

# *Desert Tracks*

Publication of the Southern Trails Chapter  
of the Oregon-California Trails Association

June 2018



*Messages from Tule Lake*

***Desert Tracks***  
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the Oregon-California Trails Association*

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**On the Cover:**  
***Messages from Tule Lake***  
**by Joan Klammer**

Joan Klammer, who paints in acrylic, ink, and watercolor, maintains a studio in Santa Ana, CA. Her recent work focuses on ancient places, exploring their complex geographic formation and human history. While on a road trip through northeastern California, she visited the Lava Beds National Monument at Tule Lake. Reflections on this site of tumultuous volcanic rock formations, on the petroglyphs, and on the stories of the Modoc people and ancestors who lived on this violent terrain resulted in this painting.

## From the Editors

The Modoc War of 1872 occurred near the Oregon-California border in a region where the Applegate Trail traversed the Modoc homelands. It was the only major Indian war in California and the only one where a general in the U.S. Army was killed. The last issue of *Desert Tracks* included a review of Jim Compton's new book *Spirit in the Rock: The Fierce Battle for Modoc Homelands* (Pullman WA: WSU Press, 2017). An award-winning broadcast journalist, Compton grew up in Klamath Falls and had a long-standing interest in the Modoc War. Following his retirement in 2006, he began working on the manuscript, which he completed in 2014. He died shortly thereafter, and his wife, Carol Arnold, a retired lawyer, edited the book and submitted it to the publishers. In this issue, we include an interview with Arnold which focuses on the causes of the Modoc War as well as the sources that Compton and Arnold used to establish the history of the conflict. The cover art is a painting by Joan Klammer, a southern California artist, representing her reflections on the Modoc people and their rugged homeland.

One of the Butterfield Overland Mail's stage stations in west Texas was at Grape Creek near San Angelo, approximately 30 miles from Fort Chadbourne. Waterman Ormsby, the lone passenger on the inaugural run, wrote that the best meal he had received on the journey was served at Grape Creek: jerked beef, bacon, corn cake, and coffee. In the last issue of *Desert Tracks*, Tom Ashmore presented his views on the location of the site of the old Grape Creek Station. Interpretation of data can be difficult, and even when evidence is used in a critical and informed way, historians may differ on the conclusions to be drawn. In this issue, we include a collegial rebuttal of Ashmore's article by Glen Sample Ely in which he argues that the Butterfield station at Grape Creek is in a different location, one that is approximately two miles from Ashmore's suggested site.

John Russell Bartlett's efforts to survey the Mexican/U.S. boundary are well known to southern trail enthusiasts. At the 2018 Southern Trails Chapter's symposium in Gila Bend, Tom Jonas gave a presentation on Bartlett's travels through southwestern Arizona. The focus of Jonas's talk was his determination of Bartlett's route and his campsites from Yuma to the Phoenix area. Together with the text of the talk, Jonas has provided this issue of *Desert Tracks* with

high-quality maps of Bartlett's travels.

Located on the northern edge of the Dragoon Mountains in Cochise County, Arizona, Dragoon Springs Stage Station was built by Butterfield's Overland Mail Company in 1858. One night during the construction, three Butterfield employees were killed by three Mexican laborers brandishing axes and a hammer. Butterfield employee Silas St. John – his arm nearly severed by the blow of an axe – was the sole survivor. Rose Ann Tompkins has contributed two 19th-century articles that discuss Silas St. John, the attack on the Dragoon Springs employees, and the surgery performed to amputate St. John's arm.

How did early trail travelers determine the number of miles they covered each day? In "Measuring America: Wagon Wheel Odometers," ex-surveyor Norman Wisner discusses how military engineers used wagon wheel odometers to obtain accurate estimates of distances traveled.

On December 29, 1863, the official swearing in of Arizona Territory's first officials took place in a snow storm at Navajo Springs. Tracy DeVault and John Krizek's "The Navajo Springs Marker Project" details the authors' efforts to repair and replace the marker at Navajo Springs that celebrates the first meeting of the government of Arizona Territory.

We are always pleased to receive letters to the editors. In addition to a letter from John Krizek on the Navajo Springs marker, we include in this issue a letter from R.D. Keever about the discovery of a Confederate camp and a section of the Butterfield Trail in central Arkansas. Keever is currently engaged in last minute on-the-ground exploration before developers destroy the site.

The obituary of Dave Hollecker is in memory of a long-time trail enthusiast and highly active OCTAn. Photos of Hollecker made when he attended a 1998 Trail Turtles' mapping trip are included. That trip focused on finding the emigrant route through Guadalupe Pass. Selections from Tracy DeVault's informal 1998 trip report allow DeVault to make a comparison between the route through Guadalupe Pass shown on an 1890's survey map and the modern road.

The books reviewed in this issue include Benjamin

Madley's *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873*. Although Madley is not the only historian to examine the genocide of California Indians, he has definitely written the most comprehensive book on the topic to date. We also include a review of Mark Gardner's *Rough Riders: Theodore Roosevelt, His Cowboy Regiment, and the Immortal Charge Up San Juan Hill*, a definitive and lively account of these men and their leader. In addition, Walter Drew Hill provides brief reviews of four recent books: Hal Simmons' *Final Act*, Jerry Rogers' *So Long for Now*, George Hacklers' *March of the Mormon Battalion through New Mexico*, and William Tallack's *Jolting Days Aboard the California Overland Express in 1860*.

We thank Jan Iwashita for providing the photos from the recent Gila Bend symposium that are shown on the inside back cover.

#### **Deborah and Jon Lawrence**



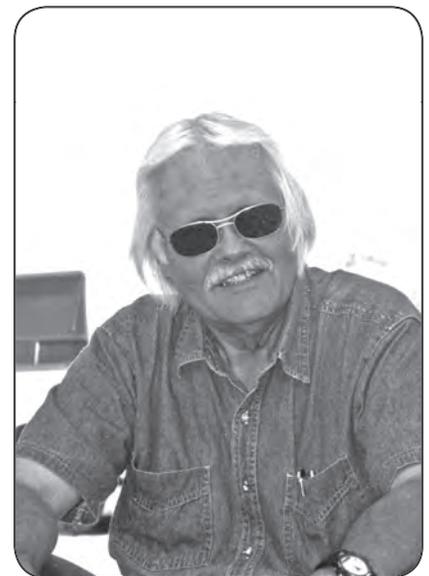
Confederate artifacts found at the Camp Holmes site by R.D. Keever.

#### **Dave Hollecker (1938-2018)**

David Hollecker was born in Montana and graduated from the University of Montana in Missoula in 1963. Following graduation, he worked as a CBS film editor and a real estate appraiser. He moved to Nevada in the early 1980s. From his base in Reno, he became an expert on mapping, preserving, and promoting local pioneer trails. Dave joined OCTA in 1988 and was an active member of the CA-NV chapter. He helped organize OCTA's 1996 convention and he co-chaired the 2002 convention; he led the effort to save a portion of the Beckwourth Trail just outside Reno; and he participated in cleaning, signing, promoting, and saving the Fenley Swales, 30 miles east of Reno. Hollecker was a major player in the Trails West project to put markers in place along the California/Oregon Trail in Nevada. As a board member and president of that organization, he worked with local city/county officials to obtain permission to place the markers, and he participated in many of the marker installation projects.

Dave joined the Trail Turtles to help map the southern trails, attending 15 mapping trips between 1996 and 2004. According to Tracy DeVault, this effort represented "quite a commitment, given that he had a two-day's drive at the beginning and the end of each mapping trip. He and Don Buck were the only experienced trail mappers to join the group, and he taught us a lot." [Hollecker participated in the trip to map Guadalupe Pass; see the article by Tracy DeVault in this issue.]

Dave Hollecker won the OCTA's 2002 Distinguished Volunteer Award and the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his enormous contributions to preserving and promoting the Oregon-California Trail. He will be sorely missed.



Dave Hollecker in 2002.  
photo by Judy DeVault

## Letter from Central Arkansas: Camp Holmes and the Butterfield Stage Road

The Butterfield Stage Road was the main east/west road passing through the area of Austin, Arkansas. After the Butterfield Overland Mail closed in 1861, the road continued in use as a major route during the Civil War. The Confederate Army used the road to move troops from the Trans-Mississippi to the theaters of war in the East. From Fort Smith to the little town of Des Arc on the White River, the road had stops or camping areas for the troops moving through Arkansas. The jumping off point was Des Arc where the soldiers caught steamboats on the White River which carried them to Memphis for departures to the war throughout the East. Many historical sites along the Old Butterfield Road are mentioned in the military war records, and much is said of the Austin area in officers' reports and soldiers' letters.

Four years ago, I found an abandoned cemetery dating back to 1831 on the west edge of Austin. [See *Desert Tracks*, June 2016, page 3.] At this cemetery, the Butterfield stage road split. The west route continued towards Fort Smith while the south spur headed to Little Rock and then back up the Arkansas River to rejoin the other branch on the way to Fort Smith.

Very little has been known about the Butterfield route west of Austin. Old residents of the area tell of a pioneer road passing through towards the west. The terrain is rough and is covered with briars, vines, and brush higher than a person's head. Nobody goes into this area but an occasional diehard hunter. Over the past two years, I have tried repeatedly to find the road, but I have always come away disheartened. I also knew there was a large Confederate camp (Camp Holmes) in there somewhere, but wondered whether it would ever be found.

Austin is currently experiencing a spurt of growth. One day last summer I noticed bulldozers and track hoes working the rough ground on a hill in the distance. On inquiring, I found that a land developer had purchased 92 acres for a subdivision. He was logging the marketable timber and cleaning and burning the rest to prepare the land for home sites. The land developer gave me permission to survey the site using metal detectors, but I was told that I had better do it quickly as the area would soon be streets, yards,

and homes. On December 14, 2017, I made a pass on the hillside and started finding Civil War artifacts, mainly bullets. Since metal detecting 92 acres can take one man a lifetime, and since time was a main concern, I recruited several friends to help me work the site. While the artifacts from the area are too numerous to mention, the finds include eight Confederate buckles, two Confederate Bowie knives, a powder flask, Confederate and Union bullets, buttons, coins, and camp equipment. We have kept our work very quiet as we want to protect the Camp Holmes site and keep the artifacts together as a single collection.

The Camp Holmes site is at the intersection of the Butterfield stage road and another Civil War road that ran north and south, going through Confederate Camp Nelson a couple of miles to the south. This latter road wasn't visible until the land had been cleared. We are currently photographing the Butterfield Stage Road to the west in areas where we can find it. I'm developing a power point program on Camp Holmes, the old roads, and Camp Nelson. I'm also working on giving the streets historical names in commemoration of Camp Holmes and the Butterfield Trail.

*R. D. Keever*



Civil War road running north into the Butterfield stage route at the woodline. Camp Holmes was located on both sides of this road.

Newly discovered section of the Butterfield road, two miles west of Austin.



## Letter to the Southern Trails Chapter The Arizona Territorial Governor's Monument

The article by Tracy DeVault in this issue gives background history on the Navajo Springs monument. I would like to add a few thoughts as to why this project is important and why it was undertaken by the Southern Trails Chapter.

Navajo Springs lies on the route pioneered by Governor John N. Goodwin's party and the Army that preceded them. This road became known in Arizona as the Overland Trail. Until the coming of the railroad, it was a major wagon road for people and supplies between Santa Fe and Prescott. According to Andy Wallace (emeritus professor of history at Northern Arizona University), Navajo Springs is one of the five most important sites relative to the establishment of Arizona Territory and the one most in need of attention.

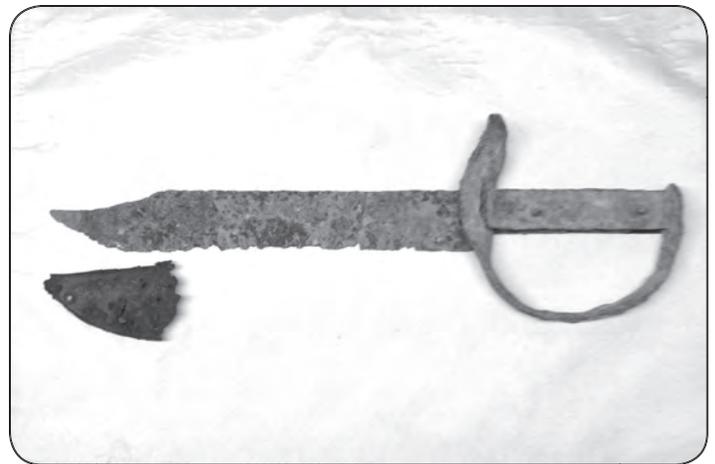
Four years ago, when I was doing a presentation on the journey of the governor's party, I learned of the existence of the monument. When I tried but failed to find the site, a Navajo woman put me in touch with a man whose grandparents had ranched the site. He sent me a picture of the monument which had fallen on its side. That photo inspired me to see that the monument was repaired. Last winter, while discussing the Overland Trail with Tracy DeVault and Richard Greene, I mentioned the issue of the broken monument and the frustration of not being able to get somebody to go out there and fix it. The two men immediately volunteered.

Tracy's article in these pages shows in great detail what has been done so far to restore the monument. The project is progressing nicely. Further work includes the following steps: placing a plaque that states that the restoration of the monument was accomplished under the sponsorship of the Southern Trails Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association; preparing the gravel foundation; attaching the upright section to the original base, hauling the restored monument (weighing over 2,000 pounds) to the site, and placing it on the new gravel foundation; and erecting a fence with a plaque at one corner describing what happened at the site. Finally, there will be a re-dedication event at the site, hopefully this fall.

At the recent meeting in Gila Bend, the Southern Trails Chapter established a fund to help restore the monument at Navajo Springs. Thanks to the contribution from the chapter and donations from two Prescott chapters of the Arizona State Questers, a large fraction of the money needed to cover the restoration cost has been raised. Randy Brown, chairman of OCTA's graves and sites committee, has agreed to provide funding for the plaque. At this time, another \$1,400 is needed to complete the project.

Thanks to Tom Jonas, more details are available on the chapter web site. Donations to the Territorial Governor's Monument Repair Fund can be sent to Lee Black, Treasurer, Southern Trails Chapter, P.O. Box 92225, Albuquerque, NM, 87119.

*John Krizek*



D-guard Bowie knife and scabbard found at the Camp Holmes site by R.D. Keever.

## Book Reviews

*An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873*

Benjamin Madley

New Haven: Yale, 2016.

ISBN 978-0-300-23069-7.

498 pages. Maps, photos, notes, bibliography.

Paperback, \$22.00.

Between 1846 and 1870, California's Native American population plunged from approximately 150,000 to 30,000. This decline was in part due to disease, starvation, and exposure, but in *An American Genocide*, Benjamin Madley stresses the other significant factor in the decline – countless murders and over 370 massacres carried out by vigilantes, volunteer state militiamen, and the U.S. Army. He argues that, according to the definition given in the 1948 United Nations Convention, what took place in California was genocide. A professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles, Madley is not the first historian to examine the genocide of California Indians, but he has definitely written the most comprehensive book on the topic.

The population of California's Native Americans had already declined from 300,000 prior to Spanish colonization in 1769 to approximately 150,000 by 1846. The Spaniards created unfree labor systems, introduced Old World diseases, and sanctioned corporal punishment and sexual violence. After Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, the *Californio* economy was heavily dependent on Indian labor. The United States inherited the Mexican systems of enslaving and dehumanizing Indians.

Genocidal actions began early in the U.S. takeover of California, starting with the 1846 Sacramento River Massacre. Under John C. Frémont, Kit Carson and a band of troopers carried out a pre-emptive surprise attack on a Wintu village, slaying several hundred Indians including women and children. According to Madley, the Sacramento River Massacre was a “pedagogic killing”: it was done to teach a lesson to California Indians not to resist white people.

With encyclopedic detail, Madley proceeds to enumerate the slaughter that followed. He refers to “vigilante” killing – murders carried out by individuals and small posses

not sanctioned by the local, state, or federal government. During the first two years of the Gold Rush, hundreds – perhaps thousands – of Indians were murdered by miners. The miners and settlers were often motivated by racism and greed. They considered Native Americans as competitors in their desire to rapidly acquire wealth. Heavily armed and predominately male, many of these newcomers were quick to turn to violence against Indians. Vigilante actions continued throughout the 1846-1873 period; in later years the vigilantes were often ranchers who killed Indians in retaliation for the loss of livestock. Vigilantes were not jailed for murdering Indians, and Indians were denied legal recourse. Indeed, local governments often put bounties on the heads of Native Americans.

The state of California sanctioned local militias to pursue and annihilate Indians. In retaliation for the 1849 Glanton Massacre near the confluence of the Gila River and the Colorado River, Governor Burnett called out for militiamen to form an expedition against the Quechan. This was the first California ranger militia operation supported materially by the state, and it set a precedent for the extended campaigns that occurred later. Madley recounts dozens of such militia expeditions, all which had the support of state legislators. These expeditions typically engaged in surprise attacks at dawn on villages, during which women and children, as well as warriors, were indiscriminately killed. In addition, following statehood in 1850, the state government passed acts that effectively stripped Indians of their rights. It established a system of Indian servitude, and it legalized the corporal punishment of Indians. Indians were not allowed to testify, serve as jurors, or work as attorneys. By denying Indians legal protection, legislators basically created an environment where violent kidnapping, murder, and slave raiding flourished. And deprived of their land rights, Indians lost even their reservation lands as legislators canceled federal treaty negotiations.

The federal government sanctioned the carnage by providing money and arms to support the militia operations. Federal troops were also directly involved in the bloodshed. Madley describes how the killing of two white ranchers in Kelseyville (Charles Stone and Andrew Kelsey) by some Eastern Pomo and Clear Lake Wappo people began the move towards statewide genocide. In retaliation, vigilantes

and Army soldiers began inflicting mass deaths. At Clear Lake, alone, they massacred approximately 400 Pomo people, including women and children. Approved by the U.S. Army and the U.S. Senate, the Bloody Island Massacre was the first large military campaign in California intended to exterminate Indians. Many more army expeditions against the Indians followed, in some of which federal and state militia troops were combined. During the Civil War, many of the California men who had enlisted in the Union Army stayed in the state. As U.S. troopers, these California Volunteers replaced small short-term militia operations. The Army's control of the operations, coupled with vigilante campaigns, proliferated the butchery.

The California press also played a role in encouraging the destruction of Native Americans by promoting racist attitudes. Indeed, there were frequent calls in the local press for "extermination" – the 19<sup>th</sup>-century equivalent of the word "genocide" – of the California Indians.

Madley's account of the genocide of California's Indian population is shockingly grim, and some readers might be overwhelmed by the numbers of killings – hundreds and thousands. The book is rigorously documented. Using federal and state records, memoirs, newspaper reports, legislative proceedings, and budgetary records, Madley carefully details nearly every known episode of violence involving California Indians between 1846 and 1873, chronologically on a year-by-year basis. (A 194-page appendix – available online for the paperback edition – lists each murder/massacre with dates, number killed, and sources.) Maps, voluminous notes, and historical illustrations complement the writing, which is well-organized and straightforward.

*An American Genocide* has won numerous awards, including the 2017 Los Angeles Times Book Prize for History and the 2017 California Book Awards Gold Medal for Californiana. *An American Genocide* is recommended for anyone interested in California history. Given that such genocide was not restricted to the West Coast (for example, the treatment of Indians in Texas was essentially similar), it should also be essential reading for anyone seriously interested in the history of Native Americans.

