Desert Tracks

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

Spring 2009

In this issue:

Desert Tracks:
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Past issues can be found at
www.physics.uci.edu/~jmlawren/SWOCTA.html

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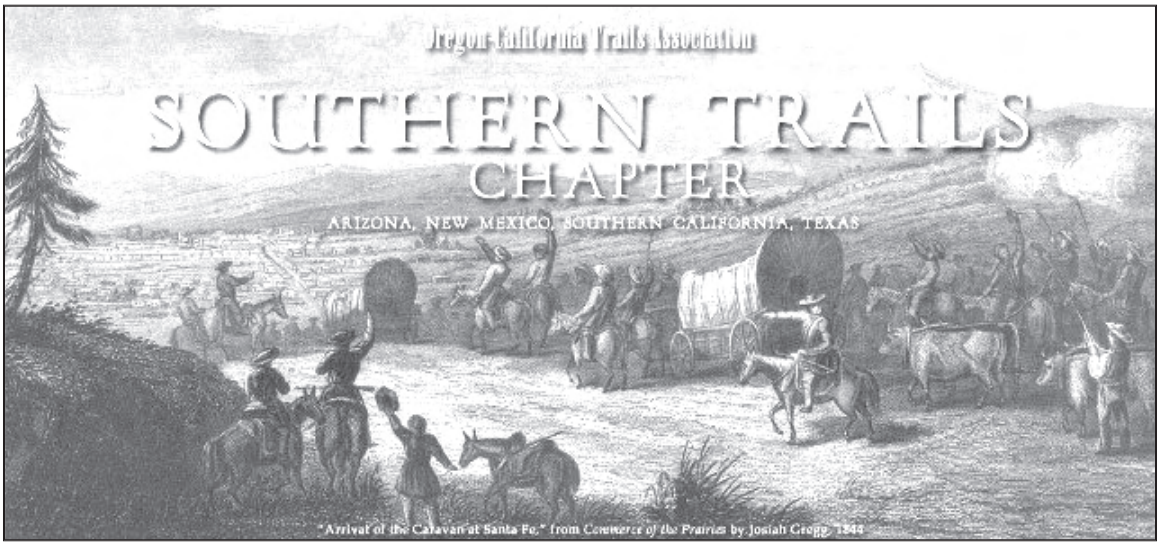

The new Southern Trails Chapter website logo.

On the cover: Map of the Southern Route Trails to California prepared by Tom Jonas and unveiled at OCTA's Yuma Symposium in January 2009. A large color version of the map is available on the website www.octa-trails.org; look for item #1821 under Trail Maps in the Bookstore section. Other maps by Jonas can be viewed on his website www.tomjonas.com/swex.

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From the President:
End of an Era for the Southwest Chapter
New beginning for the Southern Trails Chapter

by Albert Eddins

At a chapter meeting held in Phoenix, Arizona, on April 21, 2009, officers were elected (see the back cover of this issue) and a new course of action was set for the Southwest Chapter. As chapter president, I have taken it as my charge to help define the direction for the chapter. Many of the ideas and changes discussed below came from the work of the steering committee which has been in place since the Yuma Symposium in January 2009 (see *Desert Tracks*, January 2009), as well as from input received from many chapter members.

The chapter leadership has set six goals that will redefine how the chapter goes forward. In accomplishing these goals, we hope to restore interest and participation in the chapter by existing members and encourage new members to join us.

Goal 1: New name and historic look.
The chapter has received verbal approval from the OCTA President and its board of directors to change the name of the chapter from "Oregon-California Trail Association, Southwest Chapter" to **"Southern Trails Chapter of the Oregon-California Trail Association."** At the meeting in Phoenix, the vote was unanimous in favor of the name change. Formal approval will take place at the next OCTA board meeting in Loveland, Colorado. To accompany the name change, we have adopted a new chapter logo. (See back cover.)

Goal 2: Increase contact with the membership.
At present the only real communication with the membership is through *Desert Tracks*. Many members have clearly stated they want more than this from the chapter. The first step to accomplish this goal will be to have regularly scheduled chapter meetings. We will hold four chapter meetings per year – summer, fall, winter, and spring – at historical locations which will rotate across the chapter's territory. (See the textbox on page 19 for the four upcoming meetings.) Other activities and local outings to historic trail sites will be planned at various times and locations throughout the year.

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Tom Jonas, Reba Grandrud, Albert Eddins, John Fromm, and Shannon Perry. *courtesy Albert Eddins*

From the Editors

In this issue of *Desert Tracks*, Albert Eddins, the recently elected chapter president, unveils new directions for the Southwest Chapter of OCTA. This includes a name change (to "Southern Trails Chapter"), an expanded slate of officers, and an ambitious agenda, including more chapter meetings, field trips, symposia, an effort to attain National Historic Trail status for the Southern Emigrant Trail, plus a new webpage and an upcoming electronic newsletter to supplement this publication. We applaud these efforts and encourage all chapter members to participate.

The Trail Turtles continue their vital work to locate and map the Southern Emigrant Trail. In this issue, Rose Ann Tompkins reports on the Turtles' recent mapping trip to the west of Apache Pass. Since the Turtles recently mapped in the vicinity of Doubtful Canyon, we have included a review by Walter Drew Hill of the book *Doubtful Cañon* by western novelist Johnny Boggs. We also review Robert Torres' book*, The Myth of the Hanging Tree*.

Several people have requested that we publish some of the talks that were given at the OCTA Symposium in Yuma this January. We have transcribed Paul Hutton's talk on Kit Carson and the White incident, and we have included Mark Santiago's talk on the Yuma Massacre, where Father Garcés was murdered. We also include the map that accompanied Tom Jonas' talk on the Kearny/ Cooke Trail through Baja California. A writeup of the symposium by Jerry Dwyer can be found in the March 2009 issue of *Trail Talk*, the newsletter of the Cal-Nevada chapter of OCTA. See www.canvocta.org.

Gregory Franzwa, founder of OCTA, died this past March. An obituary can be found in the Spring 2009 issue of OCTA's newsletter, *News from the Plains*. At the Yuma symposium, Franzwa told us of a letter that Petrica Thompson, of the Oatman party, sent back to Iowa. We include the letter herein. We will contribute a review of *The Blue Tattoo*, Margot Mifflin's new book on Olive Oatman, in an upcoming issue of OCTA's *Overland Journa*l.

Letter from Petrica Thompson of the Oatman Party

[**Editors' Note:** The following letter was published in the *Times Republican* of Corydon, Iowa, on March 23, 1939. Written in 1851 or 1852 by Petrica Thompson to her sister Lucy Drury (who later married Richard Carter and lived near Humeston, Iowa), it tells of the hardships and struggles of one of the families who were members of the Oatman Party as they traveled westward from Iowa. The letter was recently republished in the *Newsletter of the Wayne County Historical Society* and can be found online at http://www.prairietrailsmuseum.org/newsletters/2008december.pdf. We are grateful to the late Gregory Franzwa for bringing the letter to our attention.]

Dear Brother and Sister,

I once more take my pen to address a few lines to you. I know not whether you are living or whether you are dead, but hope you are in good health and prosperity.

Now a little of our journey: We left Iowa June the 8th, 1850, in company with a family by the name of Oatman. We were the first of the family that got to Independence, MO and waited there until the rest came. Did not organize and get ready to start until the 5th of August, then started across the Indian country. We had a long and tiresome journey all of our seven hundred miles, without any white inhabitants. The Indians frequently visited our camp, and, oh how often when we lay down at night in that savage country resounding as far around as we could hear with barking and howling wolves, did I think of home and you and your little ones. But then our troubles were only begun.

Disputes often arose in the company. We passed Morrow Fort, went on to the first Mexican town, there the company divided; part went the Santa Fe road and part the left hand road to Tohoyaes where we crossed the Rio Grande, went down the river about 100 miles, then left the river and crossed the Delos Membros range of mountains. Some parts of our road were very rugged, stony, steep and narrow.

While on the summit of these mountains one day it became cloudy, followed by cold, damp mist, but we traveled on until night. We camped out, but before we got our tents pitched it began to rain very hard: before morning it turned to snow and we had no wood, and the short dry grass was all covered with snow, so there was no feed for our cattle. Judge our situation if you can.

Some of the company said we would perish there, but I did not think so. Tom was the first to make an effort to leave that heart sickening place. He hitched his teams to the wagon and succeeded in starting in the midst of snow and ice. Three other families then followed. We traveled a few miles and came to a small stream of water and a grove of timber. Then with several miles of tedious traveling forward we had a good fire and plenty of browse for our cattle. That night the rest of our company came up. We were seven families in all.

In four days the snow melted so we could travel again. A few days after this we encamped one night after dark. It being very cold, the teams were turned out that night. Twelve head of cattle and one horse were stolen.

It happened that none of ours were stolen, but you never thought of such a time as we had the next morning in getting ready to start. But at length we got on the road again and traveled alternately over mountain, through ravines, over barren plains, and fertile valleys until we got to the little town in Sonora called Thieson.

Our team was so worn out we were obliged to stop. Four other families also stopped and three went to the village of the Pomos and Maricopa Indians. One of the women was confined. Mr. Oatman went with his family along intending to reach the government station on the Colorado River. He went on nearly two hundred miles when Oatman, his wife and four children were killed by Indians. The oldest boy was also knocked down. The Indians supposed they had killed him but he "possomed" and after the Indians had gone he made his escape. Two girls were taken prisoners by the Indians.

Reports say that the girls are now with the Copapar Indians down toward the gulf, and the American troops are after them.

We got to Tucson January 8th and stayed there until May. We then left in company with some sheep drovers, for California. Utheria was taken sick a week before we got to Colorado. Two days before we got there we did not think she could get well, but we found a good doctor there who tended her faithfully. We got there the 20th day of May and the next day I was confined with a little daughter. The same doctor tended us both. I never got along so well before. Utheria also got well.

We were encamped just below where the Gile empties into the Colorado. When my baby was two weeks old we left. We came into Los Angeles County about the middle of July. It is a beautiful valley. There is no winter here. Tom has a beautiful field, ten acres of barley and four of wheat. We have potatoes, cabbage, turnips, onions, tomatoes, parsnips, and beets growing fine. We have a vineyard of grapes set out and some pears, quince, olives and a few apple trees set out. We have a comfortable house and two cows we brought through with us and five Spanish cows, five oxen and one horse and thirty-five hens.

My health has been better here than in sixteen years before. We all enjoy good health; we have plenty to eat and wear, and plenty of work to do. We live on a public road and have a great deal of company. As soon as we are able we shall put a tavern house. Indeed we already have one. We get six bits a pound for our butter. I could write a great deal more but have not room. This from your affectionate sis,

Petrica Thompson

Book Reviews

Doubtful Cañon: A Western Story
Johnny D. Boggs
Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2007
ISBN 13: 9781594145575
Hardback, $25.95

Johnny Boggs's passion for the history of the Southwest is evidenced in his novel *Doubtful Cañon*. Set in historic Shakespeare, Steins, and Doubtful Canyon – all places that will be familiar to most readers of these pages – the book cleverly combines fact with fiction.

Originally named Mexican Spring, Shakespeare is an important site on the Southern Emigrant Trail. It served as a watering hole for emigrants, as a pre-Civil War military mail stop, and as a Butterfield Stage stop. Later, in the 1870's, it became an important mining town for southwestern New Mexico. Although the present-day ghost town of Shakespeare was featured in the winter issue of *Desert Tracks*, Boggs' novel allows us to see it as it was in the 1880's when Johnny Ringo and Curly Bill Brocious frequented the bars on Avon Street.

