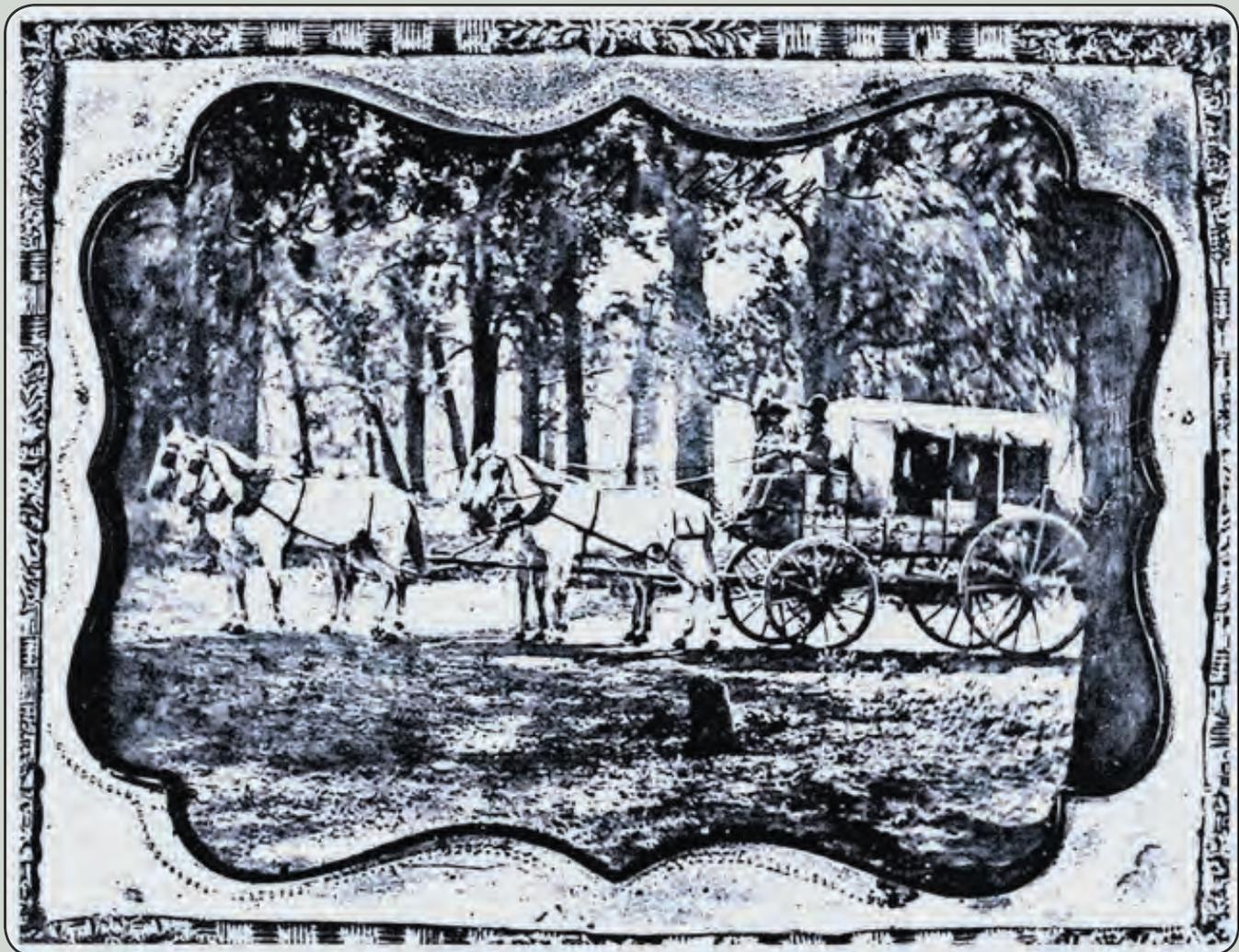


Desert Tracks

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

January 2017



Butterfield Stage Wagon in West Texas

\$7.50

Desert Tracks
*Publication of the Southern Trails Chapter of
the Oregon-California Trails Association*

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**Front Cover: Butterfield stagecoach near the Cottonwood Stage
Station in west Texas. The driver was David McLaughlin.
*from a copy of a daguerreotype in the Nita Stewart Haley
Memorial Library, Midland, Texas***

From the editors

In this issue we include an interview with Texas historian Glen Sample Ely, the author of *The Texas Frontier and the Butterfield Overland Mail, 1858-1861*. (We have also included a review of Ely's book by David Miller.) This book is a monumental work which sets the story of the Butterfield Overland Mail in Texas in the context of the development and history of the 19th-century Texas frontier. Ely spent nearly a quarter of a century of archival and on-the-ground research to produce the book. He visited all but one of the Butterfield stations in the 740-mile stretch from Colbert's Ferry on the Red River to El Paso. In the interview, he discusses the local Texas history associated with the trail, his research methodology, the condition of trail today, and the potential for the promotion and the preservation of the trail and its sites.

In 1909, Geronimo died a prisoner of war at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Members of the Order of the Skull and Bones, a secret society at Yale University, have a legend that Prescott Bush – the father of President George Bush and grandfather of President George W. Bush – broke into the grave with some classmates in 1918 and stole Geronimo's skull, two bones, a bridle, and some stirrups. In 2009, Geronimo's great-grandson, Harlyn Geronimo, sued Yale and the Order of Skull and Bones to try to recover the remains. David Miller's article "Skullduggery" provides a history of the controversy.

The Corn Exchange Hotel, today's La Posta restaurant, was located on the plaza in Mesilla, New Mexico. In the 1850s Sam Bean and his brother Judge Roy Bean owned the building and ran a passenger service west to Pinos Altos. Two decades later, John Davis had converted the station into the Corn Exchange Hotel. Some trail historians believe that the Corn Exchange became a critical stop for the Butterfield Overland Stagecoach, but others, like historian George Hackler, are inclined to disagree. In this issue, Trail Turtle Tracy DeVault weighs in on the controversy.

In "Bloody Cooke's Canyon," Las Cruces historian Dan Aranda reminds us that early New Mexico could be a very violent place. Cooke's Canyon was one of the most dangerous single-passage sections of the trail across the southwestern desert. The canyon provided the Apaches with ambush sites from the cliffs overlooking the trail. Even after the U.S. Army constructed Fort Cummings in

1863, the Apaches continued their attacks. Aranda has compiled a list of many of the conflicts that occurred on this treacherous stretch of the trail. He also provides an extensive bibliography for future research.

We welcome S.B. Katz, a retired wildlife management officer from Lewiston, Idaho, to these pages and include here his review of Paul Hutton's *The Apache Wars: The Hunt for Geronimo, the Apache Kid, and the Captive Boy Who Started the Longest War in American History*. A professor of history at the University of New Mexico, Hutton delivers a sprawling tale of conflict in the late 19th-century American Southwest.

We have contributed two reviews. The first book we review is *Mesa of Sorrows: A History of the Awat'ovi Massacre* by James F. Brooks. Readers of these pages will certainly be interested in Brooks' investigation of the mysterious massacre of Hopi Indians at Awat'ovi in 1700, as well as in his discussion of how societies confront painful and controversial histories. We also review Dennis M. Larsen's *Hop King: Ezra Meeker's Boom Years*. Although many trail enthusiasts will be familiar with Ezra Meeker's efforts to publicize and preserve the Oregon Trail, Larsen's biography concerns a less known aspect of his life: his years as a successful hops farmer and merchant.

Rose Ann Tompkins has contributed a brief obituary for Sheri Lee, who was a charter member of the Southern Trails Chapter and its first treasurer. Rose Ann comments that "it was a joke among us that our treasury was so small. Sheri kept the money in a ziplock bag on top of her refrigerator. The chapter has certainly come a long way since then."

We thank Ken and Pat White for their recent contribution to the Trail Turtles' Archive publishing fund. Although the Trail Turtles no longer perform formal week-long mapping trips, small groups of Southern Trail Chapter members continue to map sections of the trail. Tracy DeVault and Rose Ann Tompkins report on recent mapping activities in southern Arizona.

On the inside back cover, we have included a preliminary program for the Chapter's spring 2017 symposium in El Paso, Texas. See you there!

Deborah and Jon Lawrence

Sheri Lee, 1942-2016

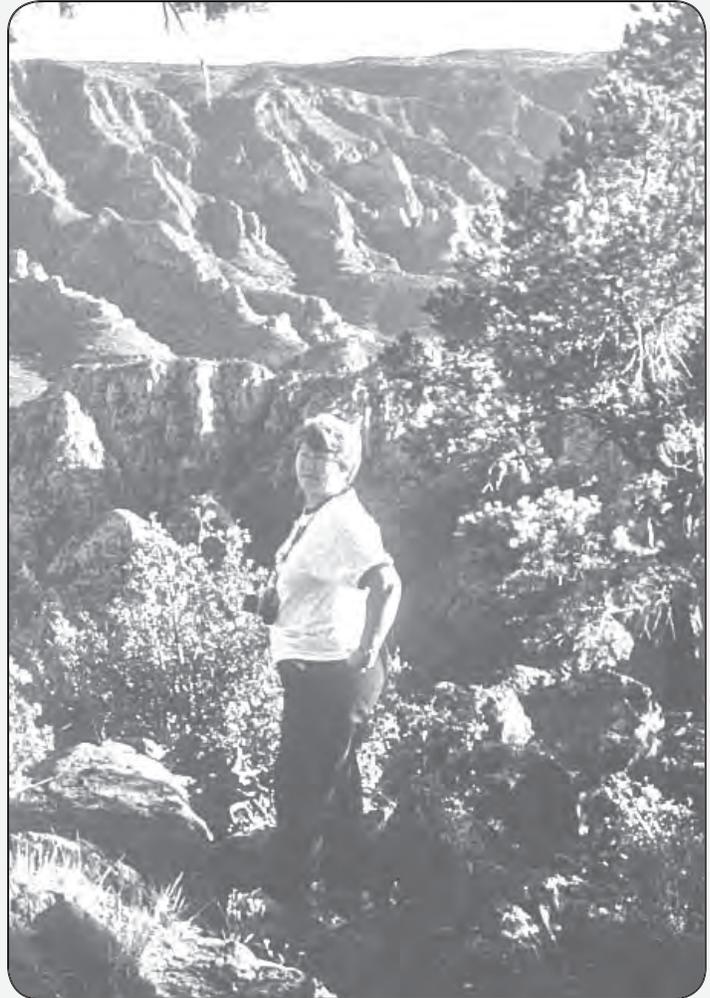
Sharon (“Sheri”) Ann Lee of Pagosa Springs, Colorado, passed away on Saturday, July 23, 2016, in Phoenix, Arizona. She was born in 1942 in Wisconsin where she grew up and went to college, majoring in chemistry and pharmacy. In 1965, she married her husband, Robert Hugh Lee. The couple subsequently lived in Minnesota, California, and Arizona. While living in Tucson, Sheri returned to school at the University of Arizona, earning a mechanical engineering degree. After retirement, the Lees moved to Pagosa Springs, Colorado. A member of the Mayflower Society and the DAR, she spent many hours researching family genealogy.

Sheri was a charter member of our OCTA chapter and its first treasurer. Until they moved from Tucson to Pagosa Springs, she and her husband, Bob, were very active in chapter activities. In March 1991, she was instrumental in our first attempt to find Ewell’s Station and in successfully finding the location of the Cienega Springs Station. Sheri and Bob hosted two of our summer planning meetings at their cabin on Mt. Lemmon outside Tucson. They attended the October 1993 trail mapping workshop led by Don Buck in Flagstaff.

Sheri had a wonderful smile and a positive attitude about anything she did. She will be sorely missed.

Memorials may be made to the Community United Methodist Food Pantry, PO Box 300, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147 or to Habitat for Humanity of Archuleta County, 703 San Juan Street, PO Box 2827, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147. Condolences may be made at www.bunkerfuneral.com, Bunker Family Funeral, Mesa, AZ.

Rose Ann Tompkins



Sheri Lee in 1991 on a Chapter outing on the Overland Road from Flagstaff to Prescott. *courtesy Rose Ann Tompkins*

Book Reviews

The Texas Frontier and the Butterfield Overland Mail: 1858-1861

Glen Sample Ely

Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016.

ISBN-978-0-8061-5221-9.

421 pages with color photos, maps, notes, bibliography.

Hardback, \$34.95.

Stage coaching along the Butterfield Overland Mail route has become one of the most iconic images in the history of the American Southwest. This fabled status exists despite the fact that over much of the trail Butterfield used Celerity wagons – mud wagons – instead of the larger Concord coaches depicted by Hollywood. Furthermore, the route was in operation for only 30 months – from September 1858, to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

Under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo that ended the U.S.-Mexico War, the United States acquired the Mexican Cession, which included California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. With the discovery of gold in California in 1848 and the subsequent gold rush, transportation became a burning issue in the Southwest. Despite government experiments with the use of camels and efforts to build adequate wagon roads, it soon became clear that railroads would one day provide the ultimate solution to transcontinental travel. However, the construction of a transcontinental railroad became a politicized sectional issue in the 1850s, and it became impossible to build the transcontinental railroad until after the Civil War.