**Deborah and Jon Lawrence**

*Rough Riders: Theodore Roosevelt, His Cowboy Regiment, and the Immortal Charge Up San Juan Hill*

Mark Lee Gardner

New York: William Morrow, 2017.

ISBN: 9780062312082.

336 pages. Illustrations, maps, notes, index.

Paperback, \$16.99.

Historian Mark Lee Gardner has written a gripping, dramatic account of the Rough Riders – the mounted regiment drawn from America's western territories who eagerly volunteered to join the Army to drive the Spaniards from Cuba in 1898. Excited to take part in the war effort, Theodore Roosevelt resigned his post as the assistant secretary of the Navy on May 6, 1898, to join his friend Leonard Wood in recruiting this cavalry unit. In *Rough Riders: Theodore Roosevelt, His Cowboy Regiment, and the Immortal Charge Up San Juan Hill*, Gardner presents the story of the unit from its formation to the battles at Las Guásimas, Kettle Hill, and San Juan Hill, through the war's end, to its aftermath.

Two months after the *USS Maine* exploded in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898, Congress authorized the recruitment of Army volunteer regiments to fight in the Spanish American War. The First U.S. Volunteer Cavalry was one of three units, and the only one that saw action. Leonard Wood, who had earned a Medal of Honor pursuing the Apaches, was appointed colonel of the Rough Riders and Theodore Roosevelt was commissioned as lieutenant colonel. The musters were held in towns like Santa Fe, New Mexico; Prescott, Arizona; Guthrie, Oklahoma; and in Indian Territory, where many recruits were Native Americans. In May, the troopers gathered in San Antonio, Texas, for 19 days of preliminary training, after which they left for Tampa, Florida. The diverse unit, comprised of approximately 1,250 men, included cowboys, miners, Indians, lawmen, ranchers, and Ivy League college boys. The press dubbed the unit "Roosevelt's Rough Riders." The troopers' battle cry was "Remember the Maine."

In Tampa, the men learned that only a fraction of the Rough Riders would be sent to Cuba. They also discovered that there was insufficient traveling storage for their horses and mules on the overcrowded ships, so the animals had to

be left behind. Thus, “Roosevelt’s Rough Riders,” who had been trained as cavalry, ended up fighting on foot.

When the regiment arrived in Cuba on June 23, 1898, the men were assigned to the Cavalry Division of the Fifth Army Corps. Led by Major General “Fighting Joe” Wheeler, the cavalry unit included the Buffalo Soldiers of the Tenth Cavalry Regiments as well as the Rough Riders. The next day the Rough Riders saw their first action at a skirmish at Las Guásimas. Moving across unfamiliar terrain and suffering from the oppressive heat, the troopers were able to drive the entrenched Spanish infantry from their strategic position on the road to Santiago. As the American forces assembled for an assault on the city of Santiago, Colonel Wood was promoted and Roosevelt became commander of the Rough Riders. On July 1, the Rough Riders participated in the Battle of San Juan Heights. Roosevelt called it “the great day of my life.” Having secured a horse, he led his troopers who followed on foot in a series of charges up Kettle Hill towards San Juan Heights, the highest point of which is San Juan Hill. His troopers took heavy casualties, but by seizing these heights, American guns commanded Santiago’s harbor.

A freelance historian of the U.S. West, Gardner has previously authored accessible, quick-moving histories such as *To Hell on a Fast Horse: The Untold Story of Billy the Kid*. In *Rough Riders*, Gardner’s focus is clearly on Teddy Roosevelt and his legendary volunteer regiment. Using previously unknown primary accounts that include period newspaper articles, private correspondence, and diaries from public and private archives, he creates a “boots-on-the-ground” narrative. He sprinkles the book with quotes from Roosevelt’s letters and with comments from the volunteers. Gardner also discusses less familiar aspects of the story such as the Rough Riders’ relationship with the Tenth Cavalry African-American Buffalo Soldiers who fought alongside them at San Juan Hill.

The “splendid little war” lasted only ten weeks. Due to their valor, Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders quickly became the subject of myth. While readers who are interested in the politics of the Spanish-American War will have to look elsewhere, Gardner presents an unbiased view of the war and does an excellent job of setting the legendary version of events alongside what the troopers

actually did. For example, his narrative suggests that the enthusiastic attitude of both Roosevelt and his men was motivated as much or more by their desire for the glory of battle than by their commitment to liberating Cuba from Spanish rule. Gardner explicitly discusses the failures of logistics that led to near-starvation of and inadequate medical attention for the troops, even by the standards of the day. And although Roosevelt returned to the U.S. as a war hero, some critics disparaged Roosevelt for taking unnecessary risks – more than one-third of the Rough Riders were casualties.

*Rough Riders: Theodore Roosevelt, His Cowboy Regiment, and the Immortal Charge Up San Juan Hill* is a rousing, informative narrative that is a must-read for anyone interested in the role Roosevelt and his Rough Riders played in the American war in Cuba.

#### **Deborah and Jon Lawrence**

##### **Rough Riders in the Media**

Two DVDs are recommended for readers interested in learning more about the Rough Riders and the Spanish-American War. The first is the PBS home video *Crucible of Empire: The Spanish-American War* (2007). Directed by Daniel Miller and narrated by Edward James Olmos, this 3 ½ hour documentary places the Rough Riders in the context of the larger conflict between Spain and the U.S. that also involved the Phillipines. It includes early photographs and film footage of battle scenes, with a concise summary of the Rough Riders, and is backed by popular songs of the era. The discussions of the U.S., Cuban, and Phillipine politics demonstrate the importance of the Spanish-American War for the later development of U.S. foreign policy.

*Rough Riders* is a 1997 docudrama miniseries directed by John Milius and starring Tom Berenger as Theodore Roosevelt, Gary Busey as General Joseph Wheeler, and Sam Elliott as Captain Bucky O’Neill. While there is considerable dramatization in the film, it does a fine job of following the history from the debates in Washington to the formation of the Rough Riders and to the battles in Cuba culminating in the Battle of San Juan Hill. The scenes in the film closely correspond to those in Mark Gardner’s book. The film helps the reader visualize what took place in a highly graphic manner.

## Book Notes

### *Jolting Days Aboard the California Overland Express in 1860*

William Tallack

Regina, SK: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Monographs, 2010.

ISBN 9780986508714.

135 pages. Introduction, notes, index.

Paperback, \$19.95.

William Tallack was an English Quaker with a commitment to prison reform. He rode on a Butterfield Overland Mail coach from San Francisco to Syracuse, Missouri, in 1860. He kept a journal of the trip, and in 1865 he published excerpts from the journal under the title *The California Overland Express: The Longest Stage Ride in the World* in an English publication called *The Leisure Hour*. The book has recently been reprinted in Saskatchewan under the current title. It is divided into chapters, each of which relates the events of a given day of Tallack's 23-day journey. Tallack describes the scenery, the colorful characters he meets along the trail, the discomforts of travel over hard roads in a coach stuffed with mailbags, and the meager food. As pointed out by the editor in an excellent introduction, Tallack's opinions were typical of an Englishman of that era. He was afraid of expressing his anti-slavery opinions in Texas and Arkansas, but he also strongly disparaged the Hispanic citizens of Tucson and his account of Indian Territory is full of negative opinions about Native Americans. While his journal entries lack the detailed station-to-station mileages given in Waterman Ormsby's book *The Butterfield Overland Mail*, Tallack was an excellent writer and his descriptions are clear, vivid, informative, and enjoyable. Readers interested in the Butterfield mail operation will appreciate that this excellent account of travel on the stage line has been made publicly available.

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### *The March of the Mormon Battalion through New Mexico*

George Hackler

Self Published, 2016.

ISBN 9781533448422.

199 pages. Maps, photos, notes, appendices.

Paperback \$39.95.

George Hackler, a Southern Trails Chapter member who is an authority on the Butterfield Trail in New Mexico (for

example, see his article in *Desert Tracks*, January 2016), has now written a new book on the trail of the Mormon Battalion through the state. The focus is on the route that the battalion followed and the location of the sites where the men camped. After 10 pages of introduction, the book enters New Mexico at McNees Crossing on the Santa Fe Trail and follows the trail to Guadalupe Canyon in the southwest corner of the state. Hackler's best estimates of the route and of the location of the campsites are shown on a series of topo maps. Color photographs allow the reader to visualize the terrain.

Hackler is quite explicit that his focus is on the southern half of the state, where he has carried out most of his explorations. He is also very clear about the difficulties of determining the precise location of the route and the various campsites along the way: different members of the battalion gave different estimates of the daily travel distances; the names of sites and geographic features are different today than in 1846; and ranching and development in the last 170 years have changed the features of the landscape. Considerable space in the text is spent explaining the reasoning behind the author's estimates of the various locations. This aspect of the book will be very useful for those who are interested in the precise location of the route that the battalion followed in New Mexico.

An appendix titled "Travel Guide" gives driving directions to allow those traveling in automobiles to come as close as possible to the route and to the campsites. Coupled with the topo maps and the color photographs, and with the addition of historical material, appropriate diaries, and books that detail the march (e.g. Philip St. George Cooke's *The Conquest of New Mexico and California*), this travel guide would allow for a very enriching experience for the trail tourist.

George Hackler's *The March of the Mormon Battalion through New Mexico* is clearly of interest to those who wish to tour the trail and to those who wish to research the details of where the Mormon Battalion went in New Mexico.

### *Final Act*

Hal Simmons

Albuquerque: Good Type Publishers, 2016.

ISBN 978-0996668408.

271 pages. Paperback \$14.99.

The novel *Final Act* by Hal Simmons (the author of *Deadly Gold* [2002] and *Magic Lance* [2008]) details a con man's efforts to convince a wealthy Texan that he has discovered the Lost Adams Diggings. According to the legend, in 1864 an Arizona freighter named Adams joined a group that was guided by an Indian to a gold field somewhere in the highlands of west central New Mexico. The miners extracted a large quantity of gold, but then most were killed by Apache Indians. Adams survived and he spent the rest of his life trying to locate the canyon and the gold. He had a poor sense of direction, however, so his efforts to guide others to the mine were unsuccessful. The lost mine that bears his name has eluded prospectors to this day. (The legend of the Lost Adams Diggings is discussed in Frank Dobie's *Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver* [1939], in Jack Purcell's *The Lost Adams Diggings: Myth, Mystery, and Madness* [2003], and in Paul Harden's two-part article on the website [http://socorro-history.org/HISTORY/PH\\_History](http://socorro-history.org/HISTORY/PH_History).)

In *Final Act*, the con man and his psychopathic sidekick get mixed in with a set of memorable characters that include a beautiful opera apprentice, a handsome young lawyer who falls in love with her, and a blind Episcopalian who is attempting to build a spiritual retreat center in the high desert. The action takes place in and around Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Socorro. The names and locations of many recognizable sites (such as the St. Francis Cathedral, the La Fonda Hotel, and the Santa Fe Opera) have been changed, but readers who know the area might enjoy sorting out the sites where the action takes place.

Hal Simmons, the brother of historian Marc Simmons, has written a page-turning mystery. Will the con man achieve his goal of obtaining great wealth by scamming the Texan? Will the opera apprentice be given a major role? Will the lawyer convince the opera apprentice to love him forever? To find out, read *Final Act*.

### *So Long for Now: A Sailor's Letters from the USS Franklin*

Jerry L. Rogers

Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017.

ISBN 9780806156323.

432 pages. Maps, photos, notes, bibliography, index.

Hardcover, \$26.27.

Jerry Rogers' *So Long for Now* is a compelling account of the daily life of his brother Elden Duane Rogers during the period when the latter served on the *USS Franklin* in the WWII Pacific War. At the core of the book is a series of letters written by Elden to his family, as well as letters written to him by his parents and a girlfriend. Since the military censored letters from servicemen, Elden's correspondence is not very informative about where the ship was, where it was going, and what it was doing. To reconstruct Elden's experience in greater detail, Rogers utilizes primary sources, such as the deck logs and action reports of the *Franklin*, letters by and interviews with other sailors, and a variety of secondary sources. The result is a vivid description of life aboard a major aircraft carrier that was under attack by the Japanese air force. The book also gives an excellent outline of the history of U.S. actions and strategy in the Pacific. When coupled with this background material, the letters to and from home constitute extremely touching and informative documents of the thoughts and feelings of a brave and dutiful serviceman.

Elden worked in the V-1 Division, which physically launched the aircraft and also brought returning aircraft to a stop on the flight deck. This was incredibly dangerous work, and during enemy attack the men were highly exposed. Jerry Rogers gives graphic accounts of some of the disasters that occurred, as well as the near-escapes. On March 19, 1945, which was Elden's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, a Japanese plane bombed the *Franklin*. Elden was one of more than 800 men who did not survive the attack.

A member of OCTA's Southern Trails Chapter, Jerry Rogers served for over a decade as the senior officer for historic preservation at the National Park Service. Now retired, Rogers has written an informative and moving memorial, not only to his brother but also to all who served their country during one of the world's most horrific wars. *So Long for Now* is an impressive work that is relevant to both scholars and general readers.

**Walter Drew Hill**

## The Modoc War: An Interview with Carol Arnold

Jim Compton's recent book *Spirit in the Rock: The Fierce Battle for Modoc Homelands* (Pullman WA: WSU Press, 2017) draws attention to the relatively unexamined Modoc War of 1872-73. This series of battles constituted the only major Indian war fought in California and the only one in which a general of the regular Army (Edward R.S. Canby) was killed. Lasting less than a year, it was also the most expensive Indian conflict in American history.

The Modoc's ancestral homeland spanned the border of California and Oregon. In the late 1840s, the Applegate Trail brought white settlers through the Modoc area. Over time, expansion of white settlements began to undermine the Modoc way of life. Settlers, including the Applegate family, established cattle ranches in Modoc country. In 1870, the Modocs were removed from their Lost River village to the Klamath Reservation near Klamath Falls in southern Oregon to live with their rivals, the Klamaths. Modoc leader Keintpoos (called "Captain Jack" by the settlers) soon left the reservation with a group of his followers and returned to his village on the Lost River. In 1872, Major John Green sent troops to escort the Modocs back to the reservation. The Battle of Lost River ensued, during which the troops burned the village and killed at least two Modoc women. The Modocs escaped, one group going east around Tule Lake and killing settlers as they fled. Captain Jack and his band headed down the lake and converged on the rugged terrain of the Lava Beds on the south side of the lake. In the ensuing Modoc War, hundreds of troops were organized to capture 50 Modoc warriors and their families and return them to the reservation. In the initial battle in the Lava Beds, the Modocs were able to inflict heavy casualties before the troops retreated. A peace commission was organized to negotiate a truce that would induce the Modocs to return to the reservation. During the negotiations, the Modocs attacked the peace commission, killing General Canby and wounding Oregon Superintendent Alfred Meacham. The Modocs escaped to the south. In pursuit of the Indians, the army initially suffered humiliating defeats. The Modoc War ended six weeks later when Captain Jack and a handful of followers finally surrendered. The U.S. Army hanged four Modoc warriors, including Captain Jack. The heads of the corpses were severed and sent to a museum in Washington, D.C.,



Carol Arnold and Jim Compton.  
*courtesy Carol Arnold*

where they remained until 1984 when Debra Riddle Herrera, a Modoc descendant, had them returned home. The combatant Modocs were exiled to a reservation in Oklahoma, where many died of disease.

An award-winning broadcast journalist, Jim Compton grew up in Klamath Falls and had a long-standing interest in the Modoc War. Following his retirement in 2006, he began working on the book (originally titled *Kill the Chief*). He completed the manuscript in 2014, but died shortly thereafter. His wife, Carol Arnold, a retired lawyer, edited the book and submitted it to publishers under its current title.

In the following interview with Carol Arnold, which was conducted by e-mail exchange in early 2018, we focus on the causes of the Modoc War as well as the sources that Compton and Arnold used to establish the history of the conflict.

**DJL (Deborah and Jon Lawrence):** During the Modoc War of 1872, fifty Modoc warriors in a lava-bed stronghold held off hundreds of U.S. soldiers. It was the only major Indian war fought in California and the only one where a general of the U.S. Army (Edward R.S. Canby<sup>1</sup>) was killed. It was also a very expensive conflict. How did your interest in and knowledge about the Modoc War arise – was it during the process of editing Jim Compton's book or earlier?

**CA (Carol Arnold):** During the years Jim was writing *Spirit in the Rock*, I read and edited dozens of drafts. But even without that first-hand knowledge of the manuscript, it would have been impossible to know Jim and not know about the Modoc War.

Jim kept an office outside our home where he worked on the Modoc War. His office was piled floor to ceiling with books, old newspapers, maps, photos, and copies of original manuscripts. He made multiple trips to libraries in Oregon and California and interviewed dozens of Modoc descendants. Jim would invite friends to his office to hear the story of the Modocs, and his love of the Modoc War was contagious. His story captured all of us.

**DJL:** What new information on the Modoc War did Jim uncover when he researched the topic for his book? Did he have access to new source material unused in earlier studies? How did his emphasis differ from earlier accounts of the war, e.g. *The Modoc and Their War* by Keith Murray?

**CA:** Jim relied on the excellent studies by Keith Murray and Erwin Thompson for the military details of the Modoc War. His main interest, though, was exploring the causes of the conflict and the cultural clash that led to the tragedy.

Jim's original work on the hidden causes of the Modoc War differentiates *Spirit in the Rock* from earlier accounts. In particular, Jim uncovered some previously unnoticed records on the role of the Applegate family.<sup>2</sup> With some trepidation – the Applegates are revered in Oregon history – Jim focused on the Applegates' contribution to the cause of the Modoc War: their greed and self-dealing in the family's management of the Klamath reservation,<sup>3</sup> Jesse Applegate's secret business schemes, and the Applegates' duplicity about their financial interests in Modoc lands.

Jim was fascinated by the journals and letters of the ordinary soldiers who fought the war. Some of these sources had never been used before. Although the young men who kept these accounts saw events from a limited perspective – and their remarks were often (understandably) hostile to the Modocs and, to our modern ears, racist – these records offer first-hand views of army life and fighting in the Lava Beds.

Jim also referred to hundreds of letters left by Alfred Meacham<sup>4</sup> and by the Applegates. Meacham's handwriting in particular is hard to read, and the Applegates' correspondence is voluminous. But he felt that sifting through the letters and quoting key figures in their own words was worth the effort to bring the Modoc War narrative to life.

For the story of Captain Jack's skull,<sup>5</sup> Jim used archival materials from the Army Medical Museum. An early source for the skull story was Lee Juillerat's 1979 article in the *Klamath Falls Herald and News*. Jim's friend Van Landrum, who gave Jim a large collection of his Modoc War research, also began to track the disappearance of the skulls in his book *Guardhouse, Gallows, and Graves*.<sup>6</sup>

A journalist himself, Jim loved the colorful (and usually accurate) 1873 newspaper accounts in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *New York Herald*, the *New York Times*, and many other papers. The newsmen, especially Edward Fox of the *New York Herald*, left lively first hand accounts of life inside the Lava Beds. Robert Bogart, an investigative reporter with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, was a prolific source on Applegate corruption.

There is a wealth of published primary sources on the Modoc War, and these were crucial to Jim's writing and my editing of *Spirit in the Rock*. The most useful published collections included Peter Cozzens, *The Wars for the Pacific Northwest*, Vol. 2; *House Document 122* (a compilation prepared for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1873); and the Don Fisher Papers, a 10-volume collection of letters and other primary materials that is now online at the Klamath Falls Historical Museum website.

**DJL:** How do current histories of the Modoc War differ from older studies, many of which were written by the participants in the war?