An old mining town 19 miles southwest of Lordsburg and at the entrance to Doubtful Canyon, the ghost town of present-day Steins (pronounced "Steens") began in 1857 as a stop on the Birch Stage Line. A year later, when James Birch was drowned in a shipwreck off the New England coast, his stagecoach company was replaced by the Butterfield Overland Stage Company, but Butterfield continued to use the Doubtful Canyon station despite the Apaches who made the area dangerous. The town of Steins was founded a few miles south in 1880 when the Southern Pacific Railroad was completed. It was named for Calvary officer Enoch Steins who was killed near there by Apaches in 1873. At the town's peak, it boasted 1,300 residents.

The winner of the 2008 Spur Award, Boggs' novel concerns the 1861 murder of Butterfield employee John James Giddings and four other men (three guards and the driver) who were attacked by Apaches at the entrance to Doubtful Canyon. According to legend, Giddings managed to cache the Overland Mail Company money before he was killed. In 1917, sixty years after the murder of John Giddings, his daughter Annie Giddings visited his gravesite where she erected a granite headstone in his memory.

In the novel, Boggs changes the time of Annie Giddings' visit to 1881. He also creates a survivor of the Apache attack in Doubtful Canyon, a half-crazed albino named Whitey Grey. Grey discovers three 12-year-old children in Shakespeare's abandoned Lady Macbeth Mine, and he convinces them to accompany him back to the site of the attack to look for the $30,000 in gold coin that he believes Giddings cached before he was murdered. He promises the children $5,000 of the gold if they will help him. He needs the children's help because he believes that Giddings hid the gold in a narrow hole in the ground – too small for him to enter. Unfortunately for the four gold seekers, the Apaches have just broken out of the San Carlos Reservation and they may be in the area. And to add to their problems, once they get to the site of the attack, they discover that Giddings' daughter, Curly Bill Brocious, and Johnny Ringo have other intentions for the gold.

Although the novel is perhaps most appropriate for teenagers, *Doubtful Cañon* will be of interest to SWOCTAns, not least of all for Boggs' depiction of the area that has been featured in so many issues of *Desert Tracks*.

Walter Drew Hill

Old Spanish Trail Association
National Convention

June 6-7, 2009
Sky Ute Resort, Ignacio, Colorado
www.oldspanishtrail.org.

The Myth of the Hanging Tree: Stories of Crime and Punishment in Territorial New Mexico
Robert Tórrez
Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008
ISBN: 978-0-8263-4379-6
Photographs, notes, appendices
Paperback, $19.95

Tales of lynching and hanging haunt the history of the West. And yet, asserts former New Mexico State Historian Robert Tórrez, the reality of how justice was administered during the frontier period is different from the popular conception which has been cultivated by movies and popular fiction. In his recent book, *The Myth of the Hanging Tree*, Tórrez attempts to set the record straight by analyzing the documented cases of lynchings and hangings in New Mexico from 1852 to 1928. Based on two decades of research into primary records found in the judicial and executive archives of the New Mexico Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe, these histories reveal that the 51 legal executions and 125 vigilante lynchings took place for crimes ranging from murder to assault on trains. Many of the hangings that Tórrez details are bungled and gruesome – Black Jack Ketchum, for example, suffered decapitation from a New Mexican hangman's noose. And the hangings did not take place in the manner that most of us imagine – where the noose dangles from the limb of a large cottonwood. Tórrez asserts that the hanging tree was rarely used in New Mexico because most towns didn't have tall enough trees from which to string up a person.

The first two chapters of *The Myth of the Hanging Tree* are overviews. Chapter one reviews what the primary documents reveal about lynching during the six decades of New Mexico's territorial government. Tórrez discusses the elements that distinguish lynching in New Mexico from lynchings in other parts of the United States. Although he examines a few racially motivated lynchings, he has found that lynchings in New Mexico were not usually racially motivated. The second chapter provides an examination of the legal hangings in New Mexico. Again, Tórrez analyses the racial composition of those legally hung, breaking down the executions by race and decade, beginning with the first documented legal hanging in 1849 and concluding in 1909 with the final execution of the territorial period.

Chapters three through ten focus on specific cases of crime and punishment. William Bonney fans will be interested in chapter three, which Tórrez devotes to two men who were affected by the same Mesilla court that convicted and sentenced The Kid. All three men – F.C. Clark, Santo Barela, and Billy the Kid – stood before Judge Bristol, were found guilty of murder, and sentenced to die for their crimes. By the time Barela and Clark were hanged, however, Billy had escaped from the Lincoln County jail. Chapter nine details the arsenic poisoning of a young man by his sixteen-year-old wife and her childhood friend in Hillsboro, New Mexico, in 1907. Also implicated in the murder is the widow's alleged lover, Francisco Baca. Although the judge sentenced the girls to death by hanging, the governor commuted their death sentence to life imprisonment, reasoning that Baca had not as yet been tried and the girls were the only witnesses who could testify for the prosecution at his upcoming trial. Especially interesting is the story of the hanging of Paula Angel, which is told in chapter ten. The only woman ever hanged in New Mexico, Angel was brought to trial in 1861 and sentenced to hang for the murder of her lover. But because the sheriff forgot to tie her arms before slipping the noose around her neck, instead of being hanged, Angel proceeded to pull herself upwards from the strangling rope. Grasping her waist, the sheriff attempted to pull her downward. The crowd, however, couldn't take it, and they rushed forward and cut Angel free from the hangman's noose. In the book's final chapter, Tórrez examines New Mexico's poor prison facilities and the building of the territorial penitentiary.

The Myth of the Hanging Tree is a corrective to the frontier justice myth, and, therefore, it is an important addition to the historiography of hanging and lynching in New Mexico.

Deborah and Jon Lawrence

Trail Turtles Spring 2009 Mapping Trip: Southern Trail, Apache Pass Alternate

by Rose Ann Tompkins

Those attending the mapping trip were Tracy and Judy DeVault, Pat and Ken White, Neal Johns and his dog Blue, Cam Wade, Rose Ann Tompkins, Charles Townley, and Bert Eddings – a first timer with the Trail Turtles.

Thursday, April 2: The mapping week began with a field trip. Tracy and Neal led Bert, Reba Grandrud, and two of Reba's friends, Marilyn Prigge and Rose Werner, along the trail east of the Dragoon Springs Stage Station, to show what the Turtles have found there in the past. This stage station is one of only two Butterfield stage stations in Arizona built of stacked rock, and there is much left to see. (The other Arizona stations were built of adobe brick, and very little if anything is left.) Several major historic events – including a battle between Confederate troops and Apaches – occurred at the Dragoon Springs Stage Station, and the graves are still there to prove it.

A local rancher rode up on horseback and provided us with some information about the area. Then the group hiked the route of the Butterfield Overland Mail to the northeast for about a mile or so. Many interesting artifacts are still along this route.

The area of the Cienega Springs Station of the Butterfield Stage line. The trail itself is difficult to find due to creek flooding, excessive trees and brush, and the railroad construction. *photo by Rose Ann Thompson*

Tracy DeVault talking with a local rancher.
photo by Albert Eddins

Later in the afternoon, Reba and her friends returned to Phoenix, and Cam, Rose Ann, and the Whites arrived at the camping spot on Lizard Lane, east of Dragoon. Tracy showed overview maps of the area and the possible places to look for the trail between Dragoon and Benson, and we discussed where we would begin working the next day. As the sun set and the breeze died down, we headed for our vehicles for the night.

Friday, April 3: After a windy night, we broke camp at 7:45 a.m., headed out Lizard Lane and drove to the Dragoon Springs Stage Station site. We broke into two groups, with one looking for trail between the station site and the access road and the other group looking for trail beyond the access road heading west. Both groups were somewhat successful. We met for lunch to discuss the next move. We decided to go back towards the town of Dragoon and go west on the power line road to where the power line and the railroad meet, and then follow Dragoon Wash. Our research had shown that the older emigrant road went west from Dragoon Pass, heading southwest along the east side of Dragoon Wash.

In this area, the modern railroad runs southwest along the west side of Dragoon Wash. Old Government Land Office (GLO) survey maps show that in the 1890's an earlier route of the railroad ran along the east side of the wash. We parked in an open area near an old windmill (complete with a large bird nest on top that had mostly collapsed) and again split up to hunt for trail sign in both directions along the wash.

Dragoon Wash. *photo by Tracy DeVault*

As the afternoon wore on, the wind got stronger. Trains passed nearby in each direction. Both groups found trail traces, traces of the early railroad grade, and a good deal of old railroad junk. The early grade had been almost obliterated by the floods that rampaged down the wash, which is the likely reason that the railroad was rerouted in this area. We decided to spend the night at the windmill, as the area around the windmill was flat with plenty of room to park. After dinner, we retreated to our vehicles early, not because of chill, but because of wind. We were lulled to sleep by the wind rocking the vehicles and by the rumble of the trains that frequently passed nearby.

Saturday, April 4: A chilly, windy morning greeted us, but we were off by 8:00 a.m. We followed the access road along the modern railroad tracks, as this was the general direction of the trail. We parked near where the group had stopped mapping the day before, crossed back over to the east side of Dragoon Wash and continued to follow the trail all morning. Judy, Rose Ann, and Neal's husky, Blue, stayed with the cars.

Charles Townley joined us just before lunch, and afterwards we drove to the town of St. David. We went to an area on the east side of town where we felt we might find the emigrant trail as it made its way to the San Pedro River. After a mostly fruitless search, we headed north of town to an area near the Dragoon Wash where we camped for the night. The chill of the evening and the continuing wind made for an early retreat to our vehicles.

Sunday, April 5: The temperature was in the mid-30's, making it hard to get out of our warm sleeping bags, but at least the sun felt good and the wind had stopped. We headed out on a dirt road that was parallel to Dragoon Wash but climbed to the mesa above it. Early GLO maps showed a wagon road in this area. In about the same place, satellite images showed the trace of an old road crossing the one we were driving on. The GPS put us on the spot, and we quickly found that the trace shown on the satellite image was indeed an old wagon road. We looked for the trail in both directions. Those working to the north did find the trail; those going south had little luck.

The views from this location were worth the trip. There were mountains all around, including those south of Dragoon Springs. In the distant north was I-10 with the tops of the trucks moving along. Also to the north was the railroad, the one we had followed the day before. Today they looked like model trains moving across the landscape. We were on a ridge with drainages dropping abruptly on our south, carving their v-shaped canyons.

Leaving this spot, we retraced our road back to St. David for a fast food lunch. Not realizing that St. David does not have such restaurants, we found ourselves on the highway to Benson, only a few miles away. We stopped at a roadside area next to the railroad tracks, where there is a visitor center in a

Heading off for the day. Left to right: Cam Wade, Ken White, Pat White, Tracy DeVault, Bert Eddins, Neal Johns, Judy DeVault. The trail west of Dragoon, AZ, where many traces were found, is in the rear of the photo. *photo by Rose Ann Tompkins*

Wagon parts. *photo by Albert Eddins*

replica of the old railroad station. We picnicked there and afterwards went into the visitor center, where there was a nice display of past railroad days.

This was an "afternoon off." Bert and Cam returned home. Several of us visited the Singing Wind Bookstore a few miles north of Benson, located on a ranch next to the San Pedro River. What a treasure! The owner, Win Bundy, gave us a tour, as she has her own system of organization. It was one of those places one could spend hours. Afterwards, we went to a motel, which was a welcome change from life in the vehicles.

Monday, April 6: After breakfast, we went over the maps for the day, and then headed out east of Benson to look at two possible alternatives for the Butterfield Overland Mail route. Although the first alternative looked promising from the aerials, it did not pan out.

Camp on Lizard Lane. Tracy DeVault shows map of trail routes to Ken and Pat White; Bert Eddins in background.

photo by Judy DeVault

We returned to the Benson area and went east along the freeway to the Sibyl exit and headed south to an area where GLO maps and satellite images also showed a possible trail trace crossing the paved road. There was better luck along this location although it will take much more work to determine which alternative is the actual Butterfield route.

