Basin Mountain. The Spanish Trail from Ridges Basin crossed over to the head of Wild Cat Canyon and then Dimmock tells us that from this point "the trail traverses a succession of small spurs and mounting by an easy ascent to a well timbered tableland from where the country, on either side seems much broken." [3] From Dimmock's "tableland," the Spanish Trail drops down a short steep slope to the La Plata River. The Spanish Trail reaches the La Plata at a point near Ute Junction, an abandoned station on the D & R G Railroad.

Ute Junction was two miles above Fort Lewis, a U.S. Army post established in 1880 on the La Plata River to protect travelers and miners from Indian hostilities and to prevent white encroachment on Southern Ute lands. Although no extensive campaigns were ever based at Fort Lewis, it provided a peace-keeping force at

continued on page 6

a critical time in the region's frontier history. Abandoned in 1891, the fort was turned over to the state of Colorado for educational purposes.

Beyond Ute Junction near the site of old Fort Lewis, the Spanish Trail swings northward and for two miles ascends the La Plata River. Orville Pratt, following the river route on September 8, 1848, described the La Plata as "one of the loveliest streams I think I ever saw." [4] Eleven years later the Macomb expedition camped along this reach. The rocky pinnacles of the La Plata Mountains, drained by the La Plata River, formed a scenic backdrop to the Spanish Trail.

Geologist J. S. Newberry found the mountain paradise exhilarating. He wrote: "... the Rio de la Plata is a beautifully clear, cold, mountain-brook... well-stocked with trout. The valley in which it flows ... is exceedingly beautiful, and our camp, one of the most delightful imaginable. Our tents are pitched in the shade of a cluster of gigantic pines, such as are scattered, here and there, singly or in groups, over the surface of the valley, separated by meadows thickly coated with the finest gramma grass. Stretching off southward, a wall of verdure, tinted with the fresh and vivid green of cottonwoods and willows, marks, while it conceals, the course of the sparkling stream whose murmuring flow comes softly to the ear. On either side of the valley rise picturesque wooded hills, which bound the view both east and west; between these on the south an open vista reveals, far in the distance, the blue chains of the Sierra del Carriso and Tunecha. On the north the bold and lofty summits of the Sierra de la Plata look down upon us in this pure atmosphere with an apparent proximity almost startling." [5]

Charles Dimmock noted here: "Just at hand, presiding over the beauties at their base, towers the majestic cluster of peaks forming the Sierra la Plata. Lifted from waving grasses and countless flowers of the valley, vainly the eye peers among the na-

ked, hopeless crags for some gleaming of that metal the name of the Sierra indicates, until heavy and wearied it sinks in the conviction that the steel-clad Hidalgo must have seen with an eye of faith, strengthened by avarice, the inaccessible hoard deep buried in the bowels of the grand old mountain." [6] Given his cursory examination of the area's mineral resources, Dimmock did not foresee the rich placer diggings and quartz lodes discovered in the 1870s in the nearby mountains.

In the La Plata high country, at the

*Once across the Rio Animas,
travelers were forced
to climb a steep terrace,
covered by thick foliage,
about three hundred feet high*

site of Hesperus — a hamlet on U.S. Highway 160 — the trail turns westward through once-active mining districts, crossing the divide between the La Plata River and Cherry Creek at an elevation of about 8,330 feet.

From the divide, the Spanish Trail follows Cherry Creek downstream to the lush pasturelands of Thompson Park, a picturesque mountain valley skirting the extreme southern base of the La Plata Mountains. Newberry described the park as "a natural pass, or *puerta*, through which the Spanish trail leads." The trail crosses the upper end of the park, running parallel to the route of U.S. Highway 160.

The ridge west of Thompson Park divides the La Plata and Mancos rivers and offers one of the more spectacular viewpoints along the Spanish Trail. Standing on this threshold in 1859, Newberry described the mountaintop perspective: "Here we were to leave the lofty sierras of the Rocky Mountain system, which had so long looked down on our camps and marches, the picturesque scenery of the foot hills, their flowery valleys and sparkling streams, the grateful shade of their noble forests, and take our weary way across the arid

expanse of the great western plateau; a region whose dreary monotony is only broken by frightful chasms, where alone the weary traveler finds shelter from the burning heat of a cloudless sun, and where he seeks, too often in vain, a cooling draught that shall slake his thirst." [7]

From the La Plata River to Utah's Abajo Mountains, the Spanish Trail runs through the Four Corners country, a region extending outward from the common point where the boundaries of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona converge. In the Four Corners region beyond the La Plata-Mancos divide, the Spanish Trail follows the geologic trough that separates the La Platas and the great sedimentary tableland of Mesa Verde.

Here in the Four Corners area prehistoric people lived for centuries and left abundant evidence of their passing. Inhabited by the Anasazi for at least 10,000 years before the arrival of the Spaniards, the region is famous for its prehistoric cultural resources. Anasazis cultivated crops of maize, beans, and squash and resided in villages and in apartment houses, including many imposing cliff dwellings, typified by those in Mesa Verde National Park. The Anasazi abandoned their homeland in the Four Corners about A.D. 1300, and their great urban centers at Mesa Verde and elsewhere became the first ghost towns in the Southwest. Some distance south from the Spanish Trail, the Anasazi ruins at Mesa Verde — the largest archaeological preserve in the United States — were not discovered until the 1870s.

