

Desert Tracks

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

June 2010



Billy in Arizona, by Bonny Holder

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

Past issues can be found at
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Oregon-California
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Elko, Nevada

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Santa Fe
Trail Association
Rendevous 2010
September 16-18
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The Pima Villages: Oasis at a Cultural Crossroads: 1690 to 1860

by Jim Turner

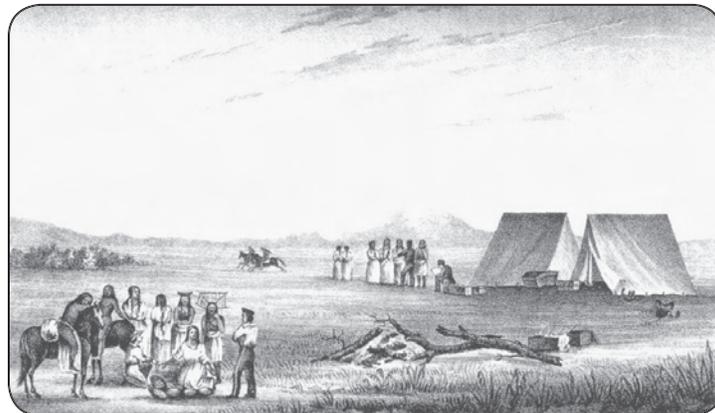
[*Editors' Note:* Jim Turner recently retired from the Arizona Historical Society and is now a freelance writer, editor, teacher, and lecturer. He holds a master's degree in U.S. history and has taught Arizona history at the University of Arizona and at Pima Community College. He is co-author of the 4th grade textbook *The Arizona Story*, and his articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines throughout the state, including *The Journal of Arizona History* and *Arizona Highways*. His pictorial history book, *Celebrate Arizona*, will be released by Gibbs Smith Publishers in December 2011. His website URL is www.jimturnerhistorian.org.]

After trudging miles across desolate Apache territory, thousands of starving, thirsty American Forty-Niners, half-crazed from heat stroke, stumbled into the Pima and Maricopa Indian villages. On the banks of the Gila River near present-day Phoenix, the villages formed an oasis between Tucson and the junction of the Gila and the Colorado Rivers. The weary travelers marveled at luxuriant fields of wheat, melons, and corn. To their astonishment, they were cheerfully welcomed by the native Indians. When Kit Carson, military scout for General Stephen Watts Kearny, arrived at the villages two years before the California Gold Rush, he asked the Indians how much their wheat cost. They replied, "Bread is to eat, not to sell; take what you want."¹

Islands in a desert sea, the Pima villages provided refuge for travelers of many cultures. From the late 17th century through the 19th century, Spanish missionaries, Mexican troops, mountain men, American soldiers during the Mexican and Civil

Wars, Forty-Niners, and eventually American settlers all availed themselves of the plentiful crops and hospitality. Although they outnumbered their visitors, the Indians preferred farming and trading to fighting, and appreciated the cloth, tools, and livestock they received in exchange for their products. Because of the Pimas' successful raids against the Apaches, travelers knew that they would be relatively safe from Apache depredations anywhere within two days ride of the Pima villages. Common economic and strategic interests allowed the Pimas, Maricopas, and Americans to enjoy good relations for more than 20 years.²

Long before the arrival of the Spaniards in Arizona, the Pimas farmed the land and developed far-ranging bartering networks. The Pimas, also called the "Gileños" (people of the Gila) by the Spaniards,



Pima Villages in 1846.
From Emory's *Report of a Military Reconnaissance*

lived in villages of 50 to 100 people in a 100-mile stretch along the river. In 1699, Captain Juan Mateo Manje, a Spanish officer accompanying Jesuit missionary Father Eusebio Kino, estimated that approximately 750 Indians raised small crops of corn, melons, and beans in the rich silt deposited by the flooding Gila River. Contact with the Spanish altered the Indians' agricultural

practices, starting in the 1690s when Father Kino brought wheat to the Pimas. When Juan Bautista de Anza and Father Garcés came to the villages in 1774, the two men noted the wheat fields that had been growing for 80 years by that time. Anza described wheat fields that were so large that a person standing in the middle of them could not see the ends; their width embraced the whole spread of the valley.³

In the early 1800s, Yuma and Mohave Indians began to pressure the people who were eventually known as Maricopas off land along the Colorado River. For protection, the Maricopas allied with the Pimas and

moved to the western edge of their villages. The Pimas welcomed them with the stipulation that they take up more farming, as long-range hunting would antagonize the Apaches.

Attacks by the Apaches on Hispanic settlements in southern Arizona started in the early 1700s. The Sobaipuri and the Tohono O'odham, both relatives of the Pimas, were also subject to these raids. These attacks were part of the motivation for establishing presidios at Tubac (1752) and Tucson (1776). In response to Apache attacks, the Pimas formed alliances with the Tohono O'odham. However, the Spaniards and Mexicans would not supply weapons to the Pimas, despite the fact that the Pimas were upset that Apaches were obtaining weapons by raiding.