We returned to Benson. Charles took leave of us. After lunch we went to the Cienega Stage Station site, which is located between Tucson and Benson. This area is now in a nature preserve, and Pat White had procured a permit for us to be there. We found a good camping spot at an overlook. The remaining three men went east looking for trail, while the three women and Blue held down the fort. The breeze was getting stronger as the afternoon wore on. The men returned without finding anything. After dinner, we braved the wind long enough to watch the sunset. We were again close to the railroad, and the trains went by with some regularity.

Tuesday, April 7: This was the last day of the mapping trip. We enjoyed the early morning from our overlook. After moving to the main parking lot of the Cienega Spring Nature Preserve, Tracy, Ken, and Neal went west looking for trail along the creek area. Pat, Judy, Rose Ann, and Blue remained with the vehicles. Radio exchanges revealed the men were not finding much trail. It was time to head for home.

It had been a fruitful mapping week. We discovered places where the trail did not go, but also places where we were able to do some mapping. More research is called for if we are going to find the trail in the area of the Cienega Spring Stage Station. Another trip to this same locale will hopefully fill in the gaps.

It would appear that Bert has caught the Trail Turtle bug. Show him a rust rock and off he goes with his head down and eyes searching. He is a welcome addition to the group.

The Yuma Massacre of 1781: A Reconstruction

by Mark Santiago

On three days, July 17, 18, and 19, 1781, Quechan Indians destroyed two mission/pueblos of Spaniards at the junction of the Gila and Colorado Rivers at what would come to be known as the Yuma Crossing. The results of this so-called "Yuma Massacre" were to prove one of the most crucial events of borderlands history. Indeed, one historian has asserted that "the Yuma disaster still stands as the greatest calamity to befall the Spanish on the northwestern frontier of New Spain" (Beilharz 121).

The impact of the Yuma revolt on the development of Spanish California was especially significant. The renowned historian Charles Edward Chapman, characterized it as follows. "The Yuma Massacre closed the overland route to Alta California, and with it passed Alta California's chance for early populous settlement. It meant that gold was reserved for discovery in 1848 . . . Alta California settled down to an Arcadian existence, able to live happily and well, and to keep out the casual foreigner but not populous enough to thrust back up the river valleys where lay the magic gold, which, had it been discovered, would at once have changed everything" (Chapman ix).

While Chapman's assessment may have been mixed with a bit of historical speculation, borderlands scholar David J. Weber detailed the actual effect of the uprising on California's development. "After the Yuma revolt of 1781 . . . no large influx of soldiers or colonists arrived, no additional presidios were built, and only one more town was established . . .. The closing of the Sonora road in 1781 had made California dependent once again on the sea for all communication with New Spain, and the province offered no attractions that would prompt immigrants to make the arduous ocean voyage" (Weber 264).

Weber further noted that, not only California, but Spanish Arizona as well, was profoundly affected by the event. "Much as the Comanche attack on San Saba a generation before had dashed Franciscan plans to build a chain of missions from San Antonio to Santa Fe, the Yuma rebellion of 1781 had brought an abrupt halt to . . . dream[s] of extending missions up the Lower Colorado River and into central Arizona" (Weber 258).

As early as the seventeenth century, Spain planned to establish bases in Alta California to protect the passage of the Manila galleon and to thwart the incursions of European rivals. Yet, the Spanish did not establish their first permanent settlement in San Diego until 1769. More presidios and missions followed, but they remained isolated and poor. To secure these outposts, the Spanish needed a reliable and secure overland supply route, as sea-borne traffic proved costly and ineffective.

In 1770-71, the renowned missionary Father Francisco Garcés traveled from his church at San Xavier del Bac near Tucson, Arizona, down the Gila River to the Yuma Crossing of the Colorado River. Preaching to the native Quechan Indians, he soon won their friendship and respect. Particularly attentive to Garcés was Olleyquotiquibe, who eventually became known as Salvador Palma. This man was a war chief of some stature, and later became *kwoxot*, or supreme chief of the nation.

Garcés' journey attracted the attention of Captain Juan Bautista de Anza of the Tubac Presidio, approximately 20 miles south of Mission San Xavier. In 1774 the two successfully executed an expedition that established contact with California via the Yuma Crossing. In Mexico City, news of the opening greatly interested the Viceroy Antonio Maria de Bucareli and the Visitador-General Jose de Gálvez. The two had been casting about for a solution to the problem of consolidating Spain's hold on the Pacific coast, most of which she claimed but did not occupy. The Yuma route promised to be the mainstream by which Spain would channel her resources into the new, rich lands of California. Consequently, in 1776 they ordered Anza and Garcés to lead a second *entrada* along the new road, taking 240 settlers destined to establish the city of San Francisco. At Yuma, the Quechans were again won

over by the liberality and good will demonstrated by Garcés and Anza. Salvador Palma personally looked to the comfort and support of Father Thomas Eixarch, who remained at the crossing to preach.

On Anza's return journey, Palma importuned him to have Spaniards come and settle at Yuma. Such settlements had long been planned, and both Garcés and Anza had submitted suggestions regarding them. Seizing the moment, Anza saw in Palma a useful tool towards this end. Appealing to the chief's vanity, Anza persuaded him to go to Mexico City to personally ask the viceroy to have Spaniards come live among his people. Arriving in late 1776, the Quechan leader was thoroughly regaled by the Spaniards, and was suitably impressed. Furthermore, he and four of his countrymen were publicly baptized. The viceroy himself interviewed Palma and assured him that missions and settlers would soon be sent to Yuma.

To Bucareli and Gálvez, the situation must have seemed quite promising. With the Quechans as allies, the lifeline to California would be guaranteed. Hopes of increasing pressure on the dreaded Apaches, and perhaps even establishing permanent links with the Moqui (Hopi) pueblos and New Mexico, seemed imminent. But almost immediately problems arose to thwart the project. The formation of the new Interior Provinces of New Spain as a separate entity, independent of viceregal control, caused delay as officials sorted administrative functions. The first commandant-general of the Interior Provinces, the Caballero de Croix, faced a lack of money and increased Indian depredations, preventing him from transferring military garrisons or establishing new ones along the Colorado.

At Yuma, a serious backlash to the European contacts began to take shape. Palma's authority began to deteriorate as the expected wealth he promised from the Spanish failed to appear. A large faction, led by Palma's brother Ygnacio, began to openly challenge his authority as *kwoxot*. Twice, in 1778 and 1779, Palma trekked to the Presidio of Altar in northwestern Sonora, imploring the authorities to send the settlers the viceroy had pledged.

Father Garcés, seeing his dream of missions on the Colorado evaporating, increased pressure on the Caballero de Croix to do something. Finally, with the help of his fellow Franciscan Juan Diaz, he convinced the commandant-general to undertake a compromise. Two missions with small "military colonies" of 20 soldiers and 20 civilians in support would be established. When funds permitted, Croix promised to dispatch additional soldiers and to found a new presidio. Garcés and Diaz were gambling and they knew it, but they chose to take what they could get rather than see the plan collapse.

In October of 1779, the two priests, along with a dozen troops, reached Yuma to begin the project. By late December of 1780, the bulk of the Spaniards under the command of Ensign Don Santiago Yslas arrived. The settlers included 21soldiers and their families drawn from the Sonoran presidios of Altar, Buenavista, and Horcasitas, and 20 civilian households recruited from Altar, Tubac, and elsewhere in the Pimeria Alta. Two more Franciscans, Joseph Matías Moreno and Juan Barreneche, were assigned to assist Garcés and Diaz as spiritual authority for the new colonies. All together the group consisted of about 173 men, women, and children.

By mid-January of 1781, Ensign-Commandant Yslas had distributed the colonists into two towns, both on the California side of the Colorado. He built La Purísima Concepción on a commanding hill overlooking the modern city of Yuma. Twelve miles upstream, the new citizens constructed San Pedro y San Pablo de Bicuñer on a low ridge close by the river. They built houses of wattle and daub for themselves and crude adobe churches for the priests. Fathers Garcés and Barreneche took charge at Concepción, while Diaz and Moreno resided at Bicuñer. Yslas retained control of all monies and properties, even those of the Franciscans, the latter having authority only in spiritual matters.

For several months the new establishments appeared to be a success. The Quechans helped the settlers and even tolerated the Spaniards' confiscation of some of their most fertile lands. Palma's authority

increased with the arrival of the Europeans, and the war party under Ygnacio Palma was quiescent. Indeed, Ygnacio's behavior was such that Yslas appointed him *justicia* of the Indians at Bicuñer.

As the year wore on, however, frictions arose. The Spaniards' habit of freely grazing their livestock caused damage to the crops of the Indians. When they complained to Yslas, he was unable or unwilling to control his compatriots. The colonists proved to be poor farmers and constantly were forced to barter for food from the tribe. Yslas introduced corporal punishment among the Quechans in an ill-conceived effort to enforce discipline. Accusing Ygnacio Palma of fomenting rebelliuon, Yslas even went so far as to publicly humiliate Palma by putting him in stocks. The cupidity of the Quechans had been whetted by the extravagant promises of Salvador Palma. When the Indians found the Spanish colonists to be a burden rather than a boon to the tribe, their initial respect turned into contempt for the Europeans.

Spanish Indian interpreters also spread false rumors that troops from Altar were coming to kill tribal leaders and enslave the rest. When on June 3, 1781, a large contingent of Spanish soldiers and settlers arrived, many Quechans believed that the rumors were true. Two hundred people and 1,000 horses and cattle, bound for the Santa Barbara channel, comprised the new arrivals. Their commander, Captain Francisco Rivera y Moncada, let the exhausted animals feed freely on the crops of the Indians. This was the last straw.

In secret the Quechans began to plan to oust the invaders, and even Salvador Palma took a leading role in the projected uprising. The Spaniards noticed a growing insolence among the tribe, but took few precautions. Rivera y Moncada admonished Yslas for not posting sentinels, but the ensign seemed unconcerned. Whether ignorant of the situation or contemptuous of the Indians, the colonists seemed oblivious to the approaching storm.

On June 19, 1781, Rivera sent the bulk of his party on their way to Santa Barbara, eventually to establish the Pueblo of Los Angeles. He remained behind with 21 soldiers and recruits and 257 horses, too exhausted to continue. Crossing to the Arizona bank of the Colorado, directly opposite the town of La Purísima Concepción, he encamped and rested his stock.

For Salvador Palma and the other Quechan leaders, Rivera's movements presented a golden opportunity. The Spaniards were now divided into three separate groups, those in the towns of Concepción and Bicuñer, located about ten miles apart, and Rivera's men across the Colorado. With careful planning, it would be possible to strike separately at each group, isolate and overwhelm them. Throughout late June and early July, the Quechan leaders prepared. They began to gather weapons and secretly sent for aid to the other tribes of the region. Eventually, a substantial number of Mohaves responded to the appeals of their kinsmen and allies, and even a few Halykwamais and Halchidomas, old enemies, appeared. As the summer lengthened, the Quechans were at last ready to liberate themselves from Spanish oppression.

The morning of Tuesday, July 17, 1781, promised another hot summer day at Bicuñer. The routine toils of working the fields, digging the irrigation ditch, and guarding the horses and mules awaited most of the adult men, while the women set about the no less demanding domestic labors. Father Díaz and Father Moreno had already been up for several hours. The family of an elderly sick woman had summoned them to her bedside in the early morning while it was still dark. Judging that she was near death, the two padres administered the last rites to the woman, anointed her with holy oil, and gave her communion.

As the sun broke over the mountains, Díaz and Moreno walked across the town plaza, heading back to their church. Morning mass would have to be said and they needed to prepare. The priests saw several people gathering outside the church as other settlers walked out towards the fields. Sgt. Juan de la Vega had routinely dispatched a single soldier to guard the horse herd, but not suspecting trouble, had not placed sentries.