With Congress deadlocked, an alternate solution to rapid transportation to California was provided by the Post Office Department, which under the leadership of Aaron Brown awarded a contract to John Butterfield in 1857 to offer regular stage coach service along what became known as the Oxbow Route. After reaching Fort Smith from either Memphis or St. Louis, this road passed through Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California to San Francisco. The 2,795-mile route was several hundred miles longer than the central route across Colorado, Utah, and Nevada, but since it avoided the Sierra Nevada snows, it was considered to be an all-weather route.

In *The Texas Frontier and the Butterfield Overland Mail*, Glen Ely has done an outstanding job of covering the 740-mile section of the Butterfield route across Texas, which included over 50 stage stops. Not only does the author provide detailed descriptions of these stage stations, but he also places them in a broad historic context. He points out how Texas was both southern and western, changing political and cultural orientation as the coaches traveled southwest from Red River toward the Pecos. The 220-mile segment from Gainsville to Fort Chadbourne became progressively western, while the segment from Fort Chadbourne to El Paso became more Hispanic. Regardless of location, the Texas frontier was a violent place. In Gainsville, for example, reaction to the presence of suspected abolitionists in north Texas led to the “Great Hanging in Gainsville,” where a vigilante group hanged 40 suspected Union sympathizers in 1862.

Indian attacks against Butterfield stations were much more common than confrontations had been between 49ers and Native Americans traveling on the southern trails a decade earlier. This was due in large part to the attraction of horses and mules corralled at the numerous stage stations. According to Ely, the Pecos River served as the dividing line between the Kiowas and Comanches of the Plains, and the Apaches in the desert Southwest. Attacks east of the Pecos were generally carried out by Plains Indians, while confrontations west of the river were in Apache country. Ely also points out that “Indian raids often included white horse thieves.”

Another graphic change beyond the Pecos was the transition from the Anglo culture of individual property ownership to the Native American concept of “collective sovereignty” and the Tejano or Hispanic concept of communal ownership of natural resources. The Salt Wars and conflicts over ownership and access to springs, water holes, and grazing lands in the trans-Pecos region occurred in this context. The book also analyzes the impact of the “environmental folly” of past agricultural practices upon the trans-Pecos region.

Ely stresses the role that the national government played in the development of west Texas, with the Butterfield Mail route as a prime example. He also discusses the importance of the promotion of “heritage tourism” by contemporary communities along the Butterfield route.

Ely's detailed history of each of the Butterfield stations across Texas is strongly enhanced by the inclusion of a large number of detailed maps and photographs. With the exception of several photos made by Roscoe and Margaret Conkling in the 1930s, most of the photographs are contemporary while the majority of the maps were produced in the nineteenth century

The Texas Frontier and the Butterfield Overland Mail is well written and printed in a generous format. It is an excellent book which I recommend highly to anyone interested in the Old West.

David Miller

Hop King: Ezra Meeker's Boom Years

Dennis M. Larsen

Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2016.

ISBN: 9780874223422.

253 pages, photos, maps, endnotes, bibliography.

Paperback, \$26.95.

Ezra Manning Meeker (1830-1928) first traveled the Oregon Trail when he migrated from Iowa to the Pacific Coast in 1852. From 1906 until his death in 1928, Meeker devoted energy to ensuring that the old emigrant trail was marked and preserved. He traveled the trail with an ox-team in 1906 and again in 1910. In 1924, he followed the trail in an airplane, and at the time of his death in 1928, the 97-year-old pioneer was beginning a trip in a Ford automobile with a covered wagon on the back. While most trail enthusiasts are aware of this final period of Meeker's life during which he worked to publicize and preserve the Oregon Trail, and many have some knowledge of his trail travel in 1852, very little has been written about his life between the years 1860 and 1896. The focus of *Hop King* is this until-now neglected period during which Meeker grew hops and participated in the development of Washington Territory.

In 1852, Ezra Meeker, his wife Eliza Jane Sumner Meeker, and their seven-week-old son Marion joined the westward trek from Iowa to the Pacific Northwest, taking one wagon, two yoke of oxen, and three cows. Although the Meekers

settled first in Kalama, just upstream of the mouth of the Kalama River, they soon moved to today's Puyallup where Meeker staked a claim and began subsistence farming. In 1865 Meeker planted a few rows of hops. When these flourished, he built his first hop-curing house near his cabin and each year he added acreage to his fields. Hops quickly become Puyallup Valley's biggest cash crop, bringing in more than \$20 million. By 1890, Meeker was, in effect, a millionaire, cultivating approximately 500 acres and employing up to 1,000 harvesters, many of whom were Indian or Chinese. One of his regular customers was Portland brewer Henry Weinhard. Because the best market for hops was in England, Meeker spent several months each year in London in the interest of the hop growers of the Northwest. In addition to growing hops for over three decades, the "Hop King" was a merchant, a bank president, a developer of railroads, a lecturer, and the author of books and articles. In 1877, he platted the town of Puyallup and became its first mayor. And, when hop lice and the economic depression depleted his assets, Meeker began to transport and sell vegetables, dried foods, and canned goods to the miners in the Yukon and Klondike gold fields.

Dennis Larsen has previously written two books with Karen Johnson on another Oregon emigrant, Edward Jay Allen. One of these – *Our Faces Are Westward* – was published by OCTA in 2012. He has also written a book on Meeker's Klondike days (*Slick as a Mitten: Ezra Meeker's Klondike Enterprise*, Washington State University Press, 2009). In *Hop King*, Larsen begins with a brief summary of Meeker's life before his decision to travel to the Northwest. He then follows Meeker as he helps to settle the Puyallup Valley, cultivates hops, attempts to start railroads and hotels, and eventually goes bankrupt. Larsen offers insights into Meeker's creative ability to build on his successes and to find solutions to his financial difficulties.

Initially, we thought that this book would be of interest primarily to those who study the history of Washington Territory, as well as those who know of Meeker's later work to promote the Oregon Trail. The book certainly contains much detail that will not be of interest to other readers. However, as we read on we came to appreciate that Larsen's book discusses important historical events not widely known outside the Northwest. These include the employment and treatment of Indians and Chinese in the

agricultural fields and the expulsion of Chinese laborers from Washington Territory, with attendant political hysteria. The book implicitly treats the development of capitalism in the fledgling territory, where creative development and risky investments as well as swindles and lawsuits were commonplace. A whole chapter is devoted to the siege of the town of Puyallup by unemployed men associated with Coxe's Army. (Coxe was an Ohio businessman who in 1894 led unemployed workers on a protest march on Washington D.C.) Furthermore, Ezra Meeker was a complex man of his era. He worked his way up from farm boy to wealthy businessman and entrepreneur. He was often creative in his business practices, such as his improvements on techniques to spray his hop fields against hop lice. He was frequently belligerent and litigious. At the same time, he was very progressive for the late 1800s. For example, he defended the Chinese against expulsion and promoted the rights of women to vote.

Complete with historic black-and-white photos, *Hop King* provides a window into the social, political, and racial views of the late 1800s. Those interested in the history of the Pacific Northwest and, indeed, anyone who wants to learn of the development of the West from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, will find this book fascinating.

Deborah and Jon Lawrence

The Apache Wars: The Hunt for Geronimo, the Apache Kid, and the Captive Boy Who Started the Longest War in American History

Paul Andrew Hutton

New York: Crown, 2016.

ISBN: 978-0-7704-3582-0.

514 pages; photos, maps, notes, bibliography.

Hardback, \$30.

In *The Apache Wars*, Paul Hutton relates the history of Apache warfare in the late 19th-century American Southwest. Beginning with Mangas Coloradas' encounters with the Americans, the book treats the following topics: the Bascom Affair and the war with Cochise; Kit Carson's

role as a Jicarilla Apache agent; General James Henry Carleton's Civil War policies, including the abortive effort to confine the Mescalero Apaches to Bosque Redondo; the Camp Grant Massacre; the arrival of General George Crook and his initial battles with Western Apaches, as well as his use of Apache scouts; the "Peace Policy," as embodied in the activities of Vincent Colyer and General Oliver Otis Howard, and the resulting peace that Tom Jeffords helped mediate with Cochise; the establishment of the San Carlos reservation; the battles with Victorio and his demise at Tres Castillos; and the protracted war with Geronimo under Generals George Crook and Nelson Miles. Essentially Hutton's work follows every major incident (and many minor ones) in the subjugation of the Apache people from 1850 to 1900.

There are many characters in Hutton's sprawling overview of the Apache Wars, and, indeed, the book can be viewed as a collective biography of Apaches and white soldiers, scouts, and settlers. In addition to such famous Apaches as Mangas Coloradas, Cochise, Victorio, and Geronimo, the book involves Juh, Loco, Delshay, Eskiminzin, and Apache scouts such as Mickey Free, Chatto, and Peaches, as well as many others. The cast of non-Apache characters is equally large. In addition to Carlton, Carson, Crook, and Miles, the list includes the Southwest's most famous scout Al Sieber; Indian agent John Clum; John Bourke; Army scout Tom Horn; the Tucson citizen William Oury; and "Texas John" Slaughter.

A thread that runs throughout the book is the character of Mickey Free. Mickey, whose given name was Felix Ward, was the adopted son of Johnny Ward, an Irish farmer in Sonoita Creek, south of Tombstone, Arizona. Free was kidnapped by Aravaipa Apaches in 1861. In response, George Bascom met Cochise near the Apache Pass stage station. Although Cochise offered to help find Mickey Free – who he had not, in fact, kidnapped – Bascom ordered that Cochise be arrested. In the ensuing fracas, Cochise escaped and subsequently the lieutenant ordered that several of the chief's family members be held hostage. This botched affair precipitated the Apache Wars, the longest war in American history (1861-1890).

After he was taken by the Aravaipa Apaches at age 11, the one-eyed red-haired boy was raised as an Apache. Later he

worked as a tribal policeman and as a scout and interpreter for the U.S. Army. He went out and brought in Apache heads for Crook, while at the same time attempting to aid the band of Indians that had adopted him. According to Hutton, “everyone hated him, but everyone needed him.” Al Sieber, the famous scout, who Mickey Free worked for, described him as “half Mexican, half Irish and whole son of a bitch.” Hutton sees him as a trickster – a “miserable little coyote,” who is able to move between two incompatible cultures.

Towards the end of the book, Hutton shifts his focus to the Apache Kid, an Apache scout who had been captured by Yuma Indians as a boy and rescued by the U.S. Army and who later became a renegade.

Hutton not only writes about the participants and the battles and skirmishes between the Indians and the American soldiers, but he details events that concern mining, reservations, politics, and slavery. Indeed, there are so many characters, incidents, and episodes that a general reader might get lost in the detail. The strength of Hutton’s approach, which includes brief background biographies, cultural details, and the attitudes and actions of settlers and soldiers, is that it provides a deep context for and a sweeping overview of the Apache Wars. Specific characters, such as Cochise, Geronimo, or Crook, and specific incidents such as the Battle of Apache Pass or Camp Grant Massacre, can thus be seen as part of the larger process of the development of the Southwest.

The sourcing for this book is extensive. A professor of history at the University of New Mexico, Hutton cites nearly every book that has been written on the Apaches, many memoirs and articles, and material from a large number of manuscript collections and archives. The book is written in a conversational style that allows the reader to engage with the different stories. Taken together, the stories that he relates illuminate the violent cross-cultural history of Apachéria during the second half of the 19th century.

For readers seeking a professional overview of the Apache Wars, Paul Hutton’s *The Apache Wars* is an excellent place to start. I recommend it highly to all who are interested in the history of the Southwest.

S. B. Katz

Mesa of Sorrows: A History of the Awat’ovi Massacre

James F. Brooks

New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016.

ISBN: 978-0-393-06125-3.

279 pages, photographs, endnotes, bibliography.

Hardback, \$26.95.

The massacre at Awat’ovi in 1700 is arguably the most traumatic event in Hopi history. Founded sometime after 1300, Awat’ovi grew to be one of the largest and most important villages within the Hopi area. The easternmost pueblo on Arizona’s Antelope Mesa, it was the first of the Hopi villages to be seen by the Spanish when Pedro de Tovar of the Coronado Expedition visited in 1540. In 1629 the Franciscans built the mission of San Bernardo de Aguatubi over the main kiva at Awat’ovi. The church was destroyed during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Not long after Diego de Vargas’s *reconquista* in 1692, the Spaniards rebuilt the church. In 1700, two padres, Fray Juan and Fray Antonio, came to Awat’ovi and began preaching. Some of the residents accepted Christianity, which made them an anomaly among the Hopi. Tensions intensified between the converted Hopis in Awat’ovi and traditionalists both in other Hopi villages and in Awat’ovi itself.

The attack on Awat’ovi occurred just before dawn in the autumn of 1700. It was carefully planned. The invaders were not the usual adversaries: they were not Ute, Navajo, or Apache. Instead, they came from Hopi villages to the west: Oraibi, Walpi, and Mishongnovi. They attacked Awat’ovi, slaughtering most of the 800 occupants and destroying the pueblo. A few surviving women and children were taken captive. However, on their return to their Hopi villages, the warriors halted with their captives and argued over the distribution of the women and girls. There was a fight and more killing ensued. The site of this event was later known as Skeleton Mound.