As their villages grew larger, the Gila River tribes used the wheat introduced by the Spaniards to grow a winter crop and increase the food supply for their populations.⁴ The practice of such large-scale agriculture led to an increase in these tribes' material wealth, making them a target for increased Apache raids. In self-defense, the Gileños consolidated into larger villages and reduced the number of settlements along the river. This process accelerated in the late 1840s when, as discussed below, the Pimas and Maricopas began to grow more crops to trade for the manufactured goods and livestock brought by the American soldiers and Forty-Niners who were passing through. The territory occupied by the Pimas and Maricopas, which covered 115 miles along the river in 1700, shrank to 35 miles along the river by 1850.

Tucson was the northernmost frontier under Spain and later Mexico, and there was never enough money or manpower to start a mission at the Pima villages, as Kino had recommended. Following Mexican independence in 1821, there was talk about forming a colony along the Gila, but the new government could not afford it. Nor could they afford to maintain roads through the area. The Spanish had stopped using the inland route to California after the Yuma Massacre in 1781. Jose Romero, Mexican commandant at Tucson,

tried to re-open the route through the Pima villages in 1828, but an uprising by Indians farther south prevented this from happening.

Small numbers of American mountain men went through the villages in the 1820s and 1830s. Often illiterate and in the country illegally, the mountain men did not broadcast their travels. From diaries, however, we know that Sylvester and James Ohio Pattie, Kit Carson, and Paulino Weaver trapped beaver on the Gila from 1825 to 1833. In 1832, Job Dye "reached the Pimos (sic) village, where we were received with friendship and hospitality, and entertained during our stay."⁵

Until the outbreak of the Mexican-American War in 1846, few Americans other than mountain men found their way to the villages along the Gila. After a surprisingly rapid conquest of New Mexico, however, U.S. troops sought a path through Arizona in order to reach the California battlefields. On November 11, 1846, "The Army of the West" – about 120 men commanded by General Stephen Watts Kearny – reached the Gila River villages. This was more Americans than the Indians had ever seen at one time – in 1846, the Mexican garrison at Tucson quartered no more than 80 soldiers. The new arrivals also seemed much wealthier than the Mexicans. The Americans' prosperity and numbers probably contributed to the Indians' willingness to assist them.⁶ Seeing the riches carried by the military and hearing news that the Americans wanted to trade for provisions, the Pimas and Maricopas rushed out to meet them, briskly walking the nine miles from the villages to Kearny's troops in three hours, arriving out of breath, loaded down with corn, beans, honey, and watermelons.

Kearny's expedition included scientific as well as military personnel. Topographical engineer Lieutenant William H. Emory studied the topography, anthropology, plant, and animal life of the Gila Valley. He drew sketches, took astronomical readings, and kept a detailed account of the journey. His report was published by the U.S. Congress as both a House Executive Document and a Senate

Document; a private printing later served as a guide book for many of the Forty-Niners. Without Emory's optimistic report, very few gold seekers would have traveled to California via Arizona's southern route. Emory described the Pimas and Maricopas as "frank, unsuspecting and honest," which he found "in strange contrast with that of the suspicious Apache."⁷

Although prone to hasty generalizations, the soldiers learned to make rapid decisions as they traveled across dangerous territory. Lives often depended on quick appraisals of everyone they met on the trail, and the opportunity for the exchange of goods made trust and honesty important issues for all concerned. Concerning the Pimas, Dr. John S. Griffin noted that "many of them speak Spanish, and altogether [sic], I think they live better and have more than the people of New Mexico – they are extremely honest – last night, we left every thing we had laying about as usual, nothing was missing."⁸ The doctor reported that the Pimas and Maricopas favored white beads and red cloth in exchange for their produce. Captain A. R. Johnston agreed that the Pimas preferred to trade for white beads and "knew the value of money."⁹

Each side in the exchanges recognized the importance of truth in successful dealings, and the Indians sought to convey their sincerity to the Americans. In his report, Captain Johnston told of a visit by the Maricopa chiefs to General Kearny. He quoted one of them as saying, "You have seen our people. They do not steal. They are perhaps better than some others you have seen. All of our people have sold you provisions. It is good to do so when people have commodities to exchange. If you had come here hungry and poor, it would have afforded us pleasure to give you all you wanted without compensation. Our people desire to be friendly with the Americans."¹⁰

After resting themselves and their livestock for five days, Kearny's dragoons moved on to California. The orderly expedition required little assistance, and they acquired only a few provisions from the Pimas and Maricopas. On the other hand, Colonel Philip St. George Cooke's Mormon Battalion of about 340 men arrived at the Pima villages about six weeks later

in desperate need of help. Blazing the first wagon trail through Arizona, the Mormon Battalion chose a less mountainous, southerly route to the Gila River. This took them through the grueling 90-mile stretch of desert between Tucson and the Pima villages. On December 18, 1846, Henry Bigler reported empty canteens and weather as hot as June. Another soldier, Henry Standage, "passed by many lying on the road begging for water." According to Colonel Cooke, the battalion had by that time marched 26 hours of the last 36, often traveling at night to avoid the heat. They trudged along almost barefoot because of the ravages of desert heat and rugged terrain on their boots and shoes.