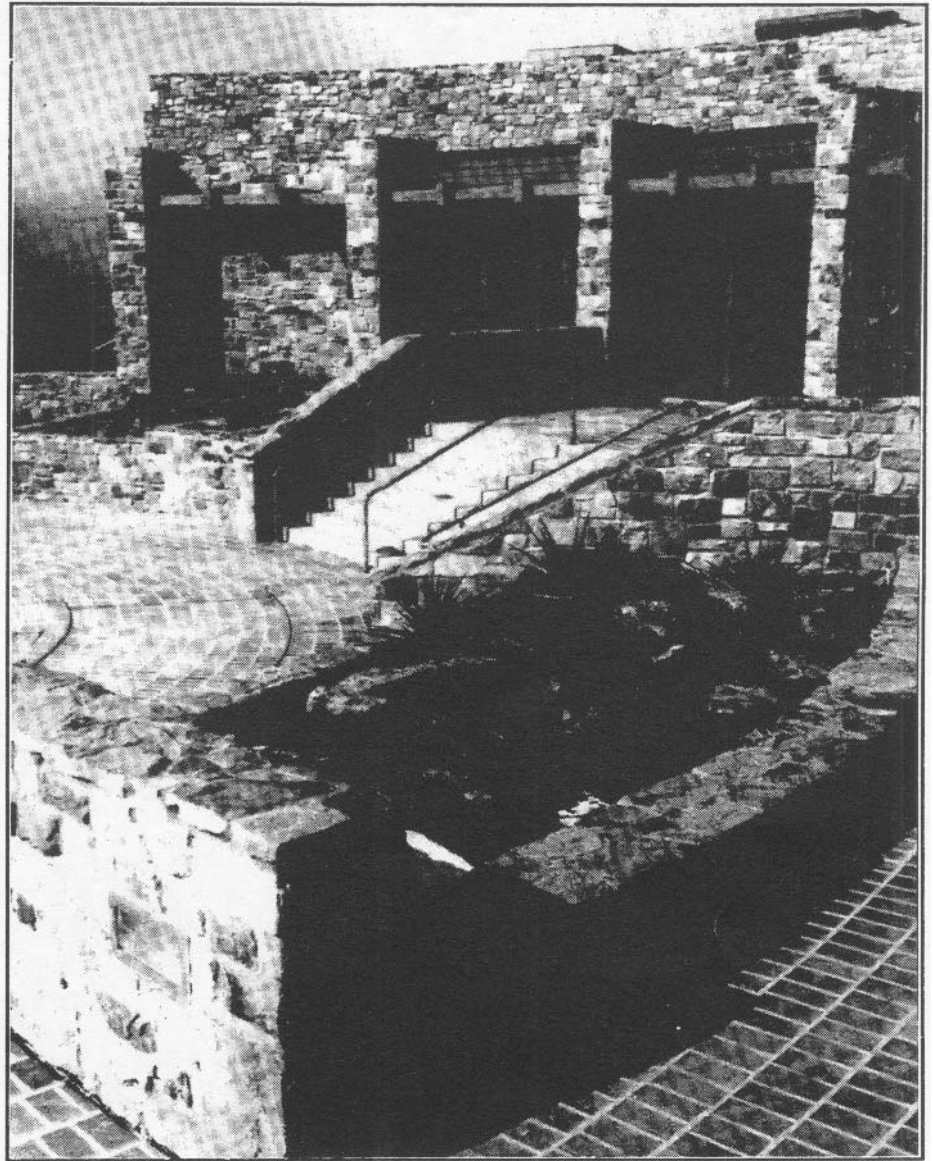
Descending the western slope of the La Plata-Mancos divide in the shadow of Mesa Verde, the Spanish Trail crosses the main forks of the Mancos River in an open valley two miles above the town of Mancos. In 1776 the Dominguez-Escalante expedition camped in this valley which earned its name after one of the explorers was injured near the river they called Rio de los Mancos (Spanish: Cripple).

Beyond the headwaters of the Mancos, the trail runs west-northwest, closely following the route of Colorado Highway 184 to the Big

Bend of the Dolores River. Here the Dolores makes a broad bend to the north. Perplexed by the name Río Dolores (River of Sorrow), Charles Dimmock in mid-August 1859 observed: "The Río Dolores sparkling & clear, 70 feet in width, flowing in a rapid shallow & winding stream, through flowery meadows & rich green cotton-woods, bending in leafy exuberance, seems but illy named, as too fair a scene for one to 'come to grief.'"[8] Between the Mancos and Dolores rivers, in the mid-1800s, the fading vestiges of Anasazi culture were visible in many places along the Spanish Trail. Newberry in 1859 reported that the area was "everywhere covered with fragments of broken pottery, showing its former occupation by a considerable number of inhabitants." [9]

South across the stream from the town of Dolores, on the rim overlooking the Dolores River, the Spanish Trail probes the ancient ruins of the Anasazi. Escalante on August 13, 1776, described what he saw: "Here there is everything that a good settlement needs for its establishment and maintenance as regards irrigable lands, pasturage, timber, and firewood. Upon an elevation on the river's south side, there was in ancient times a small settlement of the same type as those of the Indian of New Mexico..."[10] In this vicinity, Newberry in 1859 observed "an extensive series of very ancient ruins." [11] From the Mancos Valley to eastern Utah the Spanish Trail passes through the northern heart of the Anasazi country. Very near the spot where Dominguez and Escalante and Newberry noted the ancient ruins, and directly on the Spanish Trail, there now stands the Anasazi Heritage Center.

On the river bottom, below the archaeologically rich "Dolores Rim," is the present town of Dolores. The westernmost station on the Río Grande Southern, Dolores served as the railhead for frontier settlements and cattle ranches stretching across a southward-tilting plateau into southeastern Utah. Cattle outfits drove their livestock over the



Does this design look familiar?... The Anasazi Heritage Center, outside Dolores, Colo., offers outstanding interpretive programs and displays on local, indigenous cultures and the area's natural history. The nearby "Escalante Ruins," an Anasazi site perhaps mentioned by Father Escalante in 1776, is well worth a visit. (As is the Center's bookstore.)

"Monticello-Dolores Road," practically identical with the Spanish Trail, to the rail town at Dolores, where they were shipped to eastern markets. In addition, stockmen followed the trail in the 1870s and 1880s to the fertile ranges on the La Plata, Mancos and Dolores rivers. The Monticello Road carried stagecoaches, wagons, and horseriders across the San Juan River basin.

Charles Dimmock noted that the historic route beyond the Dolores River passes "over a gently broken sage plain, spreading far to the right interspersed with stunted pinons." [12] Tired by the "monotonous Cretaceous geology" along the route, Newberry named the plateau the "Great Sage Plain." The entire area dips to the south which gives it additional warm weather during the winter.