In a moment, the quiet of the dawn was rent by the screams of war. Scores, perhaps hundreds, of Quechan and Mohave warriors leaped from concealment, rushing the plaza from all sides. Painted for battle and brandishing lances, bows, and war clubs, the Indians killed every Spaniard they could catch. Breaking into the houses of the *vecinos*, the Quechans dragged many Spaniards outside, killing some, shielding others. Any control that the war leaders had over the warriors broke down immediately.

From the plaza, Father Díaz and Father Moreno watched the attack in horror. They were among the first casualties. Wielding a captured gun, a Quechan shot Díaz through the body. Crumpling to his knees, the priest was then set upon by other warriors, who crushed his skull with their war clubs. Father Moreno was also clubbed to the ground, and perhaps while he was still alive, they hacked off his head with an axe. The "palm of martyrdom" he had for so long wished had come at last.

With Bicuñer's plaza secure, some Quechans set about ransacking the houses, while smaller groups of warriors headed out to hunt down the Spaniards working in the fields. In the panic and confusion of the initial onslaught, Miguel Antonio Romero, a soldier from the presidio of Buenavista, ran to the banks of the Colorado River. Diving into the water, he managed to swim to the far shore, concealing himself among the brush. He watched and waited, unsure what to do. At the time he could not have known that his wife, María Juana Cota, and their two children lay dead within the town.

One of Romero's civilian neighbors, the town carpenter, Juan José Miranda, also managed to escape to the river. After seeing the destruction of Bicuñer, Miranda made a desperate choice. Moving stealthily among the cottonwood and willows that lined the river bank, he began to make his way downstream to La Concepción where, he no doubt hoped, he would be rescued.

Miranda's hopes were vain, for La Concepción had experienced a similar ordeal. Before eight a.m., Commandant Yslas left his house and headed toward the town's adobe church. He was scheduled to serve as Father Garcés' altar attendant for the second mass of the day. Before sunrise, Yslas' wife, María Ana Montijo, had attended the earlier mass conducted by Father Barreneche. Looking out over the rim of the hill on which La Concepción lay, the commandant noticed some groups of armed Quechans milling about below the town. Upon examination, Yslas found that Corporal Pascual Rivera was the only other soldier in town that morning, the rest having gone to work in the fields. Yslas ordered Rivera to arm himself and stand guard outside the church. Satisfied with this precaution, Yslas entered the church and helped Father Garcés prepare for mass. In the priests' house next to the church, Father Barreneche engaged in private meditation.

Meanwhile, outside town, Quechan warriors silently scaled the hill and infiltrated La Concepción. Outside the door of the church, Corporal Rivera watched as several townsmen and women entered to attend mass. He noticed some Quechans enter the plaza, but raised no alarm. As the service began inside the church, three or four Indians cautiously came towards Rivera, holding out to him a gift of firewood. Surprised by their manner, the corporal approached them. In an instant, the Quechans dropped the bundle of wood and began to batter Rivera with their clubs, simultaneously raising a great war whoop. At this signal, other Indians outside the plaza launched a general attack.

Inside the church, Yslas had just moved the scriptures from the epistle to the gospel side of the altar when he heard the war cries of the Indians. Dashing outside, the he saw Rivera struggling with the Quechans. Running through the plaza to his house, Yslas frantically grabbed his weapons and armed himself. Warned by her husband, Doña María shouted the alarm to several of her neighbors.

Gathering up a few women and children, she fled hurriedly to the church. Once inside, she found

an incredulous scene. Several townspeople were accosting Father Garcés, arguing with him over who was to blame for the revolt. Although Doña María later recalled that the padre's face was "ashen gray," the priest managed a brave reply. "Let's forget now whose fault it is," he told the panicky Spaniards, "and simply consider it God's punishment for our sins."

Father Barreneche had also heard the assault begin. Rushing from his apartments, he ran into the plaza and saw the Indians clubbing Rivera. Wading into them, Barreneche managed to squeeze the hand of the doomed corporal and give him a general absolution. Turning on the priest, the Quechans struck him several times with their war clubs. Driven back, Barreneche somehow managed to regain the safety of the church.

Having gathered his weapons, Ensign Yslas emerged from his house and headed into the plaza. However, before he could do anything the Quechans surrounded him. From the doorway of the church, Doña María watched in horror as her husband was clubbed to death. After stripping him of his clothes and weapons, the warriors eventually dragged his body to the side of the hill and cast it down into the river.

Although the Quechans killed several Spaniards in their initial assault, many succeeded in barricading themselves in their houses, while others joined with the group inside the church. Leaving these people alone for the moment, groups of warriors scattered down the hill and into the fields around La Concepción, seeking those Spaniards tending the crops. Pedro Solares, a soldier of the presidio from Altar, was guarding the 21 horses and mules of the town's garrison when he was attacked. Running for his life, Solares made it to the river, where he hid in the brush. He knew Rivera y Moncada and his men were on the other side, and perhaps Solares hoped to bring word to the captain of the Quechans' attack.

For his part, Rivera y Moncada needed no warning. From the small bluff where his *jacal* sat, the captain clearly saw and heard the assault on La Concepción. He immediately assembled all the men left in camp and sent word for those guarding the *caballada* (horse herd) to return at once. Although he possibly considered crossing the river and aiding the townspeople, Rivera rejected the idea. Fording the Colorado would have been suicidal, especially in view of his small numbers. Most likely, the Quechans had already sent warriors across the river to skirmish with Rivera's men, and the captain must have realized that his position was desperate.

Once his command assembled, Rivera took stock of his situation. Along with Sergeant Juan José Robles, there were fourteen veteran soldiers and three recruits. Rivera set out a small mounted advance guard, while the bulk of the troopers were put to work digging a field entrenchment. Two women, María Manuela Ochoa, wife of deserter Ysidro German, and María Rita, wife of Xavier Romero, a soldier from the presidio of Pitic, joined in the desperate work. While Rivera supervised his command's defensive preparations, inexplicably he apparently made no attempt to retreat his force or to send to Sonora for help.

While Rivera prepared his defenses, upstream at Bicuñer, the Quechan attack had ended. By midday, the Indians had killed or enslaved all the residents of the town. After securing their prisoners, the Quechans looted the houses of all valuables and supplies, while the bodies of the dead were stripped naked and the clothing shared out among the victors. From the church, the Indians took out the chasubles, albs, and other vestments that Father Díaz and Father Moreno had used for mass, wearing them as ponchos and shirts. The chalices and other vessels were also saved, but the priests' missals and Bibles were of no use to the Quechans. The warriors forced José Urrea, a Kohuana Indian interpreter for the Spaniards, and José Ygnacio Bengochea, a Halchidoma Indian who had been Father Moreno's servant, to gather up the books, the candlesticks, and other paraphernalia from the church and take it to the river. While the other *vecinos* looked on helplessly, the Quechans made Urrea and Bengochea hurl the sacred books and trappings into the river.

José Reyes Pacheco, a soldier from Altar, was one of the few Spanish men not killed outright by the Quechans. He begged the Indians to be allowed to bury his wife, Leonarda Brava, and their daughter. Other captives spoke up as well, pleading to tend their dead. The Quechans refused, and the bodies of the slain were left to putrefy where they fell. The Indians then systematically set fire to the whole village. Many returned to their homes with the captives and booty, but others headed south to join in the attack on La Concepción.

The destruction of San Pedro y San Pablo de Bicuñer had been extremely bloody. Of the approximately 77 men, women, and children in the town that morning, 45 lay dead. Historians later claimed that only male Spaniards were killed, the Quechans uniformly sparing the women and children. In reality there was no such consistency. Manuel Barragan, a former resident of Tubac, and his wife Francisca Olguin both died, as did Doña Francisca's kinsman José Olguin; however, the latter's wife, María Ygnacia Hurtado and their three children survived. Eight-year-old Juan José Garrigosa was spared, but saw his father, mother, and sister slain. Settler José Antonio Romero and his entire family – mother, wife, and daughter – were all killed, while José Joaquin de Leon, his wife Juana Coronado, and all three of their children lived. In the heat of the attack, survival depended on luck and the mercy of individual Quechans.

While Bicuñer burned, the Quechan attack against La Concepción subsided. Although many residents had been killed, others remained barricaded in their houses and in the church. Around noon, hostilities ceased for several hours. Father Barreneche left the church alone and went into the plaza. Finding some victims of the assault still alive, Barreneche heard their confessions before they died. During this lull, those Spaniards holed up in the church or barricaded in their homes made no attempt to escape or join together in a unified defense, possibly because numbers of Quechan warriors remained around the plaza.

But while the Spaniards remained inactive, throughout the afternoon the Quechans reorganized their forces. By sunset, large numbers of warriors once again assembled outside La Concepción, no doubt reinforced by victorious tribesmen from Bicuñer. Early in the evening they renewed the attack on the town in great force. The night favored the assailants, enabling them to approach close to the houses before being seen. The assault quickly carried all before it. The Indians set fire to the houses, forcing many Spaniards into the open where they were killed. Several others perished in the flames. At the house of the commandant, the rebels looted or smashed all the goods and furnishings they could find and destroyed a large supply of the grain that Yslas had hoarded for emergencies. Although they filled the doors and walls of the church with arrows, the Quechans once again did not assault the Spaniards inside.

In the midst of the attack, Ensign Yslas' wife, María Ana Montijo and the other refugees watched incredulously as Father Garcés and Father Barreneche stealthily crept out of the church and into the plaza. Under the cover of darkness, the two Franciscans moved through the town, ministering to the dead and dying. At midnight, with La Concepción thoroughly looted and in flames, the Quechans retired. Sometime later, Garcés and Barreneche returned to their church. For the rest of the night, one by one, they heard the confessions of the remnants of their flock.

Wednesday, July 18, saw the sun rise over the smoldering ruins of La Purísima Concepción. Inside the church with Padres Garcés and Barreneche were about a dozen Spaniards, mostly women and children. Among the small group was settler Matías de Castro with his wife and son. Castro was fortunate in that his whole family had survived. Many of the other refugees had seen their loved ones killed, while others agonized in uncertainty over the fate of their families. Instinctively, the small group of Spaniards turned towards the priests for guidance.

At this juncture Father Barreneche demonstrated true courage and leadership. Buoyed by the fact that the Indians had not destroyed the little group, the priest gathered the people in the church together. "The devil is on the side of the enemy, but God is on ours," he assured them. "Let us sing a hymn to Mary, most holy, that she favor us with her help, and let us praise God for sending us these trials." The padre then began to sing the hymn *Arise, Arise* "with great fervor of spirit." Soon all were singing. After the hymn, the priests held what would prove to be their last mass in the church of La Concepción. María Ana Montijo later recalled that as mass was being said, "we awaited death at any moment."

After mass Father Barreneche, Father Garcés, and one or two other men climbed up on the roof of the church and of the priests' adjoining house. They took down the thatch in anticipation that the Quechans would launch another fire attack. Still, the expected assault failed to materialize, and the Indians were nowhere to be seen. Barreneche then pulled out the arrows and spears from the walls and doors of the church, and he did the same to the burned buildings around the plaza. About noon, he climbed to the roof of the church to see if he could locate the Quechans. It soon became clear to the priest and the other Spaniards in La Concepción why they had been spared. Across the Colorado River several hundred Indian warriors were massing to attack Captain Rivera y Moncada's isolated command of 18 troopers and two women.

Rivera had made no movements since he had first seen La Concepción attacked on the previous morning. Throughout that day his men had completed their field defenses. While the Spaniards were not attacked in force, the Quechans gradually began to isolate Rivera's men. During the night, Rivera again made no effort to escape, and it is likely that by this time his position was becoming untenable. By Wednesday morning, the Quechans crossed the Colorado in large numbers and soon the captain and his men were completely surrounded. Why Rivera chose not to break out when he could will never be known.