Even 300 years after the event, which includes a number of years of archaeological excavation at the ruin, the specifics of the tragedy are disputed, leading Brooks to emphasize that he is only telling “a history, not the history.” *Mesa of Sorrows* explores the backstory leading up to the massacre, the attack on the pueblo of Awat’ovi, the relationship of the event to Hopi ideology, and the role of archaeologists in uncovering the ruins of the village and evidence of

the attack. A key theme of his book is the impact of the massacre on the Hopi of today – indeed, Brooks quotes William Faulkner as saying, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”

To capture the connections between the past and present, Brooks uses an anachronic narrative. Each chapter deals with a given theme, such as the role of sorcery in the prehistoric and historic Puebloan Southwest, Hopi mythology related to establishing *suyanishqatsi* (village harmony), the role of immigrant Puebloan people to the Hopi mesas, and the advent of the Spaniards. While some readers will find it a challenge to follow the narrative’s thread, those who do will be amply rewarded with a deeply contextualized understanding of the massacre.

To explore motivations for the attack, Brooks turns first to Alexander McGregor Stephen, who provides one of the earliest Hopi accounts of the massacre. In 1892, the Hopi-speaking ethnographer transcribed the Awat’ovi story from Sálíko, a woman from the village of Walpi. A descendant of a captive survivor, Sálíko told Stephen that in 1700, Awat’ovi was under the leadership of Ta’polo. The Hopi leader believed that some of his people were involved with witchcraft. He accused them of abandoning traditional Hopi rites, quarreling, raping, and stealing. The village had fallen into *koyaanisqatsi* – a state of moral corruption and spiritual transgression. He wanted his people destroyed so that balance – *suyanishqatsi* – could be restored. According to Sálíko, it was Ta’polo who recruited the warriors from the neighboring Hopi pueblos to attack and kill his own people. It was he who left open a gate to the walled city and gave the signal to attack.

What could have inspired Hopi to turn against their neighbors at Awat’ovi? Brooks contextualizes the massacre at Awat’ovi in several ways. He provides readers with a discussion of pre-contact violence, both from enemy outsiders and from other Hopi villages – intra-community conflict had existed from the introduction of the katsina religion in the 14th century. He assesses the role of sorcery in Hopi society and its possible existence at Awat’ovi. Additionally, he stresses that many Hopi villages were multi-ethnic communities. Because the Hopi recruited outsiders to their community to increase their strength, people in Hopi villages didn’t consider themselves as from

the same tribe. By the early 1600s, Awat’ovi had absorbed Kawaikas, Payupki, and other Eastern Pueblos. Many of the ceremonies at Awat’ovi derived from these immigrants. The lack of cohesion within the village was intensified by those villagers who had adopted Catholicism and were in conflict with those who adhered to Hopi lifeways. Brooks suggests that the village was condemned by its neighbors for religious reasons: the preservation of traditional Hopi ceremonialism from a renewed Christian threat. In fact, archaeologists discovered a syncretic mix of katsina and Catholic ritual objects in one of the kivas, prompting Brooks to conclude that the residents at Awat’ovi were practicing an “experimental type of piety” that threatened other Hopis who viewed it as sorcery.

The former director of Santa Fe’s School for Advanced Research, James F. Brooks is Professor of History and Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His sources for *Mesa of Sorrows* include oral histories, archaeological field notes, Spanish colonial documents, anthropological sources, and the stories of the Hopi historian Albert Yava (née Nuvayoyava – Big Falling Snow). Not only does Brooks unravel the mystery behind the massacre at Awat’ovi, but his eloquent writing brings the Hopi village back to life. Students and scholars of borderlands, indigenous, and Southwest histories will want to have a copy of *Mesa of Sorrows* in their personal libraries.

Deborah and Jon Lawrence



The Hopi village of Oraibi in 1899.
photo in the public domain

The Butterfield Trail in Texas: An Interview with Glen Sample Ely

conducted and edited by *Deborah and Jon Lawrence*

Glen Sample Ely is a documentary producer and historian who earned his Ph.D. in history from Texas Christian University. His work has won the Award of Excellence in Preserving History from the Texas Historical Commission. We interviewed Ely during the summer of 2016 via an e-mail exchange, focusing on his recent book on the Butterfield Trail in Texas.



Glen Ely standing in well-preserved Butterfield Trail ruts east of Castle Gap in west Texas.

DJL (Deborah and Jon Lawrence): Your book, *The Texas Frontier and the Butterfield Overland Mail, 1858-1861*, is unique among books on the trail in providing in-depth histories of the people and events associated with the various stage stops. The story often connects with state, national, and environmental issues. We would like to start by asking you to summarize the impact that the Butterfield Trail had on the development of Texas.

GSE (Glen Sample Ely): The Butterfield Overland Road was the 19th-century equivalent of our modern interstate highway system. Used by soldiers, emigrants, freighters, and stagecoaches, the overland road stimulated travel through the region, commercial freighting, business, and settlement. The U.S. Army and the Overland Mail Company built much of west Texas's antebellum infrastructure, jumpstarting growth, serving together as both the economic engine and advance agent of European-American settlement. My intent was to provide an in-depth look at the Texas frontier from the Red

River to El Paso, telling the stories of the people living along the overland road and examining county, state, and national issues playing out along that frontier. The Butterfield itinerary provided a way for me to move westward across Texas in an organized fashion, settlement by settlement. Providing such a detailed look at the people, the land, and the history required drilling down many layers in my research. It was not enough to locate and document these stage stops and settlements. I knew that in order to make this a compelling and extraordinary work, I also had to tell the human story of what happened in these communities. That story took me decades to uncover. I also know that you cannot write about human history without discussing man's relationship with the environment, how the environment affected settlers and forced them to adapt, how these pioneers impacted the land, and the legacy of that interaction.

DJL: Discussing secession and regional identity in Texas, you point out that there was deep animosity between pro-slavery and abolitionist citizens prior to the Civil War, as reflected in the "Texas Troubles" in northeast Texas and the Gainesville hangings,¹ and that a number of counties favored remaining in the Union.²

GSE: Texas possesses a mixed regional identity: it is both western and southern. Some see Texas as a western state, with its cowboy and Native American history and with its mountains and deserts. At the same time, there are many who conceive of the state as being southern, with its legacy of slavery, cotton, secession, and Jim Crow. In my first book, *Where the West Begins: Debating Texas Identity*, I provide a detailed study of the cultural and environmental DNA of Texas, literally showing what part of Texas is western (the western third), what part is southern (the eastern half), and what part is both (a 250-mile transition zone in Texas between the 97th and 100th meridians). One aspect of documenting the cultural DNA of Texas included examining the state's secession vote, looking at what counties voted for and against the referendum and their motivations for doing so.

DJL: You give a number of examples of lawlessness on the part of many residents of the frontier, including such notables as John Baylor. You speak of the failure of the Indian reservations in Texas, and you give evidence that some of the Indian depredations on the frontier were actually carried out by white criminals.

GSE: The antebellum Texas frontier is fascinating in its complexities. Some residents are in favor of the two federal Indian reservations in Young and Throckmorton Counties.³ Others have deep-seated prejudices against Native Americans, which is fairly typical of many Americans in the 19th century. These people have no desire to distinguish between friendly and hostile tribes. That would be too complicated – better to lump them all together. At the same time, there are several dangerous demagogues like John Baylor⁴ and Harris Hamner⁵ who are deliberately misleading the public, stoking and inflaming frontier tensions in order to serve their own nefarious ends. Baylor, Hamner, and others are part of an organized vigilante gang that includes Texas Rangers, extralegal militias, horse thieves, and rustlers who institute a reign of terror across north and central Texas. Some members of this gang dressed up as Indians when stealing livestock so as to assign blame to the reservation Indians. This reign of terror included kidnapping, assassination, and arson, and it was very effective. Compounding this problem was an ineffective and occasionally abysmal federal and state response.

DJL: You speak of the ongoing depredations by Comanches and the local, state, and national effort to subdue the indigenous people.⁶ Is it true that the Butterfield stations in west Texas suffered tremendously from raids by and battles with the Comanches? This contrasts markedly with southern New Mexico and Arizona where the Apaches were fairly tolerant of the stage operation prior to the Bascom affair.⁷

GSE: Yes, Texas stage stops were frequent targets for Comanche and Apache raids. Eagle Spring, Mountain Pass, and Head of Concho were three stations that were particularly hard hit. Typically, the losses were large numbers of livestock, but sometimes raiders would also destroy the station building and kill Butterfield employees.

DJL: Who prepared the stagecoach roads in Texas or did Butterfield rely on pre-existing military roads?

GSE: Some sections of the overland route were laid out first by emigrants and subsequently improved by the military. Some parts were blazed solely by the military, while others were done by Texas counties as an incentive to the Overland Mail Company to route the mail road through their communities. In addition, the Overland Mail

Company laid out a few parts of the route, such as the section between the North Concho and Concho Rivers. Butterfield also made improvements to existing military and county roads.

DJL: We would like to ask about your research methodology. Apparently, a quarter of a century of research went into your book. We can easily believe this because one of the features of your work – and one that we greatly appreciate – is the way you incorporate local histories for most communities along the trail. What sources did you find most useful? Did you review all the census, tax roll, and voter registration records for the various locations, as well as contemporary newspaper accounts?

GSE: As I state in the book's preface, I started this project in 1989 while filming a documentary on the history of Guadalupe Mountains and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks.⁸ All research sources were very useful, whether at various university archives, local museums, the Conkling Collection in Los Angeles, numerous county clerk and district clerk offices, the Texas General Land Office Archives, and the National Archives. All were necessary to complete my study. I utilized every source I could find, including period newspapers, county tax rolls, county commissioners court minutes, surveyor field notes, county tax appraisal records, land office maps and sketch files, land abstracts, deed records, probate records, census records, voter registration records, Postmaster General records, federal military scouts, reports, and maps, Indian depredation claims, Texas governors' papers, federal Indian agency records, period diaries, letters, and journals.

DJL: Did you utilize oral history, and if so, how reliable do you consider it to be?

GSE: Oral histories can be problematic because they sometimes contain errors or falsehoods. Evaluating whether or not to use them requires additional research and corroboration.

DJL: In addition to the newspaper reports of Waterman Ormsby,⁹ how many known contemporary accounts of Butterfield Trail travel are known? Were you able to rely on secondary accounts, other than the detailed three-volume study by Roscoe and Margaret Conkling (1947),¹⁰ as a guide?

GSE: The best primary overland mail accounts are in Waterman Ormsby's, William Tallack's,¹¹ and Walter Lang's¹² Overland Mail books. Regarding secondary sources, at a certain point I stopped utilizing these because my research had taken me far beyond their scope. The only secondary sources I went to time and again were those by the Conklings and J.W. Williams, who did excellent research for their time. These folks did not enjoy the considerable research resources that we take for granted today. The Conklings spent from 1930 to 1936 researching the Texas portion of the route. I spent from 1989 to 2014 on my own research. I greatly admire the Conklings and dedicate my book to them. Their 1947 three-volume set was very intimidating to me at first, but over time that feeling passed. My goal was to take their work to the next level. A colleague describes my book as "the Conklings on steroids." After spending years perusing their journals, notes, and letters, Margaret and Roscoe Conkling are like family to me now. As my Butterfield mentors, I know they would be very pleased with and very proud of my book.

DJL: At some point in the process, you got out on the trail to view the actual sites. How closely were you able to follow the old route? What new Butterfield sites/structures were you able to identify when you did your fieldwork for the book?

GSE: I visited my first Butterfield sites – the Pinery, Cornudas, and Alamo Spring – in 1989. In 1998, Joe Allen of Comanche, Texas, and Patrick Dearen of Midland, Texas,¹³ began joining me on my field trips, and from 1998 to 2014, the three of us had many memorable experiences out on the Butterfield Road across Texas and in New Mexico in the Cornudas Mountain range. Joe's and Patrick's contributions to the field research were considerable. Patrick is an award-winning author (e.g., Western Writers of America Spur Award) with a deep knowledge of west Texas history from his many years of writing about the region. Joe is a former member of the Crane County Historical Commission and currently serves on the Comanche County Historical Commission. The field experience and expertise that he brought to this project cannot be overstated. As I mention in the book, "Allen possesses an intuitive sense of west Texas's geography. He has an innate feel for the lay of the land and for a trail's direction, even when not visible to the eye."

Some sites took more than ten years to locate. I kept researching and looking for new archival leads to run these down. It takes a lot of time and patience. We found quite a few stations that had never been located previously, including Skillman's, Cottonwood Station, Grape Creek, Camp Fargo, Valley Creek, Krebs's Station, Spring Station, Fishpond Station, Cottonwoods/Skillman's Ranch, Crow Spring, and Camp Pleasant/Antelope Spring.

I should point out that the archival component of the book was just as important as the field research. In fact, many of the sites were pinpointed through my study of old land surveys, maps, military scouts, etc. In a number of instances, we would not have known where to start looking without these primary documents from county, state, and national archives. Using these old maps, army scouts, land surveys, historic aerial photographs, modern topographic maps, and metal detectors, we were able to follow the trail very closely.

DJL: We are quite amazed at the number of tangible Butterfield ruins there are in Texas. Since most are on private land, we are curious as to how you got permission from the landowners to survey the sites.

GSE: The majority of Butterfield sites in Texas are on private land. Getting access to these sites took years and required considerable diplomacy. It involved building trust and relationships with the landowners. Landowners are very concerned about maintaining their privacy and do not want people trespassing. In return for getting access to these sites we promised not to say who owned them. We also agreed not to provide details about a site's specific location.

DJL: The book exhibits many photos of artifacts from the different sites. What did you do with the artifacts after you unearthed and photographed them? Have you involved archaeologists in the explorations of these sites?