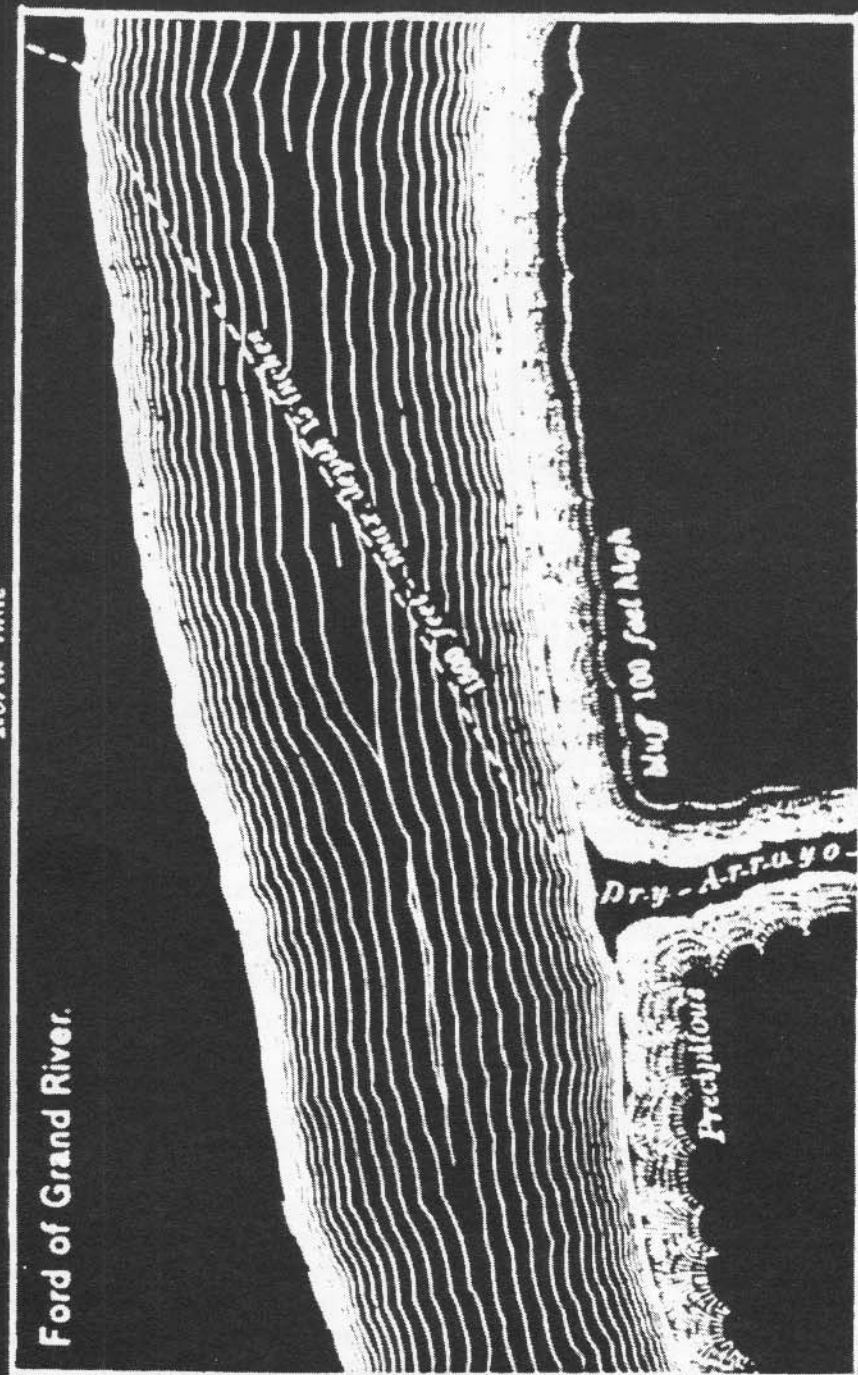
continued on page 10

FORD AT 28 1/4 Road

Sketched by

Henry Gannett, 1875

North Side



Easier said than done... This sketch by topographer Henry Gannett, on the Hayden Survey in 1875, shows a section of the Colorado River and how the North Branch of the Spanish Trail crossed it. This ford became a traditional crossing because the south bank of the Colorado provided a gently sloping gully to the river, and the north bank was low and gradual. The river is not too deep here. OSTA members visited the site in June at their national meeting in nearby Grand Junction. *Sketch courtesy of researcher Bill Chenoweth.*



Sign here, please... The difference between valuable, prehistoric or historic inscriptions and modern graffiti is that the former was made when reaching some remote spot, far out on the trail, still meant something. This inscription, by H. Clevenger, is located near the Spanish Trail on Carlisle Ranch, Cross Canyon, Montezuma County, Colo. *Photograph courtesy of author Steve Madsen.*

Madsen...

Continued from page 7

ter — a kind of oasis which the Anasazi exploited in their dry farming. Off to the south, Ute Mountain, vaguely resembling a recumbent woman, relieves the monotony of the Great Sage Plain. The landmark retains approximately the same profile from every direction.

Today the Spanish Trail route over the Great Sage Plain crosses an extensive dry farming region — open, rolling country, consisting of dry farms interspersed with scrub pine and sage brush. Much of the land is under cultivation, which has obliterated most traces of the Spanish Trail.

Beyond Dolores the trail continues through Narraguinnep Reservoir and the small village of Lewis before reaching the head of a canyon, watered by a bountiful spring, called Yellow Jacket by those in modern times who found the place to be the preferred habitat of wasps. Here the Spanish Trail passes to the right of acres of crumbling Anasazi ruins. In prehistoric times, Yellow Jacket was one of the important regional centers of Anasazi culture north of the San Juan River. Located on a flat stretch of land north and west of Yellow Jacket Creek, the ruin was first described by the Macomb expedition in 1859. Newberry labelled the ruin "Surouaro," a Ute word meaning desolation.