**CA:** Recent histories of the Modoc War are of necessity based on the written record. The narratives written by participants in the war are perhaps more colorful, but not necessarily more accurate. Jeff Riddle, the son of Toby and Frank Riddle, published in 1914 *The Indian History of the Modoc War*, a lively history based on official reports and the recollections of people involved in the war. Riddle – who was a child during the Modoc War – tends to dramatize scenes and re-create (or invent) dialogue that may or may not be accurate.<sup>7</sup>

Alfred Meacham's *Wigwam and Warpath* is another invaluable first-hand narrative of the war. Meacham also left volumes of handwritten correspondence and official records as Indian Superintendent, member of the

Peace Commission, and political gadfly.<sup>8</sup> Meacham was a sympathetic (if patronizing) friend of the Modocs, but he tended to glorify his own role in the events. He wrote *Wigwam and Warpath* with an eye to sales and sometimes embellished his history with exciting – but perhaps fictionalized – details.

Several veterans of the Modoc War published books and articles about their experiences. These narratives – written decades after the war – are valuable accounts of military maneuvers and personalities, but they recall heroic battles through the rosy glow of memory.

**DJL:** What sources on Modoc history and culture did Jim and you find most useful? How reliable is the oral history and ethno-history of the Modocs?

**CA:** Unlike most earlier works, *Spirit in the Rock* emphasizes the ways in which Modoc culture and sacred traditions influenced events. Vivian Arviso, a Native woman who authored the “Introduction,” helped guide the editorial process in this regard.<sup>9</sup> I revised Jim’s sections on Modoc spiritual culture and added additional material, including the book title and the section epigraphs. For example, an early draft of the manuscript characterized the Modocs’ flag stationed at the Stronghold as a “pitiful relic.” The later version refers to the object as a “symbolic pole” whose “powerful spirits were still on the side of the Modoc warriors.”

Resources on the Modocs’ culture and spiritual practices include Gatschet’s *Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon*, Vol. 2; Jeremiah Curtin’s *Myths of the Modocs*; and Verne F. Ray’s *Primitive Pragmatists: The Modoc Indians of Northern California*. Leslie Spier’s *Klamath Ethnography* provides ethnological background, particularly on the Modocs’ villages, social structure, and language. *Tribes of California* by Stephen Powers, who spent time with the Modocs in the 1870s, is a colorful contemporary – if not always accurate – account of Modoc life and customs.

Cheewa James’ *Modoc: The Tribe That Wouldn’t Die*, published in 2008, is a unique source. James, a Modoc descendent, was given her name by the last survivor of the Modoc War. James’ grandfather was actually born in the Lava Beds. Her Modoc perspective is invaluable, and she enlivens the narrative with inventive dialogue and insights into Modoc society and culture.

**DJL:** There is ambiguity over the details of the Ben Wright Massacre.<sup>10</sup> Based on his research, what was Jim’s understanding of the event and what role did the massacre play in the later Modoc War of 1872-1873?

**CA:** Captain Jack’s father was killed in the Ben Wright Massacre, and the Modocs never forgot. Jim believed the incident played a direct role in the Modoc War: “The Ben Wright Massacre, committed under a white flag, embittered the Modocs for decades, and the betrayal would be resurrected during the catastrophic peace conference during the Modoc War.”<sup>11</sup>

Jim would also agree that the Ben Wright Massacre is a case study in historiography. Do we believe contemporaneous Modoc sources? Non-Modoc sources? Modern historical insights?

There is general agreement that Indian fighter Ben Wright lured the Modocs to camp by the Lost River on the pretext of peace and then shot and killed dozens of them, including women and children. Not long before, a band of Modocs had attacked a group of emigrants at a site called “Bloody Point,” murdering them as they slept; Ben Wright and his men were out for revenge.<sup>12</sup>

Various accounts disagree on the details, including the year of the Ben Wright Massacre (1852 or 1853?), the exact location of the massacre, and the number of Modocs killed. *An American Genocide*, Benjamin Madley’s recent study, reports that it is possible (but not likely) that as many as 90 Modocs were killed. Others count anywhere from 37 to 44 Modoc deaths.<sup>13</sup>

One of the most intriguing questions is whether Ben Wright also tried but failed to poison the Modocs. *Spirit in the Rock* says: “Wright equipped himself with a vial of strychnine and invited the Indians to dine with him. Wright ‘roasted a beeve,’ which he laced with the poison, and then urged them to come to a feast. But a Warm Springs Indian traveling with Wright warned the Modocs not to eat the meat.”

This version is based upon Toby Riddle’s story as recorded in the Modoc language. She said that Ben Wright butchered an ox and poisoned the meat to feed to the Modocs, but a Warm Springs Indian warned them in time. The *New York Times*

correspondent writing in 1873 also reported that a “Columbia River Indian named Bill” warned the Modocs not to eat the poisoned beef. But Harry Wells, a local historian writing in 1881 and a partisan of the settlers, said the poison story is not true.<sup>14</sup> Toby’s son Jeff Riddle in his 1914 *Indian History of the Modoc War* does not mention the poisoning, nor do most modern accounts.

Relying upon Toby Riddle, *Spirit in the Rock* presents a colorful version of the poison story and drops the discussion of alternate versions to an endnote.<sup>15</sup> But should we believe Toby Riddle because she was a Modoc? Should we believe the *New York Times* because the reporter had first-hand access? Or should we accept Harry Wells’ non-Modoc but near contemporaneous account? Do we take Jeff Riddle’s silence on the matter as evidence that he did not believe the poison story? Or should we defer to modern historians who have access to today’s sophisticated search tools and archival databases?

**DJL:** The Klamath Basin was home to three semiautonomous though culturally similar Native groups: the Klamath, the Modoc, and at least one community of Northern Paiute. Before the arrival of the American colonists in the 1840s, how did these three groups get along with each other? With the advent of the settlers, how did their relationships change?

**CA:** The Modocs and the Klamaths lived in relatively close proximity. They could understand one another’s language and sometimes intermarried. They occasionally ventured out together on what Jim called “slaving expeditions.” (Although the material got edited out of the final manuscript of *Spirit in the Rock*, it is known that the Modocs as well as the Klamaths captured and enslaved individuals from other tribes.<sup>16</sup>)

The Klamaths and the Modocs, however, were rivals, and open hostilities broke out when the two groups were forced together on the Klamath reservation. Today there is still a competitive spirit between Klamaths and Modocs, although they are formally lumped together in the “Klamath Tribes” along with the Yahooskins, a band of Northern Paiutes. A few years ago, there was a movement to create a separate Modoc tribe.<sup>17</sup>

A number of Modocs carry Paiute blood. However, I don’t know how the two groups interacted during the pre-Modoc War period. As far as I know, the Paiutes stayed on the

Klamath reservation and did not fight in the war.

**DJL:** We are interested in the background to the Modoc War. Of particular interest to members of the Oregon California Trails Association (OCTA) is the role of the Applegate Trail. Led by Jesse and Lindsay Applegate, who migrated west in 1843, the first Americans to travel through the Klamath Basin did so along the Applegate Cutoff, an offshoot of the Oregon Trail. Indeed, OCTA recently added Jesse Applegate to their “Emigrant Hall of Fame.” Can you summarize the role that the Applegates played prior to, during, and after the conflict?

**CA:** The Applegate Trail is central to *Spirit in the Rock*. The Applegate Trail is an icon for the Modoc tragedy. Without the Applegate Trail – which ran directly through Captain Jack’s village – the Modoc War might not have occurred.

The main narrative in *Spirit in the Rock* begins at the moment the Applegate brothers first saw Modoc country. The beauty of the land “stunned the Applegates,” Jim wrote. Both brothers had lost sons to drowning along the Oregon Trail and, wanting to find a safer route, they laid out their namesake trail. Jesse Applegate became famous (and, as Stafford Hazelett points out,<sup>18</sup> sometimes infamous) for his role in promoting the Applegate Trail.

But the route laid out for the Applegate Trail went right through the heart of Modoc country. Captain Jack and Jesse Applegate first met each other on the Applegate Trail near Jack’s village. A few years after the Applegate Trail opened, the massacre at Bloody Point presaged the Modoc War.

The Trail brought the flood of settlers that overwhelmed Modoc ancestral lands and culture. Jesse Applegate planned a railroad along the Applegate Trail that would run directly through Captain Jack’s village. Jesse Applegate backed an irrigation scheme to block the Lost River and drain Tule Lake, depriving the Modocs of their traditional supplies of food and water.<sup>19</sup>

Eventually the Applegate Trail ended traditional Modoc life. When the Modocs fought back for their homeland, war broke out.

**DJL:** There were a number of different players in the conflict, including the Modoc and the Klamaths, the

settlers and the army, the Indian agents, the Oregon and California politicians, and the bureaucrats in Washington D.C. Apparently there was dissension and lack of communication among these actors. Would the war have been avoidable if there had been better cooperation between the various groups? Or was the war inevitable, given the economic and political interests of the Americans?

**CA:** The Modoc War, like many significant events in history, began with what General Canby called “a grave mistake.” On November 28, 1872, Indian Superintendent Thomas Odeneal ordered a posse to head for the Modoc village and arrest Captain Jack.<sup>20</sup> Odeneal, a civilian, did not have authority to order a military raid. In fact, Odeneal’s order was contrary to General Canby’s instruction not to use force.

But when Ivan Applegate told Odeneal that Captain Jack was bellicose and uncooperative,<sup>21</sup> Odeneal used the report as an excuse to attack the Modocs. On Odeneal’s command, Ivan, his brother Oliver Applegate,<sup>22</sup> and a group of volunteers besieged the sleeping village in the early hours of the morning, killing a Modoc woman and two children. In retaliation, one Modoc band went on a killing spree and murdered fourteen settlers. Captain Jack led another group of Modoc warriors and their families into the Lava Beds. The Modoc War was on.

The Modoc War was probably inevitable. Better communication and cooperation might have delayed the start of the Modoc War. But the settlers and the Applegates coveted the Modocs’ land, and everyone – the army, the Office of Indian Affairs, the settlers, the politicians – wanted the Modocs out of the way. Alfred Meacham and others advocated a nonviolent solution to the Modoc “problem,” but this would have meant forcing the Modocs to live on the Klamath reservation and learn agriculture, Christianity, and white values.

Some Californians took a somewhat more humane approach, recommending a separate Modoc reservation on the Lost River. General Canby died trying to make peace with the Modocs, although he too was prepared to use force against them. But these good intentions – even if all the parties had communicated and cooperated effectively – could not have stopped the inexorable tide of exploitation

of Native land in the American West.

**DJL:** The Indians had good justification in their violent opposition to the Americans. Not only was their traditional homeland being taken over, but the reservation system in the 1870s did a very poor job of serving the Indians’ needs and interests, even in the provision of food supplies. Can you comment on this aspect of the problem?

**CA:** “To die, shot with a bullet, don’t hurt much,” said Captain Jack. “To go on a Reservation and die of starvation, hurts great deal.”

The Klamath Reservation was a lucrative Applegate family business. Reports circulated that the Applegates gave the Modocs “half blankets,” charged the government for 1,000 pound yearling calves that actually weighed several hundred pounds less, and invoiced beef at eleven cents a pound instead of the going rate of five cents a pound. One of the Applegates remarked to his brother: “Serious money could be made from the Indian service.”

The corruption and mismanagement of the Klamath reservation was not unique in the 1870s. The Modocs shipped to Oklahoma after the Modoc War became victims of the “Quaker Ring,” a network of unscrupulous Indian agents who stole from the government and starved the Native people they were supposed to protect.<sup>23</sup>

Even if the reservations had been run honestly, President Grant’s Peace Policy would eventually have destroyed Native culture. Reservation Indians were forced to give up their ancient traditions of foraging and hunting and take up farming. Families were not allowed to live in their traditional homes – like the Modocs’ underground dwellings – but they had to build “civilized” log houses. Reservation Indians were prohibited from practicing their Native religion and were expected to accept Christianity. Children eventually were taken from their parents, punished for speaking their native tongue, and required to adopt American culture.

**DJL:** How did the intense newspaper coverage alter the course of the war? Did journalists accurately portray the violence of American settler colonialism in the Klamath Basin to their readership? How did newspaper coverage

of the Modoc War lay the foundation for later historical interpretations?

**CA:** The Modoc War was a news sensation during most of 1873. Newspapers from around the world shouted headlines like “MASSACRE! Bloody Treachery of the Lava Beds Indians!” Readers knew the Modoc warriors by name and feasted on reports of bloody massacres and ferocious battles. The nation mourned the death of General Canby, and thousands poured into the streets of San Francisco to honor his funeral procession. The public was hungry for stories about the capture and execution of Captain Jack. School children were brought to see the execution, and over a thousand people attended the event. The public in 1873 – as now – relished gruesome details and were intrigued by the Wild West.

Boyd Cothran – author of the “Afterword” to *Spirit in the Rock* – recently published *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence* in which he argues that the sensational media reports from the Lava Beds created an American narrative of Native violence against innocent settlers that justified our cruel and inhumane treatment of Native peoples.<sup>24</sup> Cothran defined the myth arising out of the Modoc War: “Indians were the irrational aggressors and violators of a civilized nation’s just laws.”

Two recent books interpret the Modoc War as evidence of an American policy of genocide: Robert Aquinas McNally, *The Modoc War: A Story of Genocide in America’s Gilded Age* and Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe*. These books came out more than two years’ after Jim’s death, but he would not have agreed with the genocide thesis.

To be sure, racism and hatred played a large role in the destruction wrought upon the Modocs. General Sherman called for their “utter extermination.” But Jim thought the tragedy of the Modoc War did not arise out of an intentional policy to annihilate the Native people, but rather from the white men’s greed, indifference, and fear.

Although his sympathies lay with the Modocs, *Spirit in the Rock* does not sanitize the horror of the Modoc murders of the settlers or shy away from the Modoc treachery in killing

General Canby at the Peace Tent. Jim always searched for what he called “moral ambiguity.” He saw General Canby and Alfred Meacham as decent men trying to resolve an intractable conflict between the demands of the settlers and politicians and the sacred right of the Modoc to their ancient lands.

In his recent review of *Spirit in the Rock* (*Wall Street Journal*, December 23-24, 2017), Peter Cozzens – a noted historian of the Indian wars – wrote that “Compton’s book makes no excuse for the killing of Canby,” and he praised the book for its objectivity. Jim would have been pleased!<sup>25</sup>

**DJL:** How have filmmakers, popular art, and public commemorations contributed to the public’s imagining of the war? Why did a minor incident of frontier violence in a sparsely populated area of northern California become a national sensation? After all, the Modoc Indians were hardly well known outside southern Oregon and northern California. Furthermore, the decade of the 1870s was a period of suppression of Native American groups (Apaches, Comanches, Sioux, Cheyenne) throughout the West. Why did the Modoc War capture the interest of the nation’s 19<sup>th</sup>-century readers and why, in the longer run, has the Modoc War been overshadowed by other campaigns in the Indian Wars?

**CA:** The public is fascinated by gruesome stories and shocking headlines. The newspapers back in 1873 – like newspapers today – wanted to sell papers, and they paid reporters to travel to Oregon and live near the Lava Beds for months at a time. The newsmen competed fiercely to be first to get their stories out. It took days to dispatch reports from the Lava Beds to Eureka and then telegraph the news back to editors in New York or San Francisco or London. Weeks went by before artists and photographers could prepare illustrations. But this reporting created an international sensation out of that “minor incident of frontier violence.”

Interest in the Modoc War waned in the decades after the fighting ended because the news cycle – that period when the public hangs excitedly on a particular media story – moved on to other events. Today the news cycle lasts 24 hours or less. In 1873, the cycle was much slower.

When Captain Jack was executed in October 1873, major papers in New York, California, and around the country covered the story in detail. In October a year later, there was not a single story in the *New York Times* or the California papers about the Modoc chief.

Why has the Modoc War been overshadowed by other campaigns in the Indian wars? In the decades afterward, the Modoc War was the subject of a few fictionalized accounts. In 1954 the movie *Drum Beat* starred Charles Bronson as a villainous Captain Jack and Alan Ladd as the virtuous pioneer. But the Modoc War never had its *Little Big Man* at the movies or its *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* on the bestseller list.

In part, the Modoc War fell out of favor because it took place in a remote area of Oregon, the war involved relatively few people, and it's hard to make a hero out of General Canby, who was a rather colorless individual – a “prudent soldier,” as his biographer called him.<sup>26</sup> Captain Jack was a powerful leader and a mighty warrior, but unlike the more famous chiefs like Geronimo, he did not speak English and could not publicize his own heroic story. Perhaps also Captain Jack's reputation is tarnished because he did not kill a general in battle, but in the shadow of a peace tent.

But the Modoc War will have its day. Historian Patricia Nelson Limerick found the pattern of all the major Indian wars in the Modoc War.<sup>27</sup> In the last few years, four book-length accounts on the Modoc War (including *Spirit in the Rock*) have been published, and in addition Madley's book devoted more than 13 pages to the Modoc War. These publications have all received media attention. Recent events have heightened American awareness about dispossessed people in our history, and I predict that the Modoc War will once again capture the interest of the American public.

**DJL:** Twenty-seven years after the execution of Captain Jack, Congress granted Toby Riddle, a Modoc woman, a pension for her service as interpreter during the Modoc War and for saving the life of Alfred Meacham during the attack on the three Anglo peace commissioners. Toby Riddle quickly became an American celebrity. Using the stage name Winema, she traveled with Alfred Meacham's

lecture company where she was portrayed as a latter-day Pocahontas, a mythical Indian priestess, and a model for the Indians' ability to assimilate to white society. Even after her death, Toby Riddle's stage persona lived on as the mythic “good Indian” of the Modoc War. How do you account for her popularity and her perseverance in the collective memory of the Klamath Basin? Why has the myth persisted?

**CA:** Every war needs its heroes and heroines. Alfred Meacham gave Toby Riddle the name “Winema” and created the myth of the “Indian Princess” in his book *Wi-Ne-Ma (The Woman Chief)*. Her name lives on in the Klamath Falls area, for example in the Winema Forest and the Winema Lodge. The last time I was there, I saw a truck marked “Winema Electric Services”!

Modocs today for the most part revere Winema. Some Modocs consider her a traitor because she warned Canby not to come to the Peace Tent, but generally they respect her important role in the Modoc War. A few years ago, Debra Riddle, Winema's great-great-granddaughter, appeared on the History Detectives television show to opine on whether Winema had weaved a historic Modoc basket.<sup>28</sup>

Toby Riddle's own role in creating the narrative of the Modoc War has been overlooked. She spoke English and sometimes reported on events to the newsmen. She also was a translator of the Modoc trial transcript, the primary contemporaneous source of factual information about the war. No living person has the linguistic skills to know if her translation was accurate or whether she embellished testimony based on her own understanding of the facts.

The ethnographer Albert Gatschet, who was proficient in the Modoc language, visited the Lake Country in the 1890s to conduct research on the Klamaths and Modocs for the U.S. Department of the Interior.<sup>29</sup> Gatschet interviewed Toby Riddle in the Modoc language, transliterated her words, and published an English translation. Her account of the Modoc War, especially the events leading up to the killing at the Peace Tent, is a primary source that has shaped our understanding of the tragic events of 1873.

**DJL:** How is the war remembered today by the

descendants of those connected to the Modoc War?

**CA:** I don't know how Jim – who interviewed many Modocs both in Oklahoma and Oregon – would have answered this question, but in my experience, the Modoc War descendants are proud. They are proud of their Modoc heritage, and they admire the power and courage of their ancestors who fought to save the Modoc homeland.