Around noon, the Quechans began to mass for an assault. Entrenched atop the small knoll, Rivera ordered some of his troopers to mount their horses and form up in front of the breastwork, and he stationed others inside to shoot down upon the Indians. When the Quechans charged, the horsemen fired a concerted volley from their guns killing many, momentarily breaking the impetus of the assault. The Indians quickly returned to the attack, and getting in among the mounted troopers began to strike with their war clubs at the legs and bodies of the horses, crippling the animals and causing the riders to be thrown. As the soldiers fell the warriors immediately pounced upon them, killing some. In desperation, Rivera had his men dismount and unite inside the breastwork. Although few in number, the soldiers sold their lives dearly, killing many of their attackers. Finally, after a protracted combat, the Quechans overwhelmed the breastwork and annihilated Rivera and his men. Among the mound of dead inside the entrenchment, the Quechans were surprised to find two women. María Rita had been killed with the rest, but María Manuela Ochoa was pulled out of the heap, dazed but alive. An unnamed servant of Rivera, possibly a California Indian, had also survived. Both were taken captive.

The victorious Quechans stripped the dead soldiers of their *cueras* (leather jackets) and clothing, and gathered up the Spaniards' firearms, lances, swords, and shields. Salvador Palma garnered for himself Captain Rivera's uniform and *adarga* (shield). Palma then ordered his men to search the *jacales* of Rivera and his men. Inside Rivera's hut, they found documents and books, along with the payroll that the captain had been taking to the California presidios. Palma allowed the papers to be destroyed, but had the chest of coins sent to his own house for safekeeping. Undoubtedly he realized that the money might prove useful in future dealings with the Spaniards.

Around three o'clock in the afternoon, Palma ordered the warriors to recross the Colorado River and head back towards La Concepción. Obviously aware that several Spaniards were still alive in the town, he told his tribesmen to round them up and bring them to his *ranchería*. He specifically commanded that Father Garcés and Father Barreneche not be harmed.

From the roof of La Concepción's church, the padres had watched helplessly as the Quechans destroyed Captain Rivera's command. When the Indians began to recross the river and head back towards the town, Father Barreneche shouted to his comrades to flee, "for in some way or other, we are exposed to die at the hand of the enemy." Barreneche then turned to Garcés and asked if they should try to reach Bicuñer. In what was later held to be a supernatural insight, Garcés told Barreneche that he was certain that Bicuñer had been totally destroyed and all its residents killed or taken.

The two priests decided to head towards the small chapel that Garcés had termed a *visita* located four miles to the north, about midway between Concepción and Bicuñer. Despite Barreneche's counsel that they flee as best they could, the small group of Spaniards instinctively stayed close to the two Franciscans. Father Barreneche quickly retrieved his breviary and a crucifix from the priests' house, and the refugees set out, as María Ana Montijo recalled, "leaving behind forever the new mission of La Purísima Concepción."

Descending the hill on which the town stood, the Spaniards followed the course of the Colorado past the juncture of the Gila, warily creeping through the trees and brush. After walking for some time, they came to "a long but narrow lagoon." As they paused to search for a place to cross, from the other side they heard the shouts of a wounded Spaniard. Pedro Bohorques, a soldier of La Concepción, had been attacked at the lagoon and left for dead. Seeing the small group of people led by the padres coming towards him, Bohorques gathered the last of his strength and shouted to them, begging for confession. Among those gathered across the lagoon from him were his wife María Gertrudis Cantú and their daughter.

Instantly, Father Barreneche jumped into the water and headed toward the dying man, but the lagoon was deeper than it appeared. Barreneche soon found himself sinking. Unable to swim, the Franciscan thrashed about, dropping his breviary and crucifix into the muddy water. Grasping a nearby log, Barreneche caught his breath, and then pulled himself along by the roots of the trees and brush along the bank, managing to reach the other side. Dragging himself out of the lagoon, Barreneche quickly found where Bohorques lay and heard the soldier's confession before he died.

At this point Father Garcés faced a difficult choice. There seemed to be little chance of Barreneche getting back across the lagoon, and even less of getting the women and children over to Barreneche's side. After some moments, he decided to leave the rest of the Spaniards and try to cross the lagoon alone. Garcés might have felt that he and Barreneche endangered the safety of the others because the priests were especially tempting targets for roving groups of Quechans. Whatever the reason, he gave the Spaniards strict orders which, as it turns out, saved their lives. "Stay together," he warned them, "do not resist capture, and the Yumas will not harm you." Seeing that some of the refugees were half naked, Garcés took off his mantle and habit and covered those most in need. Clad only in his tunic, the padre jumped into the lagoon and swam to the other side. "This was the last we saw of the two fathers," María Ana Montijo later remembered, "as we sat huddled together awaiting death at any moment."

Continuing northward, the two Franciscans again made for their visita. Once there, the fathers came upon the husband of a Quechan woman who had become a Christian, and "who had always shown affection for the missionaries." Treating the priests kindly, the man brought them to his *ranchero*, where his wife waited. The woman invited the priests to come in and gave them sanctuary. No doubt exhausted, Garcés and Barreneche spent the rest of the night with the Quechan couple.

Back at La Concepción, Salvador Palma and his warriors entered the deserted town. Whatever amount of authority he might have lost since the coming of the Spaniards, many Quechans still heeded his orders. Seeing no one left in the town, Palma had

the vestments, missals, and religious images taken from the church, along with some books and other items from the priests' house. When everything of value had been located, Palma had his men set fire to the church. He then sent those warriors who lived in nearby *rancherías* to seek Father Garcés and Father Barreneche, again commanding that they not be harmed "for they had a good heart." Satisfied, Palma returned to his own village across the river, ordering the church valuables brought to his house.

Several miles upstream, María Ana Montijo and the other refugees from La Concepción still waited by the lagoon. There were seven women in the group along with an unknown number of children. Matías de Castro and his family were still together, but he was no longer the only man among the group. At some point during the day, Juan José Miranda, the carpenter who had fled from Bicuñer early Tuesday morning, had joined the fleeing residents of La Concepción.

Before nightfall, three Quechans found the terrified Spaniards beside the lagoon. The Indians assured the women and children that they would not be harmed, and divided them up, each warrior taking those he wanted captive. Turning to Castro and Miranda, the Quechans told the two men that it was still too dangerous for them to come out, "for there were many people, and they would kill them." The Quechans advised the two men to remain in hiding for a few days and then seek out Salvador Palma. With this warning, the Indians left with their prisoners, leaving Castro and Miranda alone, as the night closed about them.

On the morning of Thursday, July 19, Father Garcés and Father Barreneche were still sheltered in the home of the Christian Quechan woman and her husband. Several other Spanish captives had arrived at the same village, including María Gertrudis Cantú, one of the group from La Concepción that had been left by the lagoon the previous day. It had been her husband, Pedro Bohorques, that Father Barreneche had confessed at the lagoon, and if she did not know already, the padre no doubt told her of her husband's death.

The new day found Salvador Palma in his home village. Seeing that Father Garcés and Father Barreneche still had not been located, Palma again sent out search parties. If the priests still lived, they were to be brought back to Palma immediately, and he reminded the search parties that "what the fathers said was good, and they did no harm to anyone." Leaving the village in small groups, the Quechans fanned out north and south along the river banks. Among the searchers was the interpreter Francisco Xavier, the Halykwamai Indian who had been instrumental in persuading the Quechans to destroy the Spanish settlements.

About ten o'clock several of Palma's searchers, including Francisco Xavier, reached the Quechan village near the *visita*. María Getrudis Cantú watched as events unfolded. Garcés and Barreneche were still inside the house of the their Christian protectors when the warriors discovered them. The two Franciscans were drinking hot chocolate that their host had prepared. Immediately upon seeing the two priests, Francisco Xavier shouted out, "If these survive all is lost, for these are the worst." Continuing to shout, he persuaded his companions to disobey Palma and kill the priests. One of the warriors entered the house and told the Franciscans, "Stop drinking that and come outside. We're going to kill you." Father Barreneche said nothing, but Father Garcés, calmly sipping his drink, replied, "we'd like to finish our chocolate first." Enraged, the warrior screamed, "Just leave it!" The two priests obediently stood up and followed him outside. Once they were in the open, María Gertrudis Cantú watched in horror as the warriors immediately began clubbing them. She was so close to the Franciscans as to "hear their piteous moans as they lay dying." Some Quechans later maintained that at the first swipe of the war clubs, "Father Garcés disappeared from their sight and they were left clubbing the air." Whatever else they might have thought of him, the Quechans had always regarded Garcés as a powerful spiritual force.

After the two priests were dead, Francisco Xavier and the other members of the search party returned the way they had come. The husband of the Christian

Quechan woman who had sheltered the Franciscans had been unable to stop the killing. He now carried the bleeding corpses a short distance to a small sandy rise, where he dug a shallow pit and buried Garcés and Barreneche side by side. His wife then had him make two small wooden crosses and place them atop the grave to mark the site.

As the days passed, the fury of the Quechans subsided. Salvador Palma had all those Spaniards that he could brought into his own village, but many were held in other rancherías scattered along both banks of the Colorado. Palma ordered his followers to round up the horses, mules, cattle, and sheep from La Concepción and Bicuñer as well as the 257 animals from Captain Rivera's caballada scattered in the fighting. Prudently, he also gathered 15 muskets and half of a case of pistols, placing them in his house. He knew the Spaniards would return to seek vengeance.

For three days Matías de Castro of La Concepción and Juan José Miranda of Bicuñer hid near the lagoon waiting for things to calm down. At one point, Castro had set out alone to try to find Salvador Palma, but he had been unable to locate the Quechan leader. Dispirited, he returned to where Miranda was waiting, and the two men continued their vigil. Shortly afterward, a couple of Quechans stumbled upon their hiding place. The two Spaniards requested to be taken to Palma, and the Indians obliged.

When they arrived at Palma's village, Castro and Miranda found Palma amidst many of his people. In a public repudiation of the Christian faith, the Quechan leader was throwing the religious images from the church of La Purísima Concepción into the river. He then placed the gospels and missals in a wooden box, locked it, and hurled it into the water as well. After this Palma had Castro and Miranda brought to his house. Upon entering the hut, the two Spaniards observed the large amount of loot accumulated by the erstwhile *kwoxot*. Seeing a small box containing the chrism oil and cruets used for saying mass, Miranda managed to retrieve the box and its vessels. The other items Palma gradually bartered away or divided up among his followers, and Castro saw the Indian give out over 900 dollars worth of coins from the payroll seized from Captain Rivera y Moncada.

A few days afterwards, a group of seven Quechans found 22-year-old trooper Pedro Solares, who had been guarding the horses of La Concepción when the attack began, hiding along the banks of the river. He had survived in the open for almost a week. Similarly, the Quechans at this time captured soldier Miguel Antonio Romero from Bicuñer. The Spaniard had swum across the Colorado at the start of the attack, and he had tried unsuccessfully to catch a horse and escape. Eventually both soldiers were turned over to Palma.

With the capture of Romero and Solares, the Quechans accounted for all of the Spaniards. One hundred and five Spanish men, women, and children had been killed, including 37 soldiers, 23 male settlers, 20 women, 21 boys and girls, and the 4 Franciscan priests. The Quechans had also seized 76 captives: 3 soldiers, 2 male settlers, 4 male Indian interpreters or servants, 30 adult women, and 37 children. The Indians put them to work, but they were not mistreated.

The Quechans had also suffered a number of dead and wounded, almost all of them from the assault on Rivera y Moncada's men. However, for many in the tribe these losses probably seemed a small price to pay. They had regained their land and their liberties, and destroyed the power of the foreign soldiers and holy men. They had substantially enriched the nation with slaves, horses, cattle and firearms, and they had shown to their neighbors the weakness of the white men and the power of the Quechan. With their victory, "the Respectable Union" that the Caballero de Croix had so hopefully initiated, eight months before, had come to an end.