From Yellow Jacket, the Spanish Trail follows a northwest direction across the Great Sage Plain. Along this narrow flat strip of land, so fully developed by the Anasazi, the Spanish Trail crossed a number of intermittent streams flowing southwest to the San Juan River. A large tributary, Cross Canyon, contained good living water and was a major stop on the Spanish Trail. Here the water issued from the base of a low sandstone cliff, whitened by mineral salts. Later travelers welcomed these reliable waters. The Macomb expedition named the place Tierra Blanca (White Land), from the presence of alkali in a tributary stream. (The Spanish Trail

reaches Tierra Blanca by way of Alkali Canyon, a Cross Canyon tributary.) From September 14 to October 7, 1878, a military reconnaissance from Fort Garland, Colorado, under the command of Lt. B. S. Humphrey, camped at Cross Canyon. Other military expeditions from Fort Lewis camped for a time at this location. Nearby, the cut stone structure of the Carlisle Cattle Company is a reminder that stockmen ranged cattle in the area in the 1870s. The high-elevation pasturelands of the Great Sage Plain provided abundant grasslands for incoming stockmen.

Leaving Cross Canyon, the Spanish

*In the La Plata high country,
at the site of Hesperus,
the trail turns west through
former mining districts,
and crosses the divide between
the La Plata River and
Cherry Creek*

Trail takes a northwesterly course to cross the head of Monument Creek, two miles west of the town of Dove Creek. Dove Creek is in the center of a large agricultural area, once heavily occupied by the dry-farming Anasazi Indians. The American settlers moving into the region in the 1920s also practiced dry farming and found that the soil and climate were ideally suited to the growing of beans, winter wheat, sunflowers and dry land alfalfa. The local chamber of commerce proudly proclaims that Dove Creek is the "Pinto Bean Capital of the World." In ancient times, the Anasazi grew beans in the vicinity of present-day Dove Creek. Today, farmers still find Anasazi pottery and arrowheads as they harvest their crops.

Beyond the head of Monument Creek west of Dove Creek, the trail nears the eastern border of Utah. It reaches the border on a sloping plain in a region which appears hauntingly beautiful in its isolation. From here, the Spanish Trail ascends the northern edge of the Great Sage Plain and

drops into the fabulous red rock country of the Colorado Plateau.

The scenic landscapes encountered on the Spanish Trail enrich the experience of pathfinding in southwestern Colorado. Trail followers may lay claim to captivating views of the historic trail as it winds through lush mountain parks, wide-flowering meadows, pine-studded hillsides, cottonwood- and willow-lined riverbanks, pinon-juniper forests, and gently sloping sage flats amidst a ruggedly beautiful backdrop: soaring plateaus, broken terrain, and jagged mountain peaks that loom in the distance. This natural beauty is the setting for the railroad, mining pursuits, cattle interests and agriculture. Furthermore, the Native American presence, both modern and historic, as well as the abundance of prehistoric cultural sites found along the Spanish Trail, enhance the journey through Colorado's San Juan River basin. Besides, what could be more rewarding for modern explorers than retracing the trail itself? The discovery of pristine trail ruts, eroded horseshoes and muleshoes, and other relics of historic overland travel by Mexican wool merchants and American fur trappers are among the possible lucky strikes.

Endnotes

1 Herbert E. Bolton, *Pageant In the Wilderness: The Story of the Escalante Expedition to the Interior Basin, 1776, Including the Diary and Itinerary of Father Escalante Translated and Annotated*. (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1950), 138-39

2 John N. Macomb, *Report of an Exploring Expedition from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to the Junction of the Grand and Green Rivers of the Great Colorado of the West, in 1859, with Geological Report by Prof. J. S. Newberry*. (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1876) 80

3 The D&RG platted the town of Durango opposite the mouth of Lightner Canyon. Tracks were laid into the town on July 27, 1881. Less than three months later, Lt. John G. Bourke, U.S. Army, bound for Fort Lewis, got off the train in Durango. Bourke noted his impressions of Durango: the town was surrounded by the "noble" San Juan Mountains. Three thousand people lived in comfort-

able houses. Substantial brick blocks lined the business streets. There was a daily newspaper and Bourke wrote of professional offices, stores, and three hotels operating at "full blast." A group of Ute Indians, wrapped in Navajo blankets, rode through the streets.

4 LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1954) 347.

5 Macomb, *Report of Exploring Expd.*, 81.

6 Dimmock, *Field Notes*, 7.

7 Macomb, *Report of an Exploring Expd.*, 83.

8 Dimmock, *Field Notes*, 8.

9 Macomb, *Report of an Exploring Expd.*, 86.

10 Bolton, Pageant

11 Macomb, *Report of an Exploring Expd.*, 88.

12 Dimmock, *Field Notes*, 8.

(This article is based in part on manuscript sources by C. Gregory Crampton and Steven K. Madsen.)



Prices are low ... The town of Yellow Jacket, Colo., lies near Anasazi cultural sites on the Dolores River, northwest of Cortez, Colo., in the southwest corner of that state. Photograph courtesy of Steve Madsen.

Road apples

New book due in February

A promising new title for Spanish Trail bookshelves is due to be published in February 1997 by the University of Utah Press. Titled, *Explorers, Traders and Slavers: Forging the Spanish Trail, 1678-1850*, it is authored by Joseph P. Sanchez, a recognized authority on Southwestern history.

The book may reach stores before February, so keep your eyes peeled. Its ISBN number, for ordering purposes, is 0-87480-526-0. Stay tuned to *Spanish Traces*; we'll review this book in our next issue.

Two items on Coronado

Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's trek from central Mexico to the upper Rio Grande, and thence to central Kansas, in the years 1540-42 proved to be the earliest effective penetration of the American Southwest by Europeans. Cabeza de Vaca and his companions crossed the very southernmost part of North America in 1528-36, and Fray Marcos de Niza may have seen Zuni, but neither provided useful news of the interior.

Coronado's route has long been the subject of study, and two items have

surfaced that may interest our readers.

The first item was posted on the Internet recently and passed along by OSTA Vice-president Pat Richmond.

The May 1996 newsletter of the Albuquerque Archaeological Society announced that archaeologist Don Blakeslee of Wichita State University has found what appear to be crossbow bolt tips from a site in Blanco Canyon, east of Lubbock, Texas. It is thought Coronado's expedition was the only early European group armed with crossbows.