GSE: Joe Allen found most of the artifacts shown in the book. We conducted sample surveys of the sites to verify them. The vast majority of artifacts were left on site with the landowners. The landowners did not want any state or federal officials on their property. They did not want excavations or archaeological digs.

DJL: Given your archival and on-the-ground research, what is your opinion about how complete our understanding is of the Butterfield route through Texas? What kinds of gaps and confusions remain?

GSE: After a quarter of a century working on this, I have a fairly comprehensive understanding of Butterfield's operations in Texas. With that said, all professional historians understand that there will always be new information that comes to light, including new primary documents, maps, letters, journals, accounts, and newspaper reports. In addition, two stations still need to be located and documented on the August 1860 to March 1861 route alteration from Gainesville to Decatur. There are also several stations along the Middle Concho requiring detailed field research, but they will have to wait until a new landowner grants access. The holy grail for me would be finding the detailed records of the Overland Mail Company and its operations. Over the last century, researchers have tried to locate these records with no success.

DJL: As members of the Oregon-California Trails Association, we are very concerned with the preservation of historic trail sites. In our travels along the trail in Arkansas, we visited a number of well-preserved Butterfield structures and we also traveled pristine segments of the trail that are on the National Register of Historic Places. What Butterfield structures survive in Texas and which ones are in particular need of preservation? Are there any sections of the trail in Texas listed on the National Register?

GSE: One section of the trail in Texas in Guadalupe Mountains National Park is now on the National Register. In addition, there are many excellent traces of the trail across Texas. During the last decade, the Texas Historical Commission (THC) has discussed heritage tourism promotion of the Butterfield Route. Its Texas Lakes Trail now has a Butterfield brochure, but to date the THC has still not made the Butterfield an official state heritage tourism trail. I hope this happens soon. As to preservation efforts, most sites in Texas are ruins. Several stations still have some good wall sections standing, but as the book's pictures illustrate, many sites today are just a wide scattering of rock on the ground. It would be nice to see a few stations accurately restored to their original condition, but again, this is up to the landowners.

DJL: We note with pleasure that (as mentioned in footnote 79 of Chapter 2) you testified before the Texas public utilities commission to preserve the ruins of West Fork of the Trinity and Earhart's stage stops and adjacent water crossings from the encroachment of utility transmission lines. Are there ongoing efforts by others to preserve the trail and its sites in Texas? When you survey Butterfield ruins on private land, do you encourage the landowners to seek easements and/or covenants to ensure that the ruins are preserved?

GSE: First of all, you must understand the nature of Texans. Many landowners in Texas are very private and fiercely independent. If I had suggested easements or covenants to these people, I would have been denied access to over 80% of the sites. Texans do not want state or federal restrictions placed on their acreage, and they do not want to be told what they can and can't do with their land. They consider themselves to be excellent stewards. This really is a personal matter best left to each individual landowner. In fact, I got involved with blocking the utility transmission line in Jack County because a landowner asked me to help.

DJL: If the Butterfield Trail becomes a National Historic Trail, do you think that promotion and preservation of the trail and its sites will become more widespread in west Texas?

GSE: National Historic Trail designation will encourage widespread promotion of the trail statewide, absolutely. I think that once the National Park Service recommends designating the Butterfield Overland Road as a national historic trail and Congress approves this recommendation, this will open the door and encourage preservation efforts from Missouri to California. The length of this approval process has been frustratingly slow.

DJL: We are very interested in your comments about the manner in which local communities preserve and promote their history, and how they selectively package their heritage and identity for visitors. Are you hopeful that communities along the trail will become more forthright about their history?

GSE: Concerning heritage/cultural tourism, I understand that communities across Texas are all competing for tourist dollars and looking at how to best package their assets and

amenities. These cities depend on the economic returns that tourism provides. With that said, it is troubling to see some cities trying to reinvent themselves and selectively packaging their heritage and identity in an attempt to boost tourism. I discuss this matter in depth in my first book, *Where the West Begins: Debating Texas Identity*.

DJL: As “trail tourists” who love to travel the old historic trails, we believe your book will make an enriching travel guide. Since many of the trail sites are on private land in Texas, what can the ordinary traveler expect to see?

GSE: In conceiving of this book’s multiple purposes, one of these was to serve as a guidebook for the Butterfield across Texas. You are correct: many of these sites are on private property and the public will not be able to access them. Providing a visual record of these places for the public was another purpose of this book because people would not have the opportunity to see them otherwise. With that said, interested persons can still go to many Butterfield locales, including Sherman, Gainesville, Decatur, Bridgeport, Jacksboro, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Hueco Tanks, and all of the forts, including Forts Belknap, Phantom Hill, Chadbourne, Stockton, and Davis. So the public can still have a wonderful Butterfield experience in Texas even without visiting the sites on private lands.

Endnotes

1. Before and during the Civil War, many Southerners were afraid that a slave uprising could occur with abolitionist aid, and they sought to prevent it by any means necessary. In 1862, in Gainesville, Texas, state militia searched several counties for suspected Unionists because the authorities had heard rumors of a potential plot. In the largest case of vigilante justice in America, forty-one alleged Unionists were hung. Two additional suspects were shot while trying to escape. For a history of the tragedy, see Richard B. McCaslin’s *Tainted Breeze: The Great Hanging at Gainesville, Texas 1862*.
2. In early 1861, Texas seceded from the Union and joined the Confederate States of America. The diversity of the state’s residents created pockets of resistance to it. See Walter L. Buenger’s *Secession and the Union in Texas*. Of the twenty Texas counties to vote against disunion, three (Grayson, Cooke, and Montague) were located on the Red River (Ely, *The Texas Frontier*, 33).
3. Beginning in 1854, two plots of land in the vicinity of Fort Belknap were selected for Indian reservations in Texas, one for Comanches and another for several tribes including the Caddo and Anadarko. The two reservations, which were under the supervision of federal Indian agent Robert Simpson Neighbors, were strongly opposed by many residents of the region, including John Robert Baylor and Harris A. Hamner. In their attacks on Neighbors and the reservations, these men promoted mob violence in the region. In the summer of 1859, federal officials ordered the closure of the two reservations. In September 1859, Neighbors was assassinated by two Butterfield employees.
4. Prior to the Civil War, John Robert Baylor (1822–1894) was heavily implicated in the violence that surrounded the establishment of Indian reservations in Texas. He was a colonel in the Confederate States Army during the American Civil War. In 1861 he drove federal troops from Mesilla, New Mexico, and declared himself military governor of Arizona Territory. He was removed from this position by Jefferson Davis for his efforts to massacre Apaches.
5. Born in South Carolina, Harris A. Hamner (1827–1876) moved to Texas in 1854. In Jacksboro, he became coeditor of the *White Man* weekly newspaper, an incendiary anti-Indian and pro-slavery newspaper. He served as a Lieutenant Colonel of Confederate forces during the Civil War.
6. For a comprehensive history of the Comanches in the 18th and early 19th centuries, see Pekka Hämäläinen’s *The Comanche Empire* and Brian DeLay’s *War of a Thousand Deserts*.
7. The Bascom Affair was a confrontation between Apache Indians and the United States Army under Lieutenant George Nicholas Bascom at Arizona’s Apache Pass in 1861. Bascom accused Apache Chief Cochise of kidnapping 11-year-old Felix Ward on Sonoita Creek. When Cochise denied having anything to do with the boy, Bascom’s soldiers took Cochise and several of his family members as prisoners. Cochise escaped and declared open war on the Americans. The Apache Wars continued intermittently until the surrender of Geronimo in 1886. For a history of the event, see Terry Mort’s *The Wrath of Cochise: The Bascom Affair and the Origins of the Apache Wars* and Paul Hutton’s *The Apache Wars*.
8. *History of the Guadalupe Mountains and Carlsbad Caverns, 1840-1940*. Forest Glen TV Prod., 1990.
9. Waterman Lily Ormsby provided a first-person account by the only through-passenger on the official maiden run of the Butterfield stage in 1858. A special correspondent for the

- New York Herald*, he sent the chapters of this story East for publication while en-route.
10. Roscoe P. Conkling and his wife Margaret B. Conkling began research for their history of the Butterfield Overland Mail in 1929. When it was published in 1947, it became the primary source of information for the route. The Conklings traveled over 65,000 miles in preparation for their book, interviewing anyone they could find associated with the stage route.
 11. An English cleric, William Tallack (1831–1908) was born in Cornwall. He devoted his life to penal reform and the abolishment of capital punishment. In 1860 he visited the United States and traveled the full route of the California Overland Express from San Francisco to St. Louis. He published an account of his travels on the Butterfield route.
 12. Walter Barnes Lang's *The First Overland Mail Butterfield Trail: Saint Louis to San Francisco 1858–1861* and a second volume on the route from San Francisco to Memphis are compilations of early accounts of travel on the Butterfield route.
 13. Patrick March Dearen (1951–) writes both fiction and history. His novel, *To Hell or the Pecos*, is set along a desolate 79-mile section of the Butterfield Trail in the Pecos River country of west Texas. His book *The Big Drift* won the 2015 Spur Award of the Western Writers of America.
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Skullduggery: Geronimo and Yale's Skull and Bones Society

by David Miller

According to the lore of the Ivy League's most infamous fraternity, Yale's Skull and Bones Society, George W. Bush's grandfather, Prescott Bush, and several accomplices broke into Geronimo's grave at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, on a May evening in 1918 and stole the old warrior's skull. They subsequently spirited their trophy back to the Skull and Bones fraternity house at Yale, an imposing fortress-like structure on High Street known as the Tomb. The following is the fraternity's official account of that escapade from an internal document entitled *Continuation of the History of our Order for the Century Celebration, 17 June, 1933*.

From the war days also spring the mad expedition from the School of Fire at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, that brought to the T[omb] its most spectacular "crook," the skull of Geronimo the terrible, the Indian Chief who had taken forty-nine scalps.¹ An expedition in late May 1918 by members . . . planned with great caution since in the words of one of them: "Six army captains robbing a grave wouldn't look good in the papers" . . . The ring of pick on stone and thud of earth on earth alone disturbs the peace of the prairie. An axe pried open the iron door of the tomb, and [Prescott] Bush entered and started to dig. We dug in turn, each on relief taking a turn on the road as guards. . . . Finally Ellery James turned up a bridle, soon a saddle horn and rotten leathers followed, then wood and then, at the exact bottom of the small round hole, James dug deep and pried out the trophy itself. . . . We quickly closed the grave, shut the door and sped home to Mallon's room,



The author standing in front of the Skull and Bones "Tomb" on High Street in New Haven, Connecticut. *photo courtesy David Miller*

where we cleaned the bones. Mallon sat on the floor liberally applying carbolic acid. The Skull was fairly clean, having only some flesh inside and a little hair.²

Skull and Bones

The Order of Skull and Bones, or the Brotherhood of Death, is one of the most powerful and influential fraternities in the United States. Its alumni have held key positions in industry and government over the years and include three United States presidents – William Howard Taft, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush. Skull and Bones was modeled after a secret German *Bruderschaft*, or fraternity. Yale valedictorian William H. Russell founded the brotherhood at Yale in 1832 upon returning from his junior year abroad. Russell was born into a prominent Connecticut family that amassed a fortune in the opium trade. After graduation he was active in politics and served as an officer during the Civil War.



An image of four skulls that emphasizes that all are equal in death. *courtesy Sterling Library, Yale University*

The skull became the fraternity's emblem, with the number "322" symbolizing the year the society was organized (1832), and the fact that it was the second chapter of the German "Brotherhood of Death."³ The group's fascination with death as the great leveler can be seen in this image of four skulls sitting on cross bones and lined up behind a globe of the world. The German slogan reads: "Wer war der Thor, wer Weiser, wer Bettler oder Kaiser?"

(Translation: Which one was the fool, the sage, the beggar or the Kaiser?) Skull and Bones emphasized fraternal bonds and members focused on obtaining political and economic power following their college years. The members lionized pirates and insurgents like Geronimo, whom they called “crooks,” and seemed to have a fascination with collecting the skulls of such men for use in their secret rites. They are reputed to have Poncho Villa’s skull as well as Geronimo’s.



Apache prisoners *en route* to Florida by train. Geronimo is in the bottom row, second from the right.
courtesy Field Artillery Museum, Fort Sill

Geronimo was not incarcerated during his years at Fort Sill, but was basically under house arrest. He had the run of the post, living with his wife and family in a picket frame house on the east side of Cache Creek. He cultivated a garden, raised cattle and horses, and sold trinkets (mostly souvenir bows and arrows), as well as autographed photographic portraits. He made frequent forays into Lawton to sell his wares and score whiskey. He was rumored to have had a substantial bank account in Lawton at the time of his death. He was permitted to perform in Wild West Shows. He posed for photographers sitting behind the wheel of a parked car at the Miller Brothers’ 101 Ranch during a 1903 convention of the National Education Association. He rode with other famous chiefs in Teddy Roosevelt’s 1905 inaugural parade. That same year he dictated his life’s story to Lawton School Superintendent S.M. Barrett; Asa Daklugie, a graduate of Carlisle Indian School, translated. While incarcerated at Fort Sill, Geronimo enlisted as a scout in Troop L of the 7th Cavalry – which, ironically, was Custer’s old outfit. In the following 1905 portrait the old warrior is seated outdoors at Fort Sill wearing his army scout uniform and holding a hat on his knee with the U.S. Scout emblem visible near his right hand. Geronimo died at Fort Sill in February 17, 1909, and was buried the following day in the Apache cemetery on the grounds of the post. At the time of his death he had been a prisoner of war for more than 22 years.