I was a bit uneasy when a number of Modocs attended a book talk I gave at Klamath Falls, but I was happy that the Modoc descendants seemed to appreciate *Spirit in the Rock*. I am working on a short piece about the women of the Modoc War and am planning to interview descendants of the brave Modoc women who bore babies and fed their families in the Lava Beds during the harsh winter of 1872-73.

**DJL:** After the execution, the condemned men's heads were removed and shipped to Washington D.C.'s Army Medical Museum in a barrel of spirits. In 1904, they became part of the Smithsonian's "People of the United States" archaeological collection, where they remained for eight decades until they were reclaimed by Debra Riddle. How big an issue is repatriation of human remains for the current Modoc?

**CA:** The Modoc people consider the remains of their ancestors to be sacred. They do not want outsiders involved in handling, keeping, or even photographing the remains. Modocs to this day are deeply offended by a photograph that a newspaper published in 1979 showing the four skulls that were retrieved from the Smithsonian. *Spirit in the Rock* refers to a letter from a young soldier to his brother in New York enclosing a lock of Captain Jack's hair, which he kept as a souvenir of the execution. When I showed a copy of the letter to a Modoc woman, she was shocked and opined that the hair should be returned to the tribe.

#### Endnotes

1. Prior to the Civil War, Edward R.S. Canby fought in the Seminole and Mexican Wars. At the beginning of the Civil War, he was in charge of the Department of New Mexico. His troops were defeated by invading Texans at the battle

of Valverde, but the Texans were driven out of New Mexico following the Battle of Glorieta Pass. In 1865, he commanded the troops which defeated the Confederate forces in Mobile, Alabama. After the war, Canby was assigned to a number of different posts; he was put in charge of the Department of the Columbia in 1872. He was killed by Modocs in the spring of 1873 while attempting to negotiate a peaceful resolution of the Modoc War.

2. The Applegate family of Missouri emigrated west along the Oregon Trail to the Oregon Country in 1843. Brothers Charles, Jesse, and Lindsay Applegate and their families experienced so many hardships on the way that they decided to find an easier route to the Willamette Valley. Known as the South Road, South Emigrant Trail or the Scott-Applegate Trail, the route started at Fort Hall in present day Idaho and followed the Humboldt River before crossing the Klamath Basin.
3. Lindsay Applegate (1808-1892) was appointed special agent for the Modoc Indians in 1861. In 1865, he was appointed Indian subagent, responsible for treaty negotiations and other U.S. government dealings with the Klamath Indians. As special agent in charge of the Klamath Reservation, Lindsay Applegate gave his sons Oliver Cromwell Applegate and Ivan Applegate well-paying jobs on the reservation.
4. A Methodist minister, Alfred Meacham served as the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon from 1869 to 1879. In 1873, he was appointed chairman of the Modoc Peace Commission. His book *Wigwam and Warpath* is a major eyewitness account of the Modoc War.
5. Keintpoos, also known as Captain Jack (c. 1837 – October 3, 1873), was a chief of the Modoc tribe of California and Oregon. He and three of his warriors were hanged after a military commission found them guilty of war crimes. An army surgeon decapitated the chief and mailed his skull to the Army Medical Museum's collection of Indian crania.
6. Francis S. "Van" Landrum was regarded as expert historian on the Klamath Basin and especially the Modoc Indian War of 1872-73. He worked to develop a more accurate interpretation of the war and the sites at what is now Lava Beds National Monument.
7. Toby "Winema" Riddle (1848–1920) was an interpreter in negotiations between the Native American Modoc tribe and the United States Army during the Modoc War. She warned the peace commission of a possible Modoc attack, and she saved the life of Alfred Meacham when the attack occurred. Her husband, Frank Riddle, was a white settler who had

- emigrated from Kentucky to California during the California Gold Rush. They named their son Jefferson C. Davis Riddle, in honor of the Army general Jefferson C. Davis who ended the Modoc War.
8. The collection of letters received and sent by Alfred B. Meacham as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon from 1869-1872 is housed in Siletz, Oregon, in the tribal cultural collections of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz.
  9. Vivian Arviso is an educator with a specialty in curriculum development. She is a member of the Navajo Nation (Diné).
  10. In 1852 Ben Wright, a Quaker turned Indian killer, brought a group of men to a Modoc village on Lost River to retaliate for an earlier ambush by the Modocs of a wagon train of emigrants. In Compton's version of what happened next, Wright failed in an attempt to poison the Indians, but then slaughtered Modocs during a peace parley (*Spirit in the Rock*, 22-23). In Keith A. Murray's version there was no poisoning and no peace parley. With his men hidden nearby, Wright walked into the village, a pistol concealed beneath his serape, and shot the headman. His men opened fire – only five of more than forty Modocs escaped (*The Modocs and Their War*, 25-27). One of the dead was Captain Jack's father. The details of this event have been the source of endless controversy. According to Cain Allen of the Oregon Historical Society, "[There are] two accounts of the same event, one written by a white pioneer, the other by the son of a Modoc woman and a white settler, [that] serve as excellent examples of the difficulty historians encounter when working with written sources. Though both profess to have the same source, they differ dramatically in their retelling of what came to be known as the Ben Wright massacre . . . In the end, we will probably never know the exact details of what occurred on that bloody November morning ("Ben Wright Massacre of 1852," [www.oregonhistoryproject.org](http://www.oregonhistoryproject.org)).
  11. The quote is from Compton's *Spirit in the Rock*, page 23.
  12. Near Tule Lake, at what is now known as Bloody Point, a group of Modocs raided an emigrant party in 1852. Only three settlers survived the attack. Two of them were women, who were taken into the tribe, and one man escaped.
  13. For an account of how the Gold Rush stirred vigilante violence against California Indians, see Benjamin Madley's *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873*.
  14. See Harry S. Wells' "The Ben Wright Massacre."
  15. Compton's footnote (Note 15 for Chapter 2, page 266) gives his sources and is explicit in saying that there is disagreement about the poisoning.
  16. In the 1840s the Modoc, in order to obtain horses, captured slaves from nearby tribes and traded them to tribes living farther north (Murray, *The Modoc and Their War*, 11-13). Elsie Frances Dennis in "Indian Slavery in the Pacific Northwest" also discusses the tradition of Native slavery in the Northwest.
  17. For the Modoc's efforts to separate from the Klamath Tribes, see Lee Juillerat's account at <http://www.klamathbasincrisis.org/tribes/modocs/hopeformodocsidentity100709.htm>.
  18. Stafford Hazelett is the author of *Wagons to the Willamette: Captain Levi Scott and the Southern Route to Oregon, 1844-1847*.
  19. Jesse Applegate and his business partner Jesse Carr schemed to build a railroad and also to control the water of the Modoc basin (*Spirit in the Rock*, 41-45, 66-70).
  20. At the time of the Modoc War, Thomas Odeneal was the superintendent of Indian affairs in Oregon. Replacing A. B. Meacham, Odeneal was too new in his position to know much about the Modocs.
  21. Ivan Applegate (1840-1918) was a member of the family that helped open the Applegate Trail. In 1868 he was appointed Special Commissary in charge of several Indian tribes at Yainax, Oregon. He fought in the Modoc Indian War, after which he retired to sheep ranching in Alkali Valley, Oregon.
  22. Oliver Cromwell Applegate (1845 –1938) was an Indian agent for all of Oregon. In 1898, he took charge of the Klamath Reservation as U.S. Indian agent and served in the position for five years. He worked as a scout during the Modoc War.
  23. After the Modoc War, approximately 150 survivors were taken to an arid reservation in modern-day Oklahoma, where they suffered disease and mistreatment.
  24. Cothran is an associate professor of U.S. history in the Department of History at York University in Toronto, Ontario. *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence* focuses on the historiography of the Modoc War and provides a discussion of how Indians and non-Indians have remembered incidents of U.S.-Indian violence and the marketplaces in which those remembrances circulate.
  25. Peter Cozzens is the author or editor of 17 books on the American Civil War and the American West, including *The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West*. His review "A War with No Heroes" can be found online at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/review-a-war-with-no-heroes-1513978325>.
  26. Mark Heyman's biography of Canby is titled *Prudent Soldier*.

27. See Limerick's *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West*.
28. In 2010, Wes Cowan, of the PBS television show *History Detectives*, featured Debra Riddle Herrera, a descendant of Modoc Toby Riddle, to find out if a basket owned by an anthropologist in New Mexico was woven by Toby Riddle. ("Modoc Basket." *History Detectives*, Season 8, Episode 9, Story 2. )
29. Albert Samuel Gatschet (1832– 1907) was a Swiss-American ethnologist who trained as a linguist. He moved to the U.S. to study Native American languages.

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## The Route through Guadalupe Pass

Guadalupe Pass lies in Hidalgo County in the southwest corner of New Mexico near the state's boundaries with Arizona and with Mexico. Prior to 1846, a trail through the pass was used by Mexicans as part of a road between Janos in Chihuahua and Fronteras in Sonora. In 1846, the Mormon Battalion under the command of Philip St. George Cooke ran Cooke's Wagon Road along this trail through the pass on the way to the San Pedro River. This road was heavily used by the 49ers during the California Gold Rush. Later, the more direct route through Apache Pass was constructed.<sup>1</sup>

The road through Guadalupe Pass traverses private property that is jealously guarded by its owners. In recent years, there is also danger arising from smugglers moving drugs across the Mexican border. In April 1998, the Trail Turtles were given permission to access the Guadalupe Ranch and map the trail through Guadalupe Pass. We have included below edited selections from an informal trip report by Tracy DeVault that describes the outing. Apparently, the Turtles did not find much evidence of wagon travel through the pass, but they obtained scattered waypoints for rocks showing rust.

Following the Gadsen Purchase, the boundary between southern New Mexico/Arizona and Mexico was surveyed by William Emory and his Mexican counterpart Jose Salazar Ylarregui during the mid-1850s. As disputes between the two nations over the exact location of the boundary became more frequent, it was decided to perform a new survey. This was carried out between 1892 and 1894 by John Whitney Barlow and his Mexican counterpart Jacobo Blanco.

Recently, Norman Wisner obtained a digital copy of the map produced by the Barlow-Blanco survey. Tracy DeVault examined the map and concluded that it is highly accurate in its depiction of the geography and in its location of the road through the pass, which he believes closely follows the original emigrant route. The map is shown on the back cover of this issue. DeVault has marked the road shown on the survey in black and has drawn in the modern road in red. He has also added waypoints from the Trail Turtles' 1998 mapping trip. DeVault comments, "For the most part, the modern 4x4 road through the pass follows the road shown on the survey map. One area where they differ is on the east end of the road. In this area, I changed the color of the road

shown on the survey to green. It is clear that the earlier road and the modern road took different routes in this area."

### *The Editors*



Dave Hollecker in a field of wildflowers in Guadalupe Canyon.  
*photo by Tracy DeVault*

1. **Tracy DeVault's Note:** The bulk of the emigrant traffic along the southern route occurred during 1849. Most emigrants that year followed Cooke's Wagon Road through Guadalupe Pass. This is confirmed in Patricia Etter's book *To California on the Southern Route 1849: A History and Annotated Bibliography* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1998). I had long been under the impression that much of the emigrant traffic through the Southwest between 1850 and 1880 used the Apache Pass Cutoff, but in recent years I have begun to revisit this belief. Certainly the stage lines used the Apache Pass route. Leach, when he did his improvements to the road, came this way but his route did not actually go through Apache Pass. During the Civil War the military generally followed the Apache Pass Route between Tucson and Cooke's Spring. The problem is that we have only been able to locate a handful of emigrant diaries relating to travel over the Apache Pass Route. Two of them are the 1849 diaries of Robert Eccleston and David Demarest. Several of the later diaries describe travel from west to east. I have not seen a study of any kind that tries to compare the volume of emigrant traffic over these two routes during the later years.

## Mapping Guadalupe Pass in April 1998: Selections from an Informal Trip Report

by Tracy DeVault

The Animas Valley is a pleasant place to poke around. It contains medium to large ranches, with a creek down its center and large groves of trees. In the early 1900s, the government gave away 320-acre homesteads to encourage an experiment in dry-land farming. With time, most of the homesteads failed and were incorporated into larger ranches. At one time there were over 70 families receiving mail at the Cloverdale post office. Today there are only two ranchers who pick up their mail, which is left in old freezers behind the Cloverdale store.

These days, there is a range war over the closure of a particular road. Ranchers in one faction won't speak to you if they suspect you are on the other side of the dispute. Because they were neutral, Rose Ann [Tompkins] and Don [Buck] hoped that the ranchers would be cordial. At the first ranch they visited, however, the owner vehemently denied the Trail Turtles access to her property. Later, when we thought we were on National Forest land, she drove us away, saying that we would have to cross 60 feet of her property to reach public land, and she would not allow that.

On the afternoon of the first day we explored Whitmire Pass. We found rust on rocks and many artifacts that we determined were from the early 1900s. The next day we explored farther down the valley, but we found no more evidence of a wagon road. We decided to move next to Guadalupe Pass. Our host in Guadalupe Canyon was Diana Hadley, who is part owner of a beautiful ranch there.

We made camp in an open area just below the ranch buildings. Although there were high winds, the days were clear and warm. The nights, however, were cold. Don complained that it was so much colder in his camper than in his refrigerator that he would have to open the refrigerator door to warm up the place. Unfortunately, the ranch's horses were free to roam while we were out on the trail. When Dave [Hollecker] left his stove out on a table, the horses knocked it off. In disgust, he started to move his van to another site, but he forgot to pick up his \$20 step stool and drove over it – not his best day.

This was rough country, and the back roads were choked with catchlaw and tree branches. While the vehicles that we used performed flawlessly, some mappers refused to take their vehicles out of camp. We were also lucky that no one got seriously hurt.

There is an old road that runs from Guadalupe Pass, past the Hadley ranch and down through Guadalupe Canyon. We believed that this was originally the old Spanish road from Janos to the frontier settlements in Sonora that was later adopted by the emigrants. We spent four days examining every foot of the road as well as parallel traces. Based on what we saw, I am convinced that no wagons with iron tires ever went over that road. When we returned home, Rose Ann and I did some further research and concluded that we may have been off Cooke's road by as much as a mile and a half.



Dave Hollecker and Don Buck at the U.S./Mexican boundary marker at the entrance to Guadalupe Canyon.

*photo by Rose Ann Tompkins*

## The Butterfield Overland Mail Stage Station at Grape Creek: A Rebuttal

*Text and images by Glen Sample Ely*

I have spent 25 years documenting the Butterfield Overland Road and its stage stations across Texas, from the Red River to New Mexico. In my opinion, the Grape Creek watershed presents one of the greatest challenges for any Butterfield sleuth. There are numerous historic sites along this drainage. Some of these date from the 1850s to the 1880s, and include the military, Butterfield, and early ranching periods.

The Overland Mail Company operated its Memphis & St. Louis to San Francisco mail and passenger service from September 1858 to April 1861. Until March 21, 1860, the president of the company was John Butterfield, namesake of the oft-used designation for the transcontinental operation, the Butterfield Overland Mail. A total of 740 miles of this 2,795-mile route ran through Texas. Butterfield's Grape Creek Station site is located on the historic March Ranch, which includes acreage in both Coke County and Tom Green County. Dr. John Abe March and his brother Napoleon Murphy March established the ranch in 1899. At its peak, the family operation encompassed 46,000 acres. Over the years, descendants divided the ranch. In 1992, two

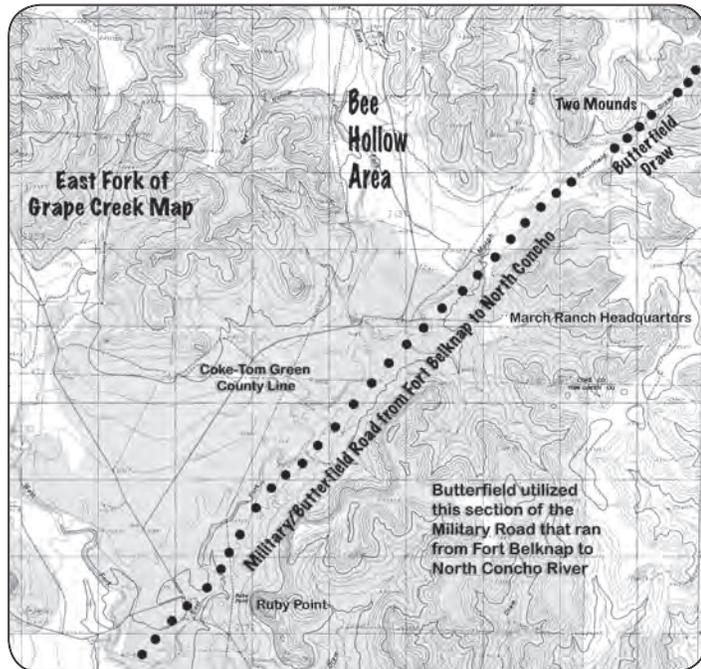


Image 1. The Bee Hollow area near the section of the military road from Fort Belknap to the North Concho River.



Image 2. Patrick Dearen at the Ashmore site.

adjacent parcels totaling 24,000 acres (including the Butterfield stage stop) passed to two siblings who are great-grandchildren of Dr. John Abe March (1859-1911).<sup>1</sup>

The first known people to attempt locating Butterfield's Grape Creek Station were pioneer Butterfield historians Roscoe and Margaret Conkling. The couple paid three visits to the March Ranch: in October 1930, August 1932, and July 1933. The Conklings were never able to pinpoint the Grape Creek stage stop but they did find a trace of the overland road near the March Ranch corrals.<sup>2</sup>

Members of the March family assisted the Conklings in their field work during their three trips. On August 9, 1932, the Conklings drove to Bee Hollow on East Grape Creek (Image 1). Bee Hollow is a historic ranching area situated in a valley near the intersection of the Bee Hollow drainage and East Grape Creek. J.A. March, Jr., told his descendants that Bee Hollow was named for the bee hives located in a large live oak grove here. During their visit, the Conklings "found [an] old corral and house ruins of stone" on the west side of East Grape Creek. Continuing their exploration of the Bee Hollow settlement, they drove over to the east side of East Grape Creek, where they "found two great stone corral ruins near a grove of large pecans and live oaks." J.A. March's great-grandson identified the grove to me as the location of the bee hives.<sup>3</sup>

In 2017, Tom Ashmore found a historic ruin on the east side of East Grape Creek, in the southern end of the valley that comprises Bee Hollow's historic ranching community. He believes that this ruin is Butterfield's Grape Creek Station. I visited his location with several others in April 2018 (Image 2). Let's take a look now at Ashmore's claim.<sup>4</sup>

Any valid assertion must meet several criteria. The first two conditions concern firsthand observations made by Waterman Ormsby, reporter for the *New York Herald* and a passenger on Butterfield's first westbound coach in September 1858. En route to Grape Creek from the Colorado River, Ormsby's coach climbed Butterfield Canyon before reaching the summit of a 2,400-foot rocky divide that separates the Colorado and Concho River watersheds. On the western side of the divide, the overland road passed down Butterfield Draw, an eastern branch and one of the headwaters of East Grape Creek (Image 3).<sup>5</sup>

Let's turn now to the first criteria. Ormsby says, "We ascended the hill [the stone divide] and discovered the [Grape Creek] station fire, miles distant—a mere speck among the

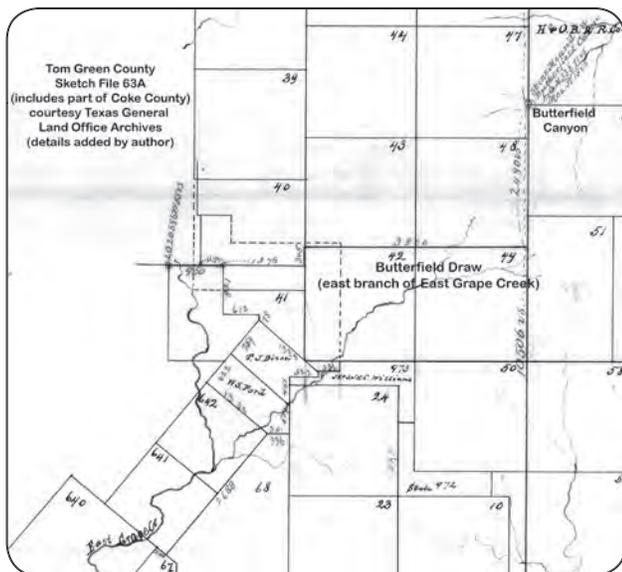


Image 3. Map of the portion of Tom Green County in the vicinity of Butterfield Draw.

trees." If one stands on the crest of this divide today looking down Butterfield Draw, it quickly becomes apparent that it is impossible to see Ashmore's location because it is tucked around the corner, in a valley, blocked from line of sight by several sets of hills on the northern side of Butterfield Draw. (See "Two Mounds" and the adjacent hill between Murph Draw and the Bee Hollow Area in Image 1.)<sup>6</sup>

Moving onto the second condition, the route that Butterfield coaches followed from Fort Belknap to the North Concho River (eight miles south/southwest of Grape Creek Station)

was first laid out by Army Captain J.E. Johnston in 1851. By 1852, the U.S. Army had established a cordon of frontier posts along Johnston's route, namely, Forts Belknap (near Graham, TX), Phantom Hill (near Abilene, TX), Chadbourne (near Bronte, TX), and Camp J.E. Johnston on south bank of the North Concho (near Carlsbad, TX). After crossing the North Concho, the Butterfield route left the military road for a new trail blazed by the Overland Mail Company in 1858. This new course led southwest to the Middle Concho River, where the Butterfield Overland Road then merged with the 1849 Upper Emigrant Road, following it west to the Pecos River.