In such a bedraggled condition, the scene which the Mormon Battalion suddenly encountered must have seemed like a mirage. Miles before they reached the villages, Pima and Maricopa women and children came to meet them. Standage said, "These Indians appear glad to see us, many of them running and taking us by the hand."¹¹ The exchange of produce for goods began at once, but Colonel Cooke disliked the high rate of exchange and prohibited individuals from



Pima chief Antonio.
From Emory's *Report of a Military Reconnaissance*

trading for corn or wheat until he issued further orders. Nevertheless, bounty flowed and the disheveled battalion feasted on abundant watermelons, musk melons, and pumpkins, harvested in the summer and stored in dirt cellars to provide a year-round supply. The Mormons rested at the Pima villages and ate watermelon with their feast on Christmas Day. Much impressed with the hospitality and climate, Colonel Cooke suggested to the Mormon leaders that they might consider settling there later, an idea which he said was favorably received by the Indians.¹²

Trust and economics figured in the combined chiefs' decision to remain neutral in the difficulties between the Mexicans and Americans. During their stay at the Pima villages, Kearny's Army of the West left ten trail-weary mules to be refreshed and two bales of trade goods to be turned over later to Cooke. Dr. Griffin reported that they waited with interest to see if the Indians' honesty survived the test.¹³ Pima Chief Antonio Azul told Colonel Cooke that after General Kearny's troops left, Captain Antonio Comadurán, Mexican *comandante* of the presidio of Tucson, demanded that the Pimas turn over the mules and goods left in their care. Azul refused, declaring that he would resist the Mexicans with force. As the Pimas and Maricopas numbered more than 400 warriors and the Mexican fighting force at Tucson was less than 100 men, no one pressed the matter. According to Cooke, Azul said the Mexicans wanted him to join the fight against the Americans and promised him the spoils. The chief refused, saying, "They had never shed the blood of a white man and for that reason he was not afraid of the coming army and did not believe we would hurt them and had no objection to our passing through their towns."¹⁴

In 1846, Kearny and Cooke purchased an estimated 2,500 pounds of foodstuffs (corn meal, flour, and shelled corn). This probably did not include the entire surplus the Pimas and Maricopas had, but Kearny's well-supplied troops demanded little, and Cooke feared carrying too much freight across the desert and breaking down the wagons.

On October 30, 1848, the last troops passed through the Pima villages – a battalion of dragoons under

the command of Major Lawrence P. Graham, en route from Monterrey, Mexico, to California. One of his officers, Lieutenant Cave J. Coutts, wrote, "As we came into the village yesterday, the bugler played a march, which highly delighted them. The Chief asked them to do so again and he would give them two watermelons, which are here in greater abundance than I ever saw anywhere."¹⁵ According to Coutts, the chief [probably Culo Azul, Antonio Azul's father] assured him of his people's good will toward the whites. The chief exhibited what he called "passports," or letters of good conduct, from General Kearny and others. Many diarists of this era mentioned these passports. The Pimas and Maricopas took good care of these documents, presented them to Americans passing through their villages, and asked them to provide them with similar documents if their actions warranted them. They used the documents to assure the Americans of their peaceful intent and fairness in bartering, indicating their interest in continuing and increasing the exchange of goods.

Signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, ended the war, and the Gila River became the new boundary between the United States and Mexico. The Pima villages then rested on Mexico's northernmost frontier.¹⁶ The Mexican government often considered cultivating the allegiance of the Gila River Indians but were always preoccupied with more pressing concerns. In 1849, the Mexican government's Department of Colonization and Industry directed Sonoran Governor José Aguilar to report on the Gila River area. He said that all vacant lands in the region suffered from "barbarian" attacks by a "ferocious nation" [Apaches], but noted also that these Indians were in turn subject to aggression by the Gileños. Placing their villages close together "almost in military fashion" to strengthen their defenses, the villagers communicated by standing on their rooftops and shouting from one village to another. In this way, seven villages operated as one. In addition to the Mexicans' need for supplies and defense against the Apaches, Aguilar stressed the political importance of creating colonies near the Pima villages. He believed that by stationing two or three missionaries among them, "this tribe



Pima Indians.

From Emory's *Report of a Military Reconnaissance*

can be considered entirely civilized in a very short time and can serve as an efficient bulwark against encroachment and settlement from the other side of the Gila."¹⁷ Lacking funds, Mexican officials took no action in the matter until 1853, when Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna regained the presidency of Mexico. In need of money and fearful of recent filibustering attempts to capture portions of Mexico, Santa Anna signed the Gadsden Purchase Treaty on May 31, 1854, ceding the land south of the Gila River to the United States.

The discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848 focused attention on the Pima villages once again. By the summer of 1849, the Pimas and Maricopas encountered the largest number of emigrants yet, the fortune hunters of the California Gold Rush of 1849. Approximately 9,000 Forty-Niners reached the gold

fields by way of southern trails through Arizona. Most of these travelers came ill prepared for the long, hazardous trip. Many expected to live off the land by killing game along the route, but rabbits were their only targets on the desert stretches between Tucson and the Pima settlements. As a result, hundreds of travelers faced starvation by the time they arrived at the Pima and Maricopa villages. Weary, destitute emigrants were the rule rather than the exception. In May 1849, John E. Durivage, correspondent for the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, described his journey from Tucson to the villages. Even though traveling at night to avoid the heat, "clouds of dust would arise as we moved along, producing a thirst most difficult to allay. . . our canteens had been drained long before midnight, our thirst was intense, and the Gila was still leagues upon leagues distant. . . I would have cheerfully given a doubloon for a glass of water."¹⁸ The next day, Durivage fell to the ground, knocked down by a "coup de soleil" [sunstroke]. Others in his party returned from the Pima villages to rescue him. Travelers reaching Tucson on their way to California heard dreadful tales about the route ahead. People and animals lay dead for lack of food and water, littering the roadway, and many Americans were stranded, unable to proceed for lack of supplies.

By the time the Forty-Niners reached the Gila villages, there was plenty of surplus for the thousands of emigrants who passed through. Because of their experience with the Spaniards and Mexicans, the Indians looked forward to exchanging their produce for cloth, beads, metal tools, and livestock.

Although the exchange of goods was the main reason for Indian hospitality, tribal customs may also have accounted for their willingness to supply goods even without compensation.¹⁹ In 1900, anthropologist Frank Russell interviewed several Pima calendar stick holders, members of the tribe chosen to memorize historical events signified by notches and symbols on a stick. The Pimas also told Russell about their "Name Song" tradition, a practice which combined organized charity with a festival. When one village lacked food, its people visited another village with plentiful crops and shared their harvest. The visitors

camped outside the village and in the evening came in to learn the names of the villagers. They arranged these names into a song in which each visitor assumed the name of a village resident as an act of fellowship. As singers called out names during the song, the wife or daughter of the person named ran away with some light object and the wife or daughter of the person assuming that name pursued the woman to take it away from her. Other women could help in the capture. The named person led her captors to “the value of her husband’s name” – goods such as corn, wheat and beans, which she presented to the visitors. In this way, visitors were rewarded just for singing. However, the gift-givers expected the visit to be returned by the other village within a reasonable time, usually within the same year. The Pimas allowed their relatives, the Tohono O’Odham, to continue participating in the ceremony even though the latter group could seldom afford to repay the Pimas. This Pima tradition probably contributed to their willingness to assist other travelers who had no present means of repayment. However, the Pimas undoubtedly would have felt cheated when Americans promised reimbursement year after year but never produced it.²⁰

It is interesting to note that the calendar stick annals, which dated back to the meteor shower of November 13, 1833, made almost no mention of the large number of American emigrants who passed through the area. Frank Russell said, “It must also be borne in mind that the relative importance of an event differs accordingly as it is viewed by Caucasian eyes or by those of the American Indian.” By the mid-1850s, accounts of Pimas and Maricopas joining white soldiers in campaigns against the Apaches or white men accompanying Pima raids were noted on the notched sticks. Civil War actions, such as trader Ammi White’s capture by the “soldiers from the east” [Confederates] and the battle between the soldiers from the west [Union troops of the California Column] and those from the east at Picacho Pass were also recounted.²¹

While customs such as the Name Song ceremony may have had some affect on the Pimas’ and

Maricopas’ charity, their primary motivation for increasing agricultural production was to allow them to exchange more goods. Early diaries note that the Indians preferred barter to money, and several travelers commented on the Indians’ bargaining abilities. With the overwhelming influx of needy Forty-Niners literally giving the shirts off their backs for food, the Pimas and Maricopas proved that they knew that bread was not just for eating, as they had told Kit Carson. Several incidents indicated that the Indians wanted to increase the trade market. For instance, one Pima chief offered to furnish a guard of 50 warriors to take the Americans prospecting two days’ journey north from the Gila. Benjamin Harris said the chief wanted to “introduce among his people trade, agricultural implements and methods from the United States.”²²

The amount of respect that the Pimas and Maricopas garnered from Spanish missionaries, Mexican soldiers, and American soldiers declined rapidly with the onslaught of large numbers of emigrants of all walks of life, acting without the stabilizing influence of disciplined military or religious leaders. Although the Pimas and Maricopas continued to amass passports attesting to their honesty, reports to the contrary appeared with greater frequency. By the fall of 1849, the gold seekers began reporting discrepancies. The number of Forty-Niners who could not pay for food given to them or the amount of time and effort the Pimas and Maricopas gave away without compensation may have accounted for the increase in petty thefts; the way the newer emigrants treated the Indians may have influenced their actions as well. H.M.T. Powell said, “I am rather disposed to think that if Captain White had made the old Chief some presents and paid his compliments to him in a proper manner it [thievery] would not have happened.”²³ In one telling episode, Forty-Niner Alonzo P. Aldrich traded away a worn-out mule, which the Indian later wanted to trade back. Aldrich reported: “I took out my revolvers and made him understand that if he did not leave it alone, I should give him six bullets for his pains.”²⁴ The Indian returned with a chief, who told Aldrich he would rather the white man take the mule and the pony