The question I will address in this paper is whether Prescott Bush and his army buddies were successful in robbing Geronimo’s grave, or whether his remains are still resting undisturbed beneath a granite cobblestone pyramid at Fort Sill.



“Bonesmen” with skull in an 1869 photo.
courtesy Sterling Library, Yale University

This 1869 photograph shows Bonesmen posing with their favorite mascot. The skull and bones in the photograph have on occasion been represented as belonging to Geronimo, which is improbable since the photograph is dated 1869, forty years before Geronimo’s death and seventeen years before Geronimo surrendered to the United States Army at Skeleton Canyon near the Arizona-New Mexico border.

Geronimo’s Later Life

By the time of his final surrender to General Nelson Miles in 1886, Geronimo was well on his way to becoming the most famous Indian in America. His military prowess was legendary, as reflected in a cartoon showing Geronimo instructing West Point cadets. Following his surrender, Geronimo and his people were transported by train from Arizona to Florida as prisoners of war at Fort Marion in St. Augustine and Fort Pickens in Pensacola. Geronimo was sent to the latter. In 1888 the Apache prisoners were moved to Mt. Vernon Barracks, Alabama (about 30 miles inland from Mobile), and in 1894 they were relocated to Fort Sill, where they remained as prisoners of war until 1913.



In a 1905 portrait, Geronimo is wearing his army scout uniform.
courtesy Field Artillery Museum, Fort Sill

Geronimo's Death And Funeral

On Thursday, February 11, 1909, Geronimo rode his horse the short distance from his home to Lawton to sell souvenirs. Apparently he had had too much to drink. He attempted to ride home after dark. The night was cold and rainy and he did not reach his house. The following morning the Apaches discovered his horse roaming through their village. They began a search and soon discovered him lying exposed to the elements in a creek bottom near his house.⁴ His relatives took him home, where he remained for three days. He developed pneumonia. On Monday, February 15, the Apaches reported his condition to the post surgeon, Dr. Roberts, who examined Geronimo in his sick bed. The old man was desperately ill. Roberts had him taken by army ambulance to the post's Indian hospital, located about two miles away. He did not expect Geronimo to live through the night. However, the Apache did not die during the night, but held out, awaiting the arrival of his two teenage children, Robert (19) and Eva (17), who were attending Chilocco Indian Boarding School some 250

miles away. His condition worsened on February 16, and his children failed to arrive on the one o'clock train. The Lawton *Daily News-Republican* reported that Geronimo had a premonition that he would not survive this illness. "Me no get well," he told a Lawton reporter.⁵

According to Apache informant Arthur Guydelken, Father Isidore from Saint Patrick's Mission in Anadarko baptized Geronimo and administered the last rites. Father Isidore and Geronimo were old friends, and conversed freely in Spanish. This was Geronimo's third baptism. He had been baptized into the Catholic Church at Mt. Vernon Barracks in the late 1880s and re-baptized again at a camp meeting hosted by the Dutch Reformed Church pastor Frank Hall Wright at Fort Sill in 1903.

Geronimo died at 5:45 a.m. on Wednesday, February 17, six days after his relatives found him lying exposed to the elements near his home on Beef Creek. The Lawton *Daily News-Republican* reported that at the time of his death he was five feet tall and weighed 190 pounds. He was scheduled for a Christian burial on February 18, but according to the *Republican*, the Apaches held traditional funeral rites on the day of his death.

He was a fearless chief and was much beloved by his tribesmen, who are now conducting their peculiar funeral rites, believing as do Apaches that it will comfort him on his final way to the "happy hunting grounds."⁶

Geronimo's funeral was scheduled on February 18 at 3:00 p.m., but it was delayed an hour in order to include his two children who arrived that afternoon on the Frisco train. The post commander declared a half day's holiday to allow funeral attendance. Reverend Leonard L. Legters of the Dutch Reformed Apache Mission officiated at the funeral. Legters had suspended Geronimo from fellowship in the Apache Mission in 1907, but he saw the funeral as a means to preach against the old Indian ways. Lawton mortician L. B. Ritter provided a fancy hearse. Legters conducted a brief service at the Indian hospital for close family and friends. A military honor guard carried the old warrior's flag-draped coffin from the hospital to the awaiting hearse, which led a mile-long funeral procession of some 700 mourners to the site of interment in the Apache cemetery on Beef Creek, just a few hundred yards from Geronimo's house.



Geronimo's grand nephew, Arthur Guydelken, standing by the cobblestone pyramid grave of Geronimo, 1955.
courtesy Field Artillery Museum, Fort Sill

Following Reverend Legters' grave-side service, Naiche, the last hereditary Apache chief, offered a eulogy, exhorting his people to follow the "Jesus Road." The *Daily Oklahoman* reported that prior to closing the grave, mourners deposited blankets and Geronimo's riding whip in the grave.⁷ His remaining property, including horses and cattle, were distributed to his heirs. No tombstone or wooden headboard marked his grave. Its exact location in the Apache cemetery was soon forgotten, except by a few close relatives.

Morris Swett's Efforts to Locate and Mark Geronimo's Grave:

The army established the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill in 1910. In 1913 the Apache Reservation at Fort Sill was closed. Of the remaining Apache prisoners of war, 183 moved to the Mescalero Apache reservation in New Mexico, while 78 others remained in Oklahoma where they became known as the Fort Sill Apaches. These Fort Sill Apaches were granted allotments near the town of Apache. The allotments (most smaller than the standard 160 acres) were carved out of lands which had previously been allotted to Kiowas and Comanches who were by then deceased. The Apaches' 27 years as prisoners of war had ended.

Sergeant Morris Swett transferred from West Point to Fort Sill in 1914 and became the fort's librarian. Swett made his first visit to the Apache cemetery in the summer of 1915. He found the cemetery overgrown with prairie grass and weeds three feet high. He noted unmarked sunken graves filled with water, rough headboards that had rotted away or

had been burned in prairie fires. He noted that the cemetery "could have passed for an abandoned cattle corral."⁸ The bridge across Cache Creek was in a state of disrepair, and the road leading past the cemetery was virtually impassible. Swett made inquiries about Geronimo's grave, but the Apaches wouldn't talk, and no other persons in Lawton or at Fort Sill could remember the grave's exact location.

I remind you that it was only three years later, in 1918, that Prescott Bush and his army buddies allegedly located Geronimo's unmarked grave and his desecrated remains.

Sergeant Swett was persistent. In 1920 he had better luck. In the spring of that year, a Comanche named Howard White Wolf introduced Swett to Belle Nicholas, a 35-year-old Apache woman who had been in her mid-twenties at the time of Geronimo's death. She had attended Geronimo's funeral, knew the location of his grave, and frequently visited the cemetery to place flowers on her relative's grave. Swett explained his desire to locate and mark Geronimo's grave and she agreed to help. On Memorial Day, they met at the cemetery where she pointed out Geronimo's grave, which Swett marked with a small wooden stake. According to Nicholas, Apaches had been loath to tell outsiders about the grave's location because in 1914 treasure hunters had broken into Geronimo's grave. Although the grave had been disturbed, Geronimo's remains were intact. (This is an important point.) Tribal members refilled the grave and concealed its location. To protect the grave from further desecration, they spread a rumor that the body had been removed and re-buried at a secret location.⁹ The grave robbery story rings true, for in May 1915, treasure hunters broke into Quanah Parker's grave at the Post Oak Mission cemetery and stole two silver dollars which had been placed over his eyes.¹⁰

On March 9, 1929, Swett met with principal Apaches at the Reformed Mission located in the town of Apache to discuss his plans for locating and properly marking all of the graves in the Apache cemetery. He discussed plans to construct an appropriate monument over Geronimo's grave. The Apaches agreed to Swett's proposal, provided that he could obtain permission from Nah-thle-tla, Geronimo's first cousin. Nah-thle-tla was the mother of Jason Betzinez, who was an Apache blacksmith, a graduate of Carlisle Indian School, and the author of the book entitled *I Fought With*

Geronimo. Nah-thle-tla agreed, and on April 3, 1930, she accompanied Swett to the Apache cemetery and pointed out the location of Geronimo's grave. Swett marked the grave with another stake, only a few inches away from the stake he placed under Belle Nicholas' direction a decade earlier. Nah-thle-tla is shown here with Swett and James Kawaykla, who helped Swett identify several dozen additional graves. Within a few months, Swett's Apache friends had located and identified several hundred Apache graves. In 1932 Nah-thle-tla was honored at age 109 as the oldest mother in the United States. She died the following year at 110 years of age.



Nah-thle-tla, Sergeant Morris Swett, and James Kawaykla.
April 3, 1930.
courtesy Field Artillery Museum, Fort Sill

In 1930 Swett obtained funds to build a suitable monument over Geronimo's grave. After considering two monument designs, he opted for the granite cobblestone pyramid seen today, which was constructed using post library funds. He employed prisoners from the post stockade to clean and fence the cemetery. In 1931 Major F. A. Peck, executive officer of the Field Artillery School, authorized the manufacture of 200 wooden grave markers. In the photograph shown earlier of Geronimo's grand nephew Arthur Guydelken standing next to Geronimo's grave, it can be seen that there was little change to the grave

or the cemetery during the intervening quarter century. However things have changed dramatically in recent years as Geronimo has become a folk hero and symbol of anti-establishment resistance. His grave has become a shrine for New Age devotees. Recently, the Army trimmed the cedar trees and removed bandannas and other offerings.

Recent Controversies about Geronimo's Grave.

In 1982 the chairman of the White Mountain Apache Tribe of Arizona, with the support of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, announced that Geronimo had not been given a proper burial in 1909. They initiated efforts to have his body exhumed and returned to Arizona for a proper Apache burial at the White Mountain Cultural Center in Arizona or at the Apache Gold Casino in Globe. The casual observer might be suspicious about the Arizona tribes' true motives since their actions appear to have been more closely related to Arizona tourism than concern that the Apache cemetery in Oklahoma was somehow an improper location for Geronimo's grave. The White Mountain Apaches did not bother to consult with the Fort Sill Apaches who oversee matters in the Fort Sill cemetery. As Mildred Cleghorn, chairwoman of the Fort Sill Apache Tribe, noted at the time, the White Mountain Apaches appeared to be trying to "cash in" on an ancestor.¹¹

As the White Mountain and San Carlos Apaches pursued their demands through both political and legal initiatives, they learned of the Prescott Bush caper, as well as the rumor that Yale's Skull and Bones fraternity had the skull, stirrups, and a horse bit that Prescott Bush had stolen from Geronimo's grave at Fort Sill. The whole affair culminated in meetings in New York City between two Arizona Apache leaders, their attorney, George W. Bush's uncle Jonathan, and the Skull and Bones attorney Endicott Peabody Davison. Davison produced a skull and stirrups, but the Apaches felt deceived because the skull was not the one depicted in the photograph and was so small that it could have only belonged to a child.

In 1998 a group in Texas sued the Secretary of Defense to have Geronimo's remains removed to Arizona under terms of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which George Bush senior had signed into law in 1990. This law provides for the return of Native American cultural items to the appropriate tribal entities. The

cultural items include human remains stored in museums, the associated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of “cultural patrimony” (which could be defined as property inherited from an ancestor, cultural heritage, or property belonging to a church). This lawsuit failed on the grounds that the plaintiffs had no standing in the case. In any case, Geronimo’s burial in the Apache cemetery at Fort Sill does not violate any provision of the NAGPRA. Geronimo had been baptized at least three times into at least two Christian denominations, had received both a proper Christian and a proper traditional Apache burial, and was buried in a consecrated cemetery, not stored in a museum. There is no way that Geronimo’s burial in the Apache cemetery at Fort Sill violates any provision of the NAGPRA.

In 2009, Harlyn Geronimo, a sculptor and Apache medicine man from the Mescalero Reservation, submitted the most recent law suit against the U.S. government, as well as against Yale University and the Order of Skull and Bones. The suit sought “to free Geronimo, his remains, funerary objects and spirit, from one hundred years of imprisonment at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, [and] the Yale university campus . . . to his native land, at the headwaters of the Gila River.” In the summer of 2010, the U.S. District Court dismissed the suit on the grounds that it did not meet NAGPRA requirements.

Does Skull and Bones have Geronimo’s Skull?

The recent discovery of a letter in the Sterling Library archives at Yale University dated June 7, 1918, mentions receiving a package from members of the Skull and Bones Society stationed at Fort Sill, which contained Geronimo’s skull, “together with his worn femurs, bit & saddle horn.¹² If these were not Geronimo’s skull and bones, then whose bones were they?

An analysis of the Skull and Bones account of Prescott Bush’s foray into a Fort Sill cemetery in 1918 suggests to me that Prescott Bush and his buddies had no idea where Geronimo’s grave was located and never sank a spade into the Apache cemetery. The Bones’ description of the grave is at variance with all the facts. Geronimo was not buried in a tomb. There never was an iron door over Geronimo’s grave. The only iron door at any cemetery at Fort Sill that I have seen is the one on what has been believed to be Kiowa chief Kickingbird’s tomb located in the Old Post Cemetery.