Ormsby confirms this route change: "A few miles from Grape Creek we crossed the [North] Concho, and then leaving the old [military] road." He continues, "[W]e took a new road, . . . which has been made under the supervision of the company." Ormsby's firsthand narrative, other period accounts by fellow travelers, and the official Overland Mail Company itinerary, all confirm that Butterfield followed Captain Johnston's Fort Belknap-North Concho military road. Therefore, Butterfield's Grape Creek Station must be on this same military road. It can be nowhere else. Ashmore's site, situated in the southern end of Bee Hollow's historic ranching area, is not on the military road. It is 1.3 miles to the northwest (Image 1). His ruin is likely a structure dating from the post-Civil War period, circa 1870s-1880s.<sup>7</sup>

Research by Joe Allen, Patrick Dearen, and myself from 1999 to 2018, confirms that the Fort Belknap-North Concho & Butterfield Road followed Butterfield Draw downstream, passing northwest of the old March Ranch corrals, and continuing to just east of the draw's junction with East Grape Creek (west of March Ranch Headquarters). Next, the trail followed East Grape Creek downstream past Ruby Point (Image 1) and steered south/southwest to the crossing of the North Concho (east of Carlsbad, TX). Our research included extensive work in county, state, and national archives. We also studied topographic maps and aerial photographs of the region, including old aerials from the 1950s. Ultimately, we found the most reliable, proven method of accurately tracking the Butterfield Road along Grape Creek was by documenting it on the ground with metal detectors.

Allen, Dearen, and I made our first trip to the March Ranch to look for the stage stop on August 21, 1999. Jock March



Image 4. An 1859 U.S. Cavalry spur.

(1920-2006), grandson of ranch founder J.A. March, took us to a site in Tom Green County on East Grape Creek between Ruby Point and the county line. Here we discovered numerous cut/shaped pieces of limestone and period artifacts. A short distance upstream, Joe Allen found pistol balls, Henry/Spencer cartridges, several military buttons, and an 1859 U.S. Army cavalry spur (Images 4 and 5). Over time we expanded our exploration of the military road, locating several additional period artifact sites both downstream and upstream. After considerable field work along East Grape Creek, by August 2004, the three of us had agreed that the cavalry spur/military button site was likely the Grape Creek Station. A significant factor in our decision was our evaluation of known, documented distances between antebellum sites in the region.

Besides Ormsby's narrative, other published firsthand accounts by period travelers over this section of the road include those of N.H. Hutton, army engineer with the Leach Wagon Train in September 1857; G. Bailey, U.S. Post Office Special Agent in October 1858; J.M. Farwell, reporter for the *Daily Alta California* in November 1858; and Mr. Baer, *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin*



Image 5. Pistol balls, cartridges, and military buttons.

reporter in November 1858. In addition, during the fall of 1867, Lieutenant Colonel E.J. Strang passed along the route while preparing a topographical sketch for the U.S. Army. All of these people reported point to point distances. Taking an average of these various reports, heading east, Grape Creek Station was fifteen miles from Butterfield's stage stop on the Colorado River and thirty miles from Fort Chadbourne. To the west, Grape Creek Station was eight miles from the North Concho River and twenty-three miles from the Middle Concho River. Our cavalry spur/military button site was a close match to all of these mileages.<sup>7a</sup>

In addition to the mileages provided in period accounts, another important asset in deciphering the Grape Creek puzzle was Lieutenant Colonel E.J. Strang's map of the region made during October and November 1867 (Image 6). This map is important in several respects. First, it presents a snapshot of the area as it largely was on the eve of the Civil War. Strang's map shows the old Butterfield stage stop and the primary road that ran through the Grape Creek valley at the time, namely, the Fort Belknap-North Concho &



Image 6. Strang's map of the region.

Butterfield Road originally laid out by Captain Johnston.<sup>8</sup> Strang's map presents an approximate layout of the region. The sketch is not precise, and some aspects are skewed. It includes several natural features such as the stone divide, the Two Mounds, and Ruby Point. I began studying this map in 2000. One item that immediately commanded my attention were the Two Mounds or hills that overlook the Grape Creek Station site (Images 1 and 6).<sup>9</sup>

I was also intrigued by a published account by N.H. Hutton, an army engineer traveling with a federal road



Image 7. Ruin with blocks of stone exposed near a spring close to the Butterfield Road.

building crew across Texas in 1857. Hutton's journal is important because it is possible that the Overland Mail Company consulted it when selecting their station sites in the area during the spring and summer of 1858. The locations of Butterfield's Mountain Pass, Valley Creek, and Grape Creek stations bear many similarities to the site descriptions and distances Hutton provided in his journal. The U.S. Department of the Interior received a copy of Hutton's publication during March 1858. A period newspaper report noted that "Mr. Hutton offers many important suggestions as to the proper route to be pursued by a mail line leaving Memphis [and St. Louis] for California by way of El Paso."<sup>10</sup>

As Hutton was passing over the stone divide in 1857, he remarked, "About three miles from the eastern entrance to the valley [Butterfield Draw] to the south of the road, will be observed a heavy ledge of rocks, at the base of which lies a magnificent reservoir of water as clear as crystal and which is probably the first water which will be met with a dry season after leaving the Salt Fork of the Colorado [River]." These two natural features, the Two Mounds and the "magnificent reservoir of water," prompted me to further investigate Butterfield Draw, the headwaters of the east fork of East Grape Creek (Image 3).<sup>11</sup>

In May 2008, J.A. March's great-grandson took me up Butterfield Draw to a spring and several adjacent pools of water that lay at the base of a steep rock hill on the south side of the Butterfield Road. After spending several weekends at this location, I found a sizeable ruin with numerous blocks of stone (Image 7), another medium-sized ruin closer to the spring, and a number of cut rocks at the spring itself (Image 8). In addition, there were many,

many artifacts scattered across the site, which encompassed several acres. Strang's map shows the stage stop to be in front of the Two Mounds, which lay on the north side of the overland road. While working here, I spotted the Two Mounds directly across from the site, on the north side of the Butterfield Road (Image 6). After these discoveries, I believed this location to be Butterfield's stage stop.<sup>12</sup>

Over the last decade, Joe Allen has been skeptical that the site I found in Butterfield Draw was the Grape Creek Station. He maintains that the cavalry spur site downstream is the correct location. Both places are on the Butterfield Road and both of them would have been visible to Ormsby from the crest of the divide. The cavalry spur location fits the documented distances cited previously, while Butterfield Draw does not. During our April 2018 field trip to Grape Creek, Joe Allen found more artifacts at the spur site, including horseshoes, period bullets, fish hook, square nails, and a military button manufactured during the late 1850s to 1865 period (Image 9). In retrospect, the cavalry spur site we originally pinpointed in 2004 as the Grape Creek Station may well be the correct location. One must go where the evidence leads them.



Image 8 . Cut rock near the spring close to the Butterfield road.

Several other points that Ashmore raises should be addressed. The first concerns Google Earth, which Ashmore says "played a crucial role in finding and interpreting this site [in Bee Hollow valley]." Citing Google Earth imagery, Ashmore makes a number of claims regarding the route of the Butterfield Road and the layout/floorplan of his site at Bee Hollow. While Google Earth can be helpful on occasion, it is far from infallible. Google Earth images from 2018 show the landscape 160 years after Butterfield. Much has changed since then. Since 1858, there have been many

man-made alterations to the landscape, including fence lines, ranch roads, oilfield activity, etc.<sup>13</sup>

Most importantly, in the case of Grape Creek, in 1977, the great-grandchildren of J.A. March root-plowed all of their acreage to a depth of one to two feet. The great-grandson notes that this widespread root plowing, which included Bee Hollow, would have obliterated many historic traces, rendering them invisible to Google Earth. This brings up another point, namely, that the earlier the aerial imagery, the less change to the land and the better the chance of spotting historic features. Some of the earliest aerial photographs of west Texas date from the 1930s to 1950s, sixty to eighty years before current Google Earth images. Even back then, the visible change to the landscape was extensive.<sup>14</sup>

On another point, Ashmore says that after leaving Fort Chadbourne, the next Butterfield Station to the west was at Grape Creek. Actually, the next station was Colorado Station, on the north bank of the Colorado River, 15 miles from Fort Chadbourne. He then states that the first Butterfield station heading east from Camp Johnson on the Middle Concho River was at Grape Creek. In fact, the next eastbound station was North Concho Station, located on the north bank of the North Concho River, where the Fort Belknap-North Concho & Butterfield Road crosses the river, near modern Carlsbad, Texas.<sup>15</sup>

Ashmore also discusses a segment of the overland mail route that ran from Fort Chadbourne to the Colorado River. When Ashmore attempted to locate this section of the road, he says, “The problem that I encountered when I attempted to follow the most prominent trail out of the fort was that it heads south, rather than west, . . . and continues due south in a generally straight line.” He claims that this road heading due south, paralleling modern Highway 277 to the Colorado, is the Butterfield Trail. Ashmore says he reached this conclusion after “an extensive search via Google Earth.” To buttress his claim, he cites a 1927 map based upon a compilation of 1871-



Image 9. Artifacts found near the spur site.  
*photo by Joe Allen*

1875 military maps. Military maps made after the Civil War include many new roads and one must be careful not to confuse post-bellum trails with those from the antebellum period.<sup>16</sup>

There are two excellent antebellum maps of Fort Chadbourne’s road system, one from 1854, and the second from 1858. There is also a May 1867 map (made prior to the establishment of Fort Concho). All of these maps show two road networks. The first of these (which Ashmore followed) heads south from Fort Chadbourne and after a short distance splits into two trails, with one branch leading east to Fort Gates, and the other continuing south to San Antonio (Image 10). The second, the

Fort Belknap-North Concho Road (via Phantom Hill), passes southwesterly through Fort Chadbourne, continuing onto the Colorado and North Concho Rivers as described previously (Image 10). This is the road Butterfield used. In January 2002, Fort Chadbourne owners Garland and Lana Richards took Allen, Dearen, and me to where the Fort Belknap-North Concho & Butterfield Road crossed Oak Creek in the James Gross Survey, a short distance *southwest* of the fort (Image 11). From Oak Creek, we followed the road southwest for several miles towards the Colorado River (Image 12).<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, Ashmore also discusses Ben Ficklin, who operated the San Antonio-El Paso mail line after the Civil War. For a number of months, Ficklin utilized a section of the old Butterfield Road for his mail route. In the summer of 1868, he opened a new spur line that split off from the Butterfield in Centralia Draw. Ashmore states that Ficklin’s new trail steered “south and then west” and eventually “merged [back with the Butterfield] before arriving at the only pass to the Pecos River, Castle Gap.” To support this claim, he provides a Google Earth aerial photograph, over which he has hand-traced several trails. Actually, as the 1869 Army map in Image 13 shows, the new Ben Ficklin road ran from Centralia Draw to Camp Melvin Mail Station at Pontoon Bridge on the Pecos River (near Iraan, TX), and then southwest to Fort Stockton. It did not loop around and rejoin the Butterfield Road near Castle Gap.<sup>18</sup>

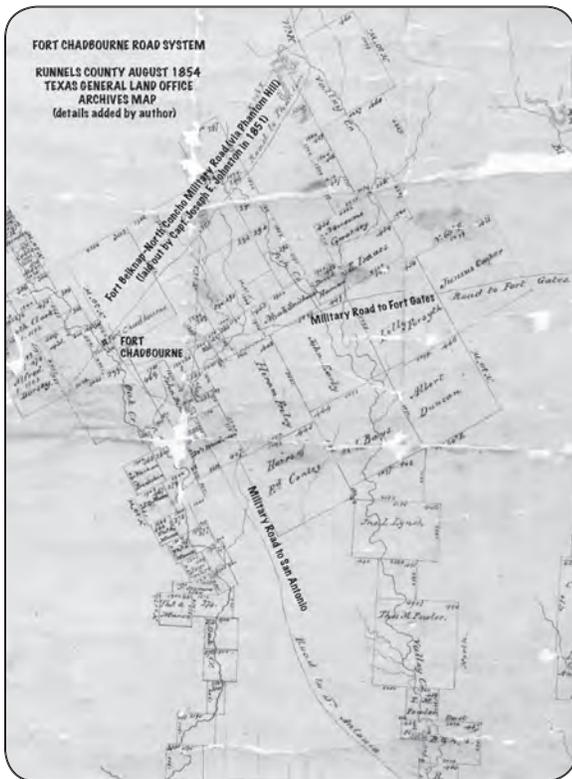


Image 10. Map from the Texas General Land Office archives showing Runnels County in 1854.

History Museum of Los Angeles County, California; Roscoe P. Conkling and Margaret B. Conkling, *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1947), 348.

- Aug. 9, 1932 entry, Conkling Texas field trip journal (quotations 1 and 2). J.A. March's great-grandson's comment to me was made during an April 13, 2018, trip to Bee Hollow historic ranch area.



Image 12. Joe Allen and Patrick Dearen in the Butterfield Road.

He heard about the bee hives from his grand-uncle John Abe March, Jr. and from John Abe Jr.'s son, Jock March.

## Endnotes

- Glen Sample Ely, *The Texas Frontier and the Butterfield Overland Mail, 1858-1861* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 5, 13-14, 273-274. Ranch history was provided to me by J.A. March's great-grandson. Note: A condition for my being granted continued access to the March Ranch since 1999 is that I insure landowner anonymity and that I will not disclose the exact location of any historic sites found on the property.
- Conklings' Texas field trip journal, Roscoe P. Conkling Papers, 1904-1971, Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural



Image 11. Garland Richards and Joe Allen at Oak Creek crossing.

- Tom Ashmore, "Butterfield Overland Mail's Grape Creek Station," *Desert Tracks*, January 2018, 31-37. To keep things simple, I use the term East Grape Creek, rather than its formal name, East Fork of Grape Creek.
- Waterman Ormsby, *The Butterfield Overland Mail* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1942), 56; Texas General Land Office Archives, *Tom Green County Sketch File 63A* (which includes part of Coke County).
- This statement is based on two field trips (June 19, 2004, and April 18, 2018) to the summit of the stone divide and the top of Butterfield Draw. Patrick Dearen, the landowner, and myself attended these trips.
- Ormsby, *The Butterfield Overland Mail*, frontispiece Sept. 16, 1858, itinerary reproduction, 38, 57 (quotation); *Map of the Frontier of the 8<sup>th</sup> Military Department* by Captain J.E. Johnston, Maps Q50 and Q52, Record Group 77, National Archives.
- Ormsby, *The Butterfield Overland Mail*, 57 (Ormsby: Ft. Chadbourne to Grape Creek 30 miles, Grape Creek to Middle Concho "about" 25 miles); Walter B. Lang, *The First Overland Mail: Butterfield Trail, St. Louis to San Francisco, 1858-1861* (Self-published, 1940), 124 (J.M. Farwell: Ft. Chadbourne to Colorado River Station 15 miles, Colorado River Station to Grape Creek 15 miles, Grape Creek to Middle Concho 22

miles); Lang, *The First Overland Mail*, 109 (G. Bailey: Ft. Chadbourne to Grape Creek 30 miles, Grape Creek to Middle Concho 22 miles); Lt. Col. E.J. Strang, *Topographical Sketch of the Road from Fort Stockton to Fort Chadbourne, October and November 1867*, National Archives (Strang: Colorado River to Grape Creek 14.84 miles, Grape Creek to North Concho 8.38 miles).

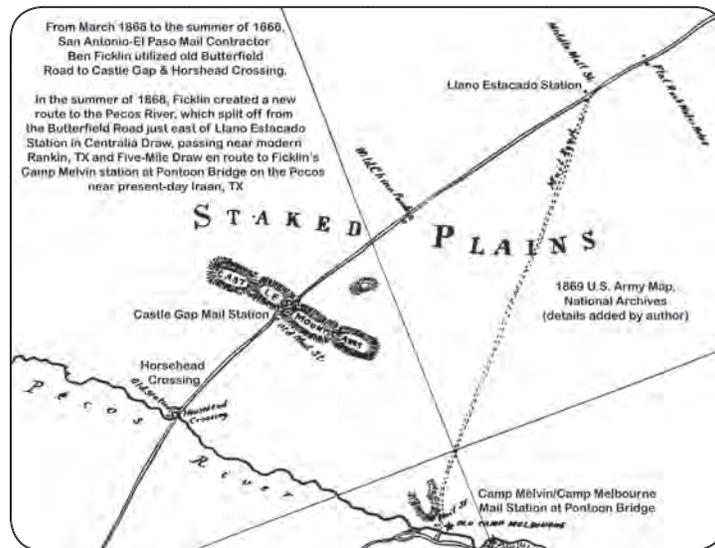


Image 13. Army map from 1869 showing the Ben Ficklin road near Horsehead Crossing.