The site in question was located after researchers tracked down an elderly resident who'd found a chain mail gauntlet in the area in the 1950s

The site in question was located after researchers tracked down an elderly resident who'd found a chain mail gauntlet in the area in the 1950s. Blakeslee traced that tip to another man who had found the crossbow bolt tips with a metal detector.

In a related matter, researcher Betty

Graham Lee has written a monograph on the location of Coronado's "Province of Chichilticale." Lee, instructor emeritus at Eastern Arizona College, investigated a site on Eagle Pass at the north end of Sulphur Springs Valley, in southeastern Arizona, and believes this may have been one of Coronado's stopping places.

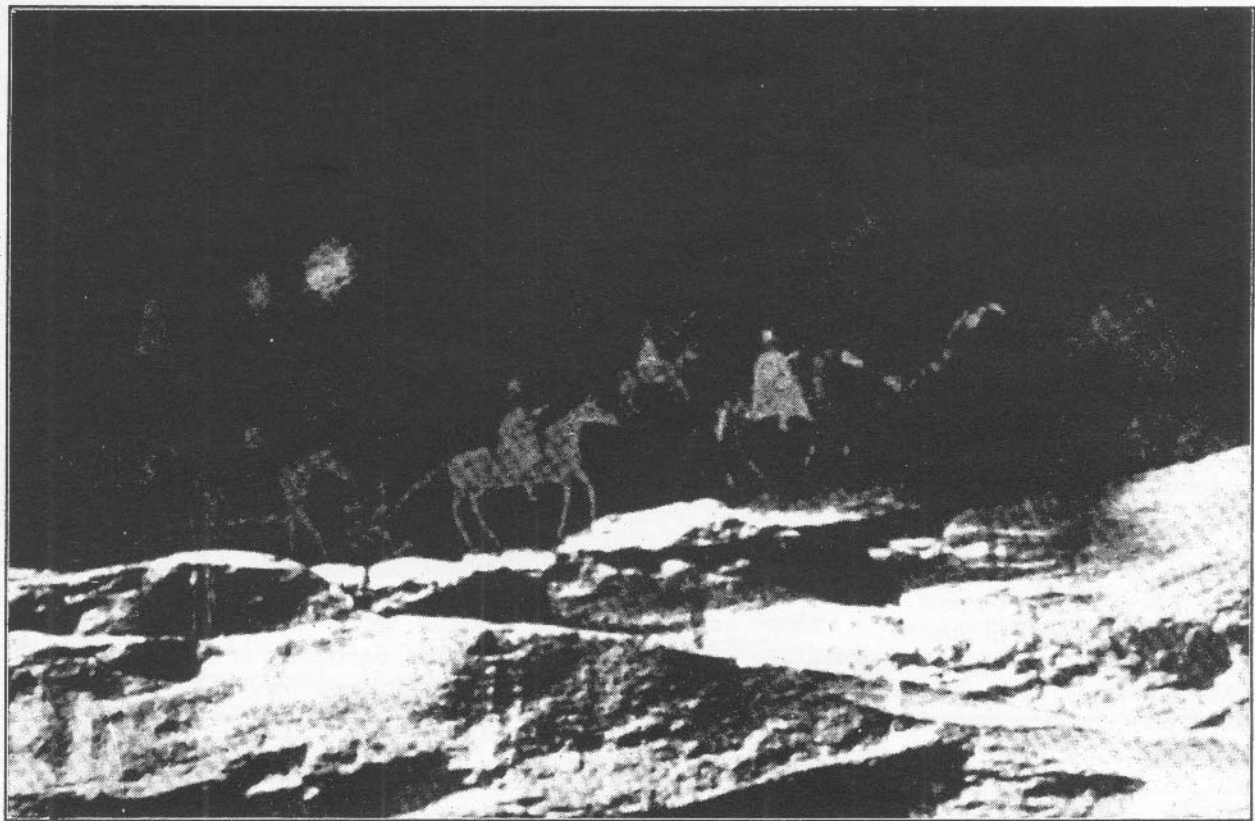
Lee's monograph, titled, "The Eagle Pass Site: An Integral Part of the Province of Chichilticale," is available for \$10 postpaid from the EAC Museum Council, P.O. Box 558, Thatcher, AZ 85552.

Sounds like a plan...

Author Steve Madsen, in a letter last year to Utah's Senator Orrin Hatch plugging National Historic Trail status for the Spanish Trail, noted that the trail is approximated by traveling between various national parks, including Mesa Verde, Canyonlands, Arches, Bryce, Zion, and Death Valley.

For that reason Madsen suggested that the trail be dubbed "The Trail to the Parks."

We need more bright ideas like this one to market the trail and convince legislators of its value for modern travelers and their cultural education!



The strangers came ... This rare pictograph of Spanish horsemen reveals riders in wide-brimmed hats and capes, and is found in Canon del Muerto, Arizona. Though far from the Spanish Trail, this rock art (thought to have been made in the early 1800s) nonetheless reflects a native American image of invading Europeans.

Chapter news

Salida del Sol

The Old Spanish Trail Association welcomes a new chapter, *Salida del Sol*, or "Sunrise," based in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

This chapter organized in April 1996 and received its charter from the national organization at the annual meeting in Grand Junction in June.

President Willard Lewis reports that his group is actively recruiting members from existing organizations with related interests, such as the Santa Fe Trail Association, the Westerners, and the Historical Society of New Mexico.

"We're anxious to build membership," says Lewis.

It would seem that Santa Fe and northern New Mexico would provide fertile grounds for recruitment, as many in the region profess interest in local heritage. Yet, so far, little officially has been done in that area to

celebrate a trail that's longer and tougher to travel than the Santa Fe Trail.

Lewis says his own interest in the Spanish Trail took off after touring the North Branch in Colorado's San Luis Valley with OSTA President Ron Kessler.

It would seem that Santa Fe and northern New Mexico would provide fertile grounds for recruitment, as many profess interest in local heritage

Salida del Sol meets on Saturday, October 26, at 2 p.m., at Meem Auditorium, Laboratory of Anthropology, 708 Camino Lejo, Santa Fe.