Kickingbird died suddenly in 1875 shortly after helping select Kiowa insurgents for transportation to prison in Florida. According to local folklore, one of his Kiowa adversaries used his owl medicine to hex Kickingbird to death. Kickingbird was buried in the Old Post Cemetery with many of his possessions in a generous four-by-eight-foot coffin. While it is possible that Skull and Bones unearthed Kickingbird’s skull, I note that nothing on the funerary list of Kickingbird’s possessions matches any of the artifacts reputedly stolen from Geronimo’s grave in 1918. There is no evidence that Kickingbird is buried behind the iron door or, for that matter, that the structure is actually a tomb. Although the structure appears to have the mark of antiquity and looks like a tomb, it is not contemporary to Kickingbird’s 1875 death. Historian Wilbur Nye states clearly in his classic *Carbine and Lance*, written in the 1930s, that the wooden headstone marking Kickingbird’s grave had rotted away by the 1930s, and that no one living at that time knew exactly where Kickingbird was buried.¹³ Still, Prescott Bush most likely pried open that iron door in the Old Post Cemetery and excavated a skull, but it certainly was not Geronimo’s, and it may not have been Kickingbird’s either.

If it is true, as some locals in Comanche County believe, that the Apache people re-buried Geronimo’s remains in a secret location shortly after his original interment, then Geronimo’s skull was not in his grave for Prescott Bush to find. Although we may never know the truth concerning the myriad of Geronimo grave stories, it is my own belief that his remains lie intact beneath the granite pyramid that Morris Swett constructed for him in 1930, and that they should be left where they lie.

Endnotes

1. As an aside, an apocryphal story circulated in Lawton during the years of Geronimo’s captivity at Fort Sill. Apparently the wily old warrior owned a buckskin hide upon which he had sewn 99 Mexican scalps, and he was looking for one more to make it an even 100. According to this urban legend, Geronimo wore his scalp buckskin on occasion while riding in parades in Lawton. He even had it on display at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. During that exposition Geronimo sat in a booth in the Indian Exhibition Hall where he sold bows and arrows and autographed photographic portraits. A pueblo potter occupied

an adjoining booth, presumably to underscore the contrast between this “relic of a savage past” and the “industrious artisan.” However, nowhere in the photograph [Editors’ Note: Shown on the back cover] can we detect the scalp-embroidered buckskin. Instead we see an old man sitting quietly in “citizen’s clothing” in front of a photographer’s backdrop. See Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest* (Smithsonian, 1996), p. 49.

2. Robbins, Alexandra. *Secrets of the Tomb: Skull and Bones, the Ivy League, and the Hidden Paths of Power*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2002), pp. 18-19.
3. Robbins, Alexandra. “Powerful Secrets,” *Vanity Fair*, July 2004, p 157; and Robbins, *Secrets of the Tomb*, pp. 3-4.
4. Jason Betzinez statement to Morris Swett, July 7, 1923, Apache Indian file, MS, Swett Papers, Field Artillery Museum, Fort Sill, OK.
5. Lawton *Daily News-Republican*, February 17, 1909.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Daily Oklahoman*, February 18, 1909.
8. MS Swett Papers, “Apache Indians” folder, Field Artillery Museum, Fort Sill, OK.
9. Swett Papers, “Geronimo’s Death” file.
10. Quanah Parker was initially buried next to his mother Cynthia Ann Parker at the cemetery of the Post Oak Mission, near Lawton, Oklahoma. In 1957 he was re-interred at the Fort Sill Cemetery. Tom Hagan, *Quanah Parker; Comanche Chief* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995) p. 124; and Marvin Kroecker, *Comanches and Mennonites on the Oklahoma Plains* (Goessel, Kansas: Kindred Productions, 1997) pp. 61-61.
11. *Lawton Constitution*, May 17, 1982.
12. *Yale Alumni Magazine*, May/June, 2006, p. 20.
13. Nye, Colonel W. S., *Carbine & Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969.

Butterfield’s Overland Mail Station in La Mesilla, New Mexico

by Tracy DeVault

Having done some motorcycle touring myself, I especially enjoyed Don Matt’s article, “Motorcycling the Butterfield Trail.”¹ The section where Don and his brother, Paul, visited the La Posta Restaurant in Mesilla brought back fond memories of my first visit to the town in the late 1980s. I had come to see my friend John Gregan and view the lot that he and his wife Marlene had recently purchased in the foothills west of town. At night the view from their lot of Mesilla and Las Cruces in the distance was nothing short of outstanding. On the day I arrived, we ate at the La Posta Restaurant.²

The building that houses La Posta is located just off the town’s main square. It has been around since the very early years of Mesilla.³ There are signs and even a painting stating that this very building had, at one time, served as the headquarters of the Butterfield Overland Mail Station. In the room where we ate, there was a painting showing a stage coach pulled up in front of the Corn Exchange Hotel.⁴ The Corn Exchange Bar was opened in June of 1874, and the hotel’s first guest signed the hotel register on August 31, 1874. In 1939 the Corn Exchange Hotel was owned by George Griggs, whose niece, Katherine “Katy” (Griggs) Camunez, bought a portion of the Corn Exchange building to open a restaurant. Initially called the Mesilla Restaurant, the restaurant was an immediate success. It eventually took over the entire Corn Exchange building and the name was changed to “La Posta.”

I have made many visits to Mesilla since that first visit, and on almost every trip I have eaten at least one meal at La Posta. In all this time I firmly believed that the Butterfield Overland Mail Line operated out of the building. The fact that the hotel opened 13 years after the Butterfield Overland Mail ceased operation over the southern route simply escaped me. In fact, the Butterfield Overland Mail Line never operated out of the La Posta building – it was not even in the same block.



An old image of La Posta Restaurant.
from the La Posta website

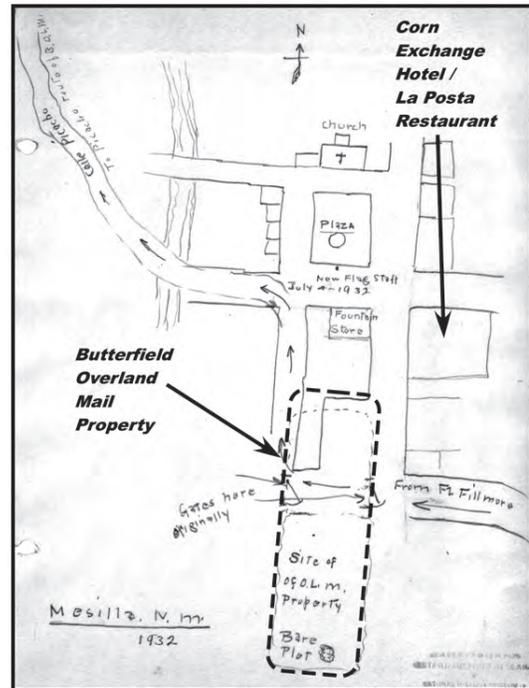
My first realization of this historical discrepancy came late last year when I was looking at some photos that Mike Volberg found at the Seaver Center for Western History Research in Los Angeles, California. The Seaver Center houses the research records of Roscoe and Margaret Conkling. During the 1930s the Conklings spent an enormous amount of time researching the Butterfield Overland Mail for their well-known book on the subject.⁵ I suspect they attempted to visit every Butterfield station. In July of 1932, they were in Mesilla. One of the photos that Mike found shows what the Conklings considered to be the site of the Butterfield station in Mesilla. The caption for the photo reads:

Site of the Butterfield Station in Mesilla, Doña Ana County, New Mexico. The station and corrals stood in the cleared space where the cars are parked. The melted down mounds are all that remain to indicate the site. The location is in the rear of Fountain's store and post-office.



The Conklings' photo of the Butterfield site in Mesilla.
courtesy Seaver Center

I realized that if the Conklings' photo and caption are correct, the stage station could not have been located in the existing La Posta building. I wondered whether the building was built later on the site of the Butterfield station. Then I came across the following sketch in the Conkling papers:



Map of Mesilla, sketched by the Conklings.
courtesy Seaver Center

From this sketch it is clear that the Butterfield station and corral were located in the block directly south of the plaza. The Corn Exchange Hotel/La Posta Restaurant is located in the block southeast of the plaza. Later, I noticed that the church steeple in the background of the photo also puts the location of the Conklings' photo directly south of the town square. The Conklings were right.

Recently David G. Thomas used early property records to trace the ownership of the lots around the Mesilla plaza.⁶ In many cases he was able to trace ownership back to the original Mexican land grants. The Overland Mail office and corral occupied lots D and E of the block directly south of the Mesilla plaza. The following property transfers come from Thomas' book:

Lot D. Eugene Leonard and Augustine Maurin to Giles Hawley superintendent of the Overland Mail Company,

June 22, 1859, for \$800, Book B, p 428.
 Lot E. Vincent St. Vrain and Amelia St. Vrain to Giles Hawley, superintendent of the Overland Mail Company, December 9, 1859, for \$600, Book B, p 410.

Shortly after the start of the Civil War, the Overland Mail Company ceased operations over the southern route and their property in Mesilla was sold:

Lots D & E. Owen Tulles superintendent of the Overland Mail Company to George H. Giddings, May 18, 1861, for \$1,500, Book B, p 666.

I am not the first person to figure out that La Posta was not the Butterfield station. Lionel Cajen Frieze puts the Overland Mail Line property in the block directly south of the plaza⁷ and George Hackler includes a photograph and map in his book *The Butterfield Trail in New Mexico*⁸ that shows the correct location of the Butterfield station. [Editors' Note: Hackler does state that "La Posta is generally accepted as the location where Butterfield passengers disembarked" (59).]

The assertion that the La Posta building was once a stage office may not be entirely incorrect, however. There is some evidence that stage lines in the 1870s and later may have operated out of the La Posta building.

Endnotes

1. Matt, Don. "Motorcycling the Butterfield Trail." *Desert Tracks*, January 2016.
2. "La Posta" means stage stop or station in Spanish.
3. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo put the site of Mesilla in Mexico. The town was formed by Mexican citizens in 1848. Following the Gadsen Purchase in 1853, Mesilla became part of the United States. The town served as the capital of the Confederate Territory of Arizona from 1861-1862, after which it was recaptured for the United States by the California Column. Mesilla was a stop on the Butterfield Trail, and many emigrants following the southern route passed through the town.
4. The painting *La Posta de Mesilla* is by Lester Hughes, an artist from El Paso.
5. Conkling, Roscoe and Margaret B. Conkling. *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857- 1869*. Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1947.

6. Thomas, David G. *La Posta, From the Founding of Mesilla, To Corn Exchange Hotel, To Billy the Kid Museum, To Famous Landmark*. Las Cruces: Doc45 Publishing, 2013.
7. Frieze, Lionel Cajen. *History of La Mesilla and Her Mesilleros*. El Paso: Book Publishers of El Paso, 2004.
6. Hackler, George. *The Butterfield Trail in New Mexico*, 2nd edition. Las Cruces, N.M.: Self published, 2012.



La Posta de Mesilla, a painting by Lester Hughes, shows the Corn Exchange Hotel.
 from the La Posta website



Greg McEachron and Mike Volberg, searching for where the trail left Pantano Wash. This section of the trail is west of Cienega Springs, between Tucson and Benson, Arizona.
 courtesy Rose Ann Tompkins

Mapping News from Southern Arizona

Since the last *Desert Tracks* was published, there have been a number of short outings by Southern Trails Chapter members who live in Arizona.

Dan Talbot led several of us to a location near Picacho Peak to look at a possible site of Butterfield's Picacho Peak Stage Station.

Ken and Pat White have been making trips to work the Butterfield Trail west of the Cienega Creek Stage Station. Last summer Pat contacted J.J. Lamb, executive director of the Vail Preservation Society. J.J. offered to lead several of us to where sections of the Butterfield Trail ran through the Cienega Creek Natural Preserve. We spent one day with J.J. and Duane Durham, a local rancher. J.J. showed us where a large number of Chinese workers were stationed while working on the railroad. Duane pointed out the route of a mid-1870s stage road that passed through his property. The next day we mapped two sections of the Southern Emigrant Trail/Butterfield Trail located west of the Cienega Creek Stage Station.

On a visit to Fort Bowie, Larry Ludwig – the Site Historian at the fort – showed several of us a report resulting from a recent ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey that was conducted within the boundaries of the Fort Bowie National Historic Site. The survey covered an area where a wagon train massacre had occurred. The 1861 massacre was one of the events associated with the Bascom affair. Apaches stopped the train, killed most of the drivers and burned the wagons. The GPR report showed a possible location of one of the wagons and a possible human burial.

Mike Volberg, Greg McEachron, Rose Ann Tompkins, and Tracy DeVault are continuing to work the Butterfield Trail between Apache Pass and Ewell's Station. Joe Austin, a local rancher, gave them permission to look for trail on his ranch. On this trip they found and mapped a small section of trail. Also, in this same area, Mike and Tracy are trying to find the spot on the old county road where Roscoe and Margaret Conkling took a photo of Apache Pass. We have made three attempts to locate the exact spot, but it remains elusive.

In December, Ron Smith and Norm Wisner took a couple of us on a half-day trip to visit Butterfield station sites north of Tucson.

Finally, in conjunction with a research visit to the Arizona Historical Society, Mike and Tracy did some additional work on the trail west of Cienega Springs Stage Station. They found traces of the trail and artifacts.

There is still much more work to be done on each of these projects. As with many locations especially those in areas near cities, development is a concern for mapping old trails. The area of Vail, Arizona, just east of Tucson, is one of those areas. A portion of the trail has been obliterated by a subdivision there.