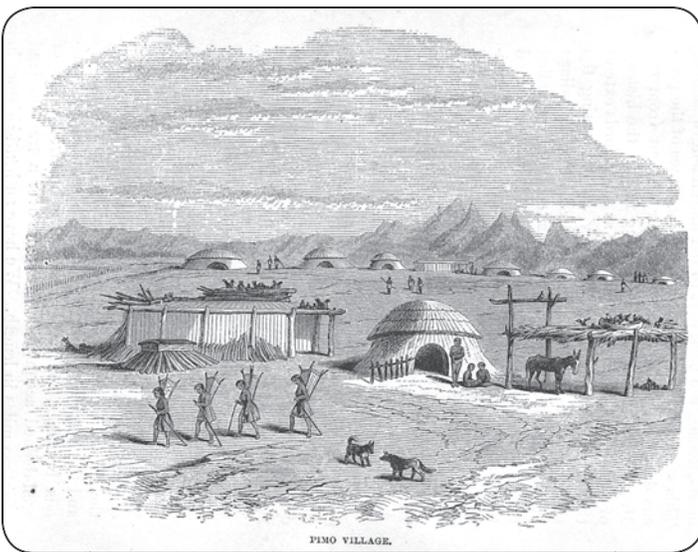
rather than risk the life of one of his people. Aldrich threw an extra shirt into the bargain, and everyone walked away peacefully.

Tension and injuries began to mount. More and more stories appeared of Indian dissatisfaction with exchanges of goods and accusations of thievery increased on both sides. The Pimas served as guides, provided the Americans with wood and water, and brought them a great deal of produce – corn, melons, and vegetables – but the Americans gave them very little in return. Although the Indians saw that the whites had ample supplies of tools and animals, the emigrants told the Indians they were very poor and had neither clothes nor goods with which to reward the Pimas' kindness.²⁵ To make matters worse, the emigrants often jettisoned many of their goods on the harsh desert route between the Pima villages and Yuma. Not being able to obtain the items they desired from the whites by trade, the Pimas probably took to stealing out of frustration.

Another trend leading to discontent concerned the promises, made by military and other government officials, that guns, tools and other merchandise would be provided to the Indians and that the Pimas' right to their traditional lands would be respected. Soldiers and Indian agents informed federal government officials of the services that the Indians

offered the emigrants and cautioned them about what might happen if they ignored Pima and Maricopa land and water rights and the promises made to them. Lieutenant Emory advised the U.S. Congress that the Indians undoubtedly had a just claim to the land along the Gila River and warned of the consequences of a war on the frontier.²⁶

These problems came to the fore in the late 1850s with the establishment of stage stations, trading posts, and permanent American settlements. In February of 1858, John Walker, first Indian agent appointed for the Indians of the Gadsden Purchase territory, visited the Pima villages. He told the Indians that he would write the Indian department and ask for instructions regarding their requests for hoes, plows, spades, shovels, axes, and other manufactured goods. Special Indian Agent Goddard Bailey, deriving his information from the reports of Captain J. H. Davidson and Lieutenant A. B. Chapman, wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "the Indians were rejoiced; they saw the fulfillment near at hand of all the long-made promises. They waited month after month, but the goods and farming utensils, which were to have been sent immediately from Santa Fe, did not come. They became disheartened and disgusted."²⁷ Six months later, U.S. Army troops on their way from Fort Buchanan to Fort Yuma stopped at the Pima villages. While there, elderly Maricopa Chief Juan José visited the tent of Lieutenant Chapman, whom he recognized as having accompanied Agent Walker when he made the unfulfilled promises. After some conversation, the chief said that he wanted to purchase some spades and axes from the Lieutenant because his people needed them. The chief was not asking for rewards for past services, he was adopting American trading methods. He offered cash and increased the price when the initial offer was refused. Juan José took out a handful of gold and offered to pay three dollars apiece for the tools. When Lieutenant Chapman explained that he could not sell government property, the chief offered five dollars apiece for the equipment. The lieutenant repeated that he had no authority to part with them. "Assuming an air of dignity, the old chief waved his hand and said sternly:



Pimo Village.

From J. Ross Browne's *Adventures in Apache Country*

‘Sir, I wish to hear no more of this; I heard enough. I believe your people are a nation of liars, and you are a liar individually. You came with your agent and heard what he said; you sanctioned it. You are an officer, and you know he lied to my people. I trust you no more.’”²⁸ Agent Bailey said the account of this incident was verified by Captain Davidson. Added to the long list of broken promises since 1694 and because the supplies obviously appeared to be surplus, relations between Gileños and whites were bound to be affected from then on.

In 1858, the Butterfield Overland Company contracted with the Gila Pimas to supply wheat to feed the company’s livestock. As in many other parts of the country, once the fields began to produce significant amounts of surplus, American traders soon arrived to share in the profits. The Overland Mail expected to control grain purchases exclusively. In 1858 they hired Silas St. John to encourage the Pima and Maricopa farmers to sell the Overland Mail all the grain needed to feed the company’s horses. Instead, St. John persuaded the Office of Indian Affairs to appoint him as special agent to represent the government in dealings with the Indians. St. John soon found himself in conflict between the interests of the stage company and his duties as a government Indian agent. Before long, the Overland Mail Company let him go.