Lewis says another meeting, with programs, is being organized for late January 1997. Interested parties can

contact him at (505) 984-2978; or write: P.O. Box 6073, Santa Fe, NM 87502.

Other chapters

The addition of *Salida del Sol* brings to ten the number of OSTA chapters across the country that are either in business or ready to be chartered.

We now have chapters in New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and California. We need one chapter in Nevada to complete this critical first step in linking together a solid national organization and convincing local, state, and federal government agencies to cooperate in preservation and interpretive work.

Let's go Nevada!

And thanks to all those organizers who've contacted us by letter and phone call, though they may be too distant to attend the national meetings. Write to *Spanish Traces* and let us know how you're doing.

The Rio Chama route: accounts from 1745

By Phil Carson

In early 1745 a dozen men testified before the governor of New Mexico that they'd crossed the province's northwest frontier to reach the Navajo. Several had traveled beyond, for diplomacy, war and prospecting.

Spaniards had preceded these men for a century. Unfortunately, primary accounts of 17th century travels across that frontier are scarce. So the testimony of ranchers and soldiers before Governor Codallos y Rabal in February and March 1745 are of considerable value.

Spanish Trail scholars seem not to have used these largely unpublished records. The manuscripts, referred to as the "New Mexico Originals," reside at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. Quotations used below were translated by Dr. Leon Bright of Pueblo, Colo., from microfilm reproductions of the original, handwritten documents.

Navajo and "Rio Grande"

Using the Rio Chama to connect Pueblo villages on the upper Rio Grande with Ute country to the northwest probably predated Coronado's visit to the area in 1540-42, perhaps by hundreds of years. Within decades of Juan de Onate's settlement of New Mexico in 1598, Spaniards used the Chama to visit and sometimes chastise the Navajo to the northwest.

Whether early 17th century Spaniards reached the Navajo's "Rio Grande," our San Juan River, remains unknown.

One of the first Spanish journeys northwest to the Navajo's stronghold took place in 1629 for diplomatic purposes.

As the province was wracked by internal conflict and frontier hostilities in the mid-1600s, Captain Juan Dominguez de Mendoza in 1650-80 made repeated forays to the northwest against the Navajo. After the Pueblo revolt in 1680 and subsequent Spanish reconquest in 1692-96, Captain Roque Madrid made similar forays in 1693-1714.

Madrid in 1705 even mentions the *Sierra de las Grullas*, or "Mountains of the Cranes" — the present-day San Juan Mountains in southwestern Colorado.

Whether Spanish traders dared the Chama route in those years is unknown, but peace between Spaniard and Navajo finally coalesced about 1720. How soon after that traders dared that frontier also is unknown, but frontiersmen did not survive by ignoring trade opportunities.

In the 1740s Spanish objectives to the northwest included peace and commerce with the Navajo and Ute, but did not yet encompass a dream of reaching the Pacific coast — the genesis, finally, of the 19th century Spanish Trail.

But Governor Codallos y Rabal apparently had orders to report to his superiors on matters pertaining to the northwestern frontier, so in early 1745 he summoned frontiersmen and soldiers who'd been there.

Navajo farming and stock-raising practices, trade with nearby Indians and Spaniards, and mentioned the Navajos' problems with Ute and Comanche to the north. There is mention of a 1743 Spanish expedition to the northwest in search of rumored silver, 20 years before Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera.

Antonio Montoya, 55, "a laborer and breeder of large and small livestock" and a resident of "Puerto Santa Rosa de Lima" testified.

Montoya said he'd made his first journey to the Navajo more than 30 years earlier (1700-1715?) when Spaniards still warred with their northwestern neighbors, but gave no details.

His second journey took place about 1730, when Spaniards aided the Navajo because the latter were "so much under attack by the Utes and Comanches, who are their enemies."

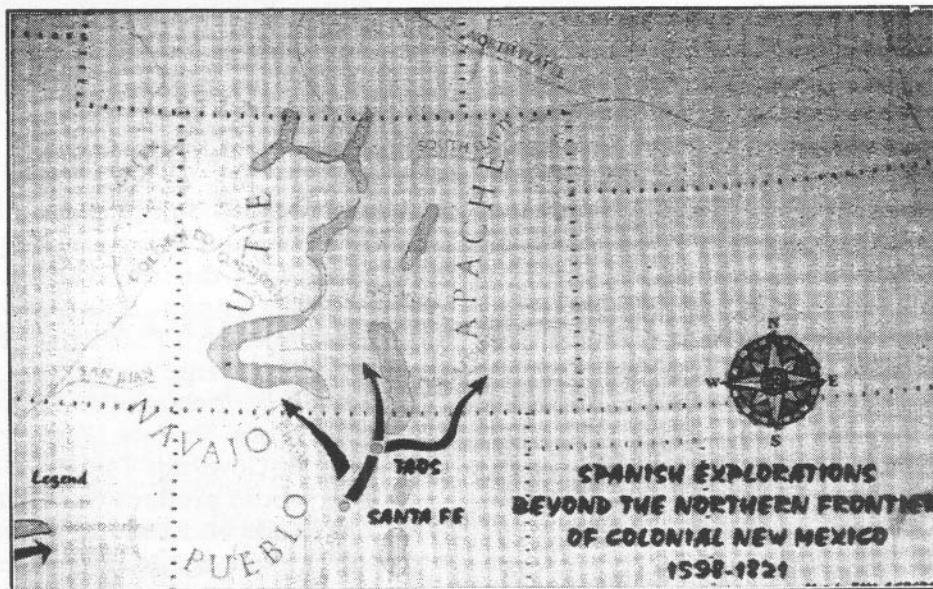
Montoya's third journey occurred in 1743.

"An Indian called Luis of the Christian Apache nation guided the witness and many other persons and

continued on page 14

Frontiersmen testify

A dozen men told their governor of journeys to the Navajo, described



The far northern frontier of New Spain ... This map shows how Spanish colonial travelers traversed their northern frontier between 1598 and 1821. To the northwest of Spanish settlements on the upper Rio Grande lay the Navajo-Apache and beyond them, the Utes. Both were often reached via the Rio Chama. *Map courtesy of Phil Carson.*

soldiers that were given permission by [Governor don Gaspar Domingo de Mendoza] for the security of those people who were going to discover mines that said Indian Luis offered that they would find great treasures, which proved to be false."