At first Spanish officials were incredulous, then outraged. From his headquarters in Arizpe, Sonora, the Caballero de Croix hurriedly dispatched a punitive expedition against the Quechans in October of 1781. Two subsequent expeditions in November of 1781 and August of 1782 were also organized. These succeeded in ransoming the captives, recovering the bodies of the slain

Franciscans, and killing many Quechans, but they failed to reassert Spanish control over the Yuma Crossing.

For Salvador Palma and the Quechan people, the Spanish crown's decision to suspend operations against them meant very little. Although Palma seems to have reestablished his position as *kwoxot* among the tribe, the alliance he had fostered with the white men resulted in an enormous loss of life. Out of a population estimated at between 3,000 and 5,000, approximately 200 people had been killed and perhaps twice as many wounded and crippled. In addition, others had been captured and enslaved. Overall, casualties may have approached one-fifth of the tribe. The Quechans paid a high price to regain their independence and to drive the Spaniards from their lands.

For the Spaniards, years of bickering over who was to blame followed. Croix blamed Father Garcés for misrepresenting the attitude of the Quechans towards the settlements, but he said nothing about his delaying of the project for almost four years after its genesis. Garcés' fellow Franciscans defended his memory vigorously and castigated those who even hinted that their champion's vision of missions along the Colorado outstripped his, or their, ability.

But, for the Quechans and other peoples, the forces unleashed by the attempt were inexorable. For more than a decade Spanish leaders had dreamed, planned, and finally set in motion a great expansion of the northern frontier, designed to strengthen their hold on the land, to push forward "the rim of Christendom" and to bring peace to the bellicose tribes along the Gila and Colorado. But in the end, all they had done was to incite new wars and to spread the shadow of death.

The failure of the attempt to settle the Yuma Crossing sealed the fate of Hispanic California and blunted Spanish expansion in Arizona. With the crossing closed, the isolated settlements in Alta California were left to survive as best they could, linked to the rest of the empire by tenuous sea borne supply lines. Ultimately, they would fall easy prey to the more numerous and powerful Anglo-Americans.

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[Editors' Note: This paper is excerpted from Mark Santiago's book, *Massacre at Yuma Crossing*. Sources for quotes given in the article can be found therein.]

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Southern Trails Chapter Upcoming Meetings

August 2009 – Loveland, Colorado
(at the OCTA convention)
November 2009 – Fort Mojave, Arizona
February 2010 – Tubac, Arizona
May 2010 – Silver City, New Mexico

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Kit Carson's Ride

by Paul Andrew Hutton

[***Editor's Note:*** This article is a transcription of a talk given on January 17, 2009, at the OCTA symposium in Yuma, AZ. The talk was based on the article "Kit Carson's Ride," which was originally published in the April 2007 issue of *Wild West* Magazine and which can be found online at http://www.historynet.com/kit-carsons-rescue-ride.htm.]

Tonight I want to tell you a tale about an incident on the Santa Fe Trail that I find to be one of the most interesting and powerful moments in the history of the American West. But let me begin a little earlier, in 450 BC. This will be a long talk! In 450 BC, Herodotus, who was the father of my profession of history, explained that he was setting forth his grand narrative so that "men's actions may not in time be forgotten, nor themes great and wonderful, accomplished whether by Greeks or barbarians, go unreported, especially the cause of the wars between the one and the other." Like Herodotus, I feel my profession is a special calling and, without meaning to be maudlin, I believe it makes an important contribution to society. I believe that it is my duty to tell stories so that the actions of the past shall not be forgotten. The work of the historian has purpose, but the work is successful only if the tale will have meaning not only for the historian's time but for all time yet to come. I believe that the story I'm going to tell has meaning for our own time. It's a tale of a time not so long ago, and not so far away – in New Mexico. It concerns a great hero who was to the American West as Leonidas was to ancient Sparta and to the story that was told of the battle of the Thermopylae by Herodotus.

My story begins when the Mexican war ended. The Santa Fe Trail, that 909-mile road of commerce that had become a pathway for military invasion, was once again bustling with trade. The necessity of supplying the new American military outposts in New Mexico had added to this traffic. The 1849 discovery of gold in California led to a brief flurry of emigrant traffic as well. By the summer of 1848, an officer at Fort Mann on the Arkansas River counted 3,000 wagons, 12,000 people, and 50,000 head of stock passing his little outpost during that season alone. And that meant that opportunity beckoned. The White brothers of Warsaw, Missouri, were among those who sought their fortune in New Mexico. James and Charles White had arrived in Santa Fe in mid-July of 1848 and opened a mercantile business very similar to the very successful one they had operated back in Missouri. After one summer of trade, Charles headed south to explore business opportunities between Santa Fe and Chihuahua, while James returned to St. Louis to bank $58,000 in gold and silver coins. That was a lot of money in those days. He promptly made plans to return to Santa Fe with his young bride Ann and their infant daughter. New Mexico would be their new home.

Postwar New Mexico held the promise of opportunity and a return to family life for another person, one who was far more famous than Mr. White. His name was Christopher "Kit" Carson. He also came from Missouri, having left there in 1826. By 1849 he was one of the most celebrated Americans in the world. He was the inheritor of the buckskin mantle of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. He was the nation's preeminent frontiersman. Taciturn and unassuming, slight of frame and well below the average in height, even in a time when the average height was 5'8", Carson hardly met the blood-and-thunder image of a frontier demigod that the wild tales circulated about him had led people to believe.

He had been born on Christmas Eve in 1809 in Madison County, Kentucky, and raised near Boone's Lick, Missouri, where his family had resettled in 1811. Apprenticed to a saddler in Old Franklin in 1821, he – just like Huck Finn – had "lit out for the territories," running away from home and joining a caravan bound for Santa Fe. He fell in with the trappers at Taos, and by 1831, he was a mountain man of the first rank, friend to Bridger, Fitzpatrick, and Meek. He later said that those youthful years in the Rocky Mountains were the happiest of his life, but the death of his young Arapaho wife, Waanibe, ended his life as a trapper. For awhile he worked

as a contract hunter at Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River in southeastern Colorado. He took his little daughter back to St. Louis to be educated at a convent school and while there he fell in with a young army lieutenant, John Charles Frémont. This led to a second career for Kit Carson as a guide for that young officer's expeditions of western exploration.

John C. Frémont was one of the most colorful characters in all of American history. He was the first Republican candidate for President of the United States, and he was hated because of his strong anti-slavery sentiments. He was blessed with a beautiful, talented wife, Jesse Benton Frémont, who was the daughter of the most powerful man in the United States Senate, Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton. She rewrote her husband's reports; her father got them published at government expense – 10,000 copies each. They were big bestsellers. John C. Frémont became "the pathfinder" of the American West, the most famous explorer since Lewis and Clark, and Kit Carson became the pathfinder for the pathfinder. They were both national celebrities. It was with little exaggeration that later writers would say of Carson and Frémont that "upon the ashes of their campfires the great cities of the American West would rise."

Kit Carson and John C. Frémont.

In August 1845, Carson joined Frémont at Bent's Fort for a third so-called "exploring expedition" westward. With 60 heavily armed men, Frémont entered California, supposedly to explore the mountain passes over the Sierras, but actually to seize that most valuable of territorial prizes once an "expected" war with Mexico erupted. In this war Kit Carson emerged as the hero of the Battle of San Pascual, near San Diego, in December 1846.

Everyone now sought him out, but they were invariably surprised. One person also bound for glory, Lt. William Tecumseh Sherman, was introduced to Carson at military headquarters in Monterey, California, in the summer of 1847. He wrote: "His [Carson's] fame was then at its height, from the publication of Frémont's book. I was very anxious to see a man who had achieved such feats of daring among the wild animals of the Rocky Mountains, and still wilder Indians of the Plains. I cannot express my surprise at beholding a small stoop-shouldered man, with reddish hair, freckled face, soft blue eyes, and nothing to indicate extraordinary courage or daring."

There is another famous incident concerning Carson's appearance. Carson and his buddy Lucien Maxwell once took 5,000 sheep up to Fort Laramie on the Oregon Trail, and then took the sheep to the California goldfields. They bought them for a quarter each in New Mexico and sold them in California for five bucks. The image of Kit Carson herding sheep on the California Trail is so rich that it should be made into a movie. While he was at Fort Laramie, an emigrant bound for California asked someone, "Where's this Kit Carson? I'd like to meet him." When Carson was pointed out, the emigrant went over and said, "Is you Kit Carson?" Carson rose and said, "Yes I am." He said, "No you're not. You don't look like Kit Carson. You're not the kind of Kit Carson I was lookin' for." Carson never would have made it in the media age!

By 1849 Carson really didn't care what people thought about him. He wanted to settle down. In 1843 he had married Josefa Jaramillo in Taos. Another mountain man wrote of her: "Her style of beauty was of the haughty, heart-breaking kind such as

would lead a man with the glance of the eye, to risk his life for a smile." Her family, while not wealthy, was well connected in New Mexico circles. Her sister was married to New Mexico's first territorial governor Charles Bent of Bent's Fort fame. Carson was devoted to his young wife. He was particularly disturbed when his government service kept him away from Taos in April 1847 when his brother-in-law Governor Bent was brutally murdered in the Taos uprising while protecting Josefa and her sister from a rebellious mob.

This tragedy made Carson all the more anxious to settle down. Using the money that he had received from his government service, he bought a ranch in Rayado, to the east of Taos, with Lucien Maxwell. But it was tough going because Indian affairs in New Mexico had deteriorated rapidly following the American conquest. The plains band of Jicarilla Apaches, in particular, had previously reached a balance of power with the New Mexicans for about a generation, but it broke down when the Americans did not engage in the customary system of bribery. Roving east of the Rio Grande southeast to the Canadian River, the Jicarillas made life miserable for settler and traveler alike. Regular troops and New Mexico volunteers repeatedly clashed with the most hostile element, whose young leader, Lobo Blanco (White Wolf), was jockeying against the old peace chief for tribal supremacy.

The Santa Fe Trail, always dangerous, was a more dangerous place to be than ever. Some of my colleagues in the academic history world try to prove that the West wasn't violent, but what I wonder is how anyone survived. The American West was unbelievably violent. The Santa Fe Trail in particular reminds me of the movie *Mad Max*, with Mel Gibson: crazy people constantly attack you from every direction, and when you survive one gang of them, another gang comes at you. That's really what it was like.

By the summer of 1849, it was rare for a wagon train to reach Santa Fe without being attacked or having stock driven off. The Indian agent Calhoun

Josefa Carson.

requested more troops but they were not forthcoming, due to Army budget cuts. Despite the dangers, the trade caravans still gathered. The most experienced of all the wagon train captains was the intrepid Francois Aubry. No wagon train captain was more respected than this young French-Canadian who had repeatedly set travel records with trade caravans and as a mail carrier. He was a friend to both Carson and Frémont. He had battled both hostile Indians and severe weather to take three trains to Santa Fe in 1848 alone. In February 1849 he accompanied Charles White to Chihuahua, which at that time was becoming the real center of a trade network stretching from St. Louis to Santa Fe and then along the old Camino Real to Mexico City. His return to Missouri was marked by attacks from both Apaches and Pawnees, but his little band reached Independence on August 23 with no loss of life. Undaunted he immediately proceeded to purchase goods for another trip to Santa Fe.

Despite all of the dire warnings and the dangers that he had heard about, James White attached 13 wagons to Aubry's caravan. He planned to headquarter his new mercantile business in Santa Fe, with another branch in El Paso established by his brother and Aubry the previous winter. All of his personal goods were with him in the wagon train, as well as his wife Ann Dunn White, two-year-old daughter Virginia, a

mulatto employee Ben Bushman, and a black female servant, who was the nurse for the child. They departed Kansas City on September 15.

Initially the journey was completely uneventful, with no signs of Indian unrest, although the weather turned cold and blustery. Just east of Council Grove, Aubry decided to send his wagon master, William Calloway, ahead to Santa Fe for fresh mules. White decided to accompany Calloway in order to get his family to Santa Fe more quickly. Horrified, Aubry argued against this, but he could not dissuade White from wanting to get his wife to more comfortable quarters. Leaving his wagons with Aubry, White pushed ahead with his family in two carriages on October 18. Along with his wife, daughter, and black nursemaid, they were accompanied by William Calloway, Ben Bushman, a German traveler named Lawberger, and two New Mexican Hispanic employees of Aubry.

One of the things that stands out in this story is how incredibly diverse the West was at that time. Everyone came from somewhere else, many from Europe. In this case, two were of African heritage and two were Hispanic. We sometimes talk about the diversity of America today as a new kind of diversity, but if you look at the Old West in the 1840's and 1850's or places like San Francisco during the Gold Rush, there was real diversity. And it was a new kind of diversity that Americans in the East couldn't possibly understand.

By October 24, the little party had hurried down the Santa Fe Trail's Cimarron Cutoff and across Palo Blanco Creek some ten miles east of the famed Point of Rocks landmark. They were less than 100 miles from the relative safety of Las Vegas when Lobo Blanco's Jicarillas sprang an ambush. The Indians would later claim that they had tried to parley with the Americans, who then fired on them, so that the Apaches had acted in self-defense. But the elaborate breastworks they had built all along the side of the trail to conduct their ambush told the true story. It must have been over very quickly. Calloway was shot through the chest, Lawberger through the neck, and the two New Mexicans fell nearby. White fought desperately in defense of his family, falling with several bullet and lance wounds. His loyal servant, Bushman, died at his side.

The gunsmoke had hardly cleared when a party of New Mexican buffalo hunters happened on the scene. But what did they do? They proceeded to ransack the wagons for loot. The Indians sprang another ambush and shot this party down as well. One of the hunters was killed and the others, wounded, beat a hasty retreat. The young son of the hunter who had been killed played possum. The wounded boy then crawled to Point of Rocks – you can't make this stuff up – where he ran into Hugh Smith, the New Mexico territorial delegate to the Congress of the United States, who was on his way to Washington. The boy's tale horrified the men, and Mr. Smith cut his journey short and headed back to Santa Fe.

Englishman Alexander Barclay, whose adobe fort was an important waystation along Mora Creek, reached the murder scene on the evening of October 25. He and his companions did not linger, especially after finding White's body with its lower half completely devoured by wolves. They pushed on quickly to camp and arrived at Barclay's Fort the morning of October 27. Smith was there when the wounded boy came in. The boy claimed that the Jicarillas were heading to the north, but Smith felt they would head east. It was assumed by all that Mrs. White, the baby, and the black nurse were with the Apaches.

Indian agent Calhoun, receiving word in Santa Fe on October 29, immediately hired an Indian trader named Garcia to ransom Mrs. White. Aubry, reaching Santa Fe the next morning, was devastated by the news and promptly hired both Pueblo Indians and New Mexican friends to rescue the captives. He offered a thousand dollars for their release. The Indian agent also offered a thousand dollars, a lot of money in Territorial New Mexico.

Troops were immediately called out. At Las Vegas, Captain Judd had ordered an escort of 20 men eastward under Sergeant Philip Swartwout to guard mail wagons bound for "the states." He sent

with them Lobo Blanco's daughter, who had been captured earlier and who was being held hostage by the Americans to ensure the good behavior of the Indians. The party camped a few miles east of Point of Rocks the first night out, not far from the White murder site. The Jicarilla woman was allowed to climb the rocks above the massacre site. She must have found something there – perhaps the body of a relative who was killed in the fighting – because she spent the night obsessively wailing and crying. At dawn she came back down to the camp appearing calm, but suddenly pulled a knife and started stabbing the mules and the teamsters. Swartwout promptly shot her, thus ending any hope of a prisoner exchange.

Troops were also set in motion from Taos, where Captain William Grier organized a joint force consisting of his own company of the First Dragoons, 42 men, as well as 40 mounted New Mexican Volunteers under Captain Jose Valdez, plus a battery of six-pounders. Grier was an 1835 West Point graduate who had been brevetted major for gallantry during the Mexican War, but since he hadn't been in New Mexico long, he wisely hired Antoine Leroux as his chief-of-scouts for the expedition. Leroux at this time rivaled even Kit Carson as a mountain man and scout, and while the two men were life-long friends, others constantly sought to build up a rivalry between them. Born of French-Canadian parents in St. Louis in 1803, Leroux had gone west with William H. Ashley in 1822. He was an experienced trapper and mountain man who had settled in New Mexico in 1833. He had married into the prominent Vigil clan. During the Mexican War he had won further fame as a scout for Colonel Philip St. George Cooke's Mormon Battalion, helping to blaze a wagon road to California.

Also attached to the command was a 22-year-old German emigrant named William Kronig, freshly minted Orderly Sergeant of Valdez's company. Kronig had migrated to the United States from Westphalia in 1847. He'd been lured by gold fever westward, but when he got to Santa Fe, he ran out of cash. In hopes of making enough money to continue on to the gold fields, he enlisted for two months service in the New Mexico Volunteers – and I love this! – since he, a man just six months off the boat, was the only man in his company who could read or write English, he was promptly promoted to sergeant.

On the third night out, Grier's detachment reached Kit Carson's ranch at Rayado. The captain wanted Kit Carson to join his party, even though Leroux was to be chief scout and even though other noted mountain men – Robert Fisher, Dick Wooton, Jesus Silva, and Tom Tobin – were also in the company. Carson listened to Grier's plea. This was a sad tale that he could not resist, a tale as old as the frontier itself. The rescue of Daniel Boone's daughter from the Shawnees was one of the most famous stories from Boone's life, and it in turn had provided the plotline for James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel *The Last of the Mohicans*. These written manifestations of the tale were not lost on Kit Carson, even though he could not read – he was totally illiterate. But the plight of the young woman certainly stirred him to action. And so he joined the rescue party.

Carson was the first to reach the slaughter site on November 9. And he quickly found the abandoned Apache camp as well. Wrote Captain Grier: "The letters, papers etc. found strewed about this camp were conclusive evidence that here had been the hiding place of those Indians who, two weeks previously had murdered Mr. J.M. White and his party." Even the rough mountain men were moved by the sight of little Virginia White's rocking chair.

Carson later declared: "It was the most difficult trail that I ever followed." The Apaches would break into small parties every morning, rejoining at a designated campsite later in the afternoon. The trail was already cold, and the weather was miserable. Carson and the other scouts followed it, although there were many dead ends. Again we return to the story of Daniel Boone's daughter, immortalized by James Fenimore Cooper: Mrs. White tore off pieces of clothing and left them all along the trail, exactly as Jemima Boone had done, and exactly as the heroine does in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Mrs. White had obviously read *The Last of the Mohicans*, so she knew what to do when she was captured by Indians.

From Point of Rocks, Carson trailed the Jicarillas to the southeast, toward their favored haunts along the Canadian River and its tributaries. After 200 miles they crossed the river only to realize that their quarry had circled back some 15 miles below the point of their crossing.

Frontiersman Dick Wooton recalled: "It was the flight of the ravens, which led me to believe that we were nearing the hostiles of whom we were in pursuit. The direction of their flight indicated the location of a camp, where they could find the carcasses of dead animals to feed on, and the time of their flight in the afternoon, indicated the distance of the camp from us."

As the trail became fresh, Captain Grier ordered the men to supply themselves with bread for eight days for the final pursuit. They had only cold camps as they moved out. At dawn on November 16, Carson and the scouts found an Apache camp that had been abandoned, but where the cottonwood was still smoldering in the ashes of the fires. They knew they had found their quarry.

At dawn on November 17, Grier moved his command out on a gallop, the scouts in advance. He gambled that, even though they had to travel over open ground, they would be able to surprise the Apaches. During the frontier era, the Indians were often surprised when they felt secure and didn't put out the kind of guards they should have.

The Jicarillas were encamped on the Canadian River some 15 miles south of the landmark called Tucumcari Butte near present day Tucumcari, New Mexico. Riding far in advance, Carson could see that the Apaches had been alerted to the troops and were breaking camp. As he galloped forward he called back to the men to follow him. Wooton and others scouts galloped forward, heading into the camp, when Wooten suddenly heard a cry from behind. It was Grier ordering everyone to stop. Grier galloped up, and Carson, cursing like a sailor, went to him and said that they had to attack the camp immediately or they would never rescue Mrs. White. But Leroux had suggested a parley and the captain wanted to negotiate. By this time the Indian warriors were shielding the escape of their families. A party of them rode forward. As Grier rode down to meet with the Apaches, Lobo Blanco pulled out his rifle and promptly shot Grier out of the saddle. Fortunately for him, Grier had his gauntlets right over his heart and survived.

As the soldiers charged, the warriors simply melted away and all their families got safely across the river. Fisher killed one warrior as he swam the river; that was the only Apache casualty of the battle. The Indians, with their fresh horses, easily outdistanced the pursuing soldiers.

In the camp Kit Carson found the body of Ann White. As he said later, "she was perfectly warm, had not been killed more than five minutes – she'd been shot through the heart with an arrow." She'd been shot in the back. Carson was uncharacteristically bitter. "I am certain that if the Indians had been charged immediately on our arrival, she would have been saved," he noted. Sergeant Kronig the German, also came on the tragic scene. He wrote: "She was running toward us when shot and the arrow that took her life, struck at her back, seemed to have passed through her heart. It was a pitiful sight to see an American woman so ruthlessly killed by these heartless savages. They still had her baby and her Negro nurse."

With pursuit fruitless the soldiers gathered up camp equipment, buffalo robes, food, and tore down 30 lodges. They buried Mrs. White and they gathered all these things over her body and built a huge fire. Seventy Indian ponies were taken, which Grier gave to the volunteers. Two Indian children were found and Grier turned them over to Jesus Silva to take back to Rayado. The taking of Indian children as slaves was still a common practice in the 1840's in New Mexico.

While gathering in all the Indian property, Mrs. White's baggage was also discovered and there a remarkable discovery was made. Carson never forgot

the moment. He said: "In camp was found a book, the first of the kind I had ever seen, in which I was made a great hero, slaying Indians by the hundred, and I have often thought that as Mrs. White would read the same, and knowing that I lived by, she would pray for my appearance so that she could be saved. I did come, but I had not the power to convince those that were in command over me to pursue my plan of rescue."

The book was most likely Charles Averill's *Kit Carson, Prince of the Gold Hunters*, published earlier that year and the first of many novels to exaggerate Carson's heroics. Since he couldn't read, portions of it were read to him. Disgusted, he told the soldiers to throw it in the fire.

On the return the column was struck by a sudden blizzard. In the ensuing whiteout most of the captured ponies were lost as the command drifted before the storm. It was even worse for Lobo Blanco's people. Caught on the open prairie with none of their baggage, and none of their buffalo robes, many perished. Carson, Leroux, and Grier, with some of the dragoons, staggered into Captain Judd's camp at Las Vegas on November 24. From there, Carson sadly went back to Rayado.

In 1850, Congress authorized $1,500 to be paid by Indian agent Calhoun for the return of the White girl, but neither she nor her nurse were ever found. The Apaches declared that they were dead, which probably was the case. In response to the White murders, Calhoun finally got his request for troops approved. In 1851 Fort Union was built near where the Cimarron and mountain branches of the Santa Fe Trail came together to the west of Point of Rocks. The army pursued the Jicarrillas, and in 1854, dragoons under Lt. David Bell finally killed Lobo Blanco. The Jicarilla leader had called for a parley and Lieutenant Bell promptly rode out and shot him out of his saddle.

Back in Taos, Sergeant Kronig was ordered to copy the official military report of Captain Grier's expedition. He later wrote: "I copied it and to my surprise I read of the wonders that we had accomplished." As he worked, Major Benjamin Beall of the First Dragoons stepped into the office to inquire how Kronig was doing. When the young German remarked on his surprise at reading of such a brilliant campaign that he had been a part of but had not witnessed any of, the old soldier smiled and simply remarked that he shouldn't worry. "Boy, it's just paper talk."

Kit Carson also now knew the strange power of "paper talk." On the far reaches of the Canadian River he had come face to face with his own storybook legend in one of the most remarkable moments in all of frontier history. The failure of his ride to save Ann White would haunt him all the rest of his days.

Questions and Answers

Q: In California at Mono Lake there's a gravesite for Kit Carson's daughter. Can you tell us what daughter that was?

A: It was his daughter Adeline, the very daughter by his Arapaho wife that he had sent back east to be educated at the convent school. She died very young. She would make a great subject for a novel. She had a very tough time because she was a half-breed. The frontier was changing, and while such intermarriage was accepted early on, it was unacceptable after the West got civilized. I always note that toleration ends as civilization comes. Civilization has to become civilized to restore toleration. That's the story of the American West.

Q: In Hampton Side's *Blood and Thunder*, I read about the opposite side of Kit Carson: how he sometimes engaged in what could be considered cold-blooded murder of Indians.

A. It's not the opposite side of Kit Carson – it's just who he was. It reflected those times. Especially in dealing with the Indians, he had a real tribal mentality. "You kill two of my people, I kill ten of yours." Hampton Sides and I have talked about this. In many ways, Carson was almost the perfect enforcer for the government as it

engaged in the business of Manifest Destiny. A real tough character. There are several incidents where Carson was involved that make you queasy.

The whole story of the American West has a romantic pall cast across it that we all grew up with. Recent historians have engaged in a lot of revision, which I think has gone a little too far. You have to deal with the reality of those people at that time and the value systems that they lived with. If you tell the story straight, you have to include the fact that Carson could be very cold-blooded.

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Paul Andrew Hutton is Distinguished Professor of History at the University of New Mexico. He is the author and/or editor of numerous books and articles, including *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), which received the Billington Prize from the Organization of American Historians, the Evans Biography Award, and the Spur Award from the Western Writers of America. Hutton is also the recipient of several other Spur Awards, as well as Western Heritage Awards from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. He has appeared on numerous television programs, including the History Channel and the Discovery Channel.

"From the President " *continued from page 1*

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, members will also receive more communication by both print and electronic media. We will, of course, continue printing *Desert Tracks*, but we will also produce a monthly electronic newsletter containing current chapter and OCTA news, announcements of upcoming events and activities, and other timely information.

Goal 3: New chapter website.

We are very fortunate to have Tom Jonas, a historian and cartographer who is well known for his mapping skills, as our new Webmaster. Tom is currently designing the new website; you can watch it develop at **southern-trails.org**. Comments and ideas on what to include on the site are welcome. Not only will the new website reinforce our goal of increased contact with the membership, but it also will allow us to reach out to everyone interested in historic trails world-wide.

Goal 4: Programs and activities for all members.

In order to appeal to the interests of all members, future programs and activities will be equally balanced across three major categories that are important to all trail enthusiasts: preservation, education, and identification. Planners will work to place equal focus on these three major themes when planning chapter activities, and we will search for new and innovative programs and activities that will capture our members' interest. Here are some examples of the type of activities we will be considering:

1. **Preservation:** Educating local clubs, groups, and schools on historical trails in their local areas; working with local, state, and federal agencies; supporting the national OCTA preservation agenda.
2. **Educational programs:** Workshops; symposia; bus tours to historic locations.
3. **Identification:** On-the-ground trail identification and mapping; outings to historical trail sites; training programs to teach mapping techniques.

Goal 5: Establish a chapter archive.

We are very happy that Rose Ann Tompkins has agreed to be the first Chapter Historian. She will organize the collection of past, current, and future chapter records, mapping data, and documents. In time, all data will be archived and placed in an appropriate secure depository, to be preserved for future generations of trail lovers.

Goal 6: National Historic Trail status for the Southern Emigrant Trail.

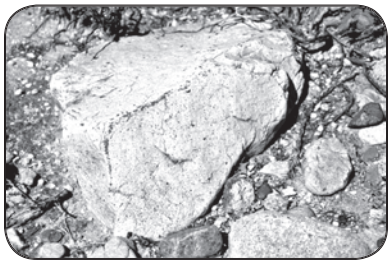
The time has come to initiate work to obtain National Historical Trail status for the Southern Emigrant Trail. Other trails, no more important in settling the West, have such status, and the Southern Trail deserves to be equally recognized. This is a long term goal that will require the support and help of many chapter and OCTA members. Many chapter members already have done considerable work to start this process. I encourage all members to help further this effort. **If we truly want a worthwhile purpose to unite and energize the chapter, this is it.**

Darryl Montgomery of Yuma, AZ, has agreed to fill the newly created position of Chapter Legislative Liaison Officer. In this capacity he will begin working with chapter members to start pulling together mapping data, historical records, and other pertinent information collected over the years. Also, again with help from members, he will start the process of making contact with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as congressional members whose support will be necessary for eventual legislative approval of historic status. We will seek OCTA support for this project; indeed, Montgomery will sit on OCTA's Legislative Liaison committee. With OCTA's support, with partnering with other interested historic trail associations, and with the support of all members of the Southern Trail Chapter, we can make this happen.

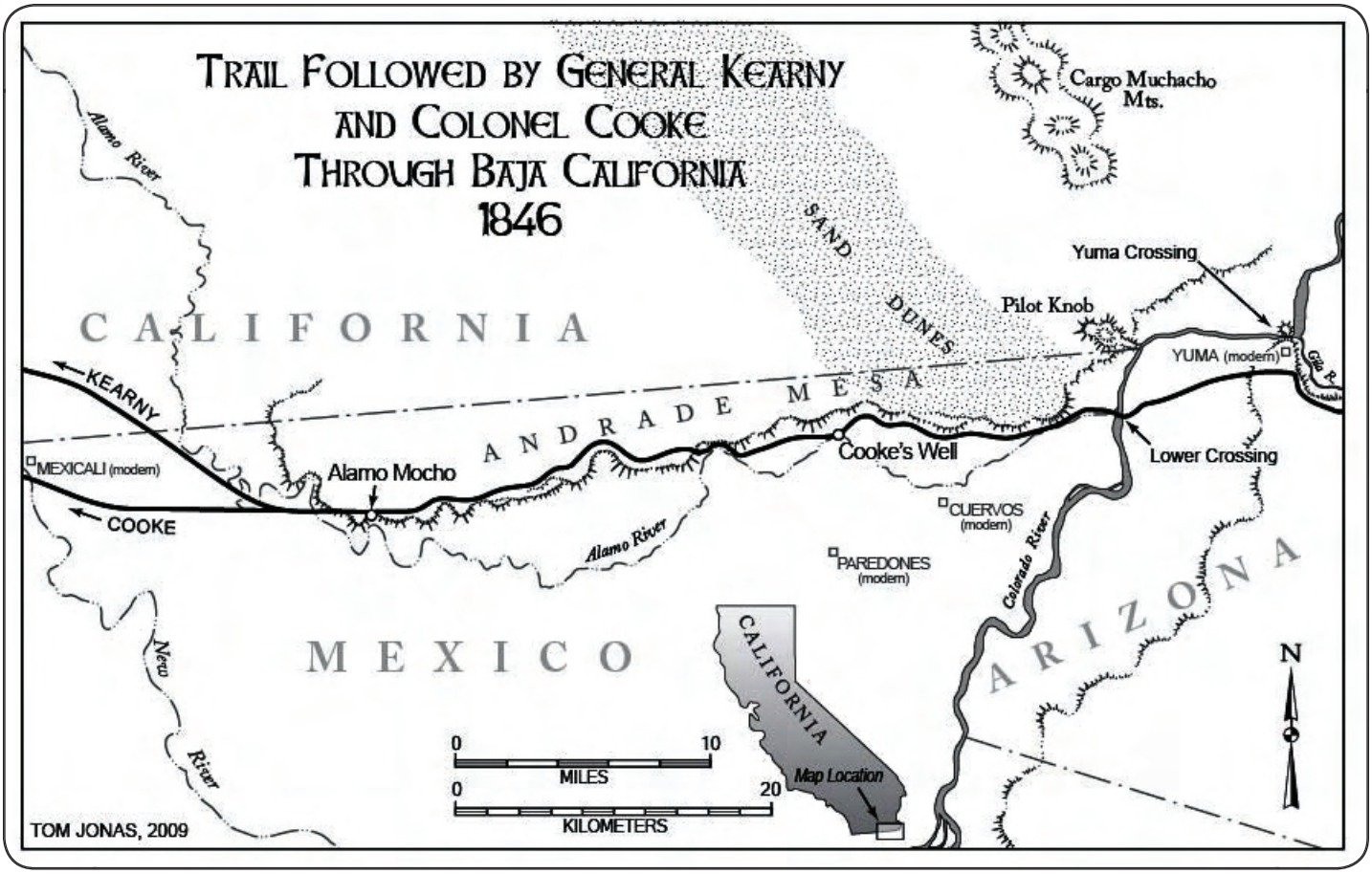
Following the summary of the new goals, the Phoenix chapter meeting turned to addressing several business issues, including the need for growth in membership, the dues structure, and the establishment of a chapter board of directors that will include a director from each state within the chapter's geographical area. The final business of the meeting was an agreement among the officers to investigate feasibility of the Southern Trails Chapter hosting the 2012 OCTA Convention in Santa Fe, NM.

It was recognized by all in attendance at the meeting that there were two groups of people who deserve a special "Thank You" from the Southern Trails Chapter. The first group is the past leadership who resigned their positions at the end of December 2008. No one knew better than they that the chapter had become very limited over the years in its activities and membership participation. They recognize that if the chapter was to survive, new leadership would be required to revitalize it. In a clear demonstration of their long-term commitment to the chapter they chose to step aside and allow that to happen. We thank them for that. The other group that we want to thank is the Steering Committee who stepped forward in January 2009 to start the process of reorganizing the chapter and to find a slate of candidates to fill the vacant chapter officers' positions. A share of the "Thank You" to the Steering Committee also belongs to Ross Marshall. In what was undoubtedly one of the chapter's darkest hours, it was Ross' wisdom and foresight that brought the Steering Committee into being.

Details of our progress will appear in the new electronic newsletter and on the website as these come online.



Rust on rock. *photo by Albert Eddins*



Alamo Mocho Well:
The Mexican War Trails of Kearny and Cooke Through Baja California.

The route followed into California by General Stephen Watts Kearny's "Army of the West" during the Mexican War has been studied by modern historians, all except for a 50-mile detour through the modern Mexican state of Baja California. The accurate understanding of the campsites and other trail locations on this detour is critical to a proper appreciation of the trail segments that precede and follow this section of the trail.

There were no springs or permanent streams along this path; the only available water sources were temporary lagoons or hand-dug wells that depended on seasonal overflows of the Colorado River to recharge the water table. Virtually no visible traces remain of the old trails, campsites, and wells, but accurate locations can be determined by a careful study of primary documents such as diary accounts, maps, and illustrations.

Tom Jonas

[**Editors' Note**: This map was exhibited during a talk by Tom Jonas at the Yuma symposium. His presentation briefly documented the trail location and the two important desert wells, shown on the map, that shaped the army's crossing in 1846 and '47. The full article on this subject, titled "Wells in the Desert: Retracing the Mexican War Trails of Kearny and Cooke Through Baja California," is tentatively scheduled for publication in the Autumn 2009 issue of the *Journal of Arizona History*.]

Southern Trails Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

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Become a member at http://www.octa-trails.org

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Secretary	John Fromm
Treasurer	Shannon Perry
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Legislative Liaison	Darryl Montgomery
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