In 1859, Agent Walker called the chiefs together in the residence of Silas St. John and told them they would soon be given presents. Antonio Azul, the principal chief of the Pimas, replied that he had frequently heard that story before and that he and his people were sick of promises made by every white man, and he didn’t believe a word of it. To demonstrate their sincerity, Walker and St. John distributed plows, hoes, spades, and other farm implements. Although the Pimas and Maricopas requested guns, they received none, ostensibly because of the problem of shipping heavy items across the desert. In the past, the Pimas and Maricopas and the Apaches met on equal ground, but bows, arrows, and war clubs offered little defense against the Apaches’ increasing supply of guns.²⁹

Due to increasing commercialization, Indian agricultural production skyrocketed and the Gila villagers briefly reaped the benefits. Surplus wheat production by the Pimas, and to a lesser extent their allies the Maricopas, increased exponentially in only two decades. The long-overdue endowment of plows, shovels, harnesses for horses and other agricultural implements facilitated the Pimas’ and Maricopas’ surplus farming. In addition, their southern neighbors, the Tohono O’odham, helped with harvesting on a larger scale. The Indians may have spent less time with other activities such as basketry and weaving as their agricultural labors increased. By 1867, cotton production decreased significantly also. Railroad surveyor William Bell said the Pimas formerly cultivated cotton, but found it easier to buy their cloth goods rather than weave them.³⁰

Ironically, as the scale of the Pimas’ agriculture increased, overall relations between whites and Indians deteriorated. In spite of glowing reports of increased wheat production, the ability of the Pimas and Maricopas to clothe their families, and predictions of a “prosperous, flattering” future, knowledgeable officials such as St. John were very concerned about the bad influence of American traders and settlers on the Indian lifestyle. The Indian agent feared the “deteriorating effects” of contacts with the whites, which he found to be the invariable result of almost all the other tribes living near American settlers. The agent also reported increasing incidents of violence between the Pimas and Maricopas and the white settlers, in spite of the combined effort of himself and several chiefs to quell the excited mobs. St. John attributed the outbreaks to the “excitable Indian character, susceptible to insult and quick to avenge it,” and to “improper persons (white settlers and traders) residing on the reservation.”³¹ By the early 1860s Ammi White reported: “They [Pimas] complain, and say that Government neglects them, and does not fulfill its promises; because, they are not bad Indians, and Kill and rob White men, like the Apaches [sic]. They say that large presents of Blankets, Clothing and Food have been made to the Apachie, while they have industriously labored upon their Farms, and have protected the Overland Mail Route for a long distance, making it perfectly safe for any person to travel alone by night or day.”³²

Endnotes

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4. Doelle, "Demographic Change," 4-6; Leslie Spier, *Yuman Tribes*, 40-41; Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest*, 265-267.
5. Job Francis Dye, *Recollections*, 26.
6. William H. Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 9; Jones, "Extracts from the Life of Nathaniel V. Jones," 9; McCarty, *Frontier Documentary*, 109.
7. Emory, *Lieutenant Emory Reports*, 131.
8. John S. Griffin, *A Doctor Comes to California*, 33.
9. Johnston, *Report*, 599.
10. Johnston, *Report*, 602.
11. Henry W. Bigler, "Extracts from the Journal of Henry W. Bigler," 50; Frank Alfred Golder, *The March of the Mormon Battalion*, 198; Philip St. George Cooke, *Conquest of New Mexico and California*, 156-57.
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13. Griffin, *A Doctor Comes to California*, 34.
14. Cooke, *Conquest of New Mexico*; Bigler, "Extracts," 51; Cary Meister, *Historical Demography of the Pima and Maricopa*, 72-76, 93-104.
15. William Doelle, "The Adoption of Wheat," 21; Cave Johnson Coutts, *Hepah, California!*, 64.
16. Coutts, *Hepah, California!*, 64; Ralph P. Bieber, *Southern Trails to California*, 62.
17. Aguilar, "Letter," 4-6.
18. Bieber, *Southern Trails*, 214-215.
19. William W. Hunter, *Missouri '49er*, 161.
20. Frank Russell, *The Pima Indians*, 171. In 1900, anthropologist Frank Russell discovered five notched calendar sticks among the Pimas. The Indians created a chronological record of events by carving a series of notches and symbols on these sticks which indicated war campaigns, epidemics, floods, and other notable occurrences. A keeper of the stick memorized the events represented and retold them as he placed his thumb on each notch. The keeper passed the stick on to a successor and taught him the history. Russell obtained information from ten Pima men and women through the aid of five interpreters. Several of his elderly subjects remembered the coming of the covered wagons during the California Gold Rush. Through his interpreters, Russell heard the telling of the sticks by their keepers from the Salt River, Gila Crossing, and Blackwater villages.
21. Russell, *The Pima Indians*, 37.
22. Benjamin Hayes, *Diary of Judge Benjamin Hayes*; John T. Hughes, *Doniphan's Expedition*, 222; H.M.T. Powell, *Excerpts from the Santa Fe Trail*, 49; Benjamin Butler Harris, *The Gila Trail*, 82.
23. Powell, *Excerpts from the Santa Fe Trail*, 51.
24. Lorenzo P. Aldrich, *Journal*, 53-55.
25. John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative*, 219.
26. Wetzler, "History of the Pima Indians," 226.
27. G. Bailey, "Report"; *Alta California*, June 28, 1858; U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report 554-555*; House Committee, *The Pima Indians and San Carlos*, 30-31.
28. *Alta California*, June 28, 1858; Bailey, "Report."
29. Senate Executive Document No. 2, 727; Wetzler, "History of the Pima," 233; Silas St. John, *Letters*; Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received. Pima, Nov. 9, 1859.
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This article is a revised version of the first half of an article initially published in the *Journal of Arizona History* 39, Number 4 (1998). The second half of the article will appear in an upcoming issue of *Desert Tracks*.