This expedition traveled "through the region of a river called Chama where some Spaniards live," Montoya testified, and headed northwest 30 leagues through uninhabited country. That route might have taken the expedition to the Navajo's "Rio Grande," at the base of the Sierra de las Grullas. In the region Montoya crossed, he reported, the Navajo were 3-4,000 strong and "living in their settlements in little houses of stone and wattle on the mesas and in the mountains, supporting themselves with their crops ..."

Montoya noted further that "they sow much, beans and squash in season, and that the natives occupy themselves in raising their livestock, cultivating their fields, and weaving some blankets ... [which they] ... trade for other things which the Indians of this Kingdom [Pueblos of New Mexico], and also Spaniards, give them."

Don Santiago Roybal, a secular priest, joined this expedition. He reported separately that the Spaniards sought "a very rich mine, abounding in silver, called Chiquagua, where the inhabitants of this country often go to trade."

Antonio Tafoya, second lieutenant of the royal presidio, told the governor that "while the Indians were at war" before 1720 he entered Navajo country with 400 others. The men journeyed northwest by "entering by the hill called 'Las Grullas,' that lies 30 leagues northwest" of Santa Fe. This may well have been one of Captain Madrid's forays against the Navajo.

"The land is one of mesas and canyons in which [the Navajo] sow corn, beans, squash and watermelons and

it seemed to him that is a dry and sterile land."

On its return, that expedition reached Santa Fe by "the spot they call El Cerro de los Pedernales near the Spanish village of Abiquiu ..." So this expedition apparently headed north to the San Juan mountains and returned by the Chama route, much as Madrid had done in 1705.

While in the Navajo province, Tafoya observed "some little flocks of small livestock that he had heard they had in many parts of said Province. There are in it about 4,000 Indians ... It is about 60 leagues long from west to north and about 30 from east to south... The Indians and their women dress as do those of this Kingdom [the Pueblos]. They make blankets of black wool and vessels which they trade with the Christian Indians for other things..."

Tafoya declared himself 68, and did not sign his testimony "because he said he did not know how to write."

Opening the northwest

Despite the scant record, these testimonies regarding expeditions to the Navajo between about 1705 and 1743 reveal that that Indian province was well-known to Spaniards and that they already were searching for silver in the northwest mountains — just as Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera would do on his celebrated expedition in 1765.

Yet a Spanish-Ute alliance had to take place before Spanish traders could explore that country more fully, reach the Colorado River, and begin to piece together the idea of a route to the Pacific. As we know from Rivera's trek in 1765 and the Dominguez-Escalante expedition in 1776, those connections were not long in the future. The late 1740s and 1750s, under Governor Tomas Velez Cachupin, would produce the Spanish-Ute alliance and send explorers into central Utah. Yet another three-quarters of a century would pass before traders in the Mexican era could connect New Mexico and California along the thousand-mile Spanish Trail.

Papers written on trail-related topics

Two academic treatises on trail topics have emerged recently from Brigham Young University in Utah.

The first is a fascinating study titled, "Indenture and Adoption of Native American Children by Mormons on the Utah Frontier, 1850-1870," and was authored by Brian Q. Cannon, assistant professor of history at BYU, and Richard D. Kitchen.

Cannon became interested in the topic after researching a talk on the Spanish Trail for a history course he taught at BYU. Kitchen's area of expertise is in intercultural relations in the 19th century West.

The Spanish Trail long served as a slave trade route between New Mexico and central Utah, and its demise was partly due to Mormon intervention in that trade. Mormon authorities in the 1850s were instrumental in arresting slave traders and rescuing Indian children.

Spanish Traces will bring its readers an abridged version of that paper in the next issue.

The second paper of interest is a 1995 master's thesis by Sondra Jones, titled, "Pedro Leon: Indian Slavery, Mexican Traders, and the Mormon Judiciary."

In her abstract Jones writes that "Utah historians have [unfairly] vilified Pedro Leon [Lujan] as an unscrupulous and vengeful Mexican slave trader ..." but he was "a product of frontier Mexican society which had a long tradition of forced Indian servitude resembling indentures more than chattel slavery for prisoners of Indian wars and 'ransomed' Indian captives."

We hope to bring you excerpts from this study as well in a future issue of *Spanish Traces*.

Both papers promise to illuminate significant aspects of Spanish Trail scholarship and detail the trail's demise as the region's various cultures clashed over conflicting values. Stay tuned to the next *Spanish Traces* for more.

Book Bag

The Last Conquistador: Juan de Onate and the Settling of the Far Southwest
By Marc Simmons

University of Oklahoma Press,
Norman

Softcover, 208 pp., 1991

ISBN: 0-8061-2368-0

Too often too many people fall into the trap of viewing historical figures by modern ethical standards, bound by angst-ridden, culturally apologetic shackles. This misguided view can be mistaken for refinement in our understanding of the past, and of the forces that produced the dramas and tragedies that we think we're above—as we, in ignorance, act out new ones. We smugly look back at persons from another time and condemn, aware of their obvious failings.

In some cases these delusions have gripped otherwise competent historians and pushed them to pen psycho-history, as if they can articulate the mind, and mindset, of another person and distant times.

There is another way to write biography: the way Marc Simmons has constructed his richly textured portrait of the founder of New Mexico. Simmons, with steady narrative hand and mastery of the facts and their relevance, crafts a picture of a man caught between two eras—that of the conquistadors, and the royal mandate for peaceful expansion of New Spain.

Simmons soberly chronicles the mores of Spanish colonial society in the New World and the paradoxical qualities inherent in Onate's forebears, even the startling similarities of experience between one generation of this prominent family and the next. The Onates were silver barons on New Spain's northern frontier in the 16th century and, like all Europeans on the rim of Christendom, soldiers.

Political correctness would have been utterly incomprehensible to them. The forces of the day cast European against native; that was that. Hindsight means nothing to honest accounts of that contemporary world. Unfortunately, Onate possessed myriad traits, including megalomania. Simmons' account is spare and sharply faceted, as was his subject. He brings not only Onate to life, but also his world. That world bears little resemblance to ours.

The illustrations are judiciously selected and presented, a mix of maps, portraits and photographs. The bibliography suggests further reading.

Simmons states that his work is based on already known sources; his goal was not to scour well-plumbed archives, but to place the known facts into a clearer framework than ever before. The degree to which he has succeeded establishes how much work remains to be done in Southwestern history. We've got many facts on our hands, but who is really shaping them into authentic narrative pictures? In this case, at least, Simmons has done so, to our benefit.

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

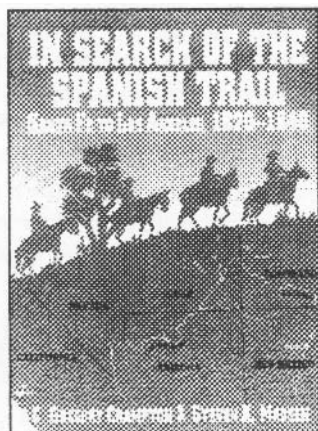
(\$4.00 each): Old Spanish Trail.

Shipping and handling:

up to \$10 ... \$3.50
\$10.01—\$30.00 ... \$5.90
\$30.01—\$50.00 ... \$7.10
\$50.01—\$75.00 ... \$8.50
\$75.01—\$100.00 ... \$9.30
\$100 & over \$9.90

Colorado residents add 7.5 percent sales tax. Send check or money order to:

Adobe Village Press
P.O. Box 510
Monte Vista, CO 81144



In Search Of The Spanish Trail: Santa Fe To Los Angeles 1829-1848

This is the first study to locate and map the historic Spanish Trail! More than 200 photos and 12 maps show the trail and locate the travel route. As fascinating for field treks as armchair journeys.

144 PP., 8-1/2 X 11; over 200 black & white photos, bibliography, index, maps; ISBN 0-87905-614-2; \$24.95, paper.

Order Toll Free (800) 748-5439
GIBBS SMITH, PUBLISHER

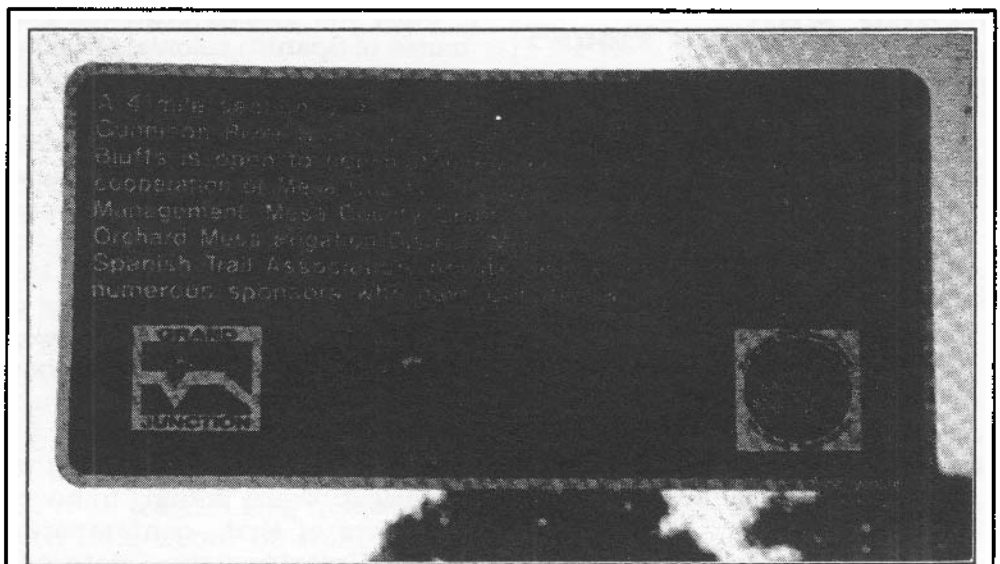
Letter from Grand Junction

"It was a real pleasure for the Mesa County Chapter to host the annual conference," writes Jack Nelson from Grand Junction. "Members of our group worked their small mules off to make it a success. It is always a real pleasure to see familiar faces, renew old friendships, make new ones and swap lies." [Editor's note: Nelson got a bit "rhetorical" at this point, such that a newsletter twice this long might not be sufficient, so we've edited.] "The recent 'discovery' of several virtually unknown trapper inscriptions has pinned down an elusive route used by the old Taos trappers through the Book Cliffs of north-eastern Utah. The Old Salt Lake Wagon Road, another ephemeral trail, is also being carefully researched by the Mesa County Chapter. This route very closely followed the Old Spanish Trail's North Branch for many miles. For our group, a real bunch of workers, not just joiners, may I thank all of those conferees who came to Grand Junction. See you in Saguache next year."

We're in pictures

OSTA member and documentary film-maker Les Southern and his company, Cineventure Productions, has created a 30-minute video on "Saving the Old Spanish Trail," shown on Denver television Sept. 23.

The film will serve well as an accurate introduction to the subject for



Read it yourself ... One of the first interpretive signs placed on the North Branch of the Spanish Trail, just east of Grand Junction, Colo. The work of innumerable individuals and civic groups in Mesa County, and the local chapter of OSTA, helped resurrect a portion of the trail here.

many folks, and features effective interviews with two authors, OSTA President Ron Kessler and Vice-president Pat Richmond.

Southern is making copies available to OSTA for re-broadcast in TV markets along the trail. Hopefully we can get membership information tagged onto that video!

Stolen signs

Vernell Rowley of the Emery County, Utah, chapter reports that several signs posted by his group along the northernmost stretch of the Spanish Trail have been stolen. We regret these outrageous acts against Emery

County's good efforts. But perhaps membership information could be printed on the back of those signs?

Next issue, next meeting

The next issue of *Spanish Traces* is due out in April 1997. Contributions are due by February 1997. Chapter reports on membership progress, trail sites, field trips and local interest in the trail are due by February.

The next national meeting will be held in Saguache, Colo., June 21-22. We look forward to gathering in the astounding San Luis Valley and visiting local sites.

See you there!

Spanish Traces

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