

SPANISH TRACES



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The end of the trail at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Plaza

Photograph courtesy of Steven Madsen, 1983.

Steve Madsen concludes his series by retracing the Spanish Trail across Southern California.

Steven K. Madsen concludes his retracing of the Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe to Los Angeles with his sixth installment featuring that portion of the trail that lies within California. In past installments, starting in the Spring 1996 issue, Madsen has described the portion of the trail in New Mexico. In the Fall 1996 issue, he took us across

southwestern Colorado. The journey across Utah was split into two segments: the part on the Colorado Plateau (Spring 1998) and that in the Great Basin (Spring 1997). The Fall 1997 issue included the Arizona and Nevada portions of the Mojave Desert.

On Page 5 we start at the eastern California border.

Willard Lewis receives first Crampton Award

At the 5th OSTA Annual Conference at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, NM on May 2, Willard Lewis, President of the Salida del Sol Chapter, received the first C. Gregory Crampton Award presented by the association. The award was given to Lewis for his outstanding contributions to OSTA. The Salida del Sol Chapter, under Lewis' leadership, has become a vital force in the association and provides a fine example of how an OSTA chapter can work for its members and enhance their knowledge of the trail. The association is grateful for Lewis' many contributions.

The Crampton Award is named for C. Gregory Crampton, a well-known Utah historian and co-author, with Steve Madsen, of the book, *In Search of the Spanish Trail*. Funding for the award was made by possible by a grant provided by the late Maria Crampton in memory of her husband, Professor Crampton.

Park Service: “No smoking gun”

Larry Beal, Job Captain of the National Park Service Old Spanish Trail Study Team, reviewed the progress of the NPS study of the OST at our annual conference at Santa Fe in May. In his review, Beal implied, but never stated explicitly, that the study team did not believe that the OST qualifies as a National Historic Trail. In a conversation in late August, however, he made it clear that the study team has not found the “smoking gun,” that is, the study team has found no convincing evidence that the OST has national significance. Given no additional evidence, the forthcoming study report will surely recommend that the OST not be granted National Trail status.

Many of us in the association strongly support the OST being included in the National Trail System. But we must act now to achieve this end. There are several approaches: The study team can be persuaded, perhaps, by written, well-documented arguments that clearly demonstrate that the OST has national, rather than just local, significance. Because achieving National Trail status usually requires political support in addition to mere historical argument, we must persuade Congress that the OST merits National Trail designation. Presumably we must document tangible benefits (such as increased tourism) to the states through which the OST passes.

A response now may affect the preliminary study report that will appear next February for public comment. The final document will follow. *Please* respond with ideas.

Send written arguments to:
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Old Spanish Trail Study Team
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National Park Service
12795 West Alameda Parkway
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-0287.

Send letters of support to your congressional representative and senators. Ask for support from state legislators as well. If California can obtain National Trail status for the Anza Trail, then, with some effort, we can succeed as well.

The Carpenters, intrepid cyclists, to ride again

In 1997, OSTA members Kenn and Lorraine Carpenter of Marysville, WA bicycled from Santa Fe, NM to Los Angeles, CA via the OST. This year they plan to repeat this *tour de force*. After departing from the Santa Fe Plaza on the morning of September 12, they plan to arrive in Los Angeles on or about October 27. On their first OST ride the Carpenters found, to their dismay, that the OST has no presence on the Los Angeles Plaza. This year, because of the Carpenter's and other's efforts, (and if the foundry reacts quickly) the new OST memorial on the Los Angeles Plaza will be ready for emplacement and dedication soon after the Carpenters arrival in Los Angeles.

For those of us who think that following the trail in a car is a major undertaking, the Carpenter's effort inspires awe. We hope that their trip is successful and that it will result in a future account in these pages.

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President's Corner

By Charles Querfeld

This is my maiden column as the new President of the OSTA, and I shall start by relating something of the odyssey that has resulted in this being my task. In the middle of last April, Ron Kessler called to ask if I would consider standing as his replacement as OSTA President.

This was quite a surprise since I am a physicist, not an historian. Moreover, I had never given any thought to being involved as an OSTA officer. After conferring with numerous members of OSTA, I finally concluded that the idea was feasible if a strong slate of officers and directors could be assembled. Happily, this proved possible.

Your new officers and directors, listed on Page 2, form a strong board that I am confident will lead the organization wisely. At the business meeting at the annual conference, I sketched my initial thoughts on the course of action that the association must now pursue. These were thoroughly discussed and adopted by the board at our first meeting in Grand Junction, Colorado on June 27. A corresponding committee structure is now in place to recommend actions that are needed for the health of the association. Membership, publicity, and new chapters deserve special attention.

The most pressing task for the coming year is to increase our membership. We need new members to further the aims of the association and because finances and membership are inextricably linked. This newsletter is the only tangible

benefit of OSTA membership and the budget allocated for its production is not commensurate with income from fewer than about 200 OSTA members. At present we have about 150 members. If we accept the premise that the newsletter quality must remain as good as in the past few years, then we must both find new members and cut newsletter production costs. OSTA officers are working both problems, but we need help from the membership as well. Ask a friend to join.

Another area that urgently needs help is how to improve OSTA visibility to the world. We need someone who understands the Byzantine world of publicity to work at or, at least, to offer advice on how to manage publicity for OSTA. If you have the knowledge and can share it, run, don't walk, to the nearest telephone and call or send e-mail. Addresses are given on Page 2.

As a partial answer to the publicity problem, material for the OSTA Web (Test) Site can be viewed at URL <http://www.slv.org/history/osta>. This material is formally in service, but should be reviewed by members for its content. It lacks pizzazz, but that will be fixed in time. Some of the graphics must be revised to shorten download time. This site has mutually supporting links to other trail associations and the National Park Service. Please e-mail comments to me.

The board has allocated the money needed to extend 501(c)(3) status to the chapters. Treasurer Richard Greene is working on this now.

Chapter formation is high on our list. We expect to form new OSTA chapters in southern California,

Nevada, and Utah. John Robinson is forming the southern California chapter. Its organization should be underway about the time this issue appears. Call him at 714-528-8609 for particulars. Ron Jewkes will lead the effort to form a chapter in Utah. The effort in Nevada needs a leader. Volunteers?

OSTA members and indefatigable cyclists Kenn and Lorraine Carpenter from Marysville, WA have initiated a successful effort to place a new memorial to mark the west end of the OST at Olvera Street, the Pueblo de Los Angeles Plaza. The Carpenters, Los Pobladores de Los Angeles (an organization of descendants of Los Angeles pioneers) and OSTA will provide the funds. OSTA will use money from a recent gift that is specifically earmarked for memorials of this kind. Next we must tackle the Santa Fe Plaza. Willard Lewis will lead this effort.

Because of confusion at the business meeting in May regarding bylaw issues, the board will propose new bylaws to the membership at the next national conference. Changes will be discussed at our board meeting in Flagstaff, Arizona on September 19, 1998. Proposed changes will be submitted to the membership in accord with the present bylaws.

Other topics the board will discuss include the compelling need to educate the National Park Service about the national importance of the OST and to set the date and the site for the next national conference.

We need a chairman for the Mapping and Marking Committee. Are there any takers out there?

Chapter Reports

Mesa County

Here is the news from the wilds of the North Branch. We're sorry we missed the Santa Fe conference, but that was not entirely by choice; there was too much going on that particular weekend. We did spread the word on the North Branch of OSTA. We had a school-district-sponsored, Mountain Man Rendezvous for the fourth graders to augment their Colorado History studies. By the time we got through "scratching and spitting" with over 400 kids, Santa Fe was looking pretty good.

We were much impressed with our new president and his lovely wife. They came up to spend a few days, met with our group, and do some photography. A small safari braved the wilderness area of the Dolores Triangle to photograph the "Juan Herrea" 1825 inscription. (After much practically fruitless research, this writer has concluded Juanito was a member of Peg Leg Smith's small band of trappers in here during the fall of 1825.)

Our statue project is advancing. The sculptor has almost finished the mold, and should be ready for the "pour" at the foundry by the middle of August. We are hopefully going to place the Pioneer Woman on a temporary location at Cross Orchards Living History Farm, site of our last OSTA Conference in 1996. The permanent park location must await completion of the park site in 1999. Further updates and site celebration activities are forth coming.

Continuing research is slowly uncovering information on much earlier use than previously assumed

of the North Branch Trail. Also specific site location information for Robidoux's Fort Uintah has been "rediscovered." It is interesting what can be uncovered, if one looks for it long enough and doesn't devote all of one's mental exercise leaping to conclusions.

Jack Nelson, President
Grand Junction, Colorado

Salida del Sol

Since the last issue of *Spanish Traces*, the Salida Del Sol Chapter in New Mexico has been busy.

Our most noteworthy accomplishment was hosting the 1998 National Conference in early May. More than 60 members and friends of the Old Spanish Trail Association attended a full day of presentations, panels and workshops, capped by a reception and business meeting. The following day, participants had a choice of two field trips. One followed the East Fork of the North Branch of the trail through Taos and into the San Luis Valley. The other trip visited Santa Cruz, Abiquiu, Cebolleta, and El Vado, tracing the beginnings of the trail.

In April, the chapter did a field trip to the Martinez Hacienda (in the snow) and joined with the Taos County Historical Society in a joint meeting. Dr. Tom Chavez, Director of the Palace of the Governors History Museum in Santa Fe, spoke about the sweep of history in New Mexico since the Onate Entrada in 1598. He particularly noted Spain's contributions to American independence efforts.

Now the chapter is gearing up for its 1998-99 program season. Fall plans include a September 26 presentation, "Four Legs Out, Four Legs Back,"

by Dr. Dorothy Parker on the trade in animals over the Old Spanish Trail during the Spanish Colonial and Mexican periods. Then, on November 7, John Baxter, author of *Las Carneradas: Sheep Trade in New Mexico, 1700-1860*, will discuss the importance of the sheep economy and its role in the Old Spanish Trail trade.

Winter/Spring 1999 programs are being developed now, and a joint meeting with the End of the Trail Chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Association is a possibility.

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Santa Fe, New Mexico

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Retracing the Spanish Trail: Across Southern California

By Steven K. Madsen

We begin the last leg of our journey over the Spanish Trail at the California border, west of the lofty Spring Mountains and some 45 miles from the once-buoyant springs of Las Vegas. Our path takes us in the footsteps of historic figures, including Antonio Armijo and the New Mexican wool traders, as well as John C. Fremont, Kit Carson, and other mid-nineteenth century travelers who used the historic overland trade route: Through the California desert — across the eastern and southern fringes of Death Valley, up the Mojave River, through a forest of Joshua Trees — and down Cajon Canyon to the balmy coastal plain, and ultimately to Los Angeles. To help us retrace the route and recognize its obscure segments, we will cite the accounts of the historic travelers. And we'll place the Spanish Trail in its geographical setting. (Unlike the Colorado Plateau region where the Spanish Trail is hemmed-in by broken topography, the broad, open spaces of southern California allow for some variance in the route. Nevertheless, the trail will follow a path of least resistance, dictated by vital water sources and needed forage.)

Today's tender footed explorers who tread across southern California's seemingly hostile desert terrain, should avoid off-the-beaten tracks, particularly in oppressive summer heat. Travelers may use Nevada Highway 16 to follow the Spanish Trail as it drops some twenty-eight hundred feet below the pinon-and juniper-clad Mountain Springs Pass (elevation 5502 feet) to reach the low desert country near the California border. Beyond the Nevada-

California line, the modern Old Spanish Trail Highway carries travelers on pavement to the town of Tecopa, roughly paralleling the actual trail.

For hardy desert wayfarers, however, we will take our departure from the blacktop to enter the pathway of the Spanish Trail at the western base of the Spring Mountains. We make our subtle entry into southern California in the heart of the Mojave Desert, some 880 trail-miles from Santa Fe. Another 240 miles of trail lies ahead. Stretching before us is a broad valley, bathed in sunlight amid the muted tones of the Mojave and punctuated by clumps of desert shrub.

We pursue a west-southwest track across the lower end of the valley that bears the name Pahrump, a Paiute term said to mean "big spring." [1] Our course continues to a low divide separating Pahrump and California valleys, some seven miles from Nevada. In this setting, the fleeting images of false lakes frequently appear then evaporate from view. Another approximately five miles across the nearly flat desert surface of California Valley brings us to Nopah (no water) Range. Here the trail swings up a short steep slope to Emigrant Pass, a notch in the southern end of the treeless range.

At Emigrant Pass we gain a sweeping hilltop view to the east — a view which Gwinn Harris Heap, diarist of the Edward F. Beale railroad survey beautifully described in 1853: "Twelve miles from the Escarbada [Stump Spring], the road makes a

sudden bend to the westward, and ascends a steep ridge, from the top of which a magnificent, but solemn and dreary view presented itself. Four ranges of mountains, overtopping each other, extended from north to south, and bounded the western horizon; to the eastward was spread a wide extent of country, which offered, in every direction, the same absence of timber, and of almost all vegetation. The solitude was unrelieved by the song of bird or the chirp of insect; the mournful murmur of the breeze, as it swept over the desert, was the only sound that broke the silence. In many places, a deceptive mirage spread fictitious lakes and spectral groves to our view, which a puff of wind, or a change in our position, suddenly dissolved." [2]

Following the Spanish Trail in 1853, Gwinn Harris Heap reported that beyond Emigrant Pass, the overland path makes "a rapid descent down a sinuous ravine" to the sink of a plain, and continues on to Resting Spring, nearly six miles from the pass. [3] Resting Spring sits astride the Spanish Trail in the badlands topography on the south end of Resting Spring Range.

John C. Fremont and his party stopped at Resting Spring on April 29, 1844, in the aftermath of a massacre. At that time, the watering place was known as "Archilette" Spring (a corruption of the surname Archuleta). Fremont renamed it "Agua de Hernandez — Hernandez's Spring" when he arrived to find that Paiutes had killed two New Mexican horse traders, Santiago Giacome and one Hernandez. The women in their party had been carried away and were presumed dead. Beside the arrow-pierced bodies, was found a frantically emotional lap dog, the only survivor on the scene. Fremont described the grisly sight in more detail in his official report. This was the terrifying end of a story that began five days earlier on the

Mojave River. [4]

Bear in mind that Fremont was traveling east-bound over the Spanish Trail. Two survivors of the massacre, Andreas Fuentes, and a boy, Pablo Hernandez, rode into Fremont's camp at the Mojave River, about ten miles downstream from the Spanish Trail, and broke the news. One hundred Paiutes, hungry for horsemeat, had descended on their camp to capture their animals. Fuentes and Hernandez had managed to escape with a small herd of horses which they abandoned at Bitter Spring. Fremont and his party decided to help. He wrote: "We left the river abruptly, and, turning to the north, regained in a few miles the main trail." [5] At Bitter Spring the party discovered that Paiutes had driven off the traders' horses. At this point, guides Kit Carson and Alexander Godey offered to pursue the raiders and recover the stolen animals. They overtook the Indians at a distant spring and after a short battle killed and scalped two of them. (When Carson and Godey attacked the Indians, they found that "several of the best horses had been killed, skinned, and cut up.")

Thirty hours after they set out, with a war whoop, Carson and Godey rode back into camp, driving before them a portion of the stolen herd. Dangling from the end of Godey's rifle were two bloody scalps. Fremont was so impressed by the courage of his guides that he praised liberally their deeds in his official report, the publication of which launched Carson into the American consciousness. Moreover, Fremont's report gave westering Americans an intriguing introduction to the Spanish Trail. (Owing to the excitement of the massacre and the events leading up to it, however, Fremont became careless with his notes during this period. He confused the routes, mileages, and campsite locations, and made a number of errors on his map between the Mojave River and

Stump Spring.) [6]

Kit Carson returned to the massacre site in 1848. Traveling with him was George D. Brewerton who wrote that between the Mojave River and Resting Spring, "our general course was by the great Spanish trail." [7] Brewerton recalled the dreadful scene at Resting Spring: "I remember that during our visit the dreariness of the scene was enhanced by a coming storm, which rendered the sides of the naked sierras still darker, and muttered solemnly among the hills. The bones of the unfortunate men still whitened on the sand, and one of the skulls which the Indians had thrust upon a pole planted in the ground, betokened the recent presence of their murderers." [8] When Gwinn Harris Heap camped at this location on August 14, 1853, he "found near the spring the skull of an Indian, killed perhaps in that affray." [9]

Two years earlier, on May 21, 1851, Parley P. Pratt stopped here, but made no mention of tragedy or its morbid remains. He wrote: "We are now encamped at a place called Resting Springs. Where we arrived on the 19th after dark. This is a fine place for rest and recruiting Animals, being a meadow of rich grass, and sufficiently extensive to sustain thousands of cattle. Since leaving the vegas we have traveled 75 m.s.[w.] through a most horrible desert. Consisting of mountains Ridges and plains of Naked Rock, or Sand and Gravel and Sometimes Clay, destitute of Soil or fertility." [10]

Immediately beyond Resting Spring the Spanish Trail enters the barren, mysterious desert of the Amargosa River basin. Between the months of October and May, cooler temperatures prevail and the slanting rays of the sun reveal the strange, exciting beauty of the desert. Across this landscape, the Amargosa weaves a ribbon of green. Rich hues replace the bleached, exhausted tones of the summer season. And in the late

winter and early spring, a delightful display of color adorns the desert. Lavender, pink, and bright shades of red and yellow burst forth on flowering cacti, Mojave asters, marigolds, thistle sage, prickly poppies, and sand verbenas. The land has a striking appearance.

At times, the land can be a furnace — a land afire. The parched terrain beyond Resting Spring is punctuated with mesquite trees and thorny shrubs. For John C. Fremont who passed through here on the Spanish Trail in 1844, the landscape appeared daunting. Fremont used words such as "sterile" and "repulsive," to describe the trail setting. [11] Four and a half miles from Resting Spring lies Tecopa, in the heart of the Amargosa River valley near the western end of the Old Spanish Trail Highway. Tourists rolling along this highway, stop for supplies, and take in the water at the nearby hot springs.

In the vicinity of the hot springs, there once stood the Paiute village of Yaga, the settlement that Antonio Armijo presumably reached on January 14, 1830. [12] Armijo, the New Mexican merchant who launched the first trade caravan from Santa Fe to Los Angeles and return in the fall and winter of 1829-1830, blazed the Amargosa River segment of the Spanish Trail. On reaching the stream near Yaga, Armijo named it Rio de los Payuches (Sp: River of the Paiutes). [13]

When Fremont traveled through this area in 1844, he referred to the Amargosa as the "bitter water of the desert." [14] Thomas Flint on December 2, 1853, complained that the water was so full of alkali that "the men did not need soap to wash their greasy shirts in it." [15] Today its waters are deeply impregnated with Glauber's and Epsom salts and are not potable.

Rising in the mountains north of Beatty, Nevada, near the California



Looking eastward across California Valley from Emigrant Pass in the Nopah Range.

Photograph courtesy of Steven Madsen, 1983.

border, the Amargosa River forms a long U-shaped depression as it flows south for over a hundred miles and then turns north for another sixty, ultimately sinking into the sand and salt at the foot of the Funeral Range in Death Valley. Death Valley is the lowest, hottest, driest desert in North America. The saying goes that it gets so hot here at times that even the mercury in thermometers dries up. On its way into the heart of Death Valley basin, the Amargosa River flows mysteriously underground throughout most of its course, occasionally reaching the surface at its lower reaches. Just south of Tecopa, the Amargosa River enters a narrow canyon, enclosed by steep walls. A dome of conglomerate, shaped by wind and rain, marks the entrance to the gorge. In 1853 Gwinn Harris Heap described the Amargosa Gorge as “a ravine containing a scanty supply of warm, fetid, and nauseating water, in a succession of holes.” [16] In the Amargosa Gorge today, the river seeps to the surface and forms wetlands and riparian forests. The canyon serves as habitat for more than 200 bird species and a few

invertebrates, protected by the Amargosa River Canyon Preserve of the Nature Conservancy. In addition, the nature preserve is the sanctuary of a globally endangered Death Valley perennial desert pool community.

The Spanish Trail snakes down the Amargosa running parallel to the route of the now defunct Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad. In a tributary canyon of the Amargosa is China Ranch, located one mile east of the trail on an old wagon road. China Ranch was established by Quon Sing, a Chinese cook who built a farm at Willow Spring in about 1900 to supply produce and poultry to the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad and to nearby mining camps. The oasis at China Ranch today shelters large numbers of birds.

Ten miles from Tecopa, the Spanish Trail leaves the bed of the Amargosa River as it bends to the west beyond the river canyon. Below the mouth of the canyon of the Amargosa, the Spanish Trail rounds the western side of the Salt Spring Hills to reach

Salt Spring. In this vicinity the trail reaches its lowest point (elevation approximately 400 feet) between Santa Fe and Cajon Pass.

Salt Spring, nearly five miles from the mouth of the Amargosa River canyon, is not far from the southeastern edge of Death Valley National Park. Mid-nineteenth century travelers on the Spanish Trail wisely avoided this desert in the furious heat of summer. Nevertheless, the Forty-niners who left the Spanish Trail to find a short cut to the gold fields of California wound up crossing the middle reaches of Death Valley. Their misfortune gave the valley its name. On the highway near Salt Spring is a monument to Harry Wade and his family who in 1849 managed to escape Death Valley by turning south to reach the Spanish Trail on the Mojave River. Located on Salt Creek, the southern branch of the Amargosa River, Salt Spring was a well-known water source on the Spanish Trail. In late April 1844, John C. Fremont described the site as “a swampy, salty spot, with a little long, unwholesome grass; and the water, which rose in springs, being useful only to wet the mouth, but entirely too salt[y] to drink. All around was sand and rocks, and skeletons of horses which had not been able to find support for their lives.” [17]

On December 1, 1849, Addison Pratt and three others of the Jefferson Hunt wagon train found gold in a vein of quartz running through a granite formation in the Salt Spring Hills. When it became known in Los Angeles that the Jefferson Hunt party had discovered gold on the Spanish Trail, prospectors rushed into the area. Former fur trapper Andrew Sublette was among the prospectors who set out early to strike his fortune at Salt Spring. But sporadic Indian attacks in the lonely mining district discouraged continuous mining operations.

At the Salt Spring Hills in 1853,

Gwinn Harris Heap reported that: "...Much to our surprise, we discovered the remains of houses, rastres (arrastras: Mexican quartz crushers), and all the appliances of gold mining. These, we subsequently ascertained, were the Salt Spring Gold Mines, where a fortune had been sunk by men who were sufficiently deluded or sanguine to abandon the rich mines of California, travel across one hundred and fifty miles of desert, and live upwards of twelve months in a spot so desolate and forlorn that there is actually not sufficient vegetation to keep a goat alive from starvation." [18] (Note: Miners developed a spring near the mine which is sometimes mistaken for Salt Spring located a half mile away on Salt Creek.) Today, abandoned buildings at the site attest to the extensive mining that evolved in the narrow, half-mile-long canyon along the Spanish Trail.

The Spanish Trail beyond Salt Spring follows up the bed of Salt Creek for nine miles to the dry, elongated playa of Silurian Lake. In this area, occasional shifting sands and gale winds sweep across the trail landscape. It is here that the Kingston cut-off route intersected the Spanish Trail. The short cut was developed in the post-trail era to accommodate wagon traffic. It ran from a point five miles below Spring Mountain Pass in Nevada to Silurian Lake via Kingston Spring. On the Pacific Railroad Survey maps it is labeled a "mail route." [19]

Although most travelers stayed with the main Spanish Trail, Carvalho, in 1854, chose to follow the Kingston route. As it turned out, Carvalho made the wrong choice. Nearing the end of the cutoff, Carvalho wrote: "this was decidedly the worst ground I ever traveled." Furthermore, he said: "I never want to traverse it again." [20] When Lt. Sylvester Mowry came along in 1855, his guide reached the fork of the trail and informed the party that they now had "a choice of evils." They could

take the way by Resting Springs or Kingston Springs. Mowry took the former. [21]

On township survey plats covering Silurian Valley, we encounter the road survey by Henry Washington, a U.S. General Land Office surveyor. General Land Office surveyors established baselines and meridians across southern California in the 1850s. U.S. government land surveys covering the area carry the notation "Salt Lake Road, 1856." These notations are found on the township plats extending westward to Cajon Pass and beyond, and eastward to the California-Nevada border.

South of Silurian Lake, the Spanish Trail continues its path through Silurian Valley, skirting the massive Avawatz Mountains. In this valley, in November of 1853, Lt. Robert S. Williamson reached the Spanish Trail while surveying a Pacific railroad route. On November 8, Williamson and his men had set out "on the trail down the [Mojave] river." His party passed through Afton Canyon (formerly Caves

Canyon) and camped south of Soda Lake where they found water in a hole. Williamson then decided to locate the terminus of the Mojave River. He wrote: "We observed today that to the north of our camp was a large lake-bed, and here we inferred the waters of the Mohave were collected." The large lake-bed was Soda Lake. Williamson continued: "The question now was, whether this lake had an outlet, or whether it was a basin, and the terminus of the Mohave." He climbed a high range of barren mountains "to examine the surrounding country." "The results of these examinations was, that if the Mohave flowed beyond the salt lake [Soda Lake], it could flow in no other than a northerly direction through these lake beds," he reported. Marching northward, his party "found, at the base of the hills, on the edge of the salt lake, several fine springs, slightly brackish but not unpalatable. Around there was good grass. We saw. . . that to the northward of the salt lake, and not far distant from it, were several other lake-beds [i.e., Silver Lake, "Dry Lake," and Silurian Lake]."



Looking northwest toward Resting Spring. Snowy Telescope Peak rises in the background.

Photograph courtesy of Charles Querfeld, 1997.



C. Gregory Crampton rests at Bitter Spring on the Old Spanish Trail.

Photograph courtesy of Steven Madsen, 1983.

Williamson explored northward to Silver Lake and wrote: "On arriving on the north end of the lake [Silver Lake], we found a very low ridge, connecting the hills on either side. ...I hence concluded that the true sink of the Mohave was in the salt lake, and that the second lake was formed principally from water flowing from the surrounding hills after heavy rains." He continued: "We crossed this ridge, and at once descended into another valley [Silurian Valley] some two hundred feet lower than the bed of the lake. After traveling four or five miles, we came suddenly upon a wagon-road. We knew it could be no other than the old Spanish trail; that when the Spanish trail left the Mohave above the canon [Afton Canyon], it never was on it again." Williamson added: "The valley [Silurian Valley] in which we struck the [Spanish] trail extended to the northward twenty or thirty miles, bounded on all sides by mountains." [22] (The present town of Baker, California, on Interstate 15, sits between Soda Lake and the overflow basin, Silver Lake.)

Trail swings to the southwest, bypasses Silver Lake, and threads Red Pass. Beyond the pass, the trail skirts the north side of the normally dry Red Pass Lake on its way to Bitter Spring. Addison Pratt in December, 1849, described Red Pass Lake, known at that time as Mud Lake, as "a dry bed of a lake some two miles across." He continued: "In winter it is covered with water. [Here] we found some muddy water in holes, and some dry bunch grass." Pratt suggested that his cattle began to "give out fast" from drinking the poor water. [23]

In August of 1853, Gwinn Harris Heap traveled the Spanish Trail route some 37 miles through a sandstorm from Salt Spring to Bitter Spring. Crossing a desert of almost unbearable heat, the men were forced to dismount and travel on foot. "After twenty hours of continuous march, completely prostrated with heat, toil, hunger, and thirst, ... we reached the Agua del Tio Mesa," the only resting place between the Amargosa and Mojave rivers, he noted. [24]

Solomon Carvalho in 1854 found the carcasses of dead horses and oxen strewn along the Spanish Trail from the desert playa of Red Pass Lake to Bitter Spring, a distance of about five miles. He wrote: "In the space of one mile I counted 40 dead oxen and cows; the air was foully impregnated with the effluvia arising from them." He also encountered six deserted wagons and some chairs, tables, and feather beds. [25]

At mid-day on June 3, 1854, Solomon Carvalho reached Bitter Spring and observed: "...The grounds about [the spring] are strewn with dead animals, and the polluted atmosphere at this time, one o'clock P.M., ranges at 95° in the shade of our wagons, and is nearly unbearable. This is a howling, barren wilderness." [26]

In the immediate vicinity of Bitter Spring, Carvalho found "hundreds of acres of the best quality of bunch grass." He added, "these springs are not bitter, but possess a brackish taste." [27] For Gwinn Harris Heap who traveled the Spanish Trail the previous year, Bitter Spring was a "wretched spot." He wrote: "The grass was scanty and salt; but when mules are starving they are not particular in their choices of food." [28]

Bitter Spring today lies in the midst of a creosote shrub desert. Aquatic plants, mesquite and bunch grass surround the spring. It is located near the source of a long wash that drains southeastward to West Cronese Lake. The spring surfaces where the wash narrows and flows as far as a quarter of a mile from its source through thickets of tamarisk and cattails, interspersed with mesquite trees. Remote from civilization, the spring is the only surface water supply in an area nearly 70 miles square. In this harsh environment, the annual rainfall is less than four inches.

Leaving Silurian Valley, the Spanish

The spring has provided dependable,

potable water for travelers since prehistoric times. Archaeologists tell us that wandering bands of desert people camped at the spring and that historic tribes are known to have frequented the site. Antonio Armijo passed this way in 1830 and referred to Bitter Spring as “a little spring of the lava beds.” [29] (A lava butte, visible from the spring site, appears on the southern horizon.)

When John C. Fremont arrived at Bitter Spring in April 1844, he labeled the waterhole, “Agua de Tomaso” (Sp: Spring — or Water — of Thomas). Later travelers corrupted the name to “Agua de Tio Mesa,” and other variants. While camped at the spring, Fremont observed: “There were a few bushes and very little grass,” but “its water was cool — a great refreshment to us under a burning sun.” [30] Lt. Robert S. Williamson’s railroad survey party reached Bitter Spring in late November 1853 after the yearly Spanish Trail caravans had passed that way and depleted the grasses. He complained that the grass was so scarce that the expedition could not feed their exhausted mules. Williamson described the spring as ‘a spring of bitter water which does not flow more than one hundred yards.’ [31]

Following on the heels of the Williamson expedition, Dr. Thomas Flint halted at Bitter Spring and found a way to swallow the seemingly unpleasant water. He wrote: “It answered very well when made into tea and could be drank clear by not stopping to taste it.” Flint added that he experienced “no deleterious effects from it.” [32]

A military redoubt carved into clay and strategically located on a small bluff above Bitter Spring is a reminder that the spring figured in the “Paiute War” of 1860, when Indian attacks against traders disrupted overland travel. The U.S. Army launched a campaign that year, led by Major James Henry Carleton, to

stabilize the frontier. Carleton ranged out across the desert from the Mojave River to Death Valley, and beyond to Las Vegas. During the course of the campaigns, he established a military outpost at Camp Cady on the Mojave River and built a redoubt at Bitter Spring and two others elsewhere. After a few short battles in the field, some Paiutes entered Camp Cady and sued for peace. Soon thereafter, Carleton withdrew from the area and returned to the coast. (In later years, the adobe ruins of Camp Cady were washed away in the Mojave River flood waters.)

Again in recent times, Bitter Spring has become tied with military activity. The historic watering place lies within the Fort Irwin Military Reservation, secluded behind a razor-tipped fence. Permission is required to enter the reservation and visit the spring. At present, the Spanish Trail stretches twenty-one miles across the reservation, and is generally off-limits to trail explorers.

The Spanish Trail from Bitter Spring runs southwesterly to Alvord Mountain, the low hills north of the Mojave River, where it leaves the present Fort Irwin military base. The trail then climbs a steep slope — dubbed in modern times, “Impassable Pass” — to cross the east shoulder of the mountain through Spanish Canyon, also called Mule Canyon. In 1844, Fremont recorded that he traveled across “the lower ridge of the mountain, through a miserable tract of sand and gravel.” [33] Fremont’s description of the trail setting has changed little over time.

From Alvord Mountain, the Spanish Trail continues across open desert to the “Fork of Roads” four miles east of present-day Yermo and south of Interstate 15. At the Fork of Roads, about ten miles upstream from the historic site of Camp Cady, the routes of the Spanish Trail and the Mojave Trail converge. Here the

water of the Mojave River is forced to the surface by a clay reef. In the Spanish Trail period, the presence of water brought a welcome relief for desert caravans. Many later overland parties after traveling the tortuous desert gave thanks when they reached the waters of the Mojave. Hispanic travelers dubbed the site “Punta de Agua” (Sp: Point of Water). [34]

Approaching the Fork of Roads on the westward march of the Lt. Amiel W. Whipple railroad survey in 1854, Baldwin Möllhausen, the expedition’s topographer and naturalist, reported: “We now found ourselves in the neighbourhood of the emigrant line of march, commonly known here as the ‘Spanish trail.’” [35]

From the Fork of Roads, a well-beaten path marked the route up the Mojave River. Möllhausen continued: “A level country through which the Mohave [River] wound, lay before us, and the proud summits of the San Bernardino mountains, round the foot of which the road led, had long been visible. We did not, therefore, longer require the services of the two Indian guides, who had led us so faithfully through a hundred and fifty miles of wilderness, and dismissed them to their beloved valley. ...” [36]

The Mojave River Trail followed the footpaths of prehistoric traders. The ancient trade route linked the Mohave Indian villages on the Colorado River with the Indian settlements on the Pacific coast. Early Spanish Trail caravans, traveling between the Colorado River and Cajon Pass, came this way. By late 1859, the U.S. Army had developed the Mojave Trail into a practicable wagon road to supply the outpost at Fort Mojave on the Colorado River. By 1864, the Mojave Road had become a commercial route linking the seaport at San Pedro with the frontier mining community at Prescott, Arizona. [37]

The Mojave is a fresh-water stream that rises on the north slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains, flows below the desert surface throughout most of its course downstream from the vicinity of Victorville, and drains into the sands of the "Mojave Sink" at Soda Lake. The stream surfaces occasionally in a number of places along its approximately 120-mile channel.

When Father Francisco Garces, led by Mohave Indians, traversed the Mojave River in March, 1776, he named the stream, "Rio de los Martires" (Sp: The River of Martyrs). [38] Since Garces' time, the Mojave River has taken on a variety of names. As early as 1819 a Spanish exploring expedition led by Lt. Gabriel Moraga identified it as "Las Animas." In 1826, Jedediah Smith gave it the name, "Inconstant River," to describe its intermittent flow. Antonio Armijo in 1830 named the stream "Arroyo de las Hayatas." Fremont on April 23, 1844, informs us that Mojave River was "called by the Spaniards the Rio de las Animas, but on the map we have called it the Mohahve river." B. Choteau in 1848 labeled the stream, "Amahabo creek," in reference to the "Amajaba" [Mohave] Indians who occupied the area. Trail diarist Orville C. Pratt in 1848 used the term "Mahave Cr[ee]k" to identify the stream. [39]

From the Fork of Roads, the Spanish Trail follows up the north side of the Mojave River for 17 miles to present-day Barstow, where it crosses the normally dry channel to its south bank. From Barstow, the trail follows the Mojave upstream for another approximately 32 miles past the modern sites of Hodge, Helendale, and Oro Grande. (Many of those who camped along the Mojave's arid banks on the upper reaches, wrote favorably of the groves of cottonwoods and grasses that grew where the water surfaced.) South of Oro Grande, and below the lower river narrows, the Spanish

Trail recrosses the stream at the site known as the "Upper Crossing." In the post-trail era it became known as "Lane's Crossing," when Aaron G. Lane ran a way station to provide supplies and food for overland travelers. [40]

The Spanish Trail beyond the Upper Crossing, passes through a woodland of Joshua Trees marking the western limits of the Mojave Desert region. John C. Fremont called the desert plants, "Yucca trees." He wrote: "[They] gave a strange...character to the country, and suited well the dry and desert region." Fremont, who despised the desert, continued: "Their stiff and ungraceful form makes them to the traveller the most repulsive tree in the animal kingdom." [41]

On the slope below Cajon summit, in a Joshua Tree forest some 13 miles from the Mojave River, Fremont on April 20, 1844, struck the Spanish Trail. Fremont had left the central valley of California and crossed Oak Creek Pass to reach the overland trade route, which he had hoped to follow on his return to the East. He wrote: "After a difficult march of 18 miles, a general shout announced that we had struck the object of our search — THE SPANISH TRAIL — which here was running directly north." [42]

The Spanish Trail followed a nearly direct path from the Mojave River to Cajon Pass. If we examine Karl Preuss's map of Oregon and California (Wheat, 559), issued in 1848, the Fremont 1844 Route/Spanish Trail is shown running in a straight line between the Upper Crossing of the Mojave and the vicinity of Cajon Pass. Fremont wrote that he followed the Spanish Trail directly north from where he intersected it. Nevertheless, the direction of travel between Cajon Pass and the Upper Crossing of the Mojave is north-northeast. Bear in mind, however, that the Preuss map was laid out according to magnetic north, at

variance with true north. This may explain the discrepancy between the route shown on the Fremont map and its positioning on modern topographic maps of the area. (According to the U.S. Geological Survey topographic map labeled "Cajon," magnetic north in 1973 had a declination of 15° — to the east.)

Below the summit of Cajon (elevation about 4300 feet) in the area east of present Interstate 15, the Spanish Trail drops rapidly for about half a mile, then enters Crowder Canyon, a tributary of Cajon Creek, which it follows to the main Cajon Canyon. The original township survey map covering the junction of the canyons shows the "Spanish Trail" extending into Crowder Canyon above its mouth. (See the 1855-1856 survey by H. Hancock, in sec. 36, T 3 N, R 6 W, San Bernardino Meridian.)

Cajon Canyon served as the historic gateway to the livestock ranges in the Los Angeles basin in the Spanish Trail years. The trail became an escape route for horse thieves of various nationalities — branded "Los Chaguanosos" by Californios — who raided the missions and ranchos, then drove the stolen animals up the trail through Cajon Pass to the desert wilderness beyond. According to legend, the Chaguanosos, led by trappers Thomas L. "Pegleg" Smith, old Bill Williams, and Jim Beckwourth, swept through southern California stealing an estimated three thousand horses and mules, then fled the coastal valley. Local authorities and ranchers quickly organized posses to pursue the raiders and recover the stolen animals. When the Chaguanosos reached the high desert beyond Cajon Pass, they began losing hundreds of exhausted, thirsty and undernourished horses by the wayside. After traveling more than 200 miles from Los Angeles, the trail-weary pursuers finally gave up the chase at Resting Spring, but not before the band of thieves had lost

half their animals. In fact, horse carcasses littered the Spanish Trail for several years to come. The enormous loss of horseflesh, however, did not dissuade future raiding parties who followed the Spanish Trail to the rich grazing lands on the coastal plain.

In later years, Indian Chaguanosos, led by Ute chief Walkara, entered San Bernardino Valley by the Cajon Pass to steal prized horses from the ranchos and mission lands. In 1854, Lt. Robert S. Williamson reported that Paiutes were also involved in the illicit business: "It was through this pass that great numbers of horses and cattle were formerly driven out into the great Basin by bands of Pai-Ute Indians, who entered the valley by night and were safely back through the pass with their spoils before morning." [43]

Williamson continued: "This pass has been known and much used for many years, being the point where the old Spanish trail from New Mexico to California reaches the settlements of the coast. It has been called El Cajon de los Mejicanos, but is now well known simply as the Cajon." The name, El Cajon de los Mejicanos, came from "the fact that the Spanish caravan route to Santa Fe ran through part of it," he wrote. Williamson noted that Cajon Pass had also been called "El Cajon de Muscupiabe," a designation originating from an Indian village in Cajon Canyon, located at the later site of Camp Cajon. He added: "This pass and the old Spanish trail is now principally used by the Mormons and other emigrants from Salt Lake to Southern California." [44]

The Spanish Trail below Crowder, descends the narrow Cajon Canyon, congested with modern highways and railroad tracks, to the historic camp site at Sycamore Grove, near the mouth of the canyon. From Sycamore Grove, the Spanish Trail follows a west-southwest direction for some 14 miles to present-day Cucamonga, known in the last half of the trail period as Rancho Cucamonga.

Rancho Cucamonga, a Mexican land grant, established in 1839, was the first white settlement on the Spanish Trail west of Abiquiu, New Mexico. Here, Spanish Trail riders were 1,082 miles from Santa Fe. At Cucamonga travelers reached a balmy paradise, on a broad coastal plain crossed by mountain streams and blanketed in wild clover and grasses, interspersed with orchards and vineyards. Cucamonga's historic winery, one of California's oldest, is today a reminder of the vine-clad lands that once dotted the area.

Beyond Cucamonga, travelers of the Spanish Trail followed existing roads leading to El Monte, and San Gabriel to Los Angeles. En route to Mission San Gabriel, the New Mexican traders passed through present-day Upland and El Monte. El Monte was a historic camping place on the Spanish Trail, on the banks of the San Gabriel River. Located on an alluvial deposit, its fertile soil was well-suited to agriculture. In the early 1850s, emigrant families began settling the area and cultivating the land.

With the exception of the San Gabriel and San Bernardino mountains looming to the north, scarcely any Spanish Trail landmarks presently exist. Nevertheless, today's Mission Drive and Mission Road, between El Monte, San Gabriel, and Los Angeles, follows closely the route taken by the trade caravans from Santa Fe, passing over a generally level, broad plain. Today the historic Mission San Gabriel rests in a sprawling megalopolis on the road to Los Angeles. In former times, the Roman Catholic mission served as a major supply point for Spanish Trail caravans and for overland traffic between Sonora, Mexico, and the Spanish capital of California at Monterey. After secularization of the missions between 1834-1836, San Gabriel lost its vast holdings and its influence faded. Many of the spoils from the mission fell into the hands of the citizenry of neighboring Los Angeles, which prospered as a result.

The road beyond San Gabriel passes

some low, rounded hills, surrounded by gentle slopes, to the heart of Los Angeles, nine miles away. We pick up the pace as we wheel through a labyrinth of highways and skyscrapers, in the unrecognizable trail atmosphere leading to the center of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles, founded in 1781, was trail's end for many Spanish Trail caravans. Located on a fertile plain next to the Los Angeles River, the town and its adjacent orchards and vineyards was surrounded by rich pastoral lands. By 1841, Los Angeles was inhabited by 1,200 people. It was the central point of the New Mexican caravan commerce.

At the center of Los Angeles pueblo — 1,120 miles from Santa Fe — stood the historic plaza surrounded by one-story, flat-roofed, adobe houses. Laid out at its present site in 1818, the town square became a marketplace for Spanish Trail trade caravans. New Mexican wool merchants disposed of their textiles in the plaza and in neighboring settlements, and then scoured the countryside from San Diego to the San Francisco bay area to buy, or steal, horses and mules to drive back over the trail to Santa Fe.

Having reached our destination at Los Angeles, we shake off the trail dust, refresh ourselves, and soak in the ambience of a plaza steeped in Hispanic culture. Here we become captivated by the charm of the marketplace and linger in its restful atmosphere. But soon something in the air — a sight or sound — stirs our imagination and carries us back over the Spanish Trail to another era and another world.

Endnotes.

[1] Walter R. Averett. *Directory of Southern Nevada Place Names*. Revised ed. (Las Vegas, Nevada: Walter R. Averett, 1962), p. 77.

[2] LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, eds. *Central Route to the Pacific* by Gwinn Harris Heap (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1957), p. 242.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.



San Gabriel Mission was a welcome sight to desert weary travelers on the Old Spanish Trail.

Photograph courtesy of Steven Madsen, 1983.

[4] Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, eds. *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, 4 vols. and map portfolio (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970-1984), vol. 1., p. 684.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 678.

Fremont had been camping at the future site of Camp Cady.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 677-684.

[7] Stallo Vinton, ed. *Overland with Kit Carson, A Narrative of the Old Spanish Trail in '48*, by George Douglas Brewerton. (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1930), pp. 56-58.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

[9] Hafen and Hafen, eds. *Central Route to the Pacific*, p. 243.

[10] Reva Holdaway Stanley and Charles L. Camp, ed. "A Mormon Mission to California in 1851: From the Diary of Parley Parker Pratt," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 14 (March 1935), p. 66.

[11] Jackson and Spence, eds. *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, vol. 1, p. 683.

[12] Richard E. Lingensfelter. *Death Valley & the Amargosa: A Land of Illusion*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 25.

[13] LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, eds. *Old Spanish Trail: Santa Fe to Los Angeles*, p. 164.

[14] Jackson and Spence, eds. *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, vol. 1., p. 683.

[15] Waldemar Westergaard, ed. "Diary of Dr. Thomas Flint: California to Maine and Return, 1851-1855," *Historical Society of Southern California. Annual Publications*, 12 (1923), p. 66.

[16] Hafen and Hafen, eds. *Central Route to the Pacific*, p. 243.

[17] Jackson and Spence, eds. *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, vol. 1, p. 682.

[18] Hafen and Hafen, eds. *Central Route to the Pacific*, p. 244.

[19] C. Gregory Crampton and Steven K. Madsen. *In Search of the Spanish Trail: Santa Fe to Los Angeles, 1829-1848*. (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 1994), pp. 104-105.

[20] Bertram Wallace Korn, ed. *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West by Solomon Nunez Carvalho*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), p. 301.

[21] See Lynn R. Bailey, ed. "Lt. Sylvester Mowry's Report on his March in 1855 from Salt Lake City to Fort Tejon," *Arizona and the West*, 7, no. 4 (Winter, 1965).

[22] R. S. Williamson, "Report of Explorations in California for Railroad Routes to connect with the Routes near the 35th and 32d Parallels of North Latitude," in *Reports of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean....* vol. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Beverley Tucker, Printer, 1856), pp. 33-34. Unfortunately, the published map of the Lt. R.S. Williamson railroad survey is in error.

[23] LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, eds. *Journals of Forty-niners: Salt Lake to Los Angeles* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1954), p. 96.

[24] Hafen and Hafen, eds. *Central Route to the Pacific*, pp. 244-246.

[25] Korn, ed. *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West*, pp. 301-302.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 302.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Hafen and Hafen, eds. *Central Route to the Pacific*, pp. 245, 246.

[29] Hafen and Hafen, eds. *Old Spanish Trail*, p. 164.

[30] Jackson and Spence, eds. *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, vol. 1, p. 679.

[31] R.S. Williamson, "Report of Explorations in California for Railroad Routes," p. 34.

[32] Westergaard, ed. "Diary of Thomas Flint," p. 67.

[33] Jackson and Spence, eds. *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, vol. 1, p. 678.

[34] Clifford Walker. *Back Door to California: The Story of the Mojave River Trail*. Edited by Patricia Jernigan Keeling (Barstow, California: Mojave River Valley Museum Association, 1986), p. 311.

[35] Baldwin Möllhausen. *Diary of a Journey from the Mississippi to the Coasts of the Pacific with a United States Government Expedition*. Translated by Mrs. Perry Sinnett. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1858). 2 vols.; New intro. by Peter A. Fritzell. Reprint ed. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), vol. 2, p. 305.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] See Dennis G. Casebier. *The Mojave Road*. (Norco, California: Tales of the Mojave Road Publishing Co., 1975).

[38] John Galvin, ed. *A Record of Travels in Arizona and California, 1775 & 1776: Fr. Francisco Garces*. New Translation. (San Francisco: John Howell, 1965), p. 59.

[39] See George W. Beattie translation of the Moraga expedition in Clifford Walker, *Back Door to California*, pp. 262-267; George R. Brooks, ed. *The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1977), p. 91, note 118; Hafen and Hafen, eds. *Old Spanish Trail*, pp. 164, 357, 366; Jackson and Spence, eds. *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, vol. 1, p. 676.

[40] Lane established the way station in 1858. See Richard D. Thompson and Kathryn L. Thompson. *Pioneer of the Mojave: The Life and Times of Aaron G. Lane* (Apple Valley, California: Desert Knoll Press, 1995).

[41] Jackson and Spence, eds. *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, vol. 1, p. 670.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 674.

[43] R. S. Williamson, "Report of Explorations in California for Railroad Routes," p. 88.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 88.

This concludes this series of articles.

Book Reviews

A Life Wild and Perilous: Mountain Men and the Paths to the Pacific.

By Robert M. Utley. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1997. xv + 392 pp. Maps, bibliography, notes, index. \$27.50.)

The role of mountain men in the Trans-Mississippi westward expansion of our nation is the subject of this recent history by Robert M. Utley.

This excellent overview begins with Colter and Drouillard in 1804 as part of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery, and ends with Jim Bridger in 1860 with the Raynolds expedition. The survey of the 50 plus intervening years includes the western adventures of such historical figures as Jedediah Smith, Joseph R. Walker, Ewing Young, Joseph Meek, Thomas Fitzpatrick, Christopher Carson, David Jackson, Old Bill Williams, Pegleg Smith, Black Harris, Warren Ferris, and William Wolfskill. Each of these, and others, played roles in the westward movement as explorers, businessmen, warriors, guides and mapmakers. One of the book's great strengths is the fine, but concise, biographical sketches of many of the mountain men discussed.

For devotees of the Old Spanish Trail there are accounts of Jedediah Smith closing the gap in earlier westward and eastward explorations; the Wolfskill-Yount trading trip of 1830-31; the Fremont/Carson 1844 eastward crossing; Carson's 1847 courier crossing to the west, and his 1848 eastward trip; and Gunnison's use of a portion of the trail in 1853.

The book includes 17 very good color shaded relief maps of various trails and expedition routes, including the Old Spanish Trail, a compre-

hensive set of notes, and a fine source bibliography. Of special interest is a brief essay by the mapmaker, Peter Dana, explaining the use of computer technology to produce the maps.

Utley is the retired chief historian of the National Park Service with a great record of award-winning western history publications. *A Life Wild and Perilous* is a worthy addition to his historical research, and a "must-read" for trail buffs and those interested in the westward expansion.

Reviewed by Willard Lewis
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Defending Eden: New Mexican Pioneers in the San Bernardino Valley.

By Joyce C. Vickery, (Riverside, CA.: Riverside Museum Press, 2nd Edition, 1984. x + 130 pp. Notes, bibliography, maps, appendices. \$11.95 paper.)

The Story of Agua Mansa: Its Settlement, Churches and People: First Community in San Bernardino Valley, 1842-1893. By R. Bruce Harley, Ph.D. (San Bernardino: Diocese of San Bernardino Archives, 1998.)

In 1842 and 1843, a group of Mexican families migrated westward from Abiquiu on the Old Spanish Trail and settled along the Santa Ana River in California's San Bernardino Valley. The original settlement was on the Lugo's Rancho San Bernardino, just south of present-day Colton, and was known as Politana. In 1844 and 1845 after differences with the Lugo family, the settlers moved three miles down the Santa Ana River to a new tract, on land donated by Juan Bandini of Rancho Jurupa, just north of today's Riverside. The larger community, on the right (northwest) bank of the river became known as Agua Mansa

(Gentle Water), while the smaller settlement on the left bank was called La Placita (Little Plaza). The parish church was San Salvador. The close knit communities, the first in the San Bernardino Valley, numbered some 250 souls. Crop raising and livestock herding were the economic mainstays.

Joyce Vickery's admirable volume is a general history detailing the founding of the colony, the development of agriculture and stock raising, the ravages of flood and drought, and the struggles of the Spanish speaking community to maintain its identity amid the increasingly dominant Anglo presence.

Bruce Harley's book is made up of thirty-three chapters that first appeared as separate articles in various publications. The author is the first historian to have access to and use the sacramental records—baptisms, marriages, deaths—of the San Salvador Parish. Harley begins the story in Abiquiu, the colonists' ancestral home, and brings them west on the Old Spanish Trail. He includes the names, ages, and years of arrival of all the known Agua Mansa settlers. Several chapters detail the history of the San Salvador Parish Church, the Agua Mansa school, and the community life. The ravages of the 1862 flood that all but destroyed the community is described, as are recovery efforts afterwards. The last half of the book is made up of mini-biographies of fourteen Agua Mansa families.

Both of these volumes are excellent, well researched studies that should be read by all those with an interest in the emigrant families that followed the Old Spanish Trail from New Mexico to California.

Reviewed by John Robinson
Fullerton, California

Old Spanish Trail North Branch and its travelers. By Ron Kessler. (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 1998. 384 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95.)

With this anthology, Ron Kessler has provided us with sixteen accounts of travel primarily on the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail. Arranged in chronological order are excerpts from diaries and journals published by those who traveled the trail. The accounts begin with the 1694 expedition of Don Diego de Vargas, who made a circuit north from Santa Fe to Taos, across the Rio Grande and on back to Santa Fe, to a final, 1880 excerpt from the diary of John Lawrence, "the founder of Saguache County," who homesteaded a parcel of land near the current location of the town of Saguache, Colorado.

The narratives provide vivid descriptions of travel on the trail in all seasons and in all conditions of the trail, the country and the travelers. Kessler has generously supplied the text with his editorial comments throughout so that the reader is able to follow the location of the travelers and also learns much of the history of each locale. Along with the tales of incredible hardship are much lighter stories, such as the hilarious account by Jacob Fowler of his hunting and trapping expedition (mostly unsuccessful!) up and down the eastern and western slopes of the San Luis Valley and the Taos Trail, and of an encounter in Taos village with a thieving innkeeper and an amorous wife. Zebulon Pike's arduous and troubled expedition is detailed. Pike explored the San Luis Valley in the winter of 1807, claiming to have mistaken it for the Red River Valley when his scattered expedition was rescued by the Spanish and taken to Santa Fe to be questioned. We are treated to

George Brewerton's description of the trek he made in 1845 with Kit Carson across the entire trail from Los Angeles to Taos, where Carson made his home. Brewerton's description of Carson's resourcefulness and courage during their troubles in fording the flooding Colorado River and later encounters with a band of the Ute Indians has contributed greatly to the image we have of Carson as a great frontiersman.

As one reads this book, one gains a deeper understanding of the panorama of history along these trails, which is no doubt what Kessler intended. These accounts detail the conflicts of the cultures, the strength of character of the leaders of these expeditions and the incredible hardships endured by these travelers. You observe, with the various minds of the diarists, the changing attitude of the Ute Indians with passing years from friendly traders to aggressive hostiles to wretched survivors of the germ warfare carried out both unknowingly and knowingly by the strangers voyaging in their lands. At one point in particular, and other points to a lesser degree, Kessler's focus exclusively on the trail interrupts the narrative. For instance, during Anza's Comanche campaign, the section of his diary from August 26, 1779, when he left the Trail to attack the Jupe Comanche chief, Cuerno Verde and his followers, until nine days later when Vargas returns triumphant to the trail, is omitted to the annoyance of this reader, who had not read Anza's account of this expedition. But this is minor and does not really detract from the grand tales Kessler has included. Kessler's notes are extremely helpful and are introduced parenthetically into the narrative rather than as footnotes or endnotes, so that the reader doesn't have to shift back and forth in the book for

these useful and instructive editorial comments.

In all, this is an interesting and useful book that puts a human perspective on the trail and the people who both traveled and who lived along it.

Reviewed by John Coffman
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Across the Northern Frontier: Spanish Explorations in Colorado.

By Phil Carson, (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 1998, xviii + 254 pp. Maps, glossary, chronology, bibliography, index. \$27.50 cloth.)

Phil Carson's recent publication *Across the Northern Frontier* has filled in a gaping void in Southwestern history. Never causing the reader to bog down in what could be a morass of mind numbing trivia, he chronicles Spanish New Mexico in the era before it became Mexican territory. Knowing full well the dearth of sound information, the reader enjoys the easy flow of the text in this well presented account covering Spain's fledgling attempt at taming a raw frontier.

While revealing very little new data, the information presented comprises an invaluable source for a background overview of an era often neglected by western historians. Of personal disappointment is the lack of additional research into the northwestern area of the Spanish "empire," and a possible slighting of available documentation, i.e. the Rivera and Dominguez-Escalante Diaries and the scattered information supplied by Posada. All in all, this well written treatise is a must read. It dovetails neatly into a few other recent studies of the era and area under consideration.

Reviewed by Jack Nelson
Grand Junction, Colorado

National Park Service Old Spanish Trail Map

As part of its Old Spanish Trail Study, the National Park Service has painstakingly compiled a trail map that shows trail branches, forks and threads. This map is shown below in a *preliminary* version that was current at the end of June, 1998. Larry Beal, NPS Study Team Job Captain, has generously provided this map and has given permission for the map to appear in *Spanish Traces*.

Although the map is not yet complete, it nevertheless shows many threads for certain sections of the trail. The south branch of the trail, for example, has multiple threads in north central New Mexico and in eastern Utah that represent a variety

of opinions about the “true” route of the trail. There is no doubt that all of these threads were traveled, but by whom and exactly when is poorly documented.

The Armijo 1829-1830 route given also reflects uncertainty about actual routes in northern Arizona where both the Hafen’s version of the route and an alternative route are shown. The alternative route conforms more to known historic routes through this difficult region, but, of course, its use is conjecture. The portion of the Armijo route shown in the Mojave desert includes Armijo’s route as reconstructed by Elizabeth Warren. In the Mojave, a number of route alternatives are shown that were

probably used at some time.

Several threads are not yet included. The Fish Lake branch in central Utah remains to be added. The trail that extends northwest from Grand Junction to Utah Lake and Salt Lake City is omitted, but there is likely to be some disagreement about its inclusion in the OST. Included in some 19th century maps, there is also a “rainy” or “winter” season route that may be real or simply conjecture. Certainly the trail through Cajon Pass evolved with time, but only one thread is shown.

If you have opinions on trail routes, *Spanish Traces* welcomes discussion and debate.



The National Park Service Old Spanish Trail Map: A Preliminary Version -- June, 1998

This map was generously provided by the Old Spanish Trail Study Team and is used with permission.