On the Trail of Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid

A Talk Given by Mark Lee Gardner on February 26, 2010, for the Fray Angelico Library in Santa Fe, New Mexico

Transcribed and edited by Deborah and Jon Lawrence



[*Editors' Note:* Mark Gardner is a professional historian, author, musician, and consultant. He writes for both popular and scholarly audiences and has written a number of books for the National Parks.¹ The lecture transcribed here is based on his recent book *To Hell on a Fast Horse: Billy the Kid, Pat Garrett, and the Epic Chase to Justice in the Old West* (New York: William Morrow, 2010). In addition to his research and writing, Mark has consulted for and appeared on a number of public television specials. Together with his partner, Rex Rideout, he performs the music of the 19th- and early 20th-century American West. The URL of Mark's website is <http://www.sogofthewest.com>.]

I want to start out with a confession. I have written a number of books and articles about the Santa Fe Trail and the U. S.-Mexican War, many of which were academic and scholarly treatments.¹ For many years, when I would talk to people about what I did as a historian, I was a bit snooty about iconic American subjects. I would say to myself, "Well, if I were writing about George Custer or Billy the Kid, I would sell lots of books. But I like these narrow academic subjects that only a few people are interested in." I did find those topics fascinating, but that approach separated me from the popular historians. Over the years, I came to realize that as a writer I wanted to be read by a lot of people. More and more I have striven to reach out to larger audiences. I find great enjoyment in telling large stories in a way that anyone can understand them and have fun.

So, now I have a book² on two of those icons that I was being snooty about, Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett. Writing this book was very exciting. There is literally a library full of works about these subjects, but even with those particular publications, I felt that the dramatic aspects of that story had not been brought out as well as they could have been. I knew these dual figures of the American Southwest made for a great story. And as I got into it, I felt lucky to be telling this tale because it was even greater than I had imagined. But it didn't come easy.

I want to give you a little background as to how I came to write this book. This topic was not my first choice for a book with a major publisher. (It is published by William Morrow, which is an imprint for HarperCollins.) My literary agent, Jim Donovan, who is out of Dallas, Texas, is also a nonfiction writer. He wrote a bestselling book called *A Terrible Glory*³ about the Battle of Little Big Horn, which was published about two or three years ago by Little Brown – it's a great book. He knows the trade, he knows all the top editors, and he knows what makes good books. Several years ago, he and I were brainstorming. I wanted to do a book on a western topic that would be marketable – something that the trade houses in New York would be interested in publishing in a large quantity. His idea was a

biography of Jim Bridger. I really liked that idea. I have worked a lot with the various fur trade archives and have written research papers and articles pertaining to the Rocky Mountain fur trade. My first summer job was as a seasonal park ranger at Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site. I knew Jim Bridger's story well. He lived in Westport, Missouri. I was born and raised in Missouri, so his story had connections to my roots. And I thought, "Wow, I would love to write his story."

Now in order to sell a book to a publisher, especially a trade publisher like Simon and Schuster, Random House, or HarperCollins, you first have to send them a very well-written proposal. Such proposals are not easy to write. They are generally 30 to 40 pages long and include an outline, chapter by chapter, of what you will be doing with the book. And you are also making a sales pitch: you are trying to convince them why this book will do well and why it is needed. So I did all that, and my agent sent it out. Many of the editors told us how good a proposal it was, but not one of those editors was interested in buying the book. Many of them said that the subject was too small, which means that they didn't think that it would have more than a regional interest. They didn't think that it was a national seller. One editor, who worked at a big house in New York but who will remain nameless, had never heard of Jim Bridger before. There are parks and forests and mountains named for Jim Bridger, but this young lady had never heard of him. If they don't know who you are talking about, it is really hard to sell them a book proposal, no matter how great a pitch you make. So after several very depressing months, during which there were no bites and nobody wanted to do the book, we came to the conclusion that we would have to come up with something else.