Farwell mentions stopping at the Colorado Station, an adobe building on the north bank of the Colorado River, on Nov. 1, 1858. He was heading eastbound on a Butterfield coach. Farwell says Colorado Station was 15 miles from Grape Creek and 15 miles from Fort Chadbourne. See Lang, *The First Overland Mail*, 124. Albert Richardson's Butterfield coach was detained at Colorado Station on the night of Sept. 29, 1859, due to high water. See Albert D. Richardson,

- Beyond the Mississippi* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing, 1867), 228. Concerning the North Concho Station, Albert Richardson's westbound coach stopped for dinner at this stage stop on Sept. 30, 1859. See Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*, 231. Tom Green County Commissioners Court Minutes from July 1877 (quotation 2) and September 1877 (quotation 1) mention "the old Butterfield Station known as the Rock House," and "the Rock House on the north side of the North Concho River." Finally, in 1933, local pioneer rancher Fayette Tankersly took Roscoe and Margaret Conkling to the "station on the North Concho [which] was [a] large rock wall corral (or perhaps adobe with rock foundations)." See July 30, 1933 entry, Conkling Texas field trip journal (quotation 3).
8. Strang, *Topographical Sketch*; J. Evetts Haley, *Fort Concho and the Texas Frontier* (San Angelo, TX: San Angelo Standard-Times, 1952), 128-130. The U.S. Army's Fort Chadbourne to Fort Concho Road is not on Strang's map because Fort Concho did not exist at the time (October and November 1867). The Army did not select the site for Fort Concho (San Angelo, TX) until November 7, 1867; troops did not arrive onsite until December 2, 1867; and by January 1868, workers had laid the foundation of only one building.
  9. Strang, *Topographical Sketch*; Terrain Navigator Pro Software, aerial photographs and USGS 1:24,000 scale topographic maps, Pecan Motte and Murph Draw, TX.
  10. *Austin Southern Intelligencer*, March 31, 1858 (quotation); "Journey of the Leach Wagon Train Across Texas, 1857," in J.W. Williams, *Old Texas Trails* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press 1979), 332-45.
  11. "Journey of the Leach Wagon Train," 341 (quotation).
  12. The discoveries were made during May 2008 field trips to Butterfield Draw site. This site is the largest and most extensive along the Butterfield Road on East Grape Creek. It may date from the historic ranching period or it may be earlier. Much remains unknown.
  13. Tom Ashmore, "Butterfield Overland Mail's Grape Creek Station," *Southwest Federation of Archaeological Societies*, 2017 Transactions of 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Symposium, 2 (quotation).
  14. J.A. March's great-grandson's remarks to me were made on April 13, 2018. The federal government began extensive aerial photography of West Texas in the 1930s, and by the 1950s, these flyovers were producing high-quality images of the landscape.
  15. Ely, *The Texas Frontier*, 169-170, 173, 178-183, 383-383 (endnotes on both pages). *Daily Alta California* reporter J.M.

16. Tom Ashmore, "Confusion about Texas Sections of Butterfield Trail," *Desert Tracks* (January 2016), 13 (quotations), 23 (endnote 2); Ashmore, "Butterfield Overland Mail's Grape Creek Station," 32-33.
17. Texas General Land Office Archives, Aug. 1854, Nov. 1858, and May 1867 Maps of Runnels County, TX (all three include Fort Chadbourne); January 27, 2002, field trip to Fort Belknap-North Concho & Butterfield Road crossing of Oak Creek, with Joe Allen, Patrick Dearen, and Garland & Lana Richards. Lt. Col. E.J. Strang's 1867 map (made before Ft. Concho was built) also shows the Fort Belknap-North Concho & Butterfield Road leading southwest from Fort Chadbourne, exactly as it did before the Civil War.
18. Ely, *The Texas Frontier*, 199; 1869 Army Scout Map, National Archives; Oct. 10, 2000, field trip to Ben Ficklin road split off Butterfield Trail (near Llano Estacado Station in Centralia Draw), with landowner, Hal Joyce, and Joe Allen; Ashmore, "Confusion about Texas Sections of Butterfield Trail," 23 (quotations).

## Measuring America: Wagon Wheel Odometers

by Norman Wisner

In territorial days, when emigrants and military scouts kept journals, the last entry for the day was typically the distance traveled. These estimates of distances are notorious for being inaccurate. In tracing wagon, emigrant, and stage roads, I tend to look for distances generated by surveyors or engineers, as I have found them to be quite accurate. In this article I discuss the road distances measured by surveyors or engineers using wagon wheel odometers. Such devices count the number of wheel rotations made along a road segment, multiply this by the circumference of the wheel, and thus calculate the distance traveled over that segment of road.

The first order of business in measuring distances with wagon wheels was to get an accurate count of the number of rotations. The count could be done manually using a mark or tie on one of the spokes of the wheel and visually counting each wheel rotation. Another manual method of keeping track of the count was to count the clicks made by a device attached to the wagon that gave an audible sound for each rotation of the wheel. Both of these methods lent themselves to possible errors in keeping track of the count.

The solution for an accurate count was an odometer – a mechanical clockwork device that kept track of the wagon wheel rotation count. In territorial days, these came in several forms. The Mormons fabricated a device with wooden gears attached to a shaft that interacted with trip cogs on the wagon wheel hub. [Note: The image of a Mormon odometer is shown on page 40.] There were also self-contained wheeled odometers that were pulled by a horse or mule. A particularly impressive odometer was a pendulum clockwork mechanism contained in a



Pendulum odometer. *courtesy Norman Wisner*



An odometer in use. *courtesy Norman Wisner*

protective tin box that was strapped to the spoke of the wagon wheel. The pendulum stayed vertical in the box as the wheel rotated; it activated an endless screw, which drove the clockwork mechanism that kept track of the count.

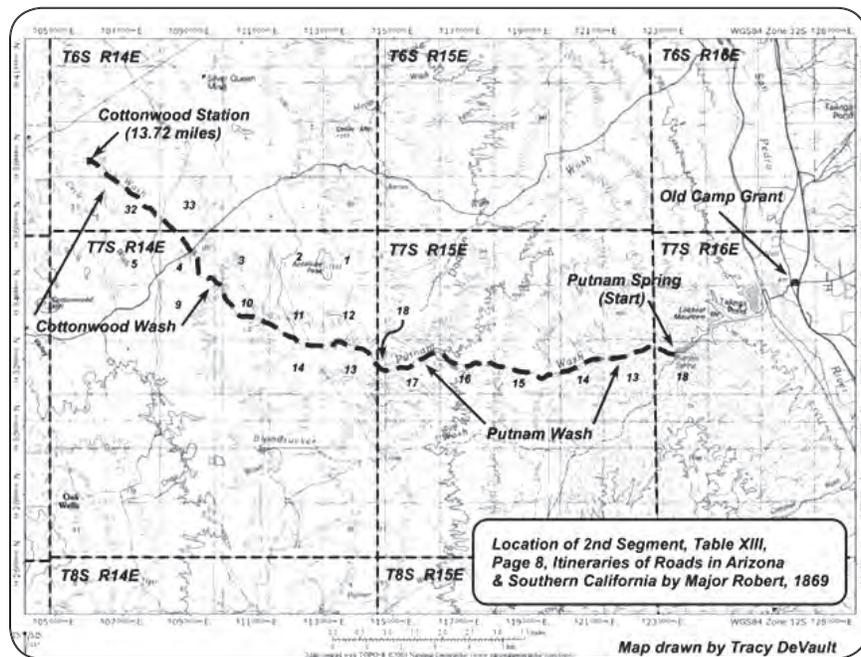
Keeping track of the count was just the first stage in measuring accurate distances with a wagon wheel. Clearly, an accurate measurement of the wheel circumference as a multiplier to calculate distance was required. In addition, slippage of the wheel, road conditions, lubrication of the wheel journal,<sup>1</sup> and the speed traveled were important factors to consider to obtain a distance accuracy of one percent.

The most interesting contemporary account on this subject was provided by Henry M. Robert, Major of Engineers. Robert noted:

The distance passed over by a wagon, during a single revolution of the wheel, is always greater than the circumference of the wheel and this difference varies on different kinds of road and probably with different kinds of wagons. Several experiments were made on different kinds of roads, including the heaviest sand on the Colorado desert with the following results: The wheel of the ambulance used had a circumference of 12' 7"; while the distance passed over during each revolution of the wheel on hard ground was 12' 10.5"; in the heaviest sand, (the axel freshly greased.) 13' 2"; and in the heaviest sand the axel not having been greased for 3 days, 13' 4.5". Thus, the *slip* of the wheel was 3.5", 7", and 9.5" respectively in the three: or 2.3 per cent, 4.6 per cent, and 6.3 per cent. In the tables the *slip* has been taken at about 3 per cent, on all the roads excepting over the Colorado desert between Yuma and the Sea Coast where the *slip* has been taken at 5 per cent.

These amounts are certainly large enough, but I think will not exceed the true *slip* in any case more than one per cent . . . This *slip* of the wheel however is a very variable quality when road is rocky and especially under the combined influence of rocks, hills, and rapid driving . . . Measurements up-hill are always more reliable than down-hill measurements . . . Rapid driving is injurious to the accuracy of the measurements, but I think it is a mistaken notion that the odometer cannot be called upon excepting when the animals are driven at a walk. On all ordinary roads at speed not exceeding five miles per hour, the Odometer seems reliable.<sup>2</sup>

I checked the accuracy of Major Robert's corrected distances by using two up-to-date methods to measure the distance from the junction of Putnam Wash and Camp Grant Wash to Cottonwood Springs Station along the Leach Wagon Road in south central Arizona. Major Robert had recorded this distance as 13.72 miles in Table XIII of his *Itineraries of Routes*.<sup>3</sup> My first method was mechanical in nature, involving the use of a Dietzgen map roller.<sup>4</sup> I converted Robert's 13.72 miles into inches, using the scale factor of the map being measured. I then measured the distance along the wagon route on a USGS topo map using the roller, marking the end point and recording the UTM coordinates for that point.<sup>5</sup> In a second approach, I measured the distance using the route feature on a USGS electronic topo map of Arizona.<sup>6</sup> As before, I marked the ending point of the recorded distance and then acquired UTM coordinates for that point. I took the mean of the two coordinate sets for the UTM location of the station. I then did a physical search for Cottonwood Springs Station and confirmed the station's location by finding artifacts at the



Map of the trail from Putnam Wash to Cottonwood Springs. courtesy Norman Wisner

site. I found the true location 200 feet away from the calculated end point, well within the set goal of 1% variance set by Major Robert.<sup>7</sup>

I have checked several additional distances from Major Robert's *Itineraries*, and found 85% of them to be within the 1% accuracy limits. Those that didn't meet the criteria had unusual road conditions, such as steep rocky grades or deep heavy sand.

## Notes

1. The wagon wheel journal was a tapered shell inside the wheel hub that the axle fit into. If it was not adequately lubricated, it could slip and seize up, which led to errors in the odometer's estimate of distance.
2. *Itineraries of Routes in Arizona and Southern California*, Prepared by Henry M. Robert, Major of Engineers, Head Quarters Military Division of the Pacific, San Francisco, California, September 27, 1869, p. 22.
3. *Ibid*, p. 8.
4. A map roller uses a wheel that glides over the map surface to measure distances along a route on the map. The map scale (e.g. inches per mile) is used to convert to geographic distances. The Dietzgen Company began producing map rollers in Chicago in the late 1800s.
5. Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) co-ordinates are an alternate system to that of longitude and latitude for locating sites on the earth's surface. The UTM system is widely used in GPS mapping.
6. The route feature on a USGS electronic topo map acts in a similar fashion to a map roller but allows the tracing of the route to be done electronically on the computer screen.
7. *Itineraries*, p. 22.

## John Russell Bartlett on the Arizona Boundary, 1852

*by Tom Jonas*

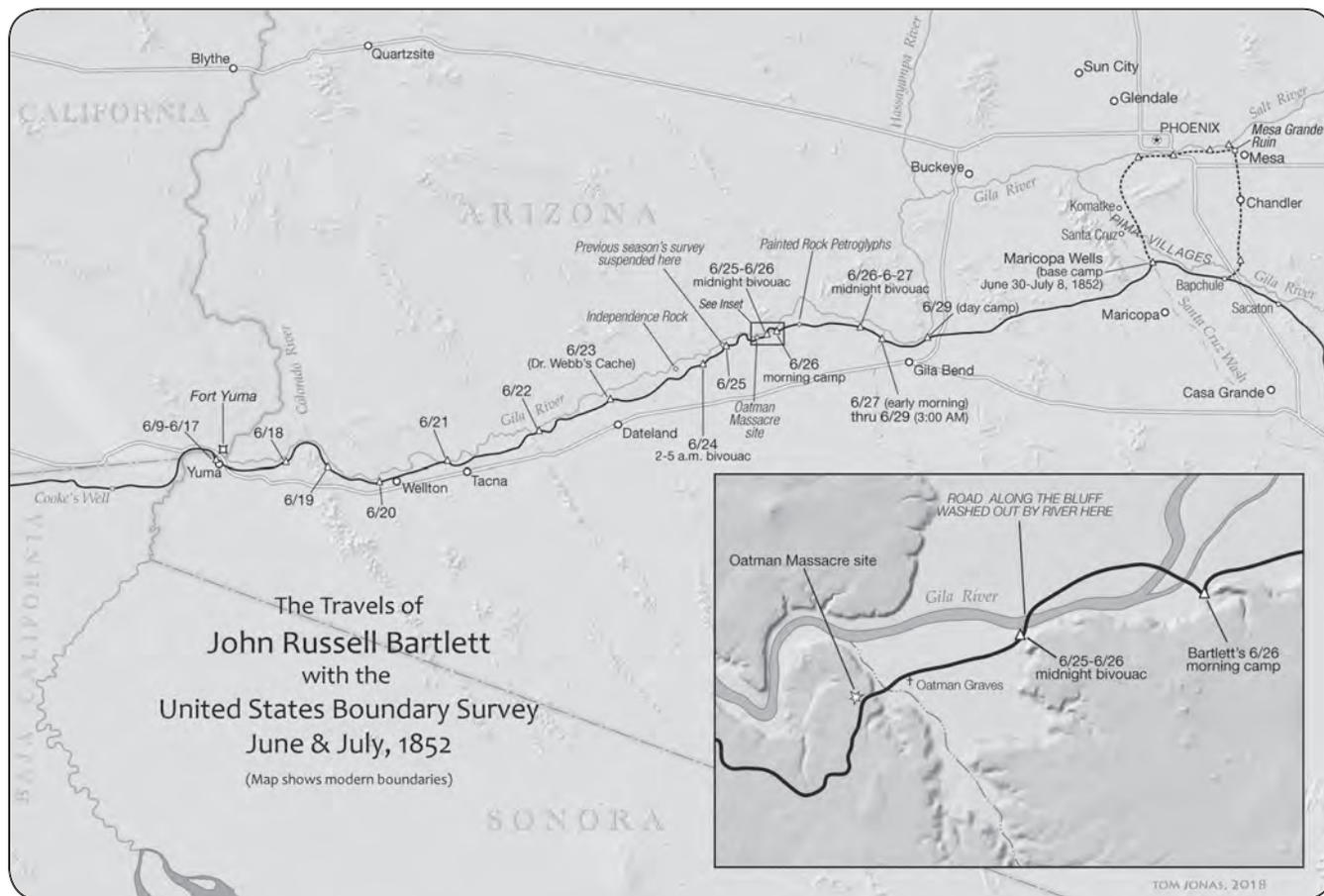
At the end of the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, negotiations between the United States and the Republic of Mexico resulted in the annexation of over a half million square miles to the United States. A new international boundary was agreed upon, following the Rio Grande from the Gulf of Mexico to El Paso and then striking off to the west to meet the Pacific Ocean south of San Diego. Most of the boundary in Arizona (then part of New Mexico Territory) would follow the Gila River. Crews were sent from both countries to map and mark the new boundary.

Newly appointed boundary commissioner John Russell Bartlett, a Rhode Island book dealer, artist, and amateur ethnographer, arrived at El Paso, Texas, to begin operations in November of 1850. The survey would proceed due west from the Rio Grande near El Paso, then join the Gila River

near modern Safford, Arizona, and proceed down that river until it emptied into the Colorado River at Yuma.

Bartlett had no experience managing an operation of this type and the workers spent most of their time on short rations while Bartlett was away searching for supplies and sightseeing. While their commissioner was traveling in Mexico and California, the survey crew mapped the boundary from the Rio Grande to the Gila, then down the Gila River to about 30 miles west of Gila Bend. They were finally forced to suspend operations there in December of 1851 due to lack of supplies.

Having retreated to San Diego for several months, the resupplied boundary commission set out again for Fort Yuma in May of 1852. They crossed the 90-mile *jornada* of the Imperial Desert in early June – the hottest time to travel there. Visiting meager water sources such as Alamo Mocho and Cooke’s Well along the way, they arrived at Fort Yuma on June 10.



Map by Tom Jonas showing the route of Bartlett’s travels from Yuma to the Phoenix area.

Every year in early June, the Colorado River swelled to flood stage as it carried snowmelt from the mountains in Colorado. This phenomenon was responsible for filling several normally dry water channels like the famous “New River” that flowed into the Imperial Desert when the river overflowed its banks. When Bartlett arrived, Fort Yuma’s rocky hill was virtually an island with the river flowing around it on all sides.

By June 12, Lieutenant Amiel Whipple and his survey crew had crossed the swollen river and commenced surveying and mapping the mouth of the Gila River nearby. Bartlett got under way several days later as the crew began to work its way upriver. The plan was to connect the present survey to the point where they had left off the previous year and then spend some time exploring the vicinity of the Pima Villages, south of modern Phoenix.

There are several extant travel diaries available to help us understand the trail and campsites. Commissioner Bartlett kept a journal that he later published in two volumes. Lieutenant Whipple also kept a detailed diary (as yet unpublished) and Lieutenant George Paige, the commander of the survey’s military escort, kept his own journal. In addition, Mr. Bartlett recorded their trail and campsites on a copy of Lieutenant William Emory’s map from the United States’ invasion of 1846.

On June 18, Bartlett and his companions set out from Fort Yuma intending to catch up with Lieutenant Whipple’s survey crew along the way. The road in those days was probably the same one followed a few years later by the Overland Mail drivers. It passed through the river bottomland east of Yuma, one to two miles south of the Gila, then around the north end of the Gila Mountains where it turned east again.

Camps were chosen for availability of water, grass, and shade. Since the bottomland close to the river was choked with brush, the road generally stayed some distance south of it. The first camp that can be placed precisely is camp #4 at Antelope Hill, commonly known as “Sierra de Los Metates” because it was a source of grinding stones used by the Indians in the region. Bartlett sketched several of the petroglyphs he found there. The following day they camped at the Mohawk Mountains, then called the “Big Horn

Mountains.” Bartlett wrote here:

From the large quantity of iron strewed about, with fragments of vehicles, tin kettles and camp equipage, we were evidently at a place where wagons had been broken up and burned. The extent of these traces showed that it was probably the place where General Kearney [*sic*] or Colonel Cooke encamped in 1847.<sup>1</sup>

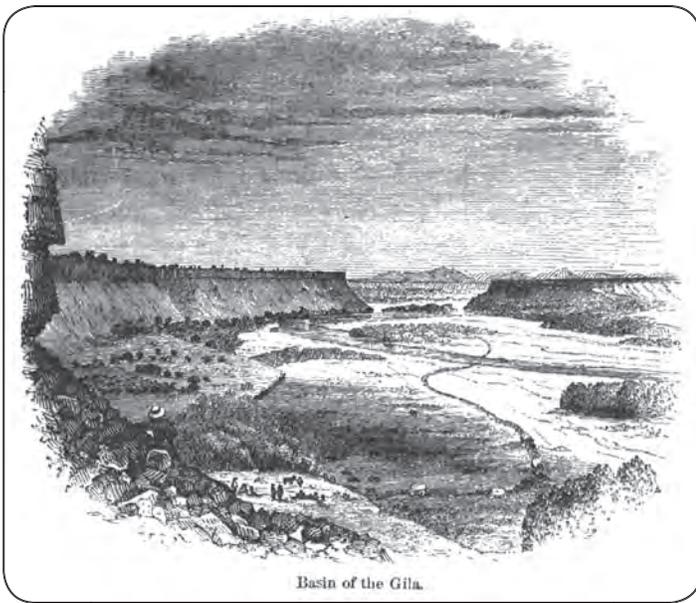
This may have been the Mormon Battalion camp on January 4, 1847. General Kearny did not camp at the Mohawk Mountains.

Having passed Lieutenant Whipple’s survey crew, Bartlett and his group pushed on towards the Pima Villages. They changed their travel schedule to avoid the daytime heat, leaving camp just before sunset, traveling as long as the moonlight held out, and then moving on again as soon as the morning twilight appeared. They slept during the midday hours in whatever shade they could find.

On June 23 they reached the place where Bartlett’s companion, Dr. Thomas Webb, had cached some equipment the previous year. After recovering the items, they camped at a nearby lagoon. Several times they found the road washed out by the meandering river and had to find a detour across a lava-covered plateau. One of these washouts caused them to take to the plateau just before reaching Independence Rock, thereby missing that site and nearby Sears Point.



A sketch from John Bartlett’s diary showing the nature of the washed out road and detour at Oatman Flat where they halted on the early morning of June 26, 1852. At daylight they crossed the Gila River and then re-crossed to the day camp location at the base of the lava bluff.



This view from the day camp of June 26, 1852, appears in Bartlett's two-volume *Personal Narrative*. It shows the detour across the river and then back again to camp. This view has been believed by some to show Oatman Flat, but the diaries and Bartlett's diary sketch reveal that it is actually about 1.5 miles upstream.

On another of these moonlight detours, the travelers came upon the scene of the Oatman Massacre which had occurred just 15 months earlier. They found wagon parts, trunks, clothing, and bones where the Oatman family had been attacked and two sisters taken captive. The attack occurred on top of the lava bluff, but the victims' remains were later buried in the valley at the foot of the hill.

Bartlett's moonlight march brought him down the plateau wall and across the bottom to where the road was again washed out. Here, they camped until morning. Mr. Bartlett's diary includes a sketch to show the river washout that halted them in the night. When dawn broke they crossed the river to the north side and then re-crossed and camped a short distance beyond. Bartlett and the other artists climbed the lava bluff behind camp and made sketches looking down river and toward the north. In the late afternoon, Bartlett and his companion Dr. Thomas Webb left camp early to sketch the petroglyphs at the Painted Rocks. The trail headed due east along the Gila through today's Painted Rock Reservoir.

Bartlett's party reached the downstream end of the "Great Bend" on June 27. Their camp was 3.5 miles north of the modern town of Gila Bend. Here the main road left the river and followed the 40-mile *jornada* to avoid the long

northward bend of the river. As the travelers approached the Great Bend of the Gila River, west of modern Phoenix, they had a choice of staying with the Gila River or taking a dry short cut between Gila Bend and Maricopa Wells. The river route offered ample water but required a four or five-day journey to cover its 70 miles. The alternative was a dry 40-mile shortcut from the vicinity of modern Gila Bend to Maricopa Wells. Commissioner Bartlett opted for the shortcut, filling up all available containers with water and force-marching across the desert.

The Gila River was nearly dry for part of the year because much of its flow was diverted by the Akimel O'odham or Pima Indians to irrigate their fields. Bartlett's destination was a desert well south of the river named Maricopa Wells. This dependable water source in the usually-dry bed of the Santa Cruz River was about seven miles north of the modern town of Maricopa and about nine miles from where the Santa Cruz empties into the Gila. The Santa Cruz originates in far southern Arizona and used to flow on the surface through the Tucson area. It sinks into the sandy desert north of Tucson but comes close to the surface again as it nears the Sierra Estrella Mountains and the Gila River southwest of Phoenix.



The vicinity of Maricopa Wells south of Phoenix, Arizona.  
*photo by Tom Jonas*

These desert wells were probably visited by Father Kino in the late 1600s, and Juan Bautista de Anza's California colonists stopped here in 1775, naming it *Laguna del Hospital* because its water made some of them sick. The wells were not much of an oasis. The available water had to be dug for in the sandy ground and what little shade was available was provided by large bushes.

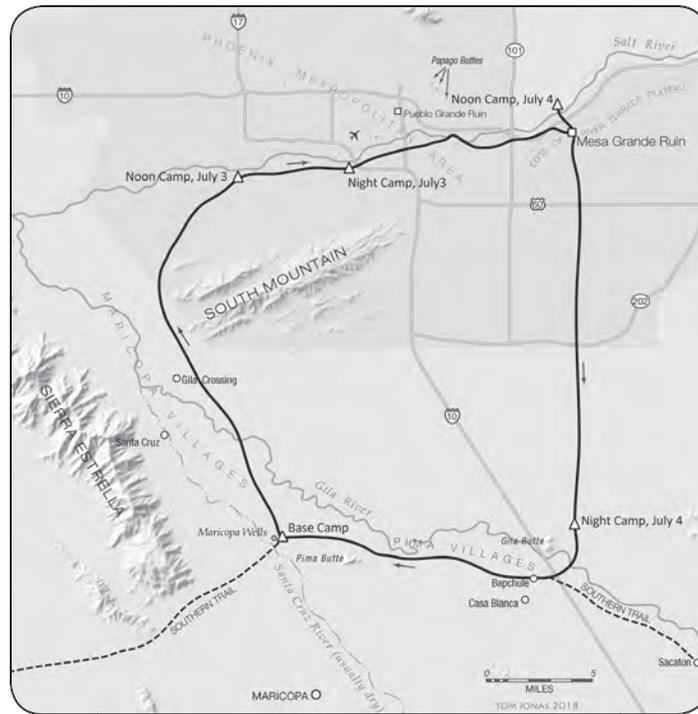
The morning after they arrived, Bartlett's men began to look longingly toward the tall cottonwood trees on the Gila River to the north. They moved camp the next day but found no water in the river and no grass in the area so they soon moved back to the wells.

The Pima Indians were generous hosts, offering provisions and help to American travelers. They had settled on the south bank of the Gila River from about modern Blackwater to Pima Butte. The Maricopa Indians lived along the river from Pima Butte to near the mouth of the Salinas. Altogether the "Pima Villages" spanned about 45 miles along the Gila River.

The origin of the name "Pima" for these Indians is interesting. When Anza's colonists passed through in 1775, they supposedly asked the Indians what they called themselves. Not understanding the Spanish language, the Indians replied "*pi-moc*," meaning "I don't know" or "I don't understand." Due to a misunderstanding on both sides, "Pima" became the commonly used name for the people until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

While waiting for Lieutenant Whipple to arrive, Mr. Bartlett decided to make an excursion to the "Casas Grandes" that the Indians had told him existed on the Salinas River, about 20 miles to the north. This is the Salt River that flows through modern Phoenix just before emptying into the Gila. As a resident of Phoenix, I assumed that the ruins he referred to were the ones known as Pueblo Grande, now in a modern archaeological park just north of the airport. The diary of Lieutenant Paige, commander of Bartlett's escort, reveals otherwise.

They set out from Maricopa Wells at 6 a.m. on July 3. They traveled northwest, passing the point of South Mountain,



Map by Tom Jonas showing Bartlett's route in the Phoenix area to see the Mesa Grande Ruin.

and then continued north to the Salt, where they stopped to wait out the heat of midday in the shade of cottonwood trees. At 5:00 they set out again upriver and camped at sunset where they found a patch of grass. They dined on trout taken in the river. The noon halt was probably near 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue and their night camp was south of the airport near 24<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway Road. Bartlett described the river as 80-120 ft. wide, 2-3 ft. deep and flowing rapidly. He also reported that the water tasted sweet, not salty as its name would imply. At 4 a.m. on July 4, 1852, they set out again without

breakfast and continued along the south bank of the river. The travelers had noticed an interesting feature ahead:

We continued our course due east, up the river towards some singular piles of rocks with fantastic tops, appearing like works of art. For some time we all imagined these rocks to be the ruined buildings of which we were in search—the "houses of Montezuma," as our Indian friends called them.<sup>2</sup>

Today, residents of Phoenix call these singular rocks the Papago Buttes, a string of small sandstone and conglomerate hills eroded into strange shapes.

My guess for Bartlett's destination – the Pueblo Grande – is north of the Salt River. Our travelers passed it by unseen, continuing east on the south bank, past the termination of the Papago Buttes. They pressed through the overgrown river bottom at Tempe Butte and then climbed up on the elevated terrace as they continued east. Bartlett describes reaching the "plateau" six miles east of Tempe Butte. On the flank of this plateau, he crossed an irrigation canal, formed in the plateau wall by cutting down the edge of the bank. The Indians had built an extensive network of irrigation canals in the Salt River Valley that was later improved and enlarged by Anglo-American settlers.

Following Bartlett’s directions as well as I could on modern streets, I drove up onto the same plateau, or mesa, that Bartlett described. This mesa is the namesake for the modern city of Mesa, AZ, established here by Mormon settlers several years later. Today, a short distance from the plateau’s edge and in the middle of a residential neighborhood, is a fenced area with a mound inside – Bartlett’s “Casa Grande.” Bartlett made sketches of it from another nearby pile of rubble (now leveled). Bartlett’s sketch shows the ruin in the foreground, a line of trees along the river in the distance and some mountains on the horizon. The mountains are familiar to Phoenix residents. From left to right they are Papago Buttes, Squaw Peak, Camelback Mountain, and Mummy Mountain.



A view on the Salt River about a mile north of the ruins. The prominent mountain with a knob on top is McDowell (Red) Mountain. Four Peaks is visible in the distance in the center of the photo.

*photo by Tom Jonas*

As midday approached, the group moved about a mile north to the Salt River bank where there was water, shade, and fish. Here they waited out the midday heat. Mr. Bartlett made a sketch of the day-camp and presumably brought his diary up to date. He wrote:

Mr. Leroux [the guide], who had before come down the Salinas, pointed out to me a mountain some six or eight miles off, at the base of which the river San Francisco or Verde enters from the north.

That mountain is today’s Red Mountain, and it appears in Bartlett’s pencil and wash sketch, along with the higher and more distant Four Peaks.



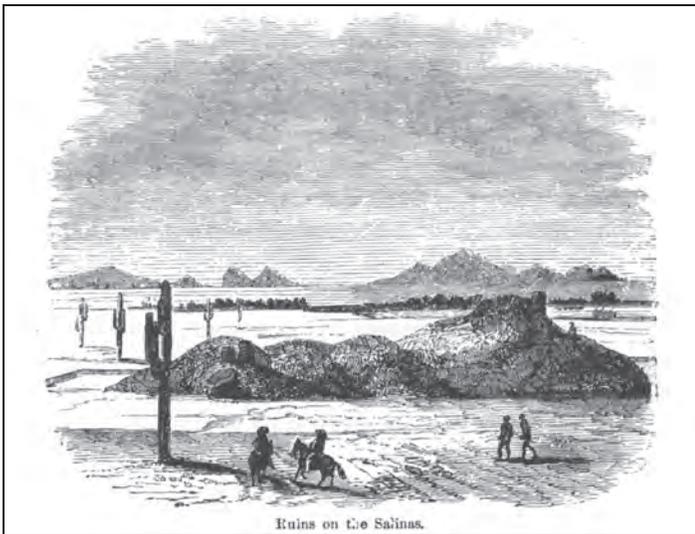
“On the Salinas—North of the Gila, New Mexico.” This pencil and wash sketch by John Russell Bartlett shows a view looking up the Salt River from the shady river-side camp where the men waited out the heat of the day near the Mesa Grande ruins.

*courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.*

Returning to the ruin in late afternoon, Bartlett reported passing numerous irrigation ditches, the largest being 25 feet wide. He also could see many other similar adobe mounds nearby. The mound that Bartlett sketched is now known as the Mesa Grande Ruin. The structures were occupied by the Hohokam between AD 1100 and 1400. After trying to break it with the heel of his boot, Bartlett reported that the adobe was “still very hard.” This is because the adobe was made of concrete-like caliche soil that is common in this area. The group examined the ruin for an hour and then took a “strongly marked trail” due south. This would be near the alignment of Mesa’s Country Club Road. They camped at midnight when they reached a mesquite thicket. In the morning they found they were but two miles from the river.

After crossing the dry bed of the Gila just east of Gila Butte, they were in the middle of the Pima Villages. A.B. Gray, who surveyed the original Pima Indian Reservation, marked on his map a small lone hill that was used as a lookout. Gray noted that the chief’s wigwam was near that hill. Today, that hill is located about a mile west of the Casa Blanca Road exit (Exit 175) on Interstate 10. From there, it was a 13-mile ride to Maricopa Wells.

Bartlett’s party arrived back at camp on July 5 and Lieutenant Whipple’s survey crew arrived that afternoon. After spending several more days in the Pima Villages, Bartlett sent Lieutenant Paige and the escort back to Yuma with a copy of the survey notes. Bartlett and Whipple then returned to New Mexico via the Southern Trail.



Woodcut titled “Ruins on the Salinas” appearing in Bartlett’s *Personal Narrative*. It shows a mound of adobe ruins in the foreground, a line of trees marking the Salt River in the middle distance, and several mountains on the horizon.



An elevated view of the Mesa Grande Ruin in Mesa, Arizona. The mountains on the horizon are the Papago Buttes, Squaw (Piestewa) Peak, Camelback Mountain, and Mummy Mountain in Phoenix.  
*photo by Tom Jonas*

Less than two years later, the United States purchased another large parcel of land from Mexico in the Gadsden Purchase in order to obtain the land required for a southern railroad route to California. By September of 1854, Lieutenant William H. Emory was in the field surveying the new Gadsden boundary – the one we know today as the Mexican border. Emory reportedly destroyed many of the records of the earlier boundary survey. While Lieutenant Emory was marking the new boundary, Lieutenant Whipple was commanding an exploration to find a railroad route on the 35th parallel.

Commissioner Bartlett was largely discredited for his inept leadership of the boundary commission. An official report of the survey was never published, but Bartlett privately published his own two-volume narrative of his travels.

*This paper was initially presented at the 2018 Southern Trails Chapter Symposium in Gila Bend, Arizona.*

#### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> John Russell Bartlett. *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora and Chihuahua 1850-1853.*, Vol. 2. (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854), page 197.

<sup>2</sup> Bartlett, 242.

## Silas St. John, the Attack at Dragoon Springs, and the Amputation of St. John's Shoulder

[*Editors' Note:* In the article "The Graves at Dragoon Springs" (*Desert Tracks*, June 2017, page 13), Doug Hocking relates the story of the September 8, 1858, attack on the employees of Butterfield's Dragoon Springs stage station in eastern Arizona. During the attack, Silas St. John's arm was severed with an axe. John Dowling Irwin, the assistant surgeon at Fort Buchanan, was sent to Dragoon Springs to help the survivors recover from their wounds. Rose Ann Tompkins recently forwarded us two 19<sup>th</sup>-century articles concerning the attack and its aftermath which we think will be of interest to our readers. The first is a newspaper article from *The Nonpareil* of Council Bluffs, Iowa. It was published on July 5, 1896, and is based on an interview with St. John, who was visiting Council Bluffs at that time. The second is Dr. Irwin's report of his experience with St. John. It was published in *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, Vol. 38 (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1859) 350-353. We have left the text of these articles unedited.]

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### **Capt. Silas St. John: Pioneer mail stage and railroad man on the frontier in the early 1850's**

Capt. Silas St. John, a gentleman who is credited with bearing a charmed life, is at present in Council Bluffs the guest of his cousin, Dr. P. J. Montgomery, at 215 South Fourth Street. Capt. St. John, as a pioneer mail stage and railroad man on the frontier in the early 50s, has been through more adventures and experienced more hair breadth escapes from death than would kill off a hundred ordinary men. As a result of these experiences the captain today, and for over forty years, has had to fight his way through life with one arm and a badly crippled limb. Not one man in a thousand could have suffered the fearful injuries that the captain has and still be alive to tell the story.

A representative of *The Nonpareil* had the pleasure of meeting Capt. St. John and was able to gather a few facts about his extraordinary experiences in California, Arizona

and New Mexico in the early 50s when connected with the government mail stage routes.

The captain is a New Yorker and in 1853, when he was about 20 years old, he and a number of companions left St. Louis with Council Bluffs as their objective point, where they intended to fit out for the overland journey to the Pacific coast. Fate decreed otherwise, however, and they never reached Council Bluffs, which at that time, was a famous outfitting post. The steamer on which they started from St. Louis was wrecked, the passengers were transferred to another boat, which was likewise shortly after disabled. Again they were transferred to another steamer, but with no better success, for the third steamer became unmanageable and the boat drifted against the shore and nearly broke in two. This happened at a point a little above Lexington, Mo. The idea of trying to make Council Bluffs was abandoned and the party outfitted at Wellington, Mo, and started for California. Nothing beyond the usual hardships accompanying an overland journey across the plains happened to the party and California was reached in safety.

In 1857, Capt. St. John helped lay out and manage the first government mail stage route in the United States. The route was from San Diego to San Antonio, Texas, the entire distance being practically through an unsettled country and the greater portion of it an arid desert. This, the first mail route contract made by the United States government, was controlled by James E. Birch, president of the California Stage Company. The contract called for the carrying of the mails twice a month, the consideration being \$149,000 a year.

The first time the mails were carried on horseback. Capt. St. John and a companion carried the mail bags the second stage of the route, a distance of 110 miles from Carrissa Creek to Fort Yuma. They were in the saddle constantly from noon of one day until 8 o'clock of the evening following. During the entire long ride they were unable to obtain drinking water. The wells dug by the Indians were filled with dead animals and those dug by Gen. Crook some years previous had become filled with sand. At one of these wells by working their hats and hands they obtained some water for the horses, but it was too brackish for themselves to drink.

The year following the government made a contract with Wells, Butterfield & Co. later reorganized into the Overland Mail Company, for a semi-weekly mail route from Memphis and St. Louis to San Francisco by way of El Paso and Fort Yuma. On account of his knowledge of the country and business ability, young St. John then only about 23 years of age, was engaged to lay out the route and superintend the building of stations. It was while engaged on this work that he met with the adventure that would have killed any other man except himself and which lost him his left arm from the shoulder and crippled his right limb from the hip down.

He started out on the work with six men to help him, three Americans and three Mexicans, and a number of packmules. One night while establishing a station at a place called Dragoon Springs in Arizona, much against his own inclinations, but at the request of the three Americans who were tired out, he consented to allow the three Mexicans to do guard duty. He felt that these Mexicans were treacherous so did not go to sleep himself, but kept one eye open on them. Hardly had the three Americans fallen asleep when the Mexicans each seizing an axe started for the sleeping men.

Before the captain had time to give them any warning, the Mexicans were on them, and with the axes clove their skulls in. They then turned to Capt St. John, who had been lying at a distance from the other three men and advanced on him. He was unable at first to get his pistols out of the saddle bag which he had been using as a pillow, and so was unarmed. As the first Mexican struck at him with his axe he put up his left arm to ward off the blow and with the right fist knocked the man down. The axe, however, struck the arm a few inches below the shoulder completely severing the member except for a small piece of flesh. As the second one advanced he kicked him in the stomach, laying him out, but not until the man had struck him a powerful blow in the right thigh with the axe, cutting it to the bone and severing all the muscles. The third Mexican backed off a little and the captain was able to secure his revolvers. As soon as they saw this the three men ran and that was the last he ever heard of them.