Tracy DeVault and Rose Ann Tompkins



Duane Durham (owner of the Agua Verde Ranch located east of Vail) shows Mike Volberg, Rose Ann Tompkins, Pat White, Ken White, and Greg McEachron where the route of the National Mail & Transportation Company (a mid-1870s stage line) passed through his ranch. This photo was taken on the trip the Whites led to map the Butterfield Trail west of the Cienega Springs Stage Station.

photo by Tracy DeVault

Bloody Cooke's Canyon

by Daniel D. Aranda

Perhaps the bloodiest pass in the West is located on the Southern Overland Trail in southwestern New Mexico. Cooke's Canyon (often spelled "Cook's") runs for approximately three miles through the southern foothills of the Cooke's Mountain Range. At first glance it does not appear imposing. It lacks a narrow defile with high, steep walls that Apaches could use to lob arrows and rocks onto unsuspecting emigrants. A second and closer look will assure the passerby, however, that this could be a very dangerous passage, indeed.

Cooke's Mountain Range, Cooke's Canyon, Cooke's Peak, and Cooke's Spring were named for Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke who camped at what is today known as Cooke's Spring on November 16, 1846. In charge of the Mormon Battalion, Colonel Cooke had been tasked with finding a wagon road west during the war with Mexico. The group left Santa Fe in October 1846, marched down the Rio Grande, veered to the southwest, and then headed west. They reached San Diego, California on January 29, 1847.



Philip St. George Cooke as a young man.
image in the public domain

The six-by-twenty mile Cooke's Mountain Range is located northeast of Deming, New Mexico, just south of the Black Range. An imposing 8,404 feet, Cooke's Peak was a known landmark for prehistoric Indians of the area for thousands of years. Later, Apaches referred to it as "Dziltanatal" – "Mountain Holds Its Head Up Proudly" or "The Proud Mountain That Sits Alone." Others say that it was also called "White Ringed Mountain."

Spanish cartographer, Bernardo Miera y Pacheco labeled it as "Cerro de los Remedios" in 1758.¹ In 1780, Jose Antonio Vildosola called it "Picacho de las Mimbres" or



Cooke's Spring.
image in the public domain

just plain "Picacho," referring to its pointed peak and the willows in the nearby mountains. The Americans first called it "Mount Republic," but almost immediately changed the name to "Cooke's Peak" in honor of the lieutenant colonel. Other names used over the years were "Old Baldy" and "Matterhorn of the West." It has been said that Lieutenant William H. Emory called it "The Dome," but the lieutenant was actually referring to another point nearby.

Cooke's Spring was also referred to by several names over the years. The original spring, which was located about 50 to 100 yards south of the present site, had been used for thousands of years. There are grinding holes nearby that early Indians used. The spring was a marshy hole when Philip St. George Cooke camped there in 1846. A forty-niner described it as a swampy hole with many wells of good water in the neighborhood while others called it a mud hole. On April 30, 1851, John Bartlett, the boundary commissioner, described it as a brackish spring that formed a pool, some 50 feet across, surrounded by rushes.

Knowing that good water was essential for passing emigrants, the government contracted James Leach in 1859 to improve the road and water sources on the Southern Overland Route. He constructed two 50 by 10 foot tanks, 5 feet deep, to receive the surplus drainage. No doubt other improvements were made later after Fort Cummings was established in October 1863.

It has been claimed that approximately 400 people died in Cooke's Canyon and its vicinity. This may seem high,

but perhaps the number may not be inflated as much as might be suspected. I have found incidents alluding to about half of that amount, equally divided among Indians and emigrants. Although some accounts were exaggerated or perhaps fabricated, I suspect that many others went unreported.

In what follows, I give a list of many events that occurred in Cooke's Canyon and its environs, with an emphasis on violent incidents.

Chronological listing of incidents in Cooke's Pass

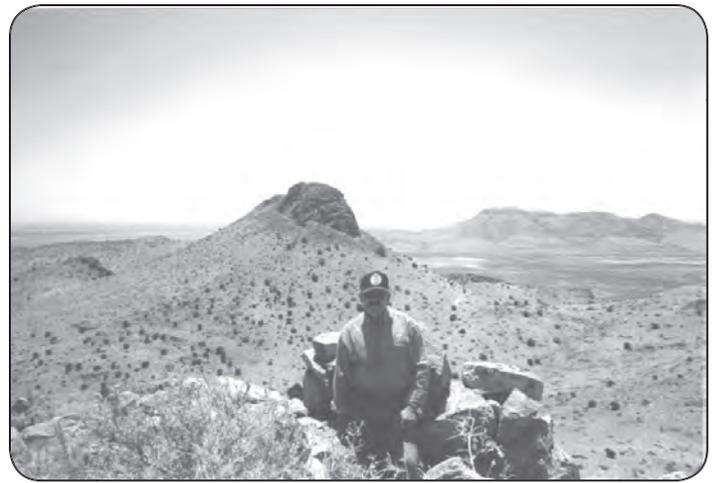
[Note: Sources for each incident, which are given in parentheses at the end of the entry, refer to entries in the bibliography.]

November 18, 1780 – Captain Don Francisco Martinez, with his column from Chihuahua, camped at San Miguel (Cooke's Spring).² This was part of a three-pronged exploration and campaign against the Apaches that was to converge at the spring. Another column under Jose Antonio Vildosola was coming from Sonora, and the third, under Juan Bautista de Anza, was coming from Santa Fe. When a lone mounted Indian was seen nearby, Martinez sent a detachment after him. Corporal Felipe Lopez, from Carrizal, killed the hapless Apache and presented the ears to his commander for which he was awarded the victim's horse and lance.³ (Barnaby)

Sometime in 1775 – Five years later, Don Francisco Martinez led another expedition against the Apaches in the Florida Mountains, Cooke's Peak, and Mimbres Mountains, but the results are unknown. (Barnaby)

Nov. 16, 1846 – On this cold and windy day, the Mormon Battalion camped at Cooke's Spring. They spent the next day at nearby Frying Pan Spring. (Couchman)

November 21, 1849 – On a cold, blustering night, forty-niner John Chaffin died of an unknown illness. He had been sick since his party left Socorro. He died unexpectedly west of Cooke's Spring and was buried just off the trail, where his rock marker still lies. He left a wife and four children in Platte County, Missouri. (Couchman)



Dan Aranda in Cooke's Canyon.
photo by Frank Brito

January 1850 – John Cremony, who was scouting through Cooke's Canyon during John Bartlett's boundary reconnaissance, had a confrontation with the Apache chief Cuchillo Negro. The chief rode ahead of his men to inquire what Cremony was up to. Because he felt threatened, Cremony, in Spanish, ordered the chief to cease his advance. Noting that the Apaches were fanning out for advantage, Cremony assured the chief that if they planned treachery, their chief would be first to die. Cremony then explained that he was part of a group of soldiers passing through and that the others would be along shortly. The chief didn't believe him because no one had reported that soldiers were nearby. Cremony spent 10 to 15 of the tensest moments of his life sparring for an advantageous position while he awaited the survey crew. With a sigh of relief, Cremony watched as the Apaches left when the soldiers arrived. (Cremony)

April 30, 1851 – The U.S. Boundary Commission under Bartlett stopped again at Cooke's Spring. (Couchman)

January 1852 – Eight wagons in Constante's wagon train were abandoned after a night attack by the Apaches. Three horses and thirty-five cattle were captured at Cooke's Spring. (Matson)

July 4, 1853 – Mormons holding a dance at the spring invited passing soldiers to attend, but were declined. (Matson)

August 7, 1854 – Michael Erskine's cattle drive (which

included about 900 head) camped about a mile west of Cooke's Spring. (Erskine)

Mid 1850's or early 1860's (The date of this event is unknown.) – A hotel in La Mesilla rang a loud bell to announce when a stage was arriving. Another hotel owner purchased a Chinese gong to outdo his competitor. Perhaps stage guard C.W. Garner sympathized with the bell ringer, for he offered to purloin the gong and take it out of town. He was in Cooke's Canyon when Apaches threatened his stage. He quickly stripped down to his drawers, covered himself with flour, and advanced toward the Indians yelling and ringing his gong like a madman. The confounded Indians left. (Taylor)

November (?), 1856
– Apaches raided a government train under Lieutenant L. S. Baker at Cooke's Spring. (Kuhn)

Early February 1859
– Henry M. Lazelle and a company of Mounted Riflemen from Fort Bliss fought Apaches near Cooke's Spring. Three soldiers were killed and six wounded. Several Apaches were also killed. (Schroeder, Part 2)

The first several years in the 1860's proved to be very bloody. Much of the Apaches' anger was due to the Bascom Incident (1861), when several of Cochise's family were killed at Apache Pass in Arizona. The Apaches were also spurred on to violence by mining activity at nearby Pinos Altos.

February 9, 1860 – An eastbound stagecoach was attacked in Cooke's Canyon. Don Carlos Buell, Eugene Van Patten, and another man were wounded. An eastbound wagon train heard the shooting and came to their relief. (Hackler)

May 23, 1860 – Apaches raided two wagons at Cooke's

Spring. The cattle were captured and one civilian was wounded. (Kuhn)

December 4, 1860 – Apaches raided sheep herds at Mule Springs and Cooke's Spring. Six Mexicans were killed, one wounded, and four captured. (Kuhn)

February 16 (?), 1861 – A government train of 15 wagons under wagon master William D. Kirk that was en route from Fort Craig to Fort Buchanan was attacked at Cooke's Spring; 40 cattle were captured. (Kuhn)

May 1861 - Twelve men were killed near Cooke's Station. (This may have happened near Doubtful Canyon, but there are indications that it occurred near Cooke's Canyon.) (Court of Claims of the U.S. – Indian depredations, No. 3112)

June 3, 1861 – Gustave Elsberg and Jacob Amberg's train was attacked in Cooke's Canyon. Pelajio Perea and Rufino Arozato were killed and at least one other was wounded; 41 mules were captured. They were attacked again the next morning. (Sweeney 1991)

June 3, 1861 – A westbound wagon train was attacked by Apaches but was repelled at Cooke's Spring. Two men were reported killed. (Kuhn)

July 21-23, 1861 – Probably the best known event that happened in Cooke's Canyon was the killing of seven men in July 1861. This incident has since been called the Freeman Thomas Massacre. After a couple of days of heavy fighting, the following men were killed: Freeman Thomas, age 29, conductor; Emmett Mills, age 19, young brother of Anson Mills who later became a general; Joe Roescher, age 26, from Germany, the driver; Mathew Champion; Robert S. Avaline, allegedly a gambler; Jack Wilson, 29 years old; and John Portell, who was fleeing because of a shooting. The men, whose sympathies lay with



Massacre Peak.
photo by Dan Aranda

again the next morning. (Sweeney 1991)

the Union, left La Mesilla, New Mexico, on either the early morning or evening of July 20 to avoid being captured by Confederates who were moving into the area. The stage, probably a celerity wagon, belonged to the San Antonio-San Diego Line. According to stagehands at Cooke's Spring Station, Roescher decided to replace his span of mules because the ones pulling the wagon were in need of re-shoeing. This lost them some valuable time and night turned into day. Most westerners were aware that Apaches did not attack at night, and it was posited that they would have passed through the canyon safely were it not for this delay. Unfortunately, the Apaches under the combined leadership of Mangas Coloradas and Cochise attacked them after they entered the canyon. With their path blocked, the men made a difficult run up a hill before they could go no further. They unloaded what they could from the stage, turned the horses loose to stall the Indians and ran up the side of the mountain. The men piled rocks for protection and fought the Indians off for two days before they were all killed. Four of the men died in their little breastworks while two ran about 50 yards before they too were killed. John Wilson made it 150 yards before he was killed. He was found mutilated and with a dozen arrows in him. The other men were also found badly mutilated. Mangas Coloradas later said that the seven men fought valiantly and that if his Apaches were as brave as they had been, he could whip the world. Estimates of Indian casualties vary from 20 to 40. (Kuhn 1997)

August 6, 1861 – Soldiers from Fort Buchanan were heading for Mesilla. After they learned about Major Lynde's defeat at San Augustine Springs, they decided to abandon their trek and flee toward the north. They damaged their cannons and burned a stage, approximately three dozen wagons, and their supplies at Cooke's Spring. (Wilson)

On August 24, 1861 – Eugene Zimmer (some accounts say his name was Anton Brewer) and his helpers were driving cattle through Cooke's Canyon when they were attacked. Eight or nine Mexican herders were killed and their cattle stolen. Zimmer fled and tried to warn another party that was traveling east.⁴ (Couchman)

On August 25, 1861 – A wagon train of close to 50 people under Felix Grundy Ake and William Wardsworth was

attacked near the western entrance of Cooke's Canyon. Ake and company, including Moses Carson, an older half-brother of Kit Carson, had fled their homes in Arizona when the military posts were abandoned because of the Civil War. Their cattle were herded through the canyon first, and then the mounted men followed with the wagons after them. Just as the mounted men got to a point where the canyon narrowed, a man spotted the nude bodies of two of the Mexican herders killed from Zimmer's party. As soon as the news was relayed to those behind, about a half a dozen men, including a nephew of Sam Houston, decided to retreat out of the canyon, but since Indians hadn't been spotted, the rest of the party continued. Suddenly the Apaches opened up, killing James May and John St. Clair and several horses, thus blocking the trail. During this chaos, William Redding and several men attempted to divert the Apaches' attention while Jack Pennington tried to withdraw the wagons. Redding was soon wounded in the leg, but he continued toward the Indians and was eventually killed. This enabled the Apaches to capture the cattle and allowed the emigrants to corral the wagons for the fight that ensued. It was a hard fought contest that added more casualties on both sides. Jim Cotton accidentally shot himself when loading his rifle; his ramrod lodged itself in his leg. Nathaniel Sharp was shot in the neck and ear but pulled the shaft through and continued to fight. Four others were wounded, and William Wardsworth died of his wounds. Several Apaches were reported killed.⁵ (O'Neal, Kuhn, Sweeney 1994)