I have a large library of Western Americana. I started skimming all the titles, trying to think of somebody who could use a new treatment, especially a biography. Someone who I had always been fascinated by was New Mexican lawman Pat Garrett. There was a great book⁴ written about Pat Garrett by Leon Metz that came out in the 1970s, but that was a long time ago. I felt confident that I

could find something new, something that hadn't been discovered or written about previously. After all, many new collections have come into archives over the last 30 years. I mentioned to my agent that I thought that Pat Garrett would make a fascinating biography. He said, "I think he probably would, but I think a better book would be a dual biography of Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid." I hadn't thought of that before, but I came to the conclusion that it was a brilliant idea because these two men are one of the classic duos in American western history. There would be no Billy the Kid unless Pat Garrett shot and killed him on July 14, 1881. There would be no Pat Garrett without Billy the Kid, the outlaw that he hunted down and killed. So I thought, okay, I like it. And the more I thought about it the more excited I became. Another 40-page proposal was cranked out.

It was a complete night and day difference between my first proposal on Jim Bridger and this one. After Donovan sent the proposal out by email, we had editors calling the next morning wanting to do the book. The choice came down between Simon and Schuster and William Morrow, which is part of HarperCollins. What made the difference for me was that the editor at William Morrow, Henry Ferris, called me at home and told me how much he liked the proposal. I was very impressed by that. In retrospect, I know it was the right move because he was a wonderful editor. I don't know that I have ever had a better editor to work with.

It was not an easy book to write. I had never written a dual biography before, and it was very, very challenging. One of the two main characters in the book lived 27 years longer than the other, and that definitely has its challenges. But fortunately that part of Garrett's life was what had gotten me interested in him to begin with. He had a very fascinating life during those 27 years after he killed Billy the Kid. It ended up not being a problem, just a challenge, to balance those two stories and make them interesting in the narrative throughout the book.

I next want to talk about the resources, how I went about researching this story. Of course, no good

historian re-invents the wheel. You start with all those previous historians who laid the groundwork for you. Fortunately, there have been many historians and researchers who have published about Billy the Kid – from Maurice Fulton⁵ to Robert Utley⁶ to Frederick Nolan.⁷ So you build upon the previous work. After you take a look at that, you still have to do the traditional legwork and go to the archives and institutions, as well as some other more unique resources that I'll talk about in a minute.

I found that the private collections of historians that were donated to archives and research centers were very helpful. Once they retire or pass away, many historians leave behind boxes and boxes full of research notes and transcriptions and Xeroxes of historical documents. It really saves you a lot of time as a researcher and historian when somebody has done basic groundwork. For some documents, I still wanted to verify that the transcription is correct, but when the collection has an exact Xerox of an original document, that saved me a lot of time. So I really benefited by these collections that were donated by writers, historians, as well as Billy the Kid buffs who had collected significant material over the years.

Historians gather far more than they need for the book they are writing, and the extra material winds up in these special collections. The researcher coming later may find a little nugget that the earlier historian didn't use for one reason or another. In my book, there were lots of vignettes and stories that I initially included that later got cut out in order to make the story flow a little better. As my editor pointed out, you need to get to the action – you can't swamp the reader in details. When you get deep into a subject, little things are really fascinating to you, and you forget that maybe this isn't so interesting to the general reader. So when you go to a collection, you find things that were not used for a certain reason, but which are useful nuggets for your work.

Some of those collections were here in Santa Fe at the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives off of Cerrillos Road. Take for example, the Don Cline⁸ Collection. Cline did a lot of work on Billy's

stepfather, William Antrim, and has a book on that topic. When I went through his collection I found that he had already been to the county courthouses and dug out county records. There are Xeroxes or transcriptions of a lot of those records from county tax books, commissioners journals, and the like.

Another researcher who had a wonderful collection is Herman Weisner⁹ in southern New Mexico near Las Cruces. His collection is at the Rio Grande Historical Collections at the New Mexico State University Library. I spent a week there going through various records and manuscripts.

Robert Utley is still writing. In one of the most gracious gestures that I have ever encountered, he offered me all of his notes – or what survived on his computer disk – from the two books that he wrote about the Lincoln County War and Billy the Kid. He had a very well-received book titled *Billy the Kid: a Short and Violent Life*, published by the University of Nebraska Press. He had another book published by the University of New Mexico Press titled *High Noon in Lincoln*. These came out in the 1980s.

Robert Utley was at the forefront of the laptop computer. He was one of the first historians to take a laptop in the archives and type notes. I talked to other historians who were contemporaries of Bob, and at the time they had been perplexed about what he was doing. He took wonderful notes and he traveled to several institutions to research those two books. Bob said, "Mark, whatever files that you can get off of these disks that are still readable, you are welcome to them." I actually printed them all out because I was afraid I would lose them – they are fairly ancient files. They made two huge binders of notes, which saved me travel time going to certain institutions. I have a big "thank you" to Bob in the acknowledgements for my book.

Another historian who is still alive, but yet donated his collection to an institution not too long ago, is Leon Metz. He wrote the standard early biography of Pat Garrett. He donated all of his papers to the University of Texas at El Paso's Sonