

SPANISH TRACES



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First Steps Taken — Planning Begins

Salt Lake City, Utah . . .
Joint administration of the OSNHT has been assigned to the BLM and the NPS. Key managers of these agencies and of the OSTA met in December 2003 to layout the plans for starting the multi-year process of writing the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) for the OSNHT.



photo by KnL Carpenter

This group of 23 had a very serious workout on December 4. Outlining decisions is Steve Elkinton, NPS National Trails System Program Leader. Second from right is Steve Heath, President of OSTA.

The CMP is intended to aid OST partners (including land managers and owners) in identifying, protecting, interpreting, and using Trail resources. Actual on-the-ground, day-to-day management decisions remain the responsibility of the agencies' field organizations, and owners, not the Trail administrators.

OSTA is delighted to have been invited to join the planning process in the very beginning. There are many things we will be involved in as this work continues, from giving talks to agency field offices, to joining the agencies in community participation meetings, to field work for accurately locating the

Trail traces for GIS use and mapping across all six states.

The OSNHT has management complications in that it intersects many hundreds of miles of private lands, and crosses the administrative boundaries of over 200 local, tribal, state and federal governments and agencies. All "stakeholders" will be identified in the CMP and invited to participate in the process, as will the general public. So, we work hard, but be patient; it will be a long process. ■

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Pre-Plan for Comprehensive Management Plan

The Pre-Plan (or Preparation Plan) comes first, and work on that has started. Members of the Pre-Plan core working group are Aaron Mahr of NPS, Sarah Schlanger of BLM, Steve Knox of BLM, and Kenn Carpenter of OSTA.

The Pre-Plan, although reasonably brief, is intended to describe how the Comprehensive Management Plan for the OSNHT will be developed. The goal for completion and approval of the Pre-Plan is by April 30.

The Pre-Plan itself will include background history on legislation designating this NHT, and on the Secretary of Interior's assignment of joint administration to the NPS and BLM. It will also thoroughly document the applicable federal laws, regulations and policy with which the CMP must be in compliance; these are numerous and relate to trails, environmental protection, Indian tribal rights, etc.

The CMP will also be directed to anticipate and analyze controversial management and land use situations, and provide for alternative choices. Much of this will be done through meetings with public communities, Indian tribal councils, state government agencies, and by input from OSTA and its members. The CMP will also be directed to address in detail how the cultural, scenic, and natural resources of the Trail will be preserved and utilized.

The Pre-Plan will assign roles and define responsibilities needed to do the CMP work, list known "stakeholders," establish an internal review plan, propose a CMP preparation schedule, propose a 2-year budget, initiate a web site, etc.

It is anticipated that the Pre-Plan core group will be responsible for seeing that the CMP joint planning effort is carried through efficiently and on schedule. ■

Visit OSTA web site at <http://www.oldspanishtrail.org>
Website upgrade continues.

All matters relating to *Spanish Traces* should be directed to the Co-Editors and Publisher:

Kenn and Lorraine Carpenter
PO Box 7
Marysville, WA 98270
E-mail: knlcarp@earthlink.net
Telephone: 360-653-5330

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The OST, one of America's great long distance trade routes, is now our country's most recent National Historic Trail. We encourage you to join OSTA and help in its preservation, and increase appreciation of our SW's multicultural heritage.

Membership Dues:

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Mail your check to:

OSTA
PO Box 7
Marysville, WA 98270

Governing Board of Officers and Directors: 2003-2004

PRESIDENT:

Steve Heath
207 S 500 W
Cedar City, UT 84720
435-586-9334
heath@suu.edu

PAST PRESIDENT:

Elizabeth von Till Warren
PO Box 19039
Jean, NV 89019
702-874-1410
Mizlizzard@aol.com

VICE-PRESIDENT:

Kenn Carpenter
PO Box 7
Marysville, WA 98270
360-653-5330
knlcarp@earthlink.net

SECRETARY:

Judy Knudson
0089 Fir Drive
South Fork, CO 81154-9504
719-873-5239
silverthreader@aol.com

TREASURER:

Ron Archibald
PO Box 420160
Kanarraville, UT 84742
435-865-7566
ronarc@accesswest.com

DIRECTORS:

Reba Wells Grandrud – AZ
2322 East Cholla Street
Phoenix, AZ 85028
602-992-0339
rgrandrud@cox.net

Joanne Hinchliff – CA
PO Box 685
San Jacinto, CA 92581-0685
909-925-7068
toci@pe.net

Doug Knudson – CO
0089 Fir Drive
South Fork, CO 81154-9504
719-873-5239
rosejems@fone.net

Pablo Vigil – NM
611 Mills Ave., #120
Las Vegas, NM 87701
505-425-9785

Carol Corbett – NV
5036 N. Cimarron Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89149
702-658-0725
lookout@sprintmail.com

Walter Hayward – UT
P.O. Box 420159
Kanarraville, UT 84742-0159
435-867-1498
mountainman@cedarcity.net

President's Corner

by Steve Heath

An Historic Issue We Cannot Ignore!

One of the issues that must be addressed by the Old Spanish National Historic Trail is the story of Indian Slavery, especially the story of the Paiutes on the western half of the Trail. At a recent visit to Pipe Spring National Monument, I noticed a panel in their visitors' center that addresses the issue. They quote from the 1840 government report of Charles Wilkes: "Every man's hand is against them. The New Mexicans capture them for slaves; the neighboring Indians do the same... The price of these slaves in the markets of New Mexico varies with age and other qualities of person. Those from ten to fifteen years old sell from \$50 to \$100...Notwithstanding their horrible deficiency in all the comforts and decencies of life, these Indians are so ardently attached to their country, that when carried into lands of their captors, and surrounded with abundance, they pine away and often die in grief for the loss of their native deserts. In one instance, I saw one of these Paiutes die from no apparent cause

than this home sickness."

Anthropologists estimate that the pre-Columbus population of the Paiutes on the Kaibab Plateau was 5,500. By the time Domínguez and Escalante passed across the plateau in 1776, the population was around 2,000. Disease introduced by the Spanish settlement had preceded them and millions of Indians died across the Americas. By the time Antonio Armijo, who lead the first successful trading trip to California in 1829 and opened up the Mexican trade trail, the population had decreased to around 1,000. Though the slave trade preceded Armijo, regular travel on the Old Spanish Trail was devastating to the Paiute. When John Wesley Powell surveyed the Paiutes in 1870, he found only 478 Paiutes in the entire region along the Old Spanish Trail. Paiute men outnumbered women by a 2 to 1 ratio, and adults outnumbered children by a 4 to 1 ratio. The Mormons put a stop to the slave trade in 1852, but the damage was



done. For most of the 20th century the population of the Kaibab Paiute band was below 100. As painful as the subject of slavery is, it must be addressed. This issue and others can best be interpreted by sites along the Old Spanish Trail, such as Pipe Springs National Monument. Eventually it should be part of an Old Spanish National Historic Trail interpretative center. In the meantime, we need to work to educate existing government entities and the public about the historic significance of the Old Spanish Trail in western American history.

Readers may want to consult:

- Ronald Holt's *Beneath These Red Cliffs: An Ethnohistory of the Utah Paiutes*, University of New Mexico Press, 1992.
- Richard Stoffle & Michael Evans' *Kaibab Paiute History: The Early Years*, Kaibab Paiute Tribe, 1978 for information on the Paiute Culture and its relationship to the Old Spanish Trail.
- The Indian slavery issue is also addressed in Joseph P. Sanchez's *Explorers, Traders, and Slavers: Forging the Old Spanish Trail, 1678-1850*, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1996.
- Check the book sales table at the Page conference! ■

Index to *Spanish Traces* Available

An 8-page Index to all 26 issues of *Spanish Traces* and Conference Reports is available from the Editors as a PDF file to your e-mail address. Hard copy is available s-mail postpaid for \$2 in USA.

Includes following 5 lists:

- *Spanish Traces* and Conference Reports;
- Articles by Title; • Authors of Articles;
- Books Reviewed by Title; • Authors of Books Reviewed.

Know Your Historians –

Harold A. Steiner

by Elizabeth von Till Warren, Ph.D.

Footsteps grated on the metal staircase that ascended to the Las Vegas district office of Nevada State Parks, the door opened, and a tall, handsome man stepped into the room. He asked for information about historical sites in southern Nevada, places he could visit where he might be able to step back in time, perhaps experience some of the sense of freedom and self-reliance displayed by early explorers and trail trekkers. He picked up brochures for southern Nevada's Spring Mountain Ranch, for Valley of Fire, and for several parks in neighboring Lincoln County. A state map completed the information we could supply, but the discussion Hal Steiner and I began then has continued to this day, over a span of more than twenty-five years. We became colleagues, sometimes walking in tandem and sometimes agreeing to disagree and moving along separate paths. We've bounced ideas off each other, collaborated on projects and programs, supported each other through thick and thin—in short, Hal Steiner is a rare friend, kind, loyal and true, and I am honored to be asked to introduce him to you.

Harold Austin "Hal" Steiner is a man of many places. Born in Arkansas in 1921, he spent his early years in Louisiana, received a BS degree from Florida State University, and an MS from McGill University in Canada. His formal field of study was atmospheric physics, which



photo by John Coffman

Hal Steiner *Author and Lecturer*

became the basis for a 31-year long career in the US Air Force, mostly occupied with research and development. Hal served during three wars of the 20th century. He saw active service in World War II, receiving his wings in 1943 and piloting B-25 and A-26 bombers, some fighters, and "lots" of cargo planes in the South Pacific. During the Korean War he was shot down, and spent from 1951 to 1953 as a POW. He remained in the Air Force after Korea, and was still serving during the Vietnam War, although

not in southeast Asia. He retired in 1974 with the rank of Colonel.

Following service as a pilot, Hal was assigned a position as Development Engineer. He became involved in the development of advanced aircraft, ballistic missiles, satellites and space technology. He was appointed a member of the Secretariat of the USAF Scientific Advisory Board, whose mission was to advise the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chiefs of Staff on scientific and technical matters. While a member of this group, his assignments gave him an opportunity to explore some cutting edge uses of technology, and to call on any member of the scientific community to assist. Carl Sagan participated in two of the research projects Hal conducted, but as Sagan was a pacifist he was not too cooperative when asked to work on problems connected with waging war. One investigation explored the use of ground-penetrating radar to detect the tunnels used by the Viet Cong. Unfortunately, this goal proved unreachable.

A still more intriguing study was the research conducted on Unidentified Flying Objects. Hal headed up a committee of the Scientific Advisory Board to investigate the multiple sightings of mysterious flying objects then so widely reported in the media. Congress called on the Secretary of the Air Force to activate the Air Force to research these phenomena. The Pentagon called on the Scientific Advisory Board which in turn named Hal to head a committee to produce a report. The program was called Project Blue Book, and Hal was authorized to recruit anyone

he wanted to work on the committee, including psychologists, cosmologists (Carl Sagan), geophysicists and others. He should spare no expense to get to the bottom of the UFO puzzle. The committee reviewed all aspects of activity that might contribute to these seemingly inexplicable events. They examined air force activity, known sightings, weather and other possible components, and decided that while most UFO sightings could be explained on the basis of known factors, a few could not. Hal's committee recommended more study. Consequently, another committee, headed by Dr. Edward Condon of the National Bureau of Standards, convened to look into the question. This committee came to the same conclusion as the Scientific Advisory Board's Project Blue Book.

Another appointment placed Hal on the President's ad hoc committee on the National Space Program. Finally, he was assigned to the National Security Agency, where he continued working in science and technology. During his military career, Hal wrote and published more than forty articles based on this work.

Upon retirement, Hal became heavily involved in politics and community affairs in Frederick County, Maryland. He served on the county Planning and Zoning Commission, and was a member of the Town Council of the Village of New Market, Maryland. He indulged his love for fine, old furnishings by opening an antique shop in Frederick County. Eventually, though, the cold, snowy winter weather and the crowded commute to Washington, DC prompted Hal and his wife, Doris, to seek a warmer

climate. Although several Southwest communities attracted them, the couple chose to relocate to Las Vegas, Nevada, where from 1948-1950 Hal was in flight operations at Las Vegas Air Force Base, soon to be renamed Nellis. He remembered Las Vegas as a small, pleasant desert town with a lot of sunshine and warm weather. In 1950, the population of Las Vegas was under 25,000. When Hal and Doris moved to Nevada in 1974, this number had increased to more than 125,000, but compared to urban Washington, DC, this was still a manageable size.

Using the skills developed over his long career in the military, Hal embarked on a career as a management consultant. With retirement came long-anticipated opportunities for Hal and Doris to become immersed in politics and personal interests: genealogy, and the history and natural history of their adopted western state. Both Hal and Doris became active in the Republican Party in Nevada, but it is as author and historian that he has become known to the people of Nevada. Although Hal's professional career was oriented toward science and technology, he was avidly interested in history. While in the Korean POW camp, he was thrown in the "hole" for giving clandestine history lectures to fellow prisoners. In Nevada, he joined Cultural Focus, a project of the Allied Arts Council which provided tours and lectures about "the other side of Nevada" to tourists and conventioners. He led many tours to historic and natural sites, and earned high praise for the quality of his presentations.

Two very different recreational activities engaged Hal in the early years of his retirement. One was as a cook and judge of chili. In the 1970s and 1980s, chili cook-offs were very popular, informally organized competitions which encouraged local folks to offer their favorite recipes. Hal judged and competed in many local contests all over the Southwest, in California, Nevada and Arizona. He was declared Nevada State Champion in 1977, and sports a fine belt buckle to prove it! Eventually, as chili cook-offs became more highly organized and fees for participants rose significantly, Hal put away his pots and pans and devoted more time to researching family genealogy and to exploring Nevada's great outdoors for traces of the Old Spanish Trail.

The Old Spanish Trail came to Hal's attention when he happened upon a sign identifying its trace through a lonely stretch of southern Utah. The few words on this sign moved Hal very deeply, as he regarded the bleak landscape around him and realized that a hundred and fifty years earlier, men regularly made their way through this remote region without benefit of paved and signed roads, of vehicles with internal combustion engines, or of fast food restaurants. He had to find out more about who they were and how they came to be traveling through this huge, empty region. It was this curiosity that led him to Nevada State Parks office that day in 1975.

Hal's search for information led him down many paths and into many institutions. Along the way he >>>

met many people who had tales to tell about the trail. Certainly one of the most important was Sherwin “Scoop” Garside of Las Vegas, who in 1965-67 organized a campaign to mark Frémont’s Old Spanish Trail route through Southern Nevada. Scoop and Hal spent many a long day together, sharing observations and information. All of this labor of love came together after 25 years in the form of Hal’s 1999 publication, *The Old Spanish Trail Across the Mojave Desert*, now in its second printing.

Hal continues to write articles about the Old Spanish Trail, and is very active in southern Nevada in preserving, protecting, and marking the trail. He joined OSTA in the mid 1990s, when it was still based largely in Colorado. In 1999, he collaborated with Liz Warren to organize and coordinate that year’s OSTA meeting in Las Vegas, and in 2000 partnered with Liz to produce the official OSTA response to the NPS OST feasibility study. He represents OSTA-LV on the Trails Coalition, a Clark County-wide trails group, and is a vital member of the BLM’s Old Spanish Trail Marking Committee. He assisted the BLM and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in GPS work along the Spanish Trail/Mormon Road alignment through southern Nevada, contributing to the successful nomination of two eligible portions of the trail to the National Register of Historic Places. Only Nevada has thus far proposed this status for segments of the Old Spanish Trail.

In interviewing Hal for this brief biographical sketch, I was struck

with how modestly he describes his work and his achievements. We discussed a possible link between his interest in the Old Spanish Trail and chili. We wondered if chili was part of trail cuisine, since chilies tenderize, and certainly the caravans that had to eat mules had tough meat to chew. Perhaps we might get Hal to organize an Old Spanish Trail Chili Cook-off — lots of laughs, good cheer and good food surely would be served up. He tells me he still has his Nevada State Champion prize chili recipe. For me, though, the true prize is Hal — friend, colleague, willing laborer in the figurative vineyards of the Old Spanish Trail. Publications available to the public include:

- with Doris McGilvary Steiner, *The MacGillivrays of Skye* (Las Vegas, NV: The Haldor Company, 1985). This work is a history of the clans of the Isle of Skye from the year 1595. [Skye lies off the northwest coast of Scotland.]
- *The Old Spanish Trail Across the Mojave Desert, A History and Guide*. (Las Vegas, NV: The Haldor Company, 1999).
- The review of the USAF’s highly secret Project Blue Book, conducted by Lt. Col. Harold S. Steiner and a committee of distinguished scientists, is published as Appendix VII in Dr. Edward U. Condon, *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects* (New York, Toronto, London: Bantam Books, 1969). This is the complete report on the subject issued by University of Colorado under contract to the USAF. ■

Lisbon Valley — as it used to be



photo used with permission

As one travels the various traces of the OST, we can’t help but wonder what it was like in the “old days.” In SE Utah at Paiute Spring, at what is now the country village of Ucolo, the OST forked into two traces, one going northwest to South Canyon and the other north to the Lisbon Valley.

In the spring of 1916, Margaret Deane Halfacre Knox took this picture of her husband Franklin Chase Knox in Lower Lisbon Valley, near the south edge of Section 6, T31S, R26E, looking north. The grass is lush. Entries from an 1879 journal describe much of the SE corner of Utah as hosting knee deep grass.

Submitted by Ron McDonald ■

ZZYZX History

by Joanne Hinchliff

Zzyzx is a name that has intrigued travelers for many years on the highway to Baker, the midway stop from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. This is the name of the first off ramp southwest of Baker. Many have asked, what is this name? Is it a name of a person, a place or a road? Some answered that it was probably a name given by some desert wacko. If you get off Interstate 15 here, you will find yourself on a long, some times bumpy dirt road that leads you around the Soda Mountains for about four miles towards Soda Dry Lake. If you don't get discouraged, you will eventually come to a group of buildings; nearby are many tall palm trees that have been planted along a beautiful long reflecting pool.

This place, once known as Zzyzx, is today the Desert Studies Center (of California State University). It is located within the Preserve at Soda Springs. Soda Lake is one of many playas or dry lakes within the Mojave Desert. It is the end point of the Mojave River if water in the river ever gets this far these days. There are a few springs around the playa; one of these is Soda Springs, which has been a good source of water for the desert traveler for thousands of years.

In our very recent history of the West, Padre Garcés is believed to be the first white man to come into this area in 1776. Jedidiah Smith is credited to being the first American to come into this area in 1827. He describes a salt plain that he crossed

that is believed to be Soda Lake.

Antonio Armijo, a trader from Santa Fé, credited with forging the first route of the Old Spanish Trail to Los Angeles, is believed by some to have come by Soda Lake. Later the Old Spanish Trail did not go this way. It followed the route from Salt Springs, then up the canyon to Red Pass Lake and west to Agua de Tomaso or Bitter Springs before it reached the Mojave River. Later in 1853 a government survey of the area is the first known written description of Soda Springs.

In 1857 Edward F. Beale laid out a road from New Mexico as an alternative to the California Trail because of the growing confrontation between the federal government and the Mormons in Utah. Unfortunately the Mojaves near today's Needles attacked the first emigrant party over this route when they tried to cross the Colorado River. Leaving some dead, the emigrants with their wounded made their way back to New Mexico.¹ Soon thereafter, Fort Mojave was built in 1859 to protect the emigrants. It was necessary to supply this post overland thus creating the Mojave Trail that is now called the Mojave Road. Soda Springs provided a source of good dependable water. Later a redoubt was erected at Bitter Spring and later another was established at the Soda Springs Oasis.

After the Civil War prospecting and mining became an important activity in the Mojave Desert and elsewhere. Gold was discovered along the Colorado River

at La Paz in Arizona. Eager miners and suppliers used a new southern route over San Gorgonio Pass that was called the Bradshaw Road. But many other travelers continued to use the Mojave Road, also known as the Government Road. There was a stop at Soda Springs. The troops were withdrawn from the Mojave Desert in 1871 and Soda Springs Station as it was then known became a way station on the Mojave Road. In the 1870s many mines were opened in the eastern Mojave that kept this way station in operation. There were various residents at Soda Springs. Moss Agate in 1885 described Shenandoah Camp, as it was then known. His praises of Soda Springs were printed in *Calico Print*. He bragged that there are "indications of immense hidden wealth unsurpassed in the history of mining."² This wealth never was found, but many others continued to look for it.

Frank Riggs and his wife spent thirty-five years in locating and working on various mines in the area of Soda Lake and near Silver Lake. "Borax" Smith developed the mining of borax in Death Valley. In 1906 he began construction of the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad from Ludlow to Goldfield, Nevada to transport the borax instead of using the comparatively slow twenty mule teams. This line went through Soda Springs and across the playa of Soda Lake. There was about one train daily going through Soda Springs from 1907 to 1940. The track became scrap as part of the war effort of World War II. Between 1908 and 1914, there was some

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Bitter Vengeance Near Bitter Springs

by Charles L. Convis

(This story, written by OSTA member Charles L. Convis, was published by Pioneer Press, P. O. Box 216, Carson City, NV 89702, in *Scouts* in 2000. Printed here by permission. *Editors.*)

Explorer John C. Frémont said that his scouts, Alexis Godey and Kit Carson, would have both been field marshals if they had served in Napoleon's army. Godey, born of French parents in St. Louis, was closely associated with Kit Carson, and they both served as scouts on three of Frémont's expeditions. Godey's fame began in April 1844, during the second expedition.

On March 24, 1844, Frémont said goodbye to Captain John Sutter and started his return east. With Godey and Carson scouting ahead, Frémont headed southeast down the San Joaquin Valley. He had just made a hair-raising crossing of the rugged Sierras to get into California, and he planned to go south in search of a lower pass discovered ten years before by Joseph Walker.

The party crossed the Cosumnes, Mokelumne, Calaveras, and Stanislaus Rivers, camping on the Merced on April 1. While local Indians guided, the scouts watched the country carefully, prepared to ward off any Indian attack. The party continued up the San Joaquin River until it turned east into the foothills and crossed the mountains at Oak Creek Pass on April 14.

The expedition descended into a dry region of Yucca trees where local Indians warned them that their animals

would perish from thirst if they continued east. Frémont took their advice and bore further south to intersect the Old Spanish Trail. This was a pack mule route from Los Angeles running northeast past present Las Vegas and looping through Utah and Colorado to Santa Fe.

They reached the trail on April 20 where it crossed the Mohave River. Knowing of the waterless stretches ahead, Frémont ordered a one-day halt to rest the stock. This camp was about twelve miles southwest of present Barstow, California.

By the twenty-third, the Mojave River had disappeared into the sandy desert; the next day they killed three of the weakest cattle and dried the meat for later consumption. On the following afternoon they met two Mexicans coming down the trail, Andreas Fuentes and Pablo Hernandez, a boy of eleven. They had been part of a group of six who were driving a herd of thirty horses up the trail. About eighty miles on ahead, at the Archillette camping ground (now called Resting Springs), they had been attacked by about a hundred Indians. Fuentes' wife, Pablo's parents, and the other herder were all believed killed. Fuentes and Pablo were on mounted guard at the time and had escaped, driving part of their herd ahead. They had left that remnant of the herd at Bitter Springs and had ridden on ahead on their own mounts.

Early on April 25 Frémont's expedition, with Fuentes and Pablo

now added, reached Bitter Springs. To no one's surprise, the stolen horses were not to be found. Godey and Carson, after thinking hard about the attack on Fuentes' wife and both of the boy's parents, said they wanted to ride on ahead and see if they could recover the horses and punish some Indians. Frémont gave his permission, saying the expedition would remain in camp at Bitter Springs until the scouts returned.

After a thirty-hour, wild ride covering a hundred miles of waterless desert, Godey and Carson galloped back into Bitter Springs. They were driving stolen horses ahead of them, and Godey brandished his gun in triumph. Here is what Frémont wrote about Godey's most famous exploit:

"A war-whoop was heard, such as Indians make when returning from a victorious enterprise; and soon Carson and Godey appeared, driving before them a band of horses, recognized by Fuentes to be part of those they had lost. Two bloody scalps, dangling from the end of Godey's gun, announced that they had overtaken the Indians as well as the horses."

Godey and Carson had followed the trail into a narrow defile and slept there from midnight until dawn. After riding forward a short distance, they found the Indian camp.

"Giving the war-shout, they instantly charged into the camp, regardless of the number which the four lodges would imply. The Indians received them with a flight of arrows shot from their longbows, one of which passed through Godey's shirt-collar,

barely missing the neck.”

The scouts had fired, dropping two Indians; the rest had escaped except for a small boy whom they captured. They scalped the two fallen Indians, but one of them leaped to his feet with a hideous howl, blood streaming from his skinned head.

“An old squaw, possibly his mother, stopped and looked back from the mountainside she was climbing, threatening and lamenting. The frightful spectacle appalled the stout hearts of our men; but they did what humanity required, and quickly terminated the agonies of the gory savage.”

The scouts released their boy captive, gathered up about fifteen of the stolen horses, and started down the trail to return to Frémont’s camp. “The time, place, object, and numbers considered,” Frémont continued, “this expedition of Carson and Godey may be considered among the boldest that the annals of western adventure, so full of daring deeds, can present. Two men, in a savage desert, pursue day and night an unknown body of Indians into the defiles of an unknown mountain – attack them on sight, without counting numbers – and defeat them in an instant – and for what? To punish the robbers of the desert, and to avenge the wrongs of Mexicans whom they did not know. I repeat: it was Carson and Godey who did this – the former an American, born in Boonslick county of Missouri; the latter a Frenchman, born in St. Louis – and both trained to western enterprise from early life.

When the expedition reached

Archillette they found the corpses of the two men the Indians had killed. The women were nowhere to be seen. The corpse of Pedro’s father had both legs and one hand cut off. A small dog belonging to Pedro’s family had stayed by the corpses, and was overjoyed to see his young master.

“Pedro, poor child, was frantic with grief, and filled the air with lamentations for his father and mother. Mi Padre! Mi Madre! – was his incessant cry. When we beheld this pitiable sight, and pictured to ourselves the fate of the two women, carried off by savages so brutal and loathsome, all compunction for the scalped-alive Indian ceased.”

Alexis Godey had become a mountain man at age seventeen when he trapped with Jim Bridger and Kit Carson. He and Carson served again as scouts with Frémont’s third and fourth expeditions. Godey was the hero of the rescue of the snowbound survivors in the fourth expedition.

Godey served as a lieutenant in the California Battalion, fighting the Mexican Army in 1846. Later he had a sheep ranch near Bakersfield. In 1889, when he was seventy years old, he got too close to a lion in a Los Angeles circus, was scratched severely, and died from blood poisoning. He is buried in Bakersfield, not a long way from the place where he first became famous.

Suggested reading: *Col. J. C. Frémont, The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, Oregon, and California* (Buffalo: Derby, Orton & Mulligan, 1854). ■

Rancho Chap. Field Trip – Facilities at Zzyzx –

photos by Dan Dugan

This historic “oasis” is now managed by the Desert Studies Center of California State University, and it was the perfect site to use as our base for the weekend starting Friday evening. Meals were great, we had a good meeting room for evenings, and the bunks were – well, bunks.



Eric serving breakfast.



The dining room.



Boardwalk access to the
2nd floor bunk rooms ■

The Earp Family on the OST

by R. Bruce Harley

With so many famous men such as Kit Carson having used the OST at some point in their lives, the question arises – did Wyatt Earp ever travel on the OST? To raise such a question indicates automatically that the answer would be in the affirmative. As a young teenager, in 1864 he did accompany the Earp family on one of its trips from Iowa to San Bernardino, California via Salt Lake City. His father, Nicolas Earp, altogether made three trips over parts of the Old Spanish Trail between 1853 and 1868 and perhaps a farewell stint in 1877.

The Earp family had already moved several times starting from North Carolina to Tennessee, to Kentucky, to Illinois, and Iowa. In 1860, the nation was on the brink of the Civil War. As a Southerner, Nicolas Earp believed in slavery but thought that the South was wrong to secede, so he favored the concept of supporting the Union cause. In addition, his old commander in the 1832 Black Hawk War – Abraham Lincoln – needed to be supported during the struggle of attempting to force the Southern states to remain in the Union or be subdued by military action.

Nick, who was the marshal in his hometown of Pella, Iowa, also took on the task of recruiting soldiers for the Union Army. This effort included three of his older sons. For his part, the younger Wyatt was not old enough yet at 13 to join the Federal forces.

However, after nearly three years, the Earp political viewpoint changed

when in late 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation became known in the hinterland. From his standpoint, Nick Earp knew the freeing of the slaves could mean pauperization of his friends in the South.

By the spring of 1864, Nick was ready to aim for Salt Lake City and thence south down the Mormon connection to the Old Spanish Trail (OST) just north of Fremont, Utah at Scipio crossroads.

Before following that trip, it should be noted that Nick had already been on the California Trail and later the OST a number of years previously. Unlike many of the travelers since the 1830s, he knew the route and the hazards it presented. In 1851, Earp, who at the time lived in Monmouth, Illinois, was already traveling western trails, in this case as part of the gold rush. He had met some men from the Dutch community of Pella, Iowa, and agreed to become the wagon master for the group headed for California. After traversing the Mormon and California Trails, the group reached the gold fields but did not find the precious metal in any great quantity.¹

Consequently, Nick decided to return to the Midwest but was determined to see Southern California before returning. In the time frame of the 1850s, a number of gold-seekers did just that before returning home, while some never returned but settled east of Mission San Gabriel. Nick followed this course and was attracted enough so that when his turntable called for

another move, and he did so about eleven years after reconnoitering the area.

Whether he met two important men temporarily located in the Sacramento area from the Agua Mansa neighborhood near the end of the OST is not known. If he did, that means that he talked to Louis Robidoux who drove cattle north from his ranch to feed the gold diggers. Also, he may have met Cornelius Jensen, a Danish sea captain who was being persuaded by Southern Californians to move to the first town east of San Gabriel at Agua Mansa, located a few miles downstream from the newly established city of San Bernardino.

The movements of Louis Robidoux show that a route to the north had long been in place – mostly the connecting road to the 21 missions. Also in the early 1850s, thousands of sheep were driven at a single time from New Mexico along the Gila Trail across Arizona to Agua Mansa and thence north through Tulare and eventually to the gold country.²

Nick Earp came down this cattle/sheep route and was impressed with the Santa Ana River Valley. Even so, he for once was not yet in the mood for moving cross country, and so in 1853 returned home by taking the OST towards Salt Lake City and thence east on the California and Mormon Trails to reach Iowa.

After briefly living in Monmouth, Illinois and then returning to Pella, Iowa, he was as noted ready to hit the trail some eleven years after the preceding journey. The group that was finally formed by the spring of

1864 consisted of four families totaling about 30 people. The other three families lived in the general area of the Earps and had their own reasons for leaving the Midwest, never to return. Two of these families included members of the Curtis and Hamilton families.³

The third family group included the parents and offspring of the Rousseaus. The wife became well known historically speaking because she was the only one of the entire group to maintain a diary. Mrs. Rousseau had a different reason from most for making the trip. She had a debilitating case of rheumatism and wanted to escape Iowa’s bitter Midwestern winters.⁴

The Earp entourage included everybody except son Virgil who was still fighting in a Union regiment – the 17th Illinois Infantry. The Earp group for the 1864 trip over the OST therefore included the following personnel:

	Age	Place of Birth
Nicholas, father	51	N. Carolina
Virginia, 2 nd wife	43	Kentucky
Newton, (mother was Nick’s 1 st wife, who had died in 1839)	24	Kentucky
James	18	Kentucky
Martha	16	Illinois
Wyatt	13	Illinois
Morgan	12	Iowa
Warren	9	Iowa
Virginia	6	Illinois
Adelia	3	Iowa

The wagon train of four families (plus a hired hand, Charlie Copla) left Pella, Iowa on May 12, 1864. They followed a route familiar to Nick Earp, the wagon master, from his 1851-1853 tour. They followed the pioneer Mormon Trail across Iowa to Council Bluffs/Omaha. From there the group took the

California Trail to the vicinity of Salt Lake City, Utah, arriving there on August 22, 1864.

To have made the distance in just over three months was about the same pace to be expected based on previous crossings over the years. However, in the heyday of the OST, people did not travel in the hot summer months. The fact that Nick insisted on proceeding without cooler weather meant that the small caravan would proceed very slowly down the Mormon Cutoff to the junction with the OST and thence down to San Bernardino. That stretch took from August until December, nearly four months, or a month longer than the historical pace.⁵

As one historian put it, “It was amazing how little they knew of what would be facing them, despite the fact of two decades of travel over that route before them and heavy travel after the discovery of gold in California in 1849.” Added to this would be 20 years of experience over the OST south of Fremont, Utah. Many of the party members even ended up depending on someone else due to some misfortune, a situation that even included the Earps “at one point.”⁶

The group had first entered Utah in July, but was still in southern Utah in early November. For any reader who has driven today’s I-15 from, say, Victorville or Barstow to Salt Lake City or even just to Las Vegas in the summertime can imagine what the heat problem would be on a slow-moving wagon convoy pace. By the beginning of November, the nights finally were cool and the days

were fortunately just warm and pleasant.⁷

On the fourth day of that month, the caravan encamped at Mountain Meadows. As Mrs. Rousseau described the location:

*Here we saw a monument erected to the memory of the dead. It made me sick at heart to look at (the memorial monument) and think of the poor emigrants which were cruelly massacred at this place.*⁸

The mixed train of emigrants from several states had arrived at the area in September 1857, only seven years earlier than the Earp train.

Within two days further, the Earp caravan had arrived in an area called Dixie by the Mormons.

*And a more rugged rough mountainous country cannot be found. We passed by some volcanic mountains.... The lava that has been thrown out looks like cinders. The mountains, some of them have a grand appearance, some a red color while other have a white appearance.*⁹

Making progress further south was a difficult proposition. On the 14th of the month, the caravan crossed the Virgin River eight times. The next day, a periodic flare-up with Nick Earp took place:

...some of the company didn’t appear to like our crossing the river to another camping place. We think Mr. Earp was the cause of our guide camping in such a sickly place; he seems as if he wants to make hard feelings among us. We had crossed the Virgin (another) five or six times when the guide crossed and >>>

*got stuck in the quick sand and like to have got drowned going back after the wagon they left behind.... We crossed the river today 11 times.*¹⁰

On the 16th the party finally left Utah where they had labored for over four months. The diary entry for that day showed that making further progress to the southwest was not an easy task.

Left camp about 8 o'clock, looked out of the carriage just now and saw some of the mountains covered with snow. Got to our last crossing place on the Virgin, rather dangerous on account of quick sands. The guide has crossed, I don't know how the rest of us will get along, some have to double teams, all have got across save. We have crossed three times this morning and are now ready to ascend the Virgin hill. It looks to be an awful one to get up, some say it's six miles long. We are now on top of the hill or rather mountain and I must acknowledge I never saw such a one, let alone ascend it. When we were below the worst part of it, I looked up and thought it an utter impossibility for any animal to get up. Toward the top there was a perpendicular rock some six feet to get up, besides some others not so bad. We all doubled teams but Mr. Earp's wagon. He started up that awful mountain with our mare, and Mr. Hamilton started a span of mules after them to help them get along, they got up safely. It appeared to me that he didn't care if he killed our horses or not. If he had he wouldn't have tried to go with only two.... It is very cold and has the

*appearance of snow. We are not far enough south yet to escape winter weather. We must be four hundred feet above the Virgin. It looks like dreary nothing but mountains to be seen. And the growth of wild sage on the mountain where we have camped is what we all have to gather to cook supper with. I suppose we will camp here as some of the stock has given out. It has taken us since 2 o'clock till nine at night to get all the wagons up. Our poor horses have gone down the hill three times, since bringing our own heavy wagon to help bring three others up. It has been a dreadful time for them. It took eight horses to get the large wagon up.*¹¹

Three days of rough travel from the 19th to the 21st enabled the group to reach Las Vegas. Mrs. Rousseau described this portion of the trail thusly:

Saturday, 19th. Another cold morning, got a thick cake of ice out of the bucket, yesterday in the middle of the day it was very warm, turning cool at night. We think of starting this evening on the big desert, about 58 miles through, have to travel night and day till we are across, being nothing for the stock to eat or drink on the way. I dread it very much on account of the poor worn-out stock. We are all busy cooking for the trip. We'll have to carry as much water as we can for the horses, and ourselves, to make a little coffee. If we can make it across the desert I think we'll be safe. The water in the Muddy is quite warm and has a milky appearance, but when in a bucket

it's clear. The growth on this river is Willow and mesquite, rather than a pretty stream. Left camp at half past two, the Indians stayed back all but four, they followed on. Went up the canon a gradual ascent till we got on the desert. After sundown stopped a while and fed the horses, some of Mrs. Curtis' oxen gave out entirely. It was our time to be foot of the train today, Mr. Curtis' next. Their teams stopped so often that the foremost wagons got a mile ahead of us, and our horses being stopped so often was an injury to them and we went on by them. A young man traveling with Mr. Curtis went by on horseback and topped the train, but the time we got up with them they had made several large fires, it was very cold. We were all pretty near frozen. We waited till they all came up, rested the teams and went on till daybreak, stopped again and made fires.

Sunday, 20th. Concluded to have breakfast, and feed the horses grain. Still very cold. Here we are this Sabbath morning on the desert. It has the right name. It is indeed a dreary looking wilderness. At 9 o'clock stopped again to feed and water the horses out of our kegs. Mr. Parker has been to the mountains making discoveries, just returned. Brought a pretty bird back perfectly preserved. It looks as if it was alive. I think it is a wren. He brought some specimens of the production of the earth. We suppose it to be sulphate of lime, it is a pretty specimen and transparent. Now it is very warm and we are ready to start on again. Traveled on till five in the afternoon, when

we stopped to make some coffee and rest the teams. Then went on till daybreak, when our horses in the carriage gave out completely. Then the train passed by them, and left me and the children alone on the desert, our big wagon had gone on. I suppose we were alone an hour and a half when Mr. Parker came on horseback to help us. The Dr. was sick and couldn't come. He hitched the horse he brought with one of ours and we rolled on, got to Las Vegas about 8 o'clock, got our breakfast. About 1-o'clock four new teams came in. Had just crossed the desert.

Monday, 21st. They left this afternoon. Mr. Hamilton's family went on with them and Mrs. Parker went. The Dr. is very sick today. I feel pretty low spirited. Quite cold this morning. We think of remaining here a few days to recruit our horses. The poor things are about worn out. Las Vegas is a barren, desolate looking place. I saw one farm of fenced house and field, a place walled up for a fort. There is plenty of Indians here. I think Dr. is some better this afternoon. Traveled 58 miles since Saturday two o'clock.¹²

On the 24th of November, there was another tiff among the travelers. As Mrs. Rousseau viewed the situation: *This evening Mr. Earpe had another rippet with Warren fighting with Jimmy Hatten. And then he commenced about all the children. Used very profane language and swore if the children's parents did not whip or correct the children he would whip every last one of them. He still shows out more and more*

every day what kind of man he is.¹³

As the caravan approached the "last leg" of the journey, it became increasingly difficult to continue daily progress. The major problems concerned the lack of food and the problems the horses had from the prolonged strain, much of it up hill. Some examples illustrate these problems on the brink of success:

Sunday, 27th. A warm morning but cloudy, the wind has abated some. Started from camp rather late, went on five miles to Williams' Ranch, where we camped at the mouth of the canon. Soon after we got there it began to blow and commenced to rain. I think I never saw such a boisterous night in my life, it blew a air hurricane without any intermission. We all suffered very much with the cold, and pretty near drowned lying soaking wet all night. It leaked through the roof of the carriage, I think it had never done before. At least the wished-for morning came, the wind abated.

Monday, 8th. By sunup it cleared off considerably. Left camp about ten o'clock. Traveled over rough mountainous roads. At last the two grey mares in the carriage (gave) out, couldn't go on any farther, by this time the train had gone a good way, our big wagon was along with them. At last Mack missed us, came to see what was the matter; he had to get the teams in our big wagon and come after us, at last we reached Mountain Springs where we camped.

Tuesday, 29th. This morning very cold, the ground frozen. Left camp at 9 o'clock, traveled on to Stump

Springs, over a rough rugged looking country, a perfect desert. The weather is still cold, but not cold enough to freeze. The roads were very good today, we got along very well.

Wednesday, 30th. Another cold morning. Had to let Tom Hays have the carriage to take through to San Bernardino for us, our horses too much tuckered out to go in it. We bought his old wagon, had to hand him \$22.50 dollars in gold for it. We left it at Stump Springs. I have to go in the big wagon. It is hard for me but if we only get through safely I shall feel glad. My health is much improved. Traveled over some bad roads today, up hill most of the way, had to fill our kegs with water, traveled about 15 miles and made a dry camp.... We went on till within two and one-half miles of Salt Springs, when our poor jaded horses stopped, couldn't go any farther. Oh, how I pitied them. We took them out and made a dry camp.

Sunday, 4th. A pretty morning but rather cool, geared up and started. The horses couldn't pull the wagon through the sand, we unloaded some and I got out and we took one more out and put another in her place. I got on the one they took out and rode to the camping place. Here is a delapidated looking place, four houses beside a quartz mill, (It) has been destroyed, it is said, by the Indians. There must have been some thousands expended to fix for getting gold. We were informed there was three men left here to take care of the property, when some Indians >>>

came and killed them about eight weeks ago. The destruction of things seem a pity, stoves, buckets, iron and all that is needed for such a mill. I suppose in the morning we'll start on the desert.

Monday, 5th. A very pleasant morning, preparing for leaving camp to try our luck crossing the desert. I suppose we'll be ready by sunup. Started from camp at 7 o'clock with our three span of poor horses, traveled on till noon, stopped to rest and feed and water the horses, got along better than I expected to far, ate our dinner, some bread and a little meat, the last we have. Went on till the sun down, gave the horses a little feed and rested them two hours. Started on again, intending to travel on till the moon went down, but the horses gave out entirely. We had to take them out and camp. The horse we call Charlie when he was taken out of the wagon staggered and would have fallen had not a young man that is with us taken hold of him and steadied him. When we stopped it was about ten o'clock.

Tuesday, 6th. Got up quarter past four, it is a very pleasant morning, intend as soon as breakfast is over to make another effort to go through. We could only put in four horses this morning, the other three can't work. We gave the poor things their last feed of barley. Oh, how my heart aches to see them. They look like skeletons, and so pitiful begging something to eat. They try to eat the dry brush or anything they can get hold of, we went about three miles when they stopped, couldn't travel any

farther. My poor little children have walked most of the way.¹⁴

Additional unplanned arrangements had to be continually devised as the caravan neared their goal. On December 6, some of the men went to Bitter Springs for grass. Two of them continued forward to the Mojave River to procure a fresh team. That same day also Nick Earp offered to take Mrs. Rousseau with them, but she replied in her diary that *I would be obligated to ride all the way and that would be additional weight for their teams and we had sent on to the Mojave to get (fresh) teams to take us through, thanked him for the offer he had made, but I would rather stay here a few days till they come after us.¹⁵*

The Rousseau party started out on the last leg from the Mojave, on December 14th, using teams borrowed from freighters. After four more days of hard riding, they finally arrived at their destination, pulling into San Bernardino "about sun down" on Saturday, December 17th. The Earps had arrived earlier that same day.¹⁶

The Earps settled down at their new location and rented a farm on the banks of the Santa Ana River. Gradually, Nick became once again a prominent person by championing the common man. By 1867, he was then appointed to the grand jury and served as foreman.

After one term, Nick began thinking of moving again. In the spring of 1868, after just four years in San Bernardino, he became angry at his fate-of-the-hour when there were no

sons in the vicinity to help with the necessary farm work. Very shortly, Mr. and Mrs. Earp were aboard a covered wagon moving north up the OST to Salt Lake City and then into Wyoming. At the railhead he disposed of his horses and took the train back to the Midwest. Fortunately, he found two of his sons near the railhead and cajoled them into joining their parents.

Upon arrival at Pella, Iowa, the party stayed for a while with Nick's brother Lorenzo (known as "Renz") who had never moved from Pella. Later, the California group moved onto visit other relatives in Monmouth, Illinois. After tiring of just visiting, the reduced clan moved to land already owned by Nick at Lamar, Missouri. This town was also the home of another Earp brother, Jonathan. Nick and his son Virgil opened a small grocery store, while Wyatt became the town's first constable. However, Nick once again felt the need after nine years to move back once more to California in 1877.¹⁷

Since he was already considerably south of the northern route taken on previous occasions, he may have gone by horse and wagon to the Santa Fe Trail that emanated west out of St. Louis, Missouri. This brought him eventually to Santa Fe, New Mexico. From there he could take the Gila Trail across Arizona to Needles, California. Departing from that stop he could work his way down the Mojave Trail and eventually reach either Barstow or Victorville and take the tail end of the OST back to San Bernardino in 1877.¹⁸

When he found no employment in that city, he moved to Temescal

(south of Corona) where he planted a crop and opened yet another grocery store. Yet, he missed the political stimulation of a large town, and finally made his last family move in December 1880. At that time he chose Colton over San Bernardino and settled down as the owner of a small saloon.

In the 1890s he played with the idea of visiting or even moving to the Midwest, but never followed through on yet another trip over the OST.

Nicolas Earp died on the 98th anniversary of Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1907, at age 93. He had been living at the Sawtell Veteran's Home in the Los Angeles area and was buried at that facility's cemetery. Ironically, a Southerner/Midwesterner had found a final resting place near the terminal of the OST in the far West.¹⁹

Endnotes

1. Nick Cataldo, "The Earps of San Bernardino County," City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society *Heritage Tales*, 2001/2002, passim.
2. *Ibid.*, also Donie Nelson and Alexander King, "New Mexican Immigration to California: 1829-1860," Genealogical Society of Hispanic America *Nuestras Raices*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 2003, pp. 14-16.
3. Glenn G. Boyer, *Wyatt Earp: Facts, Vol. IV, Wyatt Earp's Wild Boyhood and Youth in Pella, Iowa*, the author, Rodeo, NM, 1997, passim.
4. Nicholas R. Cataldo, "Diary of the Earp Wagon Train to San Bernardino," in his *Heritage Tales* as cited, pp. 35-41.
5. Glenn G. Boyer, *Wyatt Earp: Facts, Vol. V, By Wagon Trail from Iowa to California - 1864*, the author, Rodeo, NM, 1997, passim.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
7. Rousseau Diary: *Across the Desert to California, From Salt Lake City to San Bernardino in 1864*. A copy made from the

- original by George W. Beattie, San Bernardino County Museum Association *Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 2, Winter 1958, p. 1.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
16. Fred Holladay, "The Earp Clan in San Bernardino County," in Nicholas R. Cataldo, *The Earps*, as cited, pp. 3-4.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
19. Holladay, *The Earp Clan* as cited, pp. 18-19, 27; Jefferey Sciem, "Nicholas Porter Earp, His Descendants and the Amazing Events that Made This Family Famous," International Blacksheep Society of Genealogists, n.d. (taken off the blacksheep rootsweb, May 30, 2003, passim).

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Rancho Chap. Meeting — at Zzyzx —

photo by Dan Dugan

This was a great opportunity for a Chapter meeting, and so of course we had one. There was discussion about many items, and those will be covered in the Chapter newsletter.

As scheduled, we had a lecture from Cliff Walker about "Slavery on the Trail." We have all read bits and pieces about the slavery situation, but Cliff told it all; he did not leave much to our imagination, he told it like it was. Cliff's talk was recorded and we hope to have it transcribed and printed in a future issue of *Spanish Traces*.



The Rancho Chapter meeting. ■



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Traders, Travelers, and Horsethieves on the Old Spanish Trail

by John W. Robinson

The Old Spanish Trail between Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Los Angeles has been called “the longest, crookedest, most arduous pack mule route in the history of America.”¹ To avoid the tortuous canyon and plateau country surrounding the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, it followed a great semi-circular route northwest from Santa Fe into central Utah, then southwest through the mountain and desert regions of southern Nevada and California to Cajon Pass, and finally westward to *El Pueblo de Los Angeles*. Rivers had to be forded, mountain passes threaded, and waterless desert traversed, most of the way under the watchful eyes of Ute and Paiute warriors intent upon exacting tribute. It was strictly a trail for horsemen and pack animals; very few wagons ever traversed its entire 1,200-mile length. Despite the hardships, a stream of trade caravans, horse thieves, and later, settlers bound for California followed its roundabout path.

The origins of the trail date back well before Juan de Oñate’s conquest of New Mexico in 1598. Utes from what is now central Utah used a network of inter-connecting footpaths to trade with the Pueblo Indians in northern New Mexico. An illicit trade developed between the Spaniards in the Rio Grande Valley and the Utes as early as the 1670s. In exchange for horses and guns, the Utes supplied animal skins and dried meat. Unfortunately, an unsavory trade in

human lives developed, too. Ute war parties raided Paiute villages as far west as the central Great Basin (today’s Nevada) and brought back captive children to sell to the New Mexicans. Although the slave trade was prohibited by Spanish authorities, the practice was continued by the Utes and unscrupulous New Mexicans until finally ended by the Mormons of Utah in 1853.²

Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera led the first officially sanctioned expedition northwest from Santa Fe in 1765. He went in search of rumored silver mines and to locate the *Rio del Tizon*, the Spanish name for the undiscovered upper Colorado River. His first *entrada* in June and July 1765 reached as far as the Dolores River in southwestern Colorado. In October and November, he retraced his route to the Dolores and, with Ute guides, continued northwest to the Rio del Tizon near present-day Moab, Utah. He crossed the great river and advanced a short distance beyond before returning to Santa Fe. Rivera found no silver mines, but he did bestow the names still used for the rivers he forded – the San Juan, the Animas, the La Plata, and the Dolores.³

One of the most notable Spanish expeditions in Southwestern history followed the easternmost half of the Old Spanish Trail in 1776. Fathers Francisco Atanosio Domínguez and Silvestre Vélez de Escalante made a six-month trek northwest from Santa

Fe, intent upon discovering a land route to Monterey, the newly established capitol of Alta California. They also were charged with locating possible mission sites from which to convert the Indians. The Domínguez-Escalante Party, which included ten men but no soldiers, left Santa Fe on July 29, 1776 and followed the well-used trail northwest into southwestern Colorado, crossing the San Juan and Dolores rivers. Beyond the final crossing of the Dolores, their missionary zeal surpassed their desire to reach Monterey. They turned north, away from the trail, to visit native peoples in western Colorado. Then, they went west into central Utah. The approach of winter and the maze of difficult canyons forced Domínguez and Escalante to abandon plans to reach California. They returned to Santa Fe on January 2, 1777.⁴

The Domínguez-Escalante Expedition examined the vast canyon and plateau country northwest and west of Santa Fe, but as far as is known, there were no further Spanish attempts to reach California from New Mexico. Nor did Mexico, which won its independence from Spain and assumed sovereignty of the northern provinces in 1821, initially show much interest in developing a land route between Santa Fe and California.

It was knowledge gleaned from American trappers operating out of Santa Fe and Taos – Ewing Young, Kit Carson, Thomas Smith, and others – that stimulated new interest on the part of New Mexican authorities and Santa Fe traders in reaching California. In the mad rush to secure beaver pelts during the

middle and late 1820s, trappers and mountain men wandered all over the Southwest and into the regions of the middle Colorado River watershed and the Great Basin. Suddenly this mostly arid land of canyons, plateaus, and mountains, inhabited by little-known native peoples, became *terra cognita* (known land).³

As far as is known, a Santa Fe merchant named Antonio Armijo was the first to seek permission from New Mexican authorities to lead a trade caravan from Santa Fe to Los Angeles. In the fall of 1829, he secured a permit from José Antonio Chavez, governor of the province of New Mexico, to attempt such a venture. Armijo hired some thirty-one of his countrymen (one source says as many as sixty men) and assembled a large train of pack mules. The mules were loaded with woven woolen goods – serapes, blankets, and quilts, products of New Mexico’s sheep industry. Armijo hoped to trade these for California horses and mules.

Armijo’s trading expedition set out from Abiquiú, a small frontier settlement some fifty miles northwest of Santa Fe, on November 7, 1829. The long train did not follow the well-used trail northwest into Colorado as did Domínguez-Escalante; instead, it followed another old traders’ trail west over the Continental Divide, separating the Rio Grande watershed from that of the Colorado River. The train traveled through dry, broken country in a northwesterly, and then westerly direction, crossing the San Juan River and some of its tributaries to what we now call the Four Corners area (the only place in the present United States where four states join).

They veered northwesterly again to ford the Colorado River at the “Crossing of the Fathers,” used by the Dominguez-Escalante Party in 1776 on their return. Then, Armijo and his men worked their way west, through the difficult canyon country of the Colorado Plateau, to the Virgin River, which they probably struck near today’s Hurricane, Utah.

Just beyond, they intercepted the Jedediah Smith trail of 1826-1827 and followed it southwest to the Virgin’s junction with the Colorado. Instead of fording the Colorado and traveling south to the Mojave villages, as Smith had done, Armijo and the pack train moved southwest, along the north bank of the great river, to the mouth of the Las Vegas Wash, where the Colorado abruptly veers south through the narrow defile of Black Canyon. Here, Armijo rested for several days while he sent out scouts to locate a feasible route west which would avoid the eighty-mile southern detour to the Mojave villages. The scouts returned, having found enough watering places to sustain the party as far as the bend of the Amargosa River southeast of Death Valley. Buoyed by the scouts’ report, Armijo and his pack train left the Colorado and threaded a path generally westward across the Nevada desert, south of present-day Las Vegas. Three more days of rough travel brought them to the Amargosa and its foul-tasting water. From the Amargosa’s southern bend, Armijo’s pack train moved south, then southwest across the barren terrain to what they called *Ojito de Malpais* (Little Spring of the Badlands), most likely Bitter Springs. Continuing on a southwesterly course, two more days of waterless

travel brought the pack train to the Mojave River. The river, as usual, was flowing only intermittently along its lower course, but Armijo and his men found plenty of water to satisfy their needs and quench the thirst of their tired animals.

Armijo’s log is too vague to ascertain their precise route from the upper Mojave River to Cajon Pass. They were weary and their food was almost exhausted. All we have are Armijo’s terse words:

January 23. . . .; we ate a horse

January 24. Ditto

January 25. Ditto

January 26. Ditto; we ate a mule⁶

Whether they ascended the Mojave to its forks, near today’s Hesperia, then turned west through Summit Valley, or left the river near present-day Victorville and ascended south-southwest, across Baldy Mesa to the pass is impossible to determine. In any event, Armijo and his pack train crossed Cajon Pass on January 28, 1830 and descended Cajon Canyon to reach the verdant San Bernardino Valley. The trade caravan rested a day, then followed the old well-traveled mission road west to San Gabriel Mission, where the men were warmly greeted by the Californios.

This first trade caravan to travel from New Mexico to California was accomplished in eighty-six days of hard travel. The hospitable Californios were delighted to trade some of their horses and mules, abundant in the coastal province, for the woolen goods from the Rio Grande Valley. In less than a month, Armijo and his men had disposed of their blankets and serapes, and >>>

purchased some one hundred horses and mules to be sold in New Mexico.

For the return trip, Armijo divided his caravan into three sections. The first group set out on February 24, traveled the same route by which they had come, and reached Santa Fe in forty days – less than half the time of the westward journey. Armijo led the second group, with most of the purchased stock, and reached New Mexico in fifty-six days. A third party went south and followed the Yuma Trail to Sonora.

Gov. José Antonio Chavez of New Mexico was impressed with Armijo's trading venture. On May 14, 1830, he wrote to the minister of the interior in Mexico City:

On the eighth of November of last year, a company of about sixty men left this territory for California with the purpose of trading for mules with the products of this country. They have been traveling through unknown deserts until now, and have succeeded in discovering a new way of communication which passes numerous savage tribes, who, from all appearances, fled in terror. The Indians proved no obstacle and this contributed not a little to the success of the expedition.

From the itinerary which I am sending Your Excellency it can be assumed that the distance which separates California from this territory is not great...I believe that it would be greatly to the advantage of both territories for the Supreme Government to promote the commerce of this region, for which I entreat Your Excellency.⁷

The government in Mexico City responded in a favorable manner. Thus, Armijo and his band of packers inaugurated the commercial trade caravans between New Mexico and California that continued, usually on an annual schedule, through the 1830s and most of the 1840s.

The first party to travel over most of the great semi-circular route that became known as the Old Spanish Trail to California was led by William Wolfskill and George C. Yount in the winter of 1830-1831. Wolfskill, born in Kentucky in 1798, had followed the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico in 1822 and became the business partner of Ewing Young. During the ensuing nine years, Wolfskill handled business affairs of the partnership in Taos and Santa Fe, trapped along the Pecos, Rio Grande, and Colorado tributaries, and secured Mexican citizenship. Because of the latter, Mexican authorities had granted him a permit to hunt beaver, the ostensive reason for his trip to California. George C. Yount, born in North Carolina in 1794, had arrived in Santa Fe in 1826, and trapped in New Mexico and along the Colorado River. Wolfskill and Yount selected a party of about twenty men, both Americans and Mexicans, and set out from Santa Fe on September 29, 1830.

The Wolfskill-Yount Expedition kept no official journal or diary, but from later accounts by members of the party, and from Wolfskill's ledger (that fortunately has been preserved), the general outline of the journey can be traced.⁸ From Santa Fe they traveled northwest along the well-trod trail into what is now the southwestern edge of Colorado,

fording the many tributaries of the San Juan River along the southern edge of the San Juan Mountains. They struck the Colorado River just downstream from its confluence with the Dolores River and headed west across what they called "The Great American Basin" to the Sevier River in west-central Utah. They followed the Sevier south, then crossed the mountains southwestward to the edge of the Escalante Desert near present-day Parowan. They rounded the southern edge of the Escalante and climbed to the lush meadowlands of *Las Vegas de Santa Clara*. Known today as Mountain Meadows, it became a much favored resting place for California-bound travelers and the site of the Mountain Meadows Massacre in 1857. Following the Santa Clara River from its headwaters south to its confluence with the Virgin River, the expedition followed the latter to its junction with the Colorado. They rafted across the Colorado and followed Jedediah Smith's trail south to the Mojave villages near present-day Needles.

Wolfskill and Yount rested warily among the Mojaves for two days. They were aware, from the experiences of Ewing Young and other trappers, that the Mojave could turn suddenly hostile. The California-bound party had a mule-mounted swivel gun that was manned around the clock.

After obtaining some food from the Mojaves, they struck west across the desert, probably via the Mojave Trail, to the life-saving Mojave River. Traveling up the desert watercourse, they came across two horses apparently abandoned by horse thieves and

bartered for dried meat from a few Indians who lived along the river – probably Vanyumes. The party crossed Cajon Pass by an undetermined route and reached Los Angeles in early February 1831. Both Wolfskill and Yount settled in California. Wolfskill, after a short stint at hunting sea otter, settled in Los Angeles and planted California's first orange grove. Yount moved north and became a rancher and leading citizen of the Napa Valley.⁹

The second New Mexican trade caravan was led by Antonio Santi-Estevan. His pack train, loaded with woolen goods, left Santa Fe in January 1831, and reached Los Angeles in April. California authorities noted it as

*Thirty men from New Mexico, merchants in wool, bringing no passports.*¹⁰

Unfortunately, the Santa Fe traders had no Josiah Gregg, chronicler of the Santa Fe Trail, to describe their daily travels and adventures for posterity. Their arrival in Los Angeles was duly noted by the local authorities, and this remains a major source of information regarding the annual treks. From the California Provincial Archives, we learn that José Avieta, *capitan* of the 1833 caravan from Santa Fe, reached Los Angeles with 125 men on January 21, 1834. The woolen goods he brought consisted of “1654 serapes, 341 fresadas, 171 colchas y 4 tirutas.”¹¹

By the middle of the 1830s, the Santa Fe-Los Angeles trade route was fairly well established. The New Mexico governor appointed a *capitan* for each annual caravan. From fifty to two hundred men were recruited,

the most important being the *arrieros*, experienced muleteers responsible for packing and unpacking the animals each day. A train of two to four hundred *mulas de carga* (pack mules) was assembled. Merchants brought their woolen goods to be sold in California to the assembly point, where the goods were carefully recorded and loaded onto the mules. Each animal carried from two to four hundred pounds of merchandise and provisions. The caravans usually left Abiquiu, near Santa Fe, in October before snow blocked the passes and when the rivers to be forded were at their lowest. An average of twelve to fifteen miles were traveled per day – sometimes twice that distance during *jornadas de muerte* (journeys of death) across arid terrain between waterholes. They reached Los Angeles after about two and one-half months of travel.

The route followed by the annual trade caravans had several local variances, but generally it followed a great northern semicircle through present Colorado, Utah, and Nevada into southern California. It is here briefly detailed, with emphasis on the California end.

From Abiquiu, the trail headed northwest through open, rolling country to *El Vado* (The Ford), where it crossed the Chama River. It made a gentle climb over the Continental Divide into the basin of the San Juan River, a major tributary of the Colorado. Continuing in a northwesterly direction, the trail entered what is now southwestern Colorado and forded the Animas River a few miles south of present-day Durango. The path rounded the southern foot of

the La Plata Mountains, a sub-range of the Rockies, and traversed a great sage plain, still northwesterly, to the Dolores River. It entered present Utah and skirted the southern and western flanks of the La Sal Mountains, through increasingly dry terrain, to the mighty Colorado River near today's Moab. In seasons of scant precipitation in the Rockies, the source of the Colorado, it was possible to ford the river. Usually the crossing was made in rafts. The trail then traversed desert country to the Green River, which was forded a few miles north of the present-day community of Green River. It curved west, then southwest, to the Sevier River near today's Salina, Utah. It followed the lush, well-watered Sevier south, then crossed the mountains to the Escalante Desert. It skirted the desert westward, then south, and ascended into the well-watered, verdant Mountain Meadows. Here caravans might rest a few days to allow the animals to replenish their strength in preparation for the *jornadas de muerte* ahead.

From Las Vegas de Santa Clara, the trail led southwest down Santa Clara Creek and crossed a low divide in the Beaver Dam Mountains before descending to the Virgin River near present Littlefield, Arizona. The path descended the Virgin for several miles, then crossed an arid plateau westward into present Nevada, to *Rio Atascoso*, the Muddy River. From the Muddy, caravans faced a sixty-mile waterless stretch to *Las Vegas de Quintana* or *Ojo del Gaetan* (Gaetan Spring), today's Las Vegas, Nevada. Here was another lush, green oasis to rest up for the terrible *jornadas* ahead. >>>

From Las Vegas, the trail headed west-southwest to Cottonwood Spring, near present-day Blue Diamond, Nevada, and climbed over Mountain Springs Pass in the Spring Range before dropping to Stump Springs near the present California-Nevada border, a distance of about forty-four miles. The path then traversed the arid Pahrump and California valleys in a west-southwest direction and crossed Emigrant Pass in the Nopah Range to Resting Springs, known to the caravans as *Ojo de Archillette*. A small sandy basin with water and willow bushes provided another resting place.

Five miles west was the Amargosa River, a capricious watercourse that flows underground as much as it flows on the surface. Amargosa means bitter in Spanish, and the waters were unpleasant to drink. The trail proceeded southwest along the Amargosa some twelve miles to the riverbed's big bend, not far from the southern end of Death Valley. From the bend, caravans traveled due south four miles to Salt Spring. As the name implies, the scant water was salty, and those who indulged themselves often became sick. From Salt Spring, a final twenty-one-mile dry *jornada* was made south, then southwest around the base of the Avawatz Mountains and over rock-strewn Red Pass to Bitter Spring, known to the caravans as *Aqua del Tomaso* or *Aqua del Tio Mezo*. The water here was of high sulphate content that gave it a bitter taste, but it was drinkable. From Bitter Spring, the route struck southwest, crossed the Alford Mountains via Spanish Canyon, and came to the much welcomed junction with the Mojave River, known

to the New Mexicans as *Rio de las Animas*. The Mojave was reached about eight miles east of present Barstow at a spot later known as "Fork in the Road," where the Old Spanish Trail and later the Salt Lake-Los Angeles Trail joined the old Mojave Indian Trail. Reaching the Mojave was an occasion for joy among the caravaneers, for it meant that their long desert journey was nearing its end and water would henceforth be plentiful. The trail then followed the river upstream, around its great bend, into what is today the community of Victorville, some fifty miles.

Here the Old Spanish Trail left the ancient Mojave River Trail and headed south up Oro Grande Wash.

The narrow and twisting wash was ideal for the hoofed mules, who favored trekking on the soft sand rather than the rocky, rutted desert terrain,

wrote Cajon Pass and high desert historian John Swisher.¹² The pack train route climbed gently south, then southwest up the sandy arroyo, across what is now called Baldy Mesa. Near the head of Oro Grande Wash, the trail turned southeastward to Oak Hills Wash, which it followed up to East Cajon Summit.

Evidence suggests that later Santa Fe-Los Angeles trade caravans short-cutted the route from the Mojave River to Cajon Pass by leaving the desert watercourse at what became known as the "upper crossing" (later known as Lane's Crossing) near today's Oro Grande, and headed directly south-southwest across Baldy Mesa to the pass. John C. Frémont gave a good account of this route.

On his second expedition in 1844, the great pathfinder left the San Joaquin Valley via Old Tehachapi (Oak Creek) Pass and traveled southeast across the Antelope Valley to the northern base of the San Gabriel Mountains. He moved eastward "close along the mountain" and struck the Old Spanish Trail a few miles north of Cajon Summit. On April 20, 1844, 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.*¹³

Frémont and his men turned north on the trail and reached the Mojave River in fifteen miles.

Some travelers, but apparently none of the trade caravans, followed the old trail up the Mojave River to its forks. There, they turned up the West Fork to Summit Valley, which they followed west to the easternmost notch of Cajon Summit.

Cajon Pass, more correctly Cajon Summit, is not a pass in the usual sense of the word. It consists of a long, undulating ridge with a number of shallow notches that separate the upper basin of Cajon Canyon from the high desert. (Upper Cajon Canyon spreads out into a sloping basin that can be likened to the eating end of a spoon.) The Old Spanish Trail passed through one of the lower notches, about one-half mile east of today's northbound lane of Interstate 15. In the 1830s and '40s, it was known variously as *El Cajon* (The Box), *La Puerta del Cajon*, and *El Cajon de los Mexicanos*. Dr. J. H. Lyman, who traveled the Old Spanish Trail with

the Rowland-Workman Party of 1841, called it “a peculiar break in those mountains through which there is a safe and easy passage.”¹⁴

From East Cajon Summit, the trail dropped southward down East Cajon Canyon to Coyote (later Crowder) Canyon, and down the latter into the main Cajon Canyon. It intersected the main canyon where today’s northbound truck weighing station is located. It descended Cajon Canyon southeasterly to a place later known as Sycamore Grove near present-day Helendale County Park. Just before reaching this point, the trail branched. Those anxious to reach journey’s end in Los Angeles turned southwest and went through the low gap now known as the Devore Cutoff (followed today by Interstate 15) to Rancho Cucamonga, at the southern foot of the San Gabriel Mountains. Others continued down Cajon Canyon into the San Bernardino Valley. The lush grasslands dotted with hundreds of grazing cattle and horses and laced with numerous streams were a welcome sight. The caravans then followed the well-traveled mission road to San Gabriel and on to El Pueblo de Los Angeles, completing the arduous 1,200-mile *jornada* from Santa Fe.

A trade caravan’s arrival in Los Angeles was greeted with mixed feelings. The authorities were suspicious and on the lookout for dishonest dealings and thievery, while merchants and much of the citizenry were happy to receive the woolen goods.

The New Mexican traders dispersed their woolen products all over Mexican

California. J. J. Warner, who arrived in Los Angeles with a trapping party led by Ewing Young in 1831, recalled:

*Los Angeles was the central point in California of this New Mexican trade. Coming by the northern, or Green and Virgin River routes, the caravans came through the Cajon Pass and reached Los Angeles. From thence they scattered themselves over the country from San Diego to San Jose, and across the Bay to Sonoma and San Rafael. Having bartered and disposed of the goods brought, and procured such as they wished to carry back, and what mules they could drive, they concentrated at Los Angeles for their yearly return.*¹⁵

The horses and mules obtained in California were the *raison d’être* for the New Mexican traders. The animals’ appearance in Santa Fe caused a sensation. California horses, and particularly mules, were much superior and more highly valued than those raised in New Mexico. What is more, mules bought in California for around eight pesos sold in Santa Fe for forty or fifty pesos, bringing the traders a handsome profit.¹⁶

The New Mexico-bound caravans reassembled in Los Angeles with anywhere from two to four hundred purchased horses and mules. Sometimes there were many more; the 1841 caravan was said to have departed with 4,150 animals. Usually, these caravans left Los Angeles in late March or April.

The return trip was plagued by Indian thievery and extortion, and the caravans never reached Santa Fe without losing some fifty to one

hundred or more animals. On the trail across the California desert and into southern Nevada, Southern Paiutes were the main threat.

*Bands of them would appear in the hills, following stealthily and hovering about like wolves.*¹⁶

They seldom attacked a caravan but would follow and pounce on straggling horses and mules. To get more animals to lag, the Paiutes would wound them with arrows poisoned with rattlesnake venom. At night several Indians would sneak into the *caballada* (herd) and drive off animals. Gwin Harris Heap wrote in 1854 that, *The Pau-Utah Indians are the greatest horsethieves on the continent.*¹⁷

When the caravans entered Utah, they were confronted with a totally different Indian adversary. Utes, led by their great Chief Walkara, were mounted on fine horses and armed with rifles. They stopped caravans and demanded tribute.

They were robbers of a higher order than those of the desert. They conducted their depredations with form, and under the color of trade and toll for passing through their country. Instead of attacking and killing, they affect to purchase – taking the horses they like, and giving something nominal in return, wrote Frémont in 1844.¹⁸ Walkara was too intelligent to steal the entire *caballada* and kill the New Mexicans. He knew this would destroy the Santa Fe-Los Angeles trade and end his annual tribute taking. So, his Utes would pick out the finest horses, usually twenty or thirty, and allow the caravan to pass through their country without bloodshed. >>>

Despite losing up to 20 percent of their horses and mules to the Indians, the New Mexican traders reached Santa Fe with enough animals to ensure a high return for their investment and continue the annual caravans. The profits on the California end of the trade were much less lucrative, an unintended result of the very Santa Fe trade that brought prosperity to New Mexico merchants and traders. To understand this we must look at what was happening in the coastal province during the 1830s.

The late 1820s and early '30s has been called the "golden age" of the California missions. This prosperity was partly the result of an increase in mission fields under cultivation, and more by a vast expansion of mission herds. Horses and cattle numbering into the thousands roamed the plains and hills of coastal California. Mission properties in land, agriculture, and livestock represented the greater part of the wealth of the province.¹⁹

The hide and tallow trade, conducted largely by Yankee sea captains from New England whose sturdy vessels rounded the Horn to the California coast, first made the missions' livestock wealth known to the outside world. Then, the opening of the Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe to Los Angeles brought the coastal province's abundance of horses and mules to the attention of many who were previously unaware of it. The temptation to steal from the herds became an irresistible lure for many. Runaway neophytes (mission Indians) had long absconded with mission livestock, but now New Mexican, American, and Indian marauders from as far

away as Utah began pilfering animals on a much larger scale.

New Mexicans were among the first. Fray Juan Vincente Cabot of Mission San Miguel complained to Gov. José de Figueroa in February 1833 that

*Since the New Mexicans have come into this province with the commerce of wool and the purchase of horses, the mission has suffered a great loss of horses and 108 mules. [I have] reason to suspect that the animals have been taken to New Mexico. At the close of 1832 several of them [New Mexicans] passed by the Rancho of Asunción and four colts and a mule were taken from the herd. After a few days others passed and took with them a mule with a forged brand.*²⁰

The theft of horses and mules in southern California was so extensive that the Los Angeles *Ayuntamiento* (city council, whose territory extended to Cajon Pass) enacted a regulation on January 8, 1833 to ensure the legality of all purchases by the New Mexico traders. The *alcalde* (mayor) of Los Angeles and the Commander of the Guard at San Gabriel were ordered to inspect the animals supposedly purchased by the New Mexicans, recover stock they believed stolen, and detain any trader or mule packer suspected of thievery. Los Angeles Alcalde José Antonio Carillo wrote to Governor Figueroa on February 18, 1833 that New Mexicans, posing as traders, had stolen at least one thousand animals during the preceding three months, and,

*If the matter is not checked soon everything in the country will be taken away by the robbers.*²¹

In March 1833, Sgt. Antonio Avila, leading a band of angry rancheros and soldiers from San Gabriel, followed a group of "traders" over Cajon Pass and surprised them in camp along the Mojave River. Avila and his men confiscated some two hundred horses and mules that had been stolen. Arrested was Juan Jesús Villapando, known also as "Chino Pando," leader of the gang. Villapando was brought to Los Angeles and imprisoned but escaped ten days later and fled to New Mexico.

Figueroa appealed to the governor of New Mexico for help in suppressing this thievery. He claimed that the "outrages" committed by New Mexicans had become so widespread that,

*...every man coming from that territory is believed to be an adventurer and a thief.*²²

Figueroa learned that the *Valle de Tulares*, the Central Valley of California, was a gathering place for New Mexican stock thieves and runaway Indians who helped pilfer the mission herds. Don Dámasco Rodriquez, dispatched with soldiers to break up this thieves' rendezvous, surprised three New Mexicans with four hundred horses and mules about to cross Tejon Pass en route to Santa Fe. He recovered the stolen livestock and brought the three men back to San Jose for trial. The three were found guilty and imprisoned, but two later escaped.

The California governor now took vigorous measures to curtail the thievery that was robbing the province of its most valuable resource. Figueroa ordered the military commanders at

the presidios of Monterey, Santa Barbara, and San Diego to scour the country for suspected horse thieves and recover stolen animals. Horses needed for the soldiers were provided by the missions and ranchos. All stock found in the Tulares Valley or along the Mojave River was to be considered stolen and the possessors arrested. All beaver hunters were ordered to leave the province. Trade with Indians was severely curtailed.²³

It had become clear to the governor that Americans claiming to be beaver trappers teamed with runaway mission Indians, Indians living in the interior valleys and deserts of California and the Southwest, and renegade New Mexicans to steal animals for the drive over the Old Spanish Trail to New Mexico. The concerted efforts of the Californios, soldiers, missionaries, and rancheros alike, along with cooperation from the governor of New Mexico (Villapando and other accused thieves were tried in Santa Fe), combined to ease the problem for several years. California-New Mexico trade over the Old Spanish Trail was regulated by authorities at both ends and conducted on a smaller scale.²⁴

Significant changes came to California over the final twelve years of Mexican sovereignty. After several false starts, secularization of the California missions began in 1834. This involved the conversion of the missions to parish churches, the release of the neophytes from supervision by the friars, and the breakup and distribution of the vast mission lands. José de Figueroa came up with a plan to secularize ten missions in 1834, six the following

year, and the last five in 1836. He appointed a civil administrator, known as a *majordomo*, for each of the secularized missions. By the end of 1834, ten California missions had been secularized, including San Gabriel, San Fernando, and San Luis Rey. The following year saw the secularization of San Diego, San Buenaventura, and San Luis Obispo. Figueroa died suddenly in September 1835, and the careful program he had instituted fell into disarray as a succession of mediocre governors squabbled over control of the province. Secularization slowed until 1844 when Governor Manuel Micheltorena finally disposed of most of the remaining mission properties. By 1846 only Mission Santa Barbara remained under the Franciscans.

Almost all of the extensive mission agricultural and grazing lands, along with the livestock, were awarded as land grants to Mexican Californios and foreigners (mainly Americans) who had converted to Catholicism and become Mexican citizens. Thus began the so-called “golden age” of the great land-grant ranchos when increasing multitudes of cattle and horses roamed the plains and hills of California west and south of the coastal ranges – the time of “the Cattle on a Thousand Hills.”²⁵ Although land grants in California commenced under Spanish governors as early as 1784, the great majority – over 600 in all of the province – were awarded by Mexican governors, starting with Figueroa in 1834 and reaching a fever pitch under governors Juan Bautista Alvarado in the years 1837 to 1842, Manuel Micheltorena in 1843 and 1844, and Pio Pico the final two years of Mexican rule, 1845 and 1846. By

the latter year, almost all the grazing lands on the seaward side of the coastal ranges were in private hands.²⁶

The great herds of cattle and horses that grazed the rancho lands became irresistible to desert Indians, New Mexican renegades, and a handful of unscrupulous American mountain men. Governor Figueroa, by enacting strong measures and providing for a military response, had reduced livestock thievery during the years 1833 to 1835. After his sudden death, political fighting among the various claimants for the governorship and a dispute over whether Monterey or Los Angeles should be provincial capitol diverted attention from the problem, and the burden of protection of the herds fell largely upon rancho owners themselves.

The rancheros and their *vaqueros* (cowboys) faced a constant problem of stock thievery. Recently freed mission Indians often absconded with animals and fled into the mountains of the Central Valley of California. Southern Paiute raiders from the Owens Valley region periodically swept in over Cajon Pass, quickly rounded up grazing horses, and beat a hasty retreat into the desert before the rancheros could react. The biggest threat, starting in the late 1830s, were the *Chaguanosos*, “adventurers from all nations,” led by a French-Canadian trapper named Jean-Baptiste Chalifoux. The Chaguanosos, based in New Mexico, consisted of around sixty men (the number varied from year to year), a motley crowd of American and Canadian trappers, New Mexicans, and an undetermined number of Indians. Chalifoux recruited this >>>

varied bunch of adventure-seekers and misfits ostensibly to trap the Southwest, but actually, as later events proved, to steal horses.²⁷

The Chaguanosos first appear in California records in January 1837, when a band led by “monsier Shalifu” harassed Missions San Gabriel and San Fernando, robbing citizens and stealing horses. In October 1837, from their base in the southern San Joaquin Valley, the Chaguanosos raided Missions Santa Inez and San Luis Obispo and ranchos in the vicinity. Altogether they got away with 1,500 horses that they wintered in their inland valley hideout before driving the animals to New Mexico the following spring. In 1839, Chalifoux’s band returned to the San Joaquin Valley where, in league with renegade Indians, he embarked on horse stealing forays against ranchos in the central California coastal regions. In February 1840 a force of cavalymen under Mariano Vallejo, military commandant of Mexican California, raided the inland valley hideout and captured fourteen of the thieves, “among them the notorious bandit chief Califa [Chalifoux].” Chalifoux later escaped and returned to New Mexico.²⁸

The Chaguanosos, minus their original leader but now augmented by a number of American trappers – Thomas “Pegleg” Smith, Jim Beckwourth, Levin Mitchell, Dick Owens, Phil Thompson, and according to some sources Bill Williams – continued to raid southern California ranchos. Also making horse stealing forays, sometimes allied with the Chaguanosos, were Paiute, Ute, Shoshone and Mohave warriors. Cajon Pass appeared to be the major point of entry and

egress for the horse thieves, and the ranchos closest to the pass suffered the most. Losing hundreds of horses and an undetermined number of cattle annually to the crafty robbers were Rancho Cucamonga, granted to Tiburcio Tapia in 1839; Rancho Santa Ana del Chino, awarded to Antonio Maria Lugo in 1841; and Rancho San Bernardino, jointly granted to three of Lugo’s sons – José del Carmen, José Maria, and Vicente and Diego Sepulveda in 1841.

The scourge of the rancheros, beginning in 1840, was a notorious Ute chieftan named Walkara, the “Hawk of the Mountains,” known as “Walker” to the Americans. Walkara, a born leader, superb horseman, and expert with firearms, has been called “The Napoleon of the Desert” because of his talent as a strategist, daring exploits, and ability to inspire fierce loyalty from subordinates.²⁹ For several years he had levied tribute on the New Mexican trade caravans as they passed through southern Utah. He and his band of Ute marauders, augmented by a number of Chaguanosos and American trappers, numbered some 150 heavily armed men in all. In 1840, they staged the greatest horse stealing raid in California history.

Walkara and his force rode the Old Spanish Trail from the Ute homeland to the Mojave River, where they divided into several groups to stage a coordinated attack on the Californios. Walkara led most of his Utes northwest, probably across Tejon Pass, into the San Joaquin Valley, from where they made a lightning foray on San Luis Obispo. During the night, the daring Ute leader stole into the corral where the best saddle horses were held and

made away with the entire band of choice animals. In all, Walkara and his men absconded with some 1,200 horses, which they quickly drove east into the San Joaquin Valley, then southeast, probably over Tejon Pass, to the rendezvous point on the Mojave River. Meanwhile, the rest of the raiding force, which was reportedly led by “Pegleg” Smith, headed for Cajon Pass. Jim Beckwourth is said to have acted as an advance scout. “Pegleg” and his raiders thundered over the pass and divided into several bands to plunder rancho herds from the San Bernardino Valley west almost to San Gabriel and south to San Juan Capistrano. In three days and nights, Smith and his men stole upwards of 2,000 horses (one source says 5,000). Most of the stolen animals were driven over Cajon Pass, while Smith and his pilfered stock are said to have left via San Geronimo Pass, then turned north through Yucca and Lucerne valleys to the big rendezvous on the Mojave River.³⁰

So great was the livestock loss that the Californios launched a concerted effort to recover the stolen horses and capture the thieves. Tiburcio Tapia, prefect of Los Angeles and owner of Rancho Cucamonga, was heavily victimized in the raid and organized pursuit efforts. Thirty men under Ygnacio Palomares, co-owner of Rancho San José in the Pomona Valley, set off first. A second party under Juan Leandry of Los Angeles soon followed. Deciding that more men were needed, Prefect Tapia released prisoners from the pueblo jail and sent them east under José Antonio Carillo a day later.

According to historian George Beattie,

Palomares and his advance party caught up with some of the raiders near The Monument, a natural landmark twelve miles northeast of Rabbit Springs in the Mojave Desert. Here Palomares was ambushed and defeated, and his party was scattered in its haste to escape. At least one Californio and one Indian were killed and several wounded. Palomares suffered the additional humiliation of losing all his horses. His men were obliged to walk back over Cajon Pass and down to Rancho San Bernardino, where they were met by Leandry's small force. Leandry, augmented by Palomares' survivors and now numbering twenty-six armed men, proceeded to Cajon Pass. Since the horse thieves were believed to number around one hundred, Leandry decided to await Carillo's arrival. Next day Carillo and his men reached *Camp de la Puente* – probably the camp in or near Cajon Pass where Leandry was waiting. Carillo took command of the combined force, which numbered 75 armed men and 225 horses.

Walkara's Utes and his Chaguanoso and American allies were slowed in their retreat by the huge drove of horses they were driving, many of which were suffering from exhaustion, thirst, and the scarcity of forage. Carillo and his force sped northeast to the Mojave River, then downstream, easily following the multitude of horse tracks. At a place called "Fork in the Road," where the Old Spanish Trail turned northeast away from the river, about eight miles east of present-day Barstow, the tracks became so fresh as to indicate that the raiders were not far ahead. When the Californios reached *Ojo de Agua de la Mesa* (probably Bitter Springs), Carillo left

his baggage train and raced ahead at a gallop. Several hours later, the Californios spotted a cloud of dust ahead. Next morning they surprised a party of about twenty bandits, many of them Americans according to Leandry, at Agua de Ramon (probably Resting Springs on the Old Spanish Trail east of Death Valley). The thieves fled in haste, leaving saddles, clothing, and cooking utensils. Carillo reported that he passed, along the trail, the carcasses of some 1,500 horses that had perished from exhaustion, thirst and hunger. The Californios, their own mounts exhausted from the furious pursuit, gave up the chase and returned to Los Angeles. Just how many horses reached Utah with Walkara and his cohorts is unknown; estimates run from a few hundred to twenty-five hundred.³¹

The great chase was an ordeal for the robbers. Ten years later, Thomas "Pegleg" Smith told Los Angeles newspaperman Horace Bell:

*They [the stolen horses] cost me very dearly. Three of my squaws lost brothers, and one of them a father, on that trip, and I came near going under myself. I lost several other braves, and you can depend on it that I paid for all the horses I drove away. Them Spaniards [Californios] followed us and fought us in a way that Spaniards were never before known to do.*³²

When the regular New Mexican trade caravan crossed Cajon Pass and reached Los Angeles in November 1840, Lt. Col. Juan Flores, military commandant at Santa Barbara, was ordered to

...go with an armed force to aid in the suppression of the New Mexican

*party which has just arrived...be on the watch for the party of robbers, who are called the Chaguanosos and are adventurers of all nations.*³³

The trade caravan proved legitimate, but the threat of horse stealing raids kept the Californios jittery and on guard.

Walkara continued to make lightning forays on livestock herds from New Mexico to California, although never again on the grand scale of the 1840 raid.

*His movements were so rapid, and his plans so secretly laid, that he never once failed in any enterprise, and scarcely disappeared from one district before he was heard of in another.*³⁴

The Old Spanish Trail from Cajon Pass as far as southern Utah was sometimes called "Walker's Trail." Today's Horsethief Canyon east of Cajon Pass received its name because thieves often drove their stolen animals down the canyon to the rich pasturelands in Summit Valley and along the West Fork of the Mojave River before heading them across the desert.

Californios made serious efforts to curtail the livestock thievery. The military commandant of Santa Barbara Presidio and the prefect of Los Angeles, as well as local justices of the peace, sent armed parties out to patrol Cajon Pass and other points used by the robbers. Rancho owners took their own defensive measures. The Lugos of Ranchos Santa Ana del Chino and San Bernardino maintained their own armed force. Antonio Maria Lugo and his son Vicente Lugo each led >>>

in pursuit of Indian horse thieves, although their results were often less than satisfactory. To head off Paiute and Mojave raiders coming through Cajon Pass and over the mountain via the ancient Mojave Trail, Michael White was given a grant of Rancho Muscupiabe, at the mouth of Cajon Canyon in 1843. White, known to the Californios as Miguel Blanco, was an Englishman by birth who had become a Mexican citizen. He built a fortress home of logs and earth on the bench of the mouth of Cable Canyon, overlooking both Cajon Canyon and the Mojave Trail. White was confident at first that he could stop the Indian stock thieves, but his optimism was ill founded. Not only did he fail to halt raids into the valley, but he lost all of his own livestock to the crafty raiders. After nine frustrating months, White abandoned the place.³⁵

Not only traders and horse thieves used the Old Spanish Trail. Beginning in the late 1830s, Americans bent on settling in California traveled parts of the trail. The earliest known group of Americans to journey from New Mexico to California with the intention to remain in the Mexican coastal province was the Slover-Pope Party of 1837. Isaac Slover and William Pope had been to California with James Ohio Pattie in 1828; both Slover and Pope then returned to New Mexico, married Mexican women, and applied for Mexican citizenship (whether it was granted is not known). Slover and Pope, with their wives and children and two others (making twelve in all), left Taos in the fall of 1837 and headed north into Colorado, following what later became known as the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail. They turned west over Cochetopa

Pass and descended the Gunnison and upper Colorado rivers into Utah. Continuing west, they forded the Green River and reached the valley of Utah Lake, some fifty miles south of the Great Salt Lake. The Slover-Pope Party then turned south and reached the main Old Spanish Trail at the Sevier River. The group followed the well-beaten trail south and then southwest and reached Los Angeles early in 1838. What is most noteworthy about the group is that it apparently traveled with wagons, the first to do so. Antoine Leroux, noted trapper of the Southwest, wrote to Sen. Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri in 1853 that

*Wagons can now travel this route to California, and have done it. In the year 1837, two families named Sloover [sic] and Pope, with their wagons and two Mexicans, went from Taos that way.*³⁶

Isaac Slover and his wife, Doña Barbara, settled in the San Bernardino Valley, first with the New Mexican colony just south of present San Bernardino, then at the base of the hill that bears Slover's name today. He was killed by a grizzly bear near present-day Wrightwood in 1854. William Pope settled first in Los Angeles and built a gristmill on the bank of the Los Angeles River. In 1841 he moved north to the Napa Valley. He died there two years later after accidentally severing an artery in his leg with an axe.

John Wolfskill, the brother of William Wolfskill who reached Los Angeles in 1831, was probably a member of the Slover-Pope Party. He left Santa Fe on October 17, 1837 and followed the same route as Slover and Pope, via Cochetopa Pass, the Gunnison

and Colorado rivers, and Utah Lake. He arrived in Los Angeles on February 14, 1838.³⁷ John Wolfskill lived for a time with his brother, William, and helped the latter develop his extensive Los Angeles vineyards. Later he went into business on his own.

The largest group of American emigrants to travel from New Mexico to southern California via the Old Spanish Trail was the Rowland-Workman Party in 1841. John Rowland, a native of Pennsylvania, traveled the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico in 1823. For several years he trapped beaver west of Santa Fe and in the Green River country of eastern Utah. Later he married a Mexican woman and settled in Taos, where he went into the mercantile business. William Workman was an Englishman who came to New Mexico as a young man and, like Rowland, hunted beaver for several years. He was with Sylvester and James Ohio Pattie on their trapping expedition to the Gila and Colorado rivers in 1827. He married a Mexican woman, became a naturalized Mexican citizen, and settled in Taos, where he ran a clothing and provisions store.³⁸

Both Rowland and Workman were acquainted with California through talking with trappers and traders. When they began making plans to journey to California, they found many other Americans living in Santa Fe and Taos eager to join them. One of them was Benjamin D. Wilson, born in Tennessee in 1811, who had reached Santa Fe in 1833. He trapped the Gila River country before returning to Santa Fe in 1835 and going into the mercantile business

with Josiah Gregg, one of the most prominent Missouri Santa Fe traders. Wilson bought out Gregg and operated the Santa Fe store on his own until 1841 when he sold out and made preparations to join Rowland and Workman on their trek to California.

There were motives other than a desire for adventure or a new home that prompted Americans living in New Mexico to leave for California. Texas, which won its independence from Mexico in 1836, claimed the Rio Grande as its western boundary. In 1841 an ill-fated party of Texans journeyed to Santa Fe to enforce their claim. Those who reached the New Mexico capitol were seized by Mexican authorities and sent to Mexico City as prisoners. Gov. Manuel Armijo suspected that most Americans living in New Mexico were secret supporters of the Texas claim. Rumors circulated that the governor would soon arrest the Americans and seize their property. It seemed to many Americans in Santa Fe and Taos that it would be wise to leave the province.

The Rowland-Workman party assembled in the frontier community of Abiquiu in early September 1841. The emigrant group consisted of about twenty-five men. The majority were Americans who had resided in New Mexico for several years. Some in the party were recent arrivals over the Santa Fe Trail, and there were a few New Mexicans of Spanish or Indian blood. Provisions were carried by a string of pack mules, and a flock of sheep was driven for food.

The California-bound emigrants set out the first week in September. They followed or traveled with the regular

annual New Mexican trade caravan, led that year by Franco Estevan Vigil. Unfortunately, no journal of the trip has ever been found, so details of the two-month journey are lacking. According to historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, they followed “the same route taken by Wolfskill in 1831.”³⁹ This may not be totally true, as Wolfskill detoured south from near the junction of the Virgin and Colorado rivers to the Mojave villages, while later travelers on the Old Spanish Trail did not. Benjamin Wilson dictated his “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico” for Bancroft in 1877, the year before Wilson died. He disposed of the trip in brief fashion.

*We formed a party and were joined by a large number of New Mexicans. In the first week in September, 1841, we started from our rendezvous in the most western part of New Mexico, a place called “Abiqui,” for California, we met with no accidents on the journey, drove sheep with us, which served us as food, and arrived in Los Angeles early in November of the same year.*⁴⁰

At another place in the manuscript, Wilson told of a fishing incident “on the River Sevier, in Utah Territory,” which placed the emigrant party on the Old Spanish Trail about halfway between Abiquiu and Los Angeles. The most extensive account of the trek was written by Thomas Jefferson Farnham in *Life, Adventures and Travels in California* (1849).

My friend Doctor Lyman, of Buffalo, who travelled from Santa Fe, in New Mexico, by the way of the Colorado of the West, to Upper California, in the year 1841, has kindly furnished me with some of his observations,... The Doctor’s

*route lay northwesterly, up the headwaters of the Rio Bravo del Norte [Chama River] – over the dividing ridge between those waters and the upper branches of the San Juan, and northward across these of the Rio Colorado of the West – down the northern bank of this river to the California mountains – and through these to El Pueblo de Los Angeles, near the coast of the Pacific.*⁴¹

Farnham’s geography is somewhat confused. Following the northern bank of the Colorado would have taken the party through the Grand Canyon, but he essentially described the route of the Old Spanish Trail. Farnham directly quoted Dr. Lyman:

*Between Santa Fe and Rio San Juan..., a distance of 150 miles, the traveller and his animals are sure to fare well; for most of the mountain sides and valleys abound in excellent pasturage and pure ice-cold water, trickling down from the heights where the melting snows feed the springs till late in the summer. After crossing the San Juan, in about Lat. 38’N., and approaching the valleys of the Skeetskadee [Green] and Grand – the country becomes generally sterile, and broken in every direction by deep ravines with perpendicular banks, opposing almost insurmountable obstacles to the traveller’s progress; ...the traveller crosses vast barren plains utterly destitute of water, and upon which vegetation is so scarce that there will hardly be a blade of grass to a square mile of surface!*⁴²

Farnham continued:

When Doctor Lyman passed >>>

*this desert, the sands were drifting hideously, and he was only guided in the right path across by the carcasses of the horses which had perished in previous attempts to pass it. And such appeared to be the saline character of the soil, and so destitute of moisture was the atmosphere, that the flesh of the carcasses, instead of being decomposed, was dried like the mummies of Egypt! From this sandy waste to the California Mountains, the soil is so hard that horses and other animals leave no tracks behind them.*⁴³

Farnham failed to mention the life-saving waterholes passed by the trekkers between Las Vegas and the “California Mountains” – Stump Springs, Resting Springs, Bitter Springs, and most of all the Mojave River. He did, however, give a good account of the tribulations faced by those who traveled the western portion of the Old Spanish Trail.

The annual New Mexican trade caravan reached Los Angeles ahead of the American travelers. Vigil, the caravan leader, reported to California authorities:

*I give you notice that a party of American merchants are coming, and with them are others who have the intention of residing in this country.*⁴⁴

Don José Castro, *comandante* at San Gabriel, went out to meet the incoming emigrants. He informed his superiors that they were peaceful and well-intentioned, and that many of them were naturalized or native-born citizens.

Most members of the Rowland-Workman Party planned to remain in California. John Rowland and William Workman applied for 48,000-acre Rancho La Puente, ten miles southeast of Mission San Gabriel in 1842, and they were granted the rancho by Gov. Pio Pico in 1845. Benjamin Wilson originally intended to continue on to China, but after several unsuccessful attempts to find a ship bound for the Far East, decided to remain in southern California. “I never got any grant of land, as I would not apply for Mexican citizenship,” wrote Wilson. “The Jurupa Rancho I bought from Don Juan Bandini.”⁴⁵

He purchased the ranch, located alongside the Santa Ana River just southwest of Rancho San Bernardino (today’s Riverside) in 1843, and the following year married Ramona Yorba, daughter of one of the owners of Rancho Santa Ana. “Don Benito,” as he became known, as well as Rowland and Workman, were prominent citizens of southern California until their deaths in the 1870s. Members of the Rowland-Workman Party who settled in northern California included William Knight, William Gordon, Albert Toomes, and Hiram Taylor.

From 1841 on, the Old Spanish Trail increasingly served a dual purpose, both as a route of the annual trade caravans from Santa Fe to Los Angeles and as a path for emigration. The majority of the emigrants traveling the trail in 1842 and 1843 were New Mexican families seeking a home in southern California. Some of the male family members previously had made the trip with trade caravans. While in Los Angeles, they learned that Antonio Maria Lugo, owner of Rancho Santa Ana del Chino, his sons José del

Carmen and Vincente Lugo of Rancho San Bernardino, and Juan Bandini of Rancho Jurupa were seeking families to settle on their ranchos. They wanted the families to serve as a buffer against stock thieves, who were stealing up to half of their horses every year. Lorenzo Trujillo, a member of the Rowland-Workman Party, and José Antonio Martinez de la Rosa, who came with Vigil’s trade caravan, visited the San Bernardino Valley and decided that the well-watered, grassy plain through which flowed the all-year waters of the Santa Ana River would be an ideal place to settle with their families.⁴⁶

Trujillo and Martinez returned to New Mexico and began recruiting families to accompany them to southern California. They had little trouble gaining recruits, who were enticed by descriptions of the lush agricultural and grazing lands in the San Bernardino Valley. They also desired to get away from the Abiquiu area, where Comanche, Apache, and Ute warrior bands periodically raided their villages. Nineteen families accompanied the two leaders over the Old Spanish Trail to Los Angeles in the fall of 1842, and ten more families joined the regular trade caravan the following year.⁴⁷

Trujillo and Martinez reached an agreement with Lugos that provided the New Mexican settlers with a half-league of land (about 2,200 acres) bordering the Santa Ana River just south of the present city of Colton. The New Mexican families were *to conduct themselves properly and repel any invasions that might occur.*⁴⁸

The New Mexican settlement on the bluff overlooking the Santa Ana River

became known as Politana or Apolitana, apparently deriving its name from Hipolita Espinosa who already lived there. They built adobe homes, dug irrigation ditches and planted crops. An 1844 census of Los Angeles and the territory under its jurisdiction, which included the San Bernardino Valley, revealed that the population of Politana was seventy-three.⁴⁹

The New Mexicans remained at Politana only two years. Disagreements with Vincente Lugo (who on one occasion shut off their irrigation water) caused the settlers to accept an offer previously given by Bandini for land at the northern edge of Rancho Jurupa. The new owner of Jurupa, Benjamin Wilson, was very much in favor of the move; in fact, he insisted upon it before he closed the deal to buy the rancho from Bandini. The New Mexican families were given individual plots of land, which the Lugos had not offered, and plentiful irrigation water. In 1845, they moved about three miles down the Santa Ana River to their new tract, known as the "Bandini Donation." They built homes on both sides of the river. The community on the north bank became known as Agua Mansa, and the one on the south side became Salvador or La Placita.

Ute and Paiute raiders, sometimes aided by ex-mission Indians, continued to swoop in over Cajon Pass and steal horses, which they drove eastward over the Old Spanish Trail. Although none of these attacks approached the magnitude of the great Walkara and "Pegleg" Smith raid of 1840, they were annoying to rancho owners. In 1845, Gov. Pio Pico, last Mexican governor of California, commissioned Benjamin Wilson, then alcalde of the

Jurupa district, to lead punitive expeditions against the Indian stock thieves. Wilson led three campaigns against the desert renegades, managing to kill some of the thieves, mostly ex-mission neophytes, and capture some women and children whom he returned to Mission San Gabriel.⁵⁰

Wilson's three expeditions failed to solve the problem. In October 1845, Walkara crossed Cajon Pass into the San Bernardino Valley in the guise of a peaceful trader. He and his Ute warriors suddenly surrounded and drove off a large band of horses. Vincente Lugo pursued the horse thieves over Cajon Pass and caught up with them along the Mojave River. Walkara and thirty heavily armed Utes repulsed Lugo and his men, and the latter returned to Rancho San Bernardino empty handed. Walkara drove the purloined animals via the Old Spanish Trail to Utah, where he continued to levy tribute on the Santa Fe-Los Angeles caravans.⁵¹

In February 1846, John Rowland wrote from his Rancho La Puente: *A party of Utes from the Big Lake [Great Salt Lake] amounting to forty under the command of a chief named Walker [Walkara] paid a visit to this country some time ago and as soon as they could steal a few horses they put away to their own country, without any molestation from this people, because nobody followed them.*⁵²

Mexican authorities in Los Angeles had long thought of building a fort at Cajon Pass, the major point of entry and egress for those thieves. Nothing came of this proposal. However, during the Mexican War in California,

in 1847, soldiers of the Mormon Battalion under Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke were stationed there "to prevent a passage of hostile Indians with or without horses." The troops were to

*...guard the pass effectually and if necessary to send out armed parties, either on foot or mounted, to defend the ranchos in the vicinity, or to attack wandering parties of wild Indians.*⁵³

The last Santa Fe trade caravan of which anything is definitely known traveled over the Old Spanish Trail in the fall and winter of 1847. Its arrival in Los Angeles was announced in the *San Francisco Californian*: *...a large trading party of New Mexicans have come into the country consisting of about 212, of whom 60 are boys: they have about 150 mules packed with blankets and articles for traffic. They bring safe guards from the commanding officer of Santa Fe, and were much astonished when called on to pay duties. Such a band of men coming partly armed of course excited apprehensions, and Col. Stevenson has made them come to Los Angeles and make certain stipulations. All at Los Angeles seem to think they came in good faith, and Carson says he knows many of them, and that there were friendly at Taos.*⁵⁴

The Santa Fe traders faced a new government and new regulations. The Mexican War was all but over and American occupation of the entire Southwest from New Mexico to California was a reality. Things would never be the same.

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The traders left Los Angeles for Santa Fe in late April 1848. A few days later, they were followed by an American party bound for Santa Fe led by Kit Carson. Lt. George D. Brewerton was a member of the Carson party, and to him we are indebted for a description of the final eastbound New Mexican caravan.

This caravan left Pueblo de Los Angeles some time before us, and were consequently several days in advance of our party upon the trail – a circumstance which did us great injury, as their large caballada (containing nearly a thousand head) ate up or destroyed the grass and consumed the water at the few camping grounds upon the route.

We finally overtook and passed this party, after some eight days' travel in the Desert. Their appearance was grotesque in the extreme. Imagine upward to two hundred Mexicans dressed in every variety of costume, from the embroidered jacket of the wealthy Californian, with its silver bell-shaped buttons, to the scanty habiliments of the skin-clad Indian, and you may form some faint idea of their dress. The caballada contained not only horses and mules, but here and there a stray burro [Mexican jackass] destined to pack wood across the rugged hills of New Mexico. The line of march of this strange cavalcade occupied an extent of more than a mile; and I could not help thinking while observing their arms and equipments, that a few resolute men might have captured their property, and driven the traders like a flock of sheep.⁵⁵

Brewerton's biased view, that of a

nineteenth-century American frontiersman, painted a colorful picture of the Santa Fe traders.

Walkara, the great Ute chieftain and nemesis of all who traveled the Old Spanish Trail, died on January 28, 1855 at Meadow Creek in the mountains east of present Fillmore, Utah. At his funeral, held high in the mountains, fifteen horses were slaughtered and their carcasses covered with rocks; two faithful wives were slain and placed next to him in the grave; food, rifles, bows and arrows were deposited for his use in the afterlife; and, finally, two terrified children, a boy and a girl, were buried alive to serve him.⁵⁶

Walkara's death was anticlimactic in the saga of the Old Spanish Trail. Travel on its roundabout route all but ended with the American conquest and the California Gold Rush. Within less than a decade, new wagon roads were carved through the mountain and desert vastness, routes that were more direct, easier to travel, and most importantly, accessible to horse-drawn wheeled vehicles. The eastern end of the Old Spanish Trail was all but forgotten until prospectors discovered silver in the San Juans of southwestern Colorado two decades later. The very year that the last New Mexico-bound trade caravan made its way east, the Mormons, newly settled in Utah, drove a wagon from Salt Lake to Los Angeles. Within a few years, the western half of the old Trail, from central Utah to southern California, became part of the Salt Lake-Los Angeles, or Mormon Trail.⁵⁷

End Notes

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2. Joseph P. Sanchez, *Explorers, Traders, and Slavers, Forging the Old Spanish Trail, 1678 – 1850* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997), 17-39.
3. Donald Cutter, "Prelude to a Pageant in the Wilderness," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 8 (January 1977); C. Clell Jacobs, "The Phantom Pathfinder: Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera and His Expedition," *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Summer 1992), 200-23. River's journal was rediscovered in 1974. See also Joseph J. Hill, "The Old Spanish Trail," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* (August 1921), 444-73.
4. Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Pageant in the Wilderness: The Story of the Escalante Expedition to the Interior Basin, 1776* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1950); Walter Briggs, *Without Noise of Arms: The 1776 Dominguez-Escalante Search for a Route from Santa Fe to Monterey* (Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland Press, 1976); Ted J. Warner, ed., *The Dominguez-Escalante Journal: Their Expedition Through Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico in 1776* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976).
5. David J. Weber, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971).
6. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 165-69.
7. Eleanor Lawrence, "Mexican Trade Between Santa Fe and Los Angeles, 1830-1848," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 10 (March 1931), 27.
8. Iris Higbie Wilson, *William Wolfskill, 1798-1866, Frontier Trapper to California Ranchero* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1965), 64-80, best covers the Wolfskill-Yount journey to California. William Wolfskill, "Ledger of Accounts, 1830-1832," is available at the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. See also William H. Goetzmann, *Army Explorations in the American West, 1803-1863* (Yale University Press, 1959; reprinted, Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1991), 47-48, and Donald E. Rowland, *John Rowland and William Workman; Southern California Pioneers of 1841* (Spokane: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1999).

9. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 141-51; Wilson, *William Wolfskill*, 71-77.
10. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 172.
11. Lawrence, "Mexican Trade," 30.
12. John M. Swisher, *Bits 'N Pieces of the Mohave Desert's Weathered Past* (Hesperia: privately printed, 1995), 171-72. See also, Eleanor Lawrence, "The Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe to California" (unpublished thesis, University of California, 1928), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. For a detailed log of the Old Spanish Trail route, see 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, 1994). I have relied primarily on Crampton and Madsen for the route description except for the Mojave River to Cajon Pass, where Swisher is the authority.
13. Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, *The expeditions of John Charles Frémont, Travels from 1838 to 1844, vol. I* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 674.
14. T. J. Farnham, *Life, Adventures and Travels in California* (New York: Nafis and Cornish, 1849), 318.
15. J. J. Warner, Benjamin Hayes, and J. P. Widney, *An Historical Sketch of Los Angeles County, California* (1876; reprinted, Los Angeles: O. W. Smith Publisher, 1936), 34.
16. Lawrence, "The Old Spanish Trail," 49-50.
17. Gwin Harris Heap, *Central Route to the Pacific* (1854; reprinted, Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1957), 234.
18. Jackson and Spence, *Expeditions of John Charles Frémont*, 1: 695-96.
19. Charles Chapman, *History of California: Spanish Period* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1921), 466-67.
20. Lawrence, "Mexican Trade," 27.
21. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 231.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco: History Co., 1886; reprinted, Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1966), 3:386.
25. The so-called "golden age" of the California ranchos is well covered in Robert Glass Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills: Southern California, 1850-1880* (San Marino: Henry E. Huntington Library, 1964), 19-31. "The Cattle on a Thousand Hills" is a much-used title from Cleland's definitive book on southern California during the pastoral age.
26. Almost every good history of California covers the secularization of the missions and the rise of the land-grant ranchos. See Chapman, *History of California*, 466-72; John W. Caughey and Norris Hundley, Jr., *California: History of a Remarkable State* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982), 73-74, 77-80; Andrew F. Rolle, *California: A History* (New York: Thomas Y Crowell Co., 1969), 112-20, 142-43, 155-58; Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills*, 19-32. Cleland deals primarily with southern California from 1850 to 1880, but gives an excellent summary of the rise of the ranchos under Mexican rule.
27. The best description of the Chaguanos and their activities in California is Eleanor Lawrence, "Horse Thieves on the Spanish Trail," *Touring Topics* (January 1931), 22-25. See also Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 184, 236-37, 242.
28. Lawrence, "Horse Thieves," 23-24; Janet Lecompte, "Jean Baptiste Chalifoux," in *French Fur Trappers and Voyageurs in the American West*, ed. Leroy Hafen (Spokane: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1995), 58-75. See also Albert R. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
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30. Sardis W. Templeton, *The Lame Captain: The Life and Adventures of Pegleg Smith* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1965), 139-43; Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 236-38.
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33. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 242.
34. Lawrence, "Horse Thieves on the Spanish Trail," 24.
35. Beattie and Beattie, *Heritage of the Valley*, 58.
36. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 198.
37. Ibid., 198-99.
38. Ibid., 199-200. Paul R. Spitzzeri, "To Seduce and Confuse: The Rowland-Workman Expedition of 1841," *Southern California Quarterly*, Spring 1998, 31-46. For Sylvester and James Ohio Pattie see Richard Batman, *James Pattie's West: The Dream and the Reality* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986).
39. Bancroft, *History of California*, 4:277.
40. "The Narrative of Benjamin D. Wilson," Appendix, in Robert Glass Cleland, *Pathfinders* (Los Angeles: Powell Publishing Co., 1929), 383.
41. Farnham, *Life, Adventures and Travels*, 312-13.
42. Ibid., 316-17.
43. Ibid.
44. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 213.
45. "The Narrative of Benjamin D. Wilson," 383.
46. J. C. Vickery, *Defending Eden: New Mexico Pioneers in the San Bernardino Valley* (Riverside, Calif.: Riverside Museum Press, 1984), 23.
47. Lawrence, "Mexican Trade," 36.
48. Beattie and Beattie, *Heritage of the Valley*, 59. R. Bruce Harley, "From New Mexico to California: San Bernardino Valley's First Settlers at Agua Mansa," *San Bernardino County Museum Association Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3 & 4, 2000.
49. George William Beattie, "San Bernardino Valley Before the Americans Came," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 12 (June 1933), 117.
50. "The Narrative of Benjamin D. Wilson," 383-5.
51. Beattie and Beattie, *Heritage of the Valley*, 66.
52. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail*, 251.
53. Ibid., 251-52.
54. *The Californian*, San Francisco, December 29, 1847.
55. George Douglas Brewerton, *Overland with Kit Carson: A Narrative of the Old Spanish Trail in '48* (New York: A. L. Burt Co., 1930), 58-59.
56. Bailey, *Walkara*, 168-72.
57. The Salt Lake-Los Angeles Trail is the subject of Leroy R. Hafen, ed., *Journals of Forty-Niners: Salt Lake to Los Angeles* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1954). See also Judge Walter Van Dyke, "Overland to Los Angeles by the Salt Lake Route in 1849," in *Annual Publications, Historical Society of Southern California* (1894); and Mary E. Foy, "By Ox Team from Salt Lake to Los Angeles, 1850 - Memoir of David W. Cheesman," in *Annual Publications, Historical Society of Southern California* (1930).

This article originally appeared in the *Overland Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Summer 1997, and the revised version originally appeared in the *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly*, No. 44, Winter 2000. ■

Up and Across Mormon Mesa with Bicycles

by Kenn and Lorraine Carpenter
with photos by Carol Corbett and KnL

Diaries and notes from the Trail and wagon days indicate that the Virgin River was crossed and recrossed perhaps a dozen times on the approach to the final crossing at Halfway Wash. On previous bicycle OST trips we had hoped to wade the river here, but couldn't, and so had backtracked 9.8 miles to the bridge at Riverside (12 miles west of Mesquite) and took SR-170 north to I-15.

This year Carol Corbett met us with her boat and trailer, and we ferried ourselves and all our gear across the Virgin. On the far side we unloaded and sent the empty boat back to Carol, now tethered with ropes from both sides of the river so it would not drift downstream into the bush. It worked great. In fact, when Carol tied the two ropes together and ran it through a pulley at the front end of the trailer, we were able to help pull the boat onto the trailer from across the river.

But then we were alone, and not sure what to expect. The first obstacle was 1/4 mile of six inch deep sand, and that meant pushing. At 1.0 miles there was a hill in front of us, and it was tempting to take the easy canyon left of the hill, but don't; turn sharply right and follow the sand! It was late so we made a nice camp at 1.2 miles.

The next morning at 2.4 miles from the river we had a great view of Virgin Hill on our left, to the west. One must look carefully and be observant to spot the bottom end of the trail where it blends



Pushing off across the Virgin River. It's a measured 85 feet wide here and about 2 feet deep today. The muddy banks hint of being 4 to 5 feet deep at times.



As we paddle across the river we drag a rope for boat retrieval. Mormon Mesa is prominent, and Halfway Wash is on the right. The OST goes 2.4 miles up the wash, and then will ascend westerly up Virgin Hill to the Mesa top.



A rope from both sides of the river keeps the boat from drifting downstream during the empty return.

into the bottom of the wash. But from this point most of the trail and its switchbacks are visible clear to where it broaches the rim. And if really observant you can spot the white pylon at the top, which actually sets back about 20 feet from the rim. This is Nevada Centennial Marker No. 3 (NCM #3) as referenced in *The Old Spanish Trail: Across the Mojave Desert* by Harold Steiner, page 110. See GPS notes at end.

The trail is exactly as depicted in the aerial photograph on page 82 of *In Search of the Spanish Trail* by Crampton & Madsen, but the lower 0.3 miles of the trail is not seen in the photo. The trail is 0.6 miles up, basically ascends a wiggling ridge line, and has two obvious switchbacks near the top. We measured an elevation gain of 405 feet from the wash; can you believe that diaries of the trail days said it was 400 feet!

Even more, to be there on the trail and imagining the wagons of post-OST days going up there is awesome. It becomes obvious why they double- and tripple-teamed and had every man pulling on a long rope in order to do the top 200 to 300 yards!

In fact, we double-teamed to push our heavily loaded bikes up one at a time in 100 to 200 foot increments. Crazy, yes, but what else were we to do; up was the only way out for us.

There are several places on the trail, especially the upper part, that are extremely eroded, and serious consideration should be given to reconditioning the trail top to bottom. It is a case of fix it or lose it. Nevermind that it is the OST; it is no longer pristine except in location, and will eventually be



Looking up at the mesa rim from the wash.



Pushing hard up the Trail.



At NCM #3 on the mesa rim.



Beyond NCM #5. Beacon is on peak just left out of picture. Trucks on freeway visible.



At NCM #6 at the freeway



Going under the freeway fence is our only way out.

worthless if not maintained.

Then we were on the mesa, and what a beautiful day. It was just noon time, so we had a hearty lunch of p&j on flour tortillas washed down with Gatorade. Then we headed true west, expecting to see the next pylon soon. After a bit we picked up a road track going in our direction and so stayed with it. In 2.8 miles we reached pylon NCM #4. The going was easy, saw one tarantula, and were careful to avoid the small cactus that are everywhere because repairing a flat in the heat of the day is a real sweat.

After the ritual of an apple and chocolate bar, we were off again, following the road track still basically true west. In the far distance ahead was the low

peak for the airway beacon. In 1.3 miles we hit soft red sand and had to push for 100 yards, then up to level ground and easy going again. Saw a number of barrel cactus on this stretch. At 2.5 miles from the last pylon we reached pylon NCM #5, and again a snack. Sure was wonderfully desolate out there!

The peak with the airway beacon was more prominent now and true west of us, but now we headed to the right of it at 270° true so we could avoid the ragged mesa rim. The road track was still suitable so we followed it. Truck traffic on I-15 was now quite visible, and at 3.9 miles from the last pylon we directly found pylon NCM #6.

It was getting late now, and we still

had a final set of obstacles; we had to somehow get under the fence guarding the freeway, and then we had to cross the I-15 high speed lanes and the median between them. This we did with great care, and then followed I-15 west to Glendale for a motel room. And yes, for dinner we had our usual can of salmon and can of baked beans, along with flour tortillas and Gatorade.

GPS notes:

Wash at river: N 36°39.603' x W 114°18.760'
 Pylon NCM #3: N 36°41.110' x W 114°20.419'
 Pylon NCM #4: N 36°41.019' x W 114°23.385'
 Pylon NCM #5: N 36°40.992' x W 114°26.133'
 Pylon NCM #6: N 36°41.648' x W 114°29.959'

Opinions expressed on trail maintenance are those of the authors, and not necessarily the opinion of OSTA. ■

Field Trip — Rancho Chapter

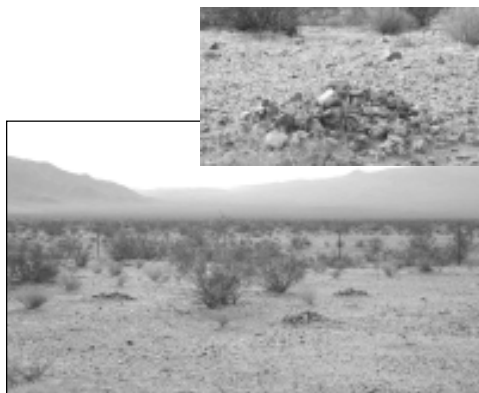
by Joanne Hinchliff, with photographs by Dan Dugan

Red Pass

Our base camp for the field trip was the Desert Studies Center at Zzyzx, and we tell you about that on page 7.

On overcast mornings of November 15 and 16, seven vehicles with eighteen OSTA members set out to see portions of the OST north of Baker in the Mojave desert. Our leader was member Neal Johns, who is also a veteran of the Desert Explorers. Neal had very carefully planned our weekend journeys.

We followed SR-127 north from Baker. At the northeast edge of Silver Dry Lake we turned west on the power line road that had recently been bladed. There had been a gentle rain storm about a week ago and we were fortunate that the sand was now fairly firm. Our first stop at 6 miles was to inspect some ancient geoglyphs that had been fenced for protection. Only a trained eye that had carefully searched this small area of the desert would have discovered these scattered small piles of rocks.



Geoglyphs near the power line road, and there were dozens of them; it was a step back in time.

Continuing west on the power line road, we soon exited north and headed for the Avawatz Mountains to find Red Pass Canyon. One must know that there is a pass, because it is not seen “until you are there”; its appearance is a real surprise!



First Peek of Red Pass

There is no noticeable elevation gain into the pass, it has a wide, fairly smooth floor, and is lined with steep rock faces. Only the upper portion of the canyon has the red rocks for which the canyon is named. Here we all



Once into Red Pass it is wide open, but of course sandy and gravelly. Such an easy passageway must have been a welcome sight to the packtrains!

stopped at the fence that separates us from the Fort Irwin Military Reservation. Just beyond the fence is Red Pass Lake, a playa or dry lake. The OST continues beyond here on its way west toward Bitter Springs.

On the return drive to SR-127 we stopped and made a short trek out onto the alluvial looking for either a mule single trace or a two-rutted wagon trace. After a while we think we found both, and of course we then had excitement. It is known

that the route did go across the alluvial, and there is rumor that Fort Irwin wants to acquire this land to enlarge their training base. An on-the-spot decision was made to have a GPS mapping weekend here to locate both traces. Cliff Walker will be the leader on March 6 & 7, along with Leo Lyman. Call Cliff or Joanne Hinchliff for details, which are also in the Rancho Chapter Newsletter. Also see page 37.

Salt Springs

After lunch we visited Salt Springs located at the southern end of the Salt Spring Hills. The Springs area has been designated an area of Critical Environmental Concern, and our walk through the area surely substantiated that concern. Approaching the spring we were at first delighted to see a large tree, but on further inspection we realized it was a tamarisk tree, an invasive, water sucking plant (phreatophyte) from the middle east. Among the heavy riparian vegetation were small areas of burned tamarisks that are being eradicated. The creek here flows north to join the Amargosa River. This was the route of the OST, coming south up the narrow canyon on their way west.



Part of the group walks in to Salt Springs, and here Emmett Harder tells the history of the spring and today's environmental concerns. The OST coming up from the canyon is in the background on the right.

Salt Springs Mine

From the Salt Springs we drove north on SR-127, and then took a dirt road east toward the Salt Spring Hills. We dead-ended at the gate for access to the Salt Springs Mine road. Over the years the mine has had many names such as the Mormon or Amargosa Mine. Addison Pratt, a Mormon missionary who was a member of the Jefferson Hunt wagon train, discovered gold here in 1849.

Emmett Harder, one of our leaders this day, now owns the claim to Salt Springs Mine. He led our group walking up the narrow canyon to view “his mine” and we saw the old mine shafts, part of an old stone crusher wheel, and remnants of the long abandoned stone buildings.



Emmett Harder gives the historical story of his Salt Spring Mine to our field trip group. From here it is a half mile walk up to the mine and the abandoned stone building.



From the remnants of the old stone building, looking north down the narrow canyon. The white area far in the valley is the west end of the Dumont Dunes.

Kingston Cutoff

On Sunday we again headed north from Zzyzx and Baker on SR-127. When we came to the Silurian Valley we turned off the highway and headed northeast and then east to the Valjean Valley. Driving up the valley, we first crossed the trace of the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad that was built in the early twentieth century to serve the various mining districts in Nevada and adjacent California.

The Kingston cutoff, used by wagons after 1848, met the OST in the Valjean Valley. At about 9 miles in we junctioned with the Kingston Cutoff route, took a walk down the trace and found numerous stones chipped by wagon wheels.



We then drove up the canyon to Kingston Springs, which had been an important water stop for those on the cutoff, had lunch, and explored.



Looking over the old cabin site at Kingston Springs. The canyon beyond is true east from the spring. There are two theories on where the route went from here for the next couple of miles to get into Kingston Wash.

Amargosa Canyon

Our next stop was the lower end of Amargosa Canyon. After coming back out from Kingston Springs, we continued north on SR-127 to the road into Dumont Dunes. Here we went east 4.4 miles, then exited north up the Amargosa River for 3.3 miles. This last stretch was for 4x4s only! We drove as far as the fence for the natural area and then retreated due to time constraints. While in there we walked on parts of the abandoned T&T railroad bed which was cut by several huge washouts. Beautiful country!



Slickensides along the Amargosa River. Massive and spectacular!

Our Trusty Leaders

Neal Johns
A real desert rat.



Cliff Walker
Knows his ruts!



Book Reviews

Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American

Empire, by Tom Chaffin (Hill & Wang), 2002, 559 pages, size 6x9, 21 black and white illustrations, 4 maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 hardcover.

Tom Chaffin, historian at Emory University, has provided a meticulously researched and engaging biography of John Charles Frémont, a complex man of many parts who is most remembered as an explorer and promoter of the American West. This detailed, thoughtful, welcome addition to knowing and understanding Frémont is generally accurate. There are, however, minor lapses such as repeating Frémont's mistake of having the Wasatch Mountains run south as far as the Cedar City area, when they actually end 160 miles north at Nephi.

Frémont was born the illegitimate son of an upper class Virginia woman and her French emigree tutor in 1813 at Savannah, Georgia. His upbringing was highly structured; nevertheless, he was expelled from the College of Charleston for poor grades. His educational experience became rather representative of Frémont's disregard for rules and authority.

At age twenty, Joel Poinsett made Frémont his protégé. His first survey work was as a civilian until he received an army commission in 1837. He gained experience exploring for a railroad company and then undertook his first mission

for the army in 1839 to help explore the upper Mississippi and Missouri valley. His work also took him to Washington, D.C. where he courted and eloped with Jessie Benton, the charming, graceful daughter of Senator Thomas Hart Benton, who helped Frémont move with ease among the influential in the capitol city. Equally important, Jessie became the explorer's secretary and editor of his scientific reports making particularly important contributions to the reports of his first two expeditions to the Rockies and beyond. These two expeditions touched most directly on regions along the Old Spanish Trail.

After a first westward expedition to the Wind Rivers in Wyoming, Frémont subsequently made four transcontinental crossings, none without danger. Because of Frémont's penchant for taking risks over difficult routes, bad fortune, and some bad judgment, his reconnaissances were fraught with adventure and peril. The exploits of celebrated scouts, former trappers like Kit Carson, further helped capture the American imagination.

Frémont's growing reputation was turned to social currency. He was charming, a capable self-promoter, and a manipulator. In 1843 he turned his view to the vast America beyond the Rockies. His trips, especially that of 1843–44, helped broaden America's cultural, political, and geographical vision. His reports popularized the west and convinced many of the suitability of the West for settlement. His fairly accurate charts and maps, and reports of the potential of the land and its

resources sparked "Oregon Fever" and helped Brigham Young determine to settle in the Great Basin. As an advance scout for American expansion, he fed a desire to fill the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Frémont was a stubborn man, self-assured and cocky. He was often unwilling to follow orders and went beyond his assignments and took unauthorized side trips that were often ill-planned and ended with his men eating pack mules and saddles to survive. He also transgressed international boundaries as he made incursions into Mexican territory that culminated in his helping foment the Bear Flag Revolution in California in 1846.

Despite his instinct for self-promotion, Frémont came to make many enemies of powerful people. He endured much controversy while experiencing many successes, but also many reverses. For example, he served briefly as military governor of California, but was court-martialed in 1848 for insubordination. He later served a brief term as United States Senator from the new state of California. In 1856, because he had developed strong anti-slavery credentials, he ran as the first Republican presidential candidate in history, losing to James Buchanan. At the outset of the Civil War President Abraham Lincoln appointed Frémont a Major General and commander of the Department of the West. He infuriated Lincoln when he issued a proclamation freeing the slaves in the Department and was removed from command.

>>>

After the Civil War, Frémont speculated in railroad bonds which brought to him a fair amount of public loathing and an eventual conviction in France for fraud. He took huge financial leaps without looking and emerged broke. To some he remained a hero but to many others he was a scoundrel. Nevertheless, he enjoyed the devotion of many friends and some degree of admiration from the public. Consequently, in 1878 President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed him territorial governor of Arizona. Because he was more interested in speculation and prospecting than governing, President Chester A. Arthur asked for his resignation in 1881. In 1890 Frémont died broke in New York City. His wife, Jessie, living in California, could not afford to attend the funeral.

Chaffin's fascinating account captures well the life and times of John Charles Frémont and helps us understand this daredevil adventurer who had a weakness for questionable causes. Not an easy man to get along with, Frémont pursued many trouble-plagued quests, but his career captured the public imagination, especially between 1841 and 1854. The life of this man of many parts – explorer, writer, soldier, politician, businessman, promoter – is well worth examining. Chaffin examines his life, warts and all, and helps us to understand Frémont and his role as a controversial, opinionated, charismatic figure central to the exploration of the American West.

Reviewed by
Dr. Wayne K. Hinton
Cedar City, Utah

Chapter Notes

La Vereda del Norte. The OST Wagon Train will travel again, this year June 20-23, from Antonito CO to near Saguache CO. They will stop in Del Norte June 22 for a country concert and silent auction to benefit the Chapter; OSTA members may help at the concert/auction in several ways. Info on joining the Wagon Train is at www.summittrails.com. There are various options for bringing your own horse, or wagon and team, or just walking/riding. Info on attending the concert and/or giving items for the auction is from Doug Knudson at [<rosejems@fone.net>](mailto:rosejems@fone.net). Last year's riders came from 8 states with beautiful horses and wagons.

- The Chapter Annual Meeting is Feb 28. Call Doug at 719-873-5239, or Max Lara at 719-274-5469, or Pat Richmond at 719-658-3122 for details.



Rancho. An OST mapping field trip is planned for the weekend March 6-7; coordinators are Cliff Walker and Leo Lyman. Everyone welcome. This will be "pristine" Trail we are looking for out in the aluvial brush. Phone or email Cliff Walker at 760-256-5570, [<cjwalker@mindspring.com>](mailto:cjwalker@mindspring.com) to tell him you are coming. Meet Sat. at the Mojave River Museum in Barstow at 8:30 a.m. for orientation, leave the Museum at 9:15 a.m., and arrive at the dry powerline campground 8 miles north of Baker 10 a.m.. If you want a Chapter newsletter with all the details for vehicle requirements and clothing and camping call Joan Hinchliff at 909-925-7068, or email at [<toci@pe.net>](mailto:toci@pe.net).

- Rancho Chapter Annual Meeting will be in May. Details later in Chapter newsletter.

Salida del Sol. Meetings are scheduled for February, March (a joint meeting with the Palace of the Governors Docents and the Santa Fe Trail Chapter), and April (when OSTA President Steve Heath will be visiting). For meeting info call Pat Kuhlhoff at 505-466-4877, or Peter Mackaness at 505-776-1831.

- Planning for placement of an OST marker at Abiquiu continues, and hopefully will be up by late spring.

Chapter Contacts

North Branch Chapter
Jack Nelson – Pres.
Grand Junction, CO
970-241-8143
[c/o edheusser@ATTBI.com](mailto:c/o_edheusser@ATTBI.com)

Las Vegas Chapter
Nick Saines
Las Vegas, NV
702-896-4049
greatunc@aol.com

La Vereda del Norte Chapter
Max Lara – Pres.
La Jara, CO
719-274-5469
[c/o creede@my.amigo.net](mailto:c/o_creede@my.amigo.net)

Rancho Chapter (South CA)
Joanne Hinchliff – Pres.
San Jacinto, CA
909-925-7068
toci@pe.net

Salida del Sol Chapter
Peter Mackaness – Pres.
Valdez, NM
505-776-1831
[c/o Pat at pgilk@earthlink.net](mailto:c/o_Pat_at_pgilk@earthlink.net)

William Workman Chapter – UK
William Ramsay – Pres.
Ulverston
Cumbria, England
[c/o david.fallowfield@btinternet.co](mailto:c/o_david.fallowfield@btinternet.co)

ZZYZX - Continued from page 7

development at Soda Springs. In 1907 a report printed in the *San Bernardino Sun* states, "Splendid stone buildings are being constructed on the site of the old fort that was established here by the great pathfinder, Fremont [sic], and in close proximity to the great Soda Springs." The Pacific Salt and Soda Company during this time was mining and processing both soda and salt at Soda Lake.

Sometime after 1912 the activity of the Pacific Salt and Soda Company disappears from the record. In fact most activity in this area of the Mojave Desert was at a low point. The borax mines in Death Valley had reached their peak. The T & T Railroad was contracting its services and trackage.

Around 1914 a new type of people entered this desert area with a new message. A religious group was established near Soda Springs. The story is that the founder of this settlement was Charles T. Russell who claimed that he was chosen by higher powers with the promise of finding gold at Soda Springs. In 1884 Pastor Russell founded The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. This was the legal agency of the Jehovah's Witnesses. There are some physical remains from his settlement here, namely some poured concrete foundations. The name "BETHEL" was painted in white on a rock face that can still be seen. By 1917 this religious group had left Soda Springs.

Soda Springs seems to be deserted

during the 1920's and 1930's with only occasional visitors. The 1940's saw a major change with the arrival of Curtis Howe Springer who under a mining claim took possession of Soda Springs and surrounding area. He named the place Zzyzx Mineral Springs and Health Resort. It is reported that he made up this name so that it would be the last one listed in the telephone directory.

He was a Methodist minister who claimed to have many honorary degrees. He proclaimed that he had various health products that were advertised over the radio beginning in 1928. He gave lectures to promote his philosophy at various places in Los Angeles during the 1940s. After World War II he acquired various war-surplus materials and encouraged jobless men from Skid Row to come to Zzyzx to recuperate and work. Thus he was able to engage in various building projects. The first block of buildings was completed in 1955, which he named Sunrise; later he built the two-story Castle that contains the rooms that today's guests use. Many more buildings were constructed at this resort. He was able to accommodate over a 100 people by the 1960s. Springer and his wife provided the guests with a mixture of religion, health foods, various treatments and relaxation in the desert. Many people enjoyed this mixture and returned many times. His fees were considered to be donations; one didn't have to pay.

His radio broadcasts over Los Angeles and a wider area made him almost a household name. He was on the air twice a night for six nights

a week. His popularity encouraged too many people who were truly sick to come to Zzyzx that he wasn't able to cure. Various complaints were made. The government became concerned with his activities and he was deemed guilty of false advertising and many other offenses. The Bureau of Land Management disputed his mining claims and eventually he was evicted from Soda Springs or Zzyzx in 1974.

In 1976, The California Desert Studies Consortium, of the California State University signed a five-year management agreement with the BLM to use the facilities for research and teaching. In 1981 the agreement was extended for 25 years.

1. Baley, Charles W., *Disaster at the Colorado: Beale's Wagon Road and the First Emigrant Party*, Utah State Univ. 2002.

2. Duffield-Stoll, Anne Q., *Zzyzx: History of an Oasis*, Santa Susan Press, University Library, California State University, Northridge, 1994.

■



Board Mtg. Summary November 22, 2003

The board met in Las Vegas with all but two board members present.

Actions taken on key issues were:

- 1. Elections:** Nominations are needed for Pres, V-Pres, and Directors for Nevada and Arizona.
- 2. Durango Conference:** Account closed. Profit was \$265.40, thanks to the donation of meeting facilities by the Fort Lewis College, Center of Southwest Studies.
- 3. Board Changes** due to resignations: Joanne Hinchliff appointed to CA Director, Judy Knudson appointed to Secretary.
- 4. Membership Coordinator:** A new non-board position was approved; Lorraine Carpenter appointed.
- 5. CMP Planning:** BLM and NPS want OSTA involved from the very beginning; we accept. (See page 1.)
- 6. OSTA Trail Logo:** Approved for use in Nevada OST marking project. This is same as on the lapel pins. [The NHT logo still needs NPS approval.]
- 7. PNTS 2005 Conference:** OSTA will offer to host it in Las Vegas NV.
- 8. Website:** We are in crucial need of an experienced web site designer who can work on a volunteer basis.
- 9. Membership Dues:** Effective on June 1 of 2004, regular memberships will be \$20/year. A sustaining membership of \$30/year will be added.
- 10. Retail Sales Loan:** Funds are sufficient to pay it off. Retail sales account has grown to about \$500 cash, and \$3000 in an inventory of 15 book titles and 100+ lapel pins.
- 11. Next Board Meeting** will be February 28 in Mesquite NV, and will include a second-day field trip to Mormon Mesa. [**Meeting changed to March 20 in Overton NV.**] ■

Treasurer's Report November 22, 2003

Assets - 11/19/03

Checking Account	8,676
T.R.Price Prime Reserve	8,313
Total	16,989

Liabilities - 11/19/03

UK Chapter Cash Account	7
UK John Sharpe Cash Account	50
Retail Sales Loan Account*	948
Outstanding checks	1094
Total	2,099

Net Assets - 11/19/03 14,890

Allocation of Remaining Assets

Operating Act (Gen Ledger)	9,348
Retail Sales Account*	1,352
Marker Fund- Protected Act	4,789
Spanish Traces-Protected Act	1,500
Liabilities (see above)	- 2,099
Total	14,890

*The board voted to pay off the remaining \$948.33 of the loan, and expressed thanks to the members who had backed book sales until it could become self-sustaining. ■



photo by KnL Carpenter

And who are YOU ?

Books in Inventory

The following trail and southwest related books are available from the Editors, still at conference prices. Send an email request for more details.

1. *Fur Trappers & Traders*, ed Hafen
2. *Old Spanish Trail*, Hafen & Hafen
3. *Ute Indians of Utah*, V. Simmons
4. *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, Brooks
5. *In Search of the Spanish Trail*, Crampton & Madsen
6. *Explorers, Traders & Slavers*, Sanchez
7. *Over the Rim*, Pratt
8. *A Newer World*, Smart
9. *A Guide to Tucson Architecture*, Nequette & Jeffery
10. *The Story of Agua Mansa*, Harley
11. *Ute Indian Arts & Culture*, ed Wroth
12. *Pobladores*, Quintana
13. *Forgotten Founders*, Udall
14. *Overland with Kit Carson*, Brewerton
15. *The Chavez Trail*, Byrkit
16. *The Palatkwapi Trail*, Museum of Northern Arizona
17. *America's Honeymoon Trail*, ed Ricketts, maps by Byrkit
18. *Beneath These Red Cliffs*, Ronald L. Holt
19. *The Domínguez-Escalante Journal*, ed Warner
20. Lapel Pins
21. Bookmarks
22. Fridge magnets
23. Back issues of *Spanish Traces*
24. Reprints of *ST* articles
25. Index to *ST*

OSNHT Logo
Proposed by OSTA



OSTA Annual Conference
June 5-6, 2004
Page, AZ

Page is a very special place for an OSTA conference; both the 1776-77 Domínguez-Escalante Trail and the 1828 Armijo route of the OST crossed the Colorado River here. Make a vacation out of your trip; there are endless things to see and do in the area, including the Glen Canyon Dam and Rainbow Bridge. Plan!

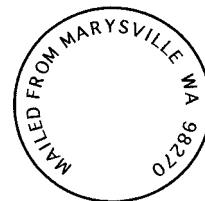
Conference theme is
**Forerunners and Founders of the
Old Spanish Trail**

Friday evening will be a social at the small Powell Museum. Saturday will be the symposium papers and the OSTA annual meeting. At the evening dinner will be celebrations for the 10th anniversary of OSTA and the 175th for Armijo. On Sunday there will be two field trips, one going east and one going west.

Pre-registration packets will be mailed in April with all details of schedule, speakers, lodging, fees, etc. ■



P.O. Box 7
Marysville, WA 98270



OSTA 11th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
June 5-6, 2004, Page, Arizona
Located on the Domínguez-Escalante route
and on the Armijo Route of the OST