When the Mexicans left he realized for the first time that he

was badly injured. On putting up his right hand to see what made his left arm feel so numb, he discovered that it was hanging by a mere shred of flesh and that the blood was pouring from the wound. After considerable difficulty with a pebble and a piece of rag he managed to make a ligature above the cut and partially stop the flow of blood. He also managed to bind up the gash in his thigh with some pieces of sacking. By this time, he was faint from loss of blood and was so weak that he was unable to move any distance. With great exertion he dragged himself onto the top of a pile of gunny sacks and placing his revolvers near him lay down to await developments.

This occurred Wednesday night and he lay on the sacks without a drop of water to drink, with the fierce sun beating down on him until the following Sunday, when help arrived. He was unable to speak, owing to the swollen condition of his tongue and mouth and his wounds were in a state of putrefaction and alive with maggots. A messenger was sent to Fort Buchanan for the regimental surgeon, but, as luck would have it, he was away on a hunting expedition and it was the Thursday following before he arrived.

The doctor, B.J.D. Irwin of the First Dragoons, the regiment occupying Fort Buchanan, amputated the arm immediately and made him as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. Dr. Irwin was compelled to return to Fort Buchanan in order to send Captain St. John some necessary medicines and supplies. These arrived a couple of days after and St. John was picking up wonderfully, when the escort that had been left to attend him drank up all the wine and spirits that the doctor had sent him. This enraged Captain St. John, and taking his revolver in his only hand, he ordered the men to hitch up an army wagon and harness six mules to it, and forming a hammock out of a blanket, made them drive him to the fort. This was six days after the amputation of the arm, which shows what wonderful vitality he possessed. After spending five days in the hospital at the fort he was around and walking. Six days later he rode seventy miles on horseback to the nearest stage line and then drove all the way to Los Angeles.

The story of his terrible experience and the facts of his remarkable recovery from injuries which, under the circumstances would have been death to nearly any other man, was published in the American Journal of Medical

Sciences of October 1859 by Surgeon Irwin.

Later Capt. St. John was connected in an official capacity with the first railroad ever built in California. The road was from Sacramento to Folsom. In 1865-67 he was interested in the oil fields in West Virginia. He has been in forty two railroad accidents and escaped serious injury in all of them, although men on each side on several occasions have been killed. For years he was connected with one or the other of the express companies in responsible positions but finally on account of failing health had to resign. He has been engaged in the mining business in Colorado and has done considerable journalistic work. For several years he owned and edited the *Expressman* of New York, a monthly devoted to the interests of the express companies. ‘

In 1888 tumors formed at the end of the nerves in the stump of the shoulder where the arm was amputated which caused that side of his body to become paralyzed. He underwent an operation in New York and the paralysis disappeared. In spite of his crippled condition he has always led a most active life but thinks that it is now time for him to settle down and spend the remainder of his days in peace and quiet. He may probably make Council Bluffs his home

***Nonpareil, Council Bluffs, Iowa, July 5, 1896***

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### **Amputation at the Shoulder-Joint**

***by B.J.D. Irwin, M.D., Assistant Surgeon, U.S. Army***

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, 1858, I was requested to visit one of the stations of the Southern Overland Mail Company, where a number of men were reported to have been dangerously wounded. I set out at once, and arrived at the place early the next morning, after a smart ride of one hundred and fifteen miles, but found that three of the four wounded men had already died. The history of the survivor, Silas St. John, a strong, robust, healthy young man, 24, a native of New York City, was as follows: He, with three Americans and three Mexican boys, was engaged in keeping the mail station. On the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup>, one of the latter was placed on guard, and remainder of the party retired to rest for the night, about midnight

the Mexicans arose, and with axes and a large hammer attempted to murder their sleeping companions. St. John awoke, and hearing blows given, was in the act of springing from his bed when he received a terrible blow from an axe, which almost severed his left arm from his body, followed quickly by another that cut the fleshy part of the same arm in a shocking manner; this was succeeded by another stroke that cut through the anterior external portion of the right thigh, a short distance below the joint. By this time he succeeded in grasping his pistol, and having fired at the desperate assassins, they fled and were seen no more. One of the unfortunate victims who slept outside of the door of the rude shed never awoke, another, with his face and head frightfully chopped and mangled, lived in great agony until the evening of the next day; while a third, whose head was almost cloven in two, the brain continually oozing from the shattered skull, lingered until the *sixth* day, during which time his frenzied craving for water to quench his burning thirst was of the most heart-rending character. On the evening of the next day the mail stage came by and found St. John, the only survivor of his party, alone in the rude hovel in the wilderness, without food or water, unable to move; his wounds undressed, stiffened, and full of loathsome maggots; his companions had died one by one a horrible death, and lastly, to add to the horrors of his suffering, the hungry wolves and ravens came and banqueted upon the putrefying corpse of one of his dead companions which lay but a few feet from his desolate bed. The mental and physical sufferings which he endured are marvelous to think of. Yet he never complained nor flinched for a moment. Calm and resigned, he bore his torments with the fortitude of a martyr.

After administering to his immediate wants, one of the mail party was left with him, and remained until my arrival on the 17<sup>th</sup>, at which time his condition was as follows; he was weak and pallid from loss of blood, sleep, and constant mental and physical suffering; his disposition was cheerful, and he evinced much pleasure at the prospect of having his wounds attended to. A deep, incised wound, about eight inches in length, extending from the point of the acromion process, passing inwards, downwards and backwards, laid open the shoulder joint, passed through the external portion of the head of the humerus, and thence downward, splintering the bone through about four inches of its course. The wound in the thigh proved to be only a severe lesion of

the soft parts, about eight inches long and three deep.

After a careful examination, I saw it would be impossible to make any effort to save the arm; I therefore determined to remove it at once. The patient was informed of the necessity for the operation, and his permission was accorded almost cheerfully. The only assistance that I could command was from three of the men forming my escort. Having made a kind of bed of some bags of corn, the patient was placed on it. One of the men having been instructed how to compress the axillary artery, and the other assistants properly disposed of, I removed the limb as follows: the patient lying on his back, with the shoulder elevated, I placed myself on the outside, and grasping the arm, I passed the catling through the original wound, thence inwards behind the fractured point of the humerus, and downwards, forming a large flap from the anterior and inner aspect of the arm, which made up for the deficiency caused by the character of the wound, which left the superior-posterior aspect of the joint entirely devoid of muscular tissue. With the aid of the scalpel, the remaining portion of the head and neck of the humerus was removed from the glenoid cavity, the granulated surface of the old wound revived, and the arteries tied as quickly as possible, after which the edges of the wound were brought together and retained by interrupted sutures and some bands of adhesive plaster. Cold water dressing was applied, with a light bandage suitable to the part. The wound in the lower limb was dressed by inverting the large fleshy flap, and retaining it in its normal position by several interrupted sutures. Cold water dressing and the maintenance of the thigh in a semi-flexed position were the only requisites here. Forty drops of tincture of opium were administered, and the patient placed in as comfortable a bed as the meager circumstances of the place would permit. Chloroform was not at hand to be given, and the only stimulus obtainable was a few drachms of essence of ginger. The celerity with which the operation was performed, and the fortitude and excellent disposition of the patient, saved him from everything like protracted suffering. In the evening, the *tinct. opii* was repeated, and proper directions having previously sent for some wine, brandy, and other nourishment. Of the former, fZviiij, and the latter, fZiv, were allowed him daily. [Editors' note: these are older pharmaceutical units; the former is approximately a fluid ounce.]

During the night of the 23d he arrived at the fort, having travelled in a common wagon sixty miles over a rough road during the two preceding days; and he was weak and fatigued, half a grain of sulphate of morphia was given him, and he was placed in a comfortable bed. Next morning I examined his wounds, and found the lesion at the shoulder had united by first intention, save at a point where the ligatures protruded. The wound in the thigh had partly opened. Proper dressings were applied, generous diet given, and the patient continued to convalesce without an untoward symptom. Most of the ligatures came away between the ninth and twelfth days, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> the last, that from the axillary artery. Occasionally he suffered from frightful dreams, and imaginary pain in the lost arm. Whilst recovering, he had two attacks of quotidian intermittent fever, which readily yielded to quinine. On the 24<sup>th</sup> day after the operation he was walking about, and in less than six weeks he started for the Eastern States, restored to perfect health.

**Fort Buchanan, Arizona, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1859**



Mormon odometer.  
[See article page 29.]  
photo by Norman Wisner

## The Navajo Springs Marker Project

*text and photos by Tracy DeVault and John Krizek*

During the Civil War, President Lincoln created Arizona as a separate territory from New Mexico under the Organic Act in February 1863. The new territorial government party set forth from Leavenworth, Kansas, in September 1863, on a four-month overland journey to the new territory. By the time they reached Santa Fe, the party determined that their destination would be in the central mountainous area of Arizona where valuable mineral deposits were being discovered, rather than in Tucson where Confederate sympathy still held sway.

The Beale Road, which traverses northern Arizona approximately where Interstate 40 runs today, was opened for emigrant travel by Edward Fitzgerald Beale in 1857, following a route originally explored by Lieutenant Amiel Whipple. Heading west on the Beale Road, the governor's party – which included some 60 wagons and 1,000 head of cattle – camped at Navajo Springs. This was the first water source on the Beale Road inside the new Arizona Territory. Confident that they were within the boundary of the new territory, they held a ceremony on December 29, 1863, to swear in the new territorial officers.

The train continued west along the Beale Road to a point near where Flagstaff is today and then angled south from there. It took them two more weeks to reach the first Fort Whipple, at Del Rio Springs, north of today's Chino Valley, where they arrived in January 1864.

In October 1930, the St. Johns' Stake of the Mormon Church placed a sandstone marker at Navajo Springs to commemorate the event. The site is on Indian land about 40 miles east of Holbrook and about 5 miles south of the Navajo Springs exit off Interstate 40. The marker remained intact until a few years ago, when it was toppled by erosion and wind – perhaps cattle had also rubbed against it.

Although the original marker had remained upright for nearly 100 years, it is clear why it eventually broke. The original marker was hauled to the springs site and set in a relatively small concrete footing that had been poured

on site. The result was a marker that probably weighed 700 pounds sitting on a concrete footing that weighed approximately 200 pounds. When erosion washed away some of the dirt supporting the footing, the marker fell over and the upright part of the marker separated from the original base. Neither part was substantially damaged.



Marker as it appeared in 2001.

Several years ago, one of us (John Krizek) learned that the marker had been broken and began searching for someone to undertake the repair. In February, two of us (Tracy DeVault and Richard Greene) volunteered to repair the marker. We decided to repair it in such a way that it might last another 200 years. Trying to do this work in the middle of the desert, 175 miles from Prescott, would have been too difficult. We decided to travel to Navajo Springs, collect the marker, and return it to Prescott where it could be properly repaired.

Navajo Nation representatives Clarence Bedonie and Elwood "Al" Pahi escorted us to the site where we removed the marker. The original marker pieces weighed



Marker after it was broken.

about 350 pounds apiece. An engine hoist was used to load the marker pieces into Tracy's 4-wheel drive van. We then transported it to Tracy's garage for restoration.

Although we were able to move the two pieces of the original marker, which weighed about 350 pounds each, the repaired marker will weigh about 2,100 pounds. In order to move it and transport it back to Navajo Springs, a substantial cart was needed. Our first task, then, was to construct such a cart. Since it had to be moved with a motorized vehicle, we also fabricated a trailer hitch for the cart.



Clarence Bedonie, Richard Greene, and Al Pahi loading the marker into Tracy's van.

Cart and trailer hitch.

We decided that a new base would be cast from concrete. The repaired marker with its original base would sit on the new base, which would be substantially larger than the original 200-pound footing. The rendering below gives an idea of what the repaired marker will look like. The new base, which will weigh approximately 1,400 pounds, will be even larger than that depicted in the drawing.

Our next step was to figure out how to attach the original marker base to the new base. We decided to reinforce the new base with structural steel and attach the original marker base to the structural steel. The photo below shows the cart with the form that was used to cast the new marker base. Structural steel and eye-bolts, which are required to lift the marker when it is complete, were placed inside the base.



Drawing showing how the restored marker will appear.

Form used to cast the base, with structural steel and eye-bolts in place.

In order to attach the original marker base to the structural steel, we inserted four threaded rods into holes in the bottom of the original marker base and locked the rods into the holes with industrial epoxy.



Original marker base with new steel rods epoxied in place.

We next bolted the original marker base to the structural steel. Several additional steps were needed before casting the new concrete base.



Original marker base bolted to the structural steel.

Considerable research went into understanding what goes into a high-strength, water-freezing resistant concrete mix. We also reviewed the steps involved in placing, finishing, and curing concrete flat work.

On April 19, we cast the new concrete base. It was kept wet for seven days as the concrete went through the initial cure phase. (Concrete takes 28 days to fully cure.) The new concrete base together with the original



Newly cast concrete base.

sandstone marker base now weighs over a ton. It can only be moved on the cart with a powerful tow vehicle such as a quadrunner.

When the marker was originally constructed, the upright



Cart, holding the new and original marker bases, being pulled by a quadrunner.

part was attached to the original base with some sort of cement. This worked well enough that the marker would probably still be attached to the base if it had not fallen over. We plan to use three steel rods to attach the upright part of the marker to the original base. We will also fill the gap between the upright part of the marker and the

original base with industrial epoxy. Once the epoxy has set up, it should be almost impossible to ever separate the base from the upright.

Up to this time we have been able to lift the marker pieces using an engine hoist and lift the cart carrying the new concrete base with a rolling floor jack. Neither of these devices will work to lift the finished marker off the cart. What we will need is a gantry and a pair of heavy-lift chain hoists.

While the final repairs are being made to the marker, a trip will be made to Navajo Springs to prepare the site for the repaired marker. We plan to level an area of about 60 square feet. We will then build a low retaining wall from precast concrete stones; the enclosure will be filled with driveway gravel.

Finally, the new concrete base will be waterproofed. When the repairs are complete, the marker, sitting on the cart, will be loaded onto a car-hauler trailer and taken back to Navajo Springs. The quadrunner will be used to move the marker/cart across the desert and back to where the marker was originally placed.

Future plans include putting a protective fence around the marker and placing an OCTA descriptive plaque at the site.



Final check of the fit before re-attaching the upright part of the marker to the base. The upper image shows the front of the marker. The bottom image shows the back of the repaired marker and the cart. It also shows how the precast stone enclosure will appear. The backside of the marker reads: "Erected at Navajo Springs by St. Johns Stake M.I.A., October 1930." In this expression, "M.I.A." stands for Mutual Improvement Association.



Gantry for lifting the repaired marker with the new concrete base off the cart.

Donations to the Territorial Governor's Monument Repair Fund can be sent to Lee Black, Treasurer, OCTA Southern Trails Chapter, P.O. Box 92225, Albuquerque, NM 87119.

**Scenes from the OCTA Southern Trails Chapter Symposium  
Gila Bend, Arizona, March 15-19, 2018**

*photos by Jan Iwashita*



Oatman Grave.



Oatman Massacre site.



Group picture taken at Painted Rock.



Petroglyphs at Painted Rock.



OCTA members at the Four gravesite.



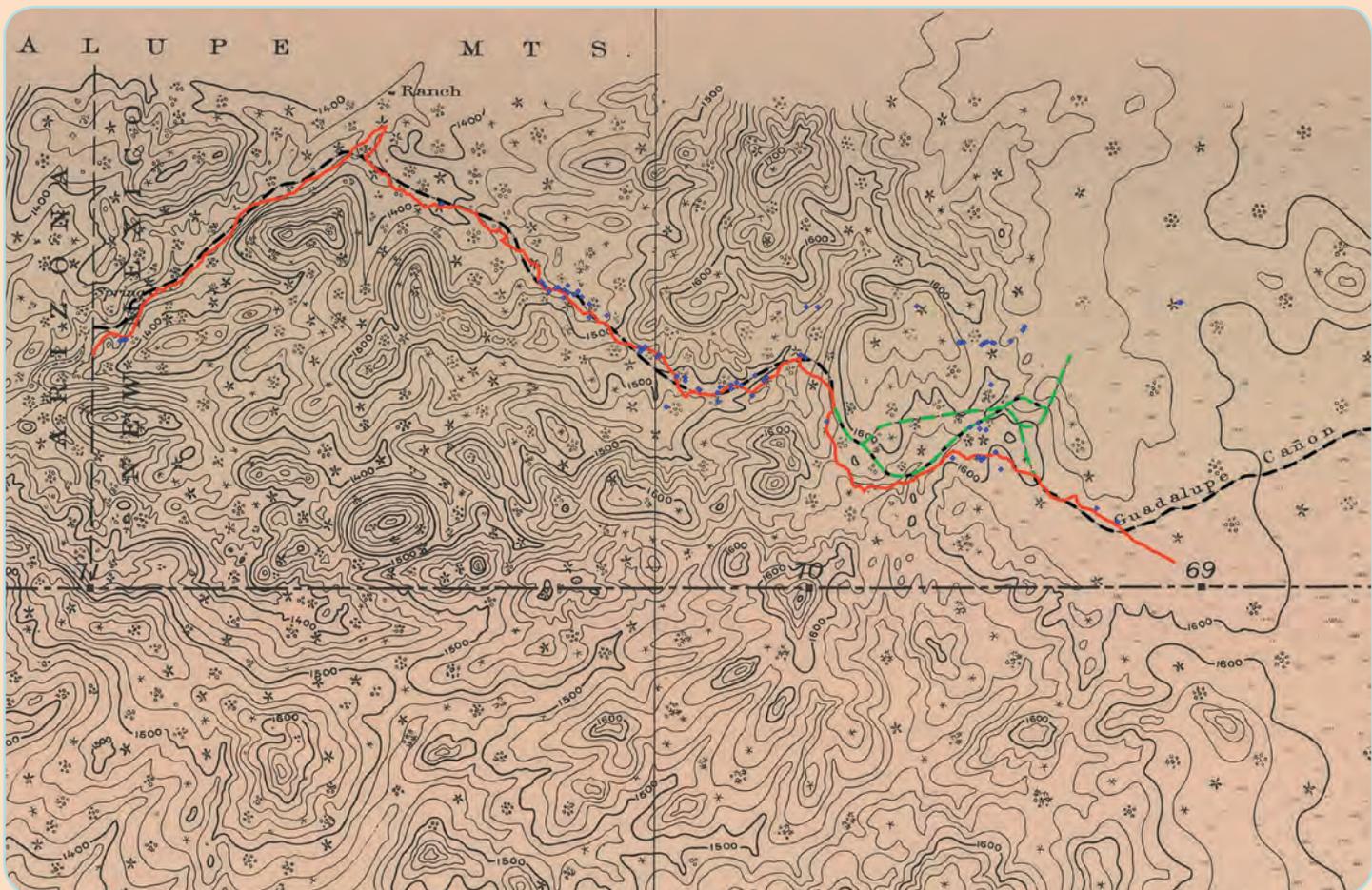
Leach's Road.

# Southern Trails Chapter

Oregon-California Trails Association



OCTA:  
The Oregon-California  
Trails Association



Map of the Guadalupe Pass area, taken from the Barlow-Blanco U.S.-Mexican Boundary Survey of the early 1890s. The modern 4-wheel drive road through the pass is shown in red. The road shown on the 1890's map is highlighted in black. It is shown in green where it diverges from the modern road. Waypoints taken during a 1998 Trail Turtles' mapping trip are shown in blue. *courtesy Tracy DeVault and Norman Wisner*