Late August 1861 – Five adults and two children were killed and mutilated in Cooke's Canyon. (Couchman)

September 26, 1861 – Apaches set an ambush in Cooke's Canyon for the Charles Hayden wagon train, but since it was heavily guarded by Mastin's Arizona Guards, the Indians called it off. (Sweeney 1991)

Early October 1861 – It was reported that 32 men from the Mesilla Valley, who were going to the aid of Pinos Altos, were bottled up in Cooke's Canyon. (Couchman)

December 17, 1862 – Sergeant George Hand and a detachment of soldiers rode through Cooke's Canyon and reported many bones, skulls, and graves of men, women, and children in the canyon. (Carmony)



Grave in Cooke's Canyon.
photo by Dan Aranda

February 16, 1863 – Express of Co. “G,” 1st Cavalry, California Volunteers was attacked at the western entrance of Cooke’s Canyon. Three mules or horses were taken and three Indians killed. (Kuhn)

March 1863 – Apaches attacked a wagon train in Cooke’s Canyon. Eight Mexicans were tortured to death and their families taken captive. (Couchman)

July 10, 1863 – Apaches attacked an eastbound wagon train under Sergeant E.V. Hoyt and a six-man detail in Cooke’s canyon. Four soldiers were wounded and nineteen mules were captured; three of the four wagons were abandoned. Indian casualties were reported as four dead and several wounded. (Michno)

July 24, 1863 – Very early in the morning, a military wagon outfit under Lieutenant John Lambert and detachments of Co. “F” and “H” of the 5th Infantry, California Volunteers, was attacked at Cooke’s Pass. Private Jonathan C. Queen was killed and Sergeant Hance (or Hantz) was wounded twice, once in the shoulder and once in the hand. Two wagons and a dozen mules were taken. Three Indians were reported killed. (Thompson)

October 2, 1863 – As a result of the many Indian attacks, Fort Cummings was established. It was a walled fort and it was condiered to be dangerous for soldiers to wander

beyond the walls unarmed.

September 1866 – Indians stole horses, mules, and other livestock at Fort Cummings. (Couchman)

November 1867 – Military courier Charles Young was killed in Cooke’s Canyon. (Couchman)

January 1868 – Apaches attacked a stagecoach in Cooke’s Canyon and made off with the horses. (Couchman)

January 22, 1868 – Apaches broke into the stage company corral, killed one mule and shot another with an arrow. (Couchman)

February 20, 1868 – Apaches attacked an emigrant train near the east entrance of Cooke’s Canyon. Lieutenant Leggett and 20 men went to the rescue. (Couchman)

November 13, 1868 – Apaches killed a Mexican in Cooke’s Canyon. (Kuhn)

February 2, 1869 – A civilian mail rider was wounded in Cooke’s Canyon. (Kuhn)

February 20, 1869 – Apaches wounded a civilian mail rider in Cooke’s Canyon. (Kuhn)

February (?), 1873 – Four cattle were captured from a wagon that was encamped at the western entrance of Cooke’s Canyon.

January 12, 1876 – At two o’clock in the morning, John Chisum and his attorney were returning from Tucson when their stage was robbed by Joseph “Dutch Joe” Hubert and his gang. The outlaws took six silver ingots but overlooked a thousand dollars that Chisum had hidden in his boot. (Couchman)

May 9, 1876 – “Dutch Joe” and an accomplice again robbed another eastbound stage in Cooke’s Canyon. The robbery was not very lucrative. (Couchman)

Fall (?) 187 – Nine young and heavily armed Anglo “owl-hoots” stopped a stage near Fort Cummings but

finding nothing of value, let it continue on its way.

Spring 1878 – Bandits struck Warner’s sheep herd in Cooke’s Canyon. Warner and outlaw Tom Hill were killed and outlaw Jesse Evans was wounded. (Michno 2015)

May 19, 1878 – Bill Brazelton held up a stagecoach near Cooke’s Canyon. (O’Dell)

Early 1880 – Lieutenant Thomas Cruse passed through Cooke’s Canyon and was appalled at all of the animal bones, wagon wheels, and other debris. (Cruse)

May 4, 1880 – Francisco Montoya’s train (and possibly Evangelisto Chavez’s) was attacked in Cooke’s Canyon. Montoya was wounded and one of his freighters was killed. Over 100 oxen and mules were taken by the Apaches. (Kuhn)

Late May 1880 (?) – Major Morrow attacked one of Victorio’s bands near Cooke’s Canyon, killing two, wounding three, and capturing their stock. (Kuhn)

May 28, 1880 – Five horses belonging to Post Sutler Samuel J. Lyons were captured near Fort Cummings. (Couchman)

May 29, 1880 – One Mexican was killed when Apaches attacked a wagon train near Cooke’s Spring within view of Fort Cummings. (Kuhn)

May 29, 1880 – Apaches killed E. Hildebrand, Samuel J. Lyons, Mr. Carson, George Campbell, and Mr. Vigil at the west entrance to Cooke’s Canyon. Two wagons, one buggy, and seven horses were taken. One Apache was killed. (*Daily Southwest*, June 1, 1880)

June 5, 1880 – Apache scouts under Henry K. Parker attacked five Apaches on the west end of Cooke’s Canyon. Washington (son of Warm Springs Chief Victorio) and another Apache were killed and seven horses were captured. (Kuhn)

Sometime after December 15, 1880 – H.B. Ailman wrote that Indians captured a young stagecoach driver and two unlucky men in a passing wagon in Cooke’s Canyon. They

were apparently tortured to death. Ailman also reported that the fetid odor of decaying flesh of the unburied Indians, killed shortly after, permeated the air. (Ailman)

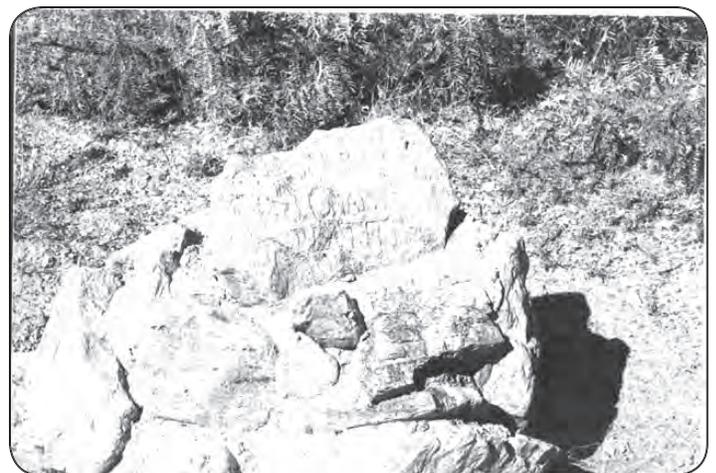
August 19, 1881 – Apache Chief Nana attacked S.P. Carpenter’s wood camp. Wood choppers Desiderio Hereida and Petronilo Chacon were killed and Manuel Chacon, age 12, and Juan Chacon, age 14, were captured near Cooke’s Canyon. Two others were reported missing.⁶ (Kuhn)

1885 – According to Louie Taren, his father and ten Mexicans were killed and three were wounded near Cooke’s Spring. (This is probably an error; it is more likely that the incident he described took place in October 1879 near Magdalena Gap, east of Cooke’s Canyon.) (Sharp)

1990’s – A man turned his Jeep over, was pinned in the wreckage, and died. Caretakers at Fort Cummings found him. (Interview with caretakers at Fort Cummings.)

The author is grateful to Emilio Tapia, Eric Fuller, George Hackler, Dr. Robert N. Watt, Jim Huff, Ed Sweeney, Santiago Brito, Frank Brito, Doris and Don Kendall (caretakers at Fort Cummings), Mary Kay Shannon, Juan Rojelio, and numerous others. I would appreciate information on any other violent incidents in Cooke’s Canyon.

Endnotes



Chaffin’s grave, at the entrance to Cooke’s Canyon.
photo by George Hackler

- 1 Miera y Pacheco may have made a map during an 1847 expedition that labeled the site. See Kessell, *Miera y Pacheco*.
2. It is possible that Montoya camped approximately two miles away at what is today known as Frying Pan Spring.
3. Couchman (20) implies that the incident happened at or near Cooke's Canyon, while Barnaby (221) states that Antonio Bonilla reported that it happened on the skirt of Las Mimbres.
4. This incident happened in Frying Pan Canyon, adjacent to Cooke's Canyon, but since the Southern Overland Trail traverses both, it is often reported as Cooke's Canyon.
- 5: I have used the spelling "Wardsworth" although various spellings are recorded. Also, the accounts of this event vary on dates, details, etc. This writer is in the process of gathering information for a more complete picture.
6. This incident has also been reported as happening on August 19, 1881, at Mule Springs, northeast of the Cooke's Canyon.

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West-Wide Energy Corridors Review

The Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Energy, and the U.S. Forest Service are conducting reviews of proposed corridors that will carry oil and gas pipelines as well as electrical transmission and distribution facilities in the western states. They are inviting the public to participate in these reviews, which provides an opportunity for OCTAns wishing to protect trail resources.

Public participation in the reviews for Region 1 (which includes California, Nevada, and the western section of Arizona) was accepted in September-October, 2016. The review for Region 2, which covers New Mexico, most of Arizona, and southern Colorado, will be of particular interest to Southern Trails Chapter members. Public input for the Region 2 review is currently scheduled to begin in March 2017.

The online center for public information for the West-Wide Energy Corridors Review is the website <http://corridoreis.anl.gov/>. The link "Invitation for Stakeholder Participation" contains general information, and the main page will direct the reader to current news about the reviews. For questions regarding corridors on lands administered by the Forest Service, contact Reggie Woodruff, FS Project Manager, at 202-205-1196 or rwoodruff@fs.fed.us. For more information on the reviews or questions regarding corridors on BLM-administered lands, contact Jim Gazewood, BLM Project Manager, at 801-539-4107 or jgazewoo@blm.gov.

BLM Seeks Public Input on Target Shooting in the Sonoran Desert National Monument

The Phoenix District Office of the Bureau of Land Management is seeking public input on recreational target shooting in the Sonoran Desert National Monument. A 90-day period for public comment will end on March 15, 2017. Information about the Resource Management Plan (RMP) and how to make input is available on the website <http://bit.ly/SDNMtargetshooting>.

Rose Ann Tompkins notes that the Southern Emigrant Trail, the Butterfield Trail, and the Mormon Battalion Trail all traverse the monument. "On four occasions," she writes, "I witnessed shooting on Arizona public lands and observed the debris left behind, from water bottles and food leftovers to used diapers, cartridge casings, and large objects full of bullet holes. On two occasions, once just west of Butterfield/Pima Pass, our group had to leave the area when bullets whizzed over our heads." She adds that she is not opposed to recreational target shooting, but she believes it should be restricted in all areas of the monument. She encourages STC members to become involved and make appropriate input to the BLM.

OCTA Southern Trails Chapter 2017 Spring Symposium

El Paso, Texas March 15 – 19, 2017

Country Inn & Suites, 99 Sunland Park (915-833-5588)

Tentative program

Wednesday, March 15

- 1:00 p.m. Chapter Officers Meeting
- 4:00 p.m. Registration
- 6:00 p.m. Open Bar and Dinner
Dinner Speaker: William Haenn, "Military Trail: San Antonio to Fort Davis."

Thursday, March 16

- 8:00 a.m. Registration
- 8:30 a.m. Chapter Business
- 10:15 a.m. Bus tour to Concordia Cemetery, Magoffin House, and Chamizal National Park.
- 2:00 p.m. David Miller, "Camels in the Southwest."
- 2:45 p.m. Jane Gray, "Romance on the Santa Fe Trail."
- 3:15 p.m. Harry Hewitt, "Boundary Commission Negotiations."
- 4:15 p.m. Tour of La Plaza de Mesilla.
- 6:30 p.m. Dinner at the Cottonwood Ranch (Mesquite, New Mexico).

Friday, March 17

- 8:30 a.m. Larry Francel, "Role of Fort Davis in Victorio Campaign."
- 9:45 a.m. Tour of Hueco Tanks.
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch at Butterfield Trail Golf Course Restaurant.
- 2:25 p.m. Patricia Kidney, "Rails – El Paso to Douglas."
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner with members of El Paso/Las Cruces Westerners Corral #26.
Dinner Speaker: Glen Ely, "The Butterfield Stage: Fort Davis to El Paso."

Saturday March 18

- 9:00 a.m. Tour of the Mission Trail to San Elizario.

March 19-20

Optional Tour of Fort Davis Area. (Those interested must register for this tour by January 15.)

For more information, contact Cecilia Bell - ceciliajb@aol.com or call 575-956-3294 or 575-388-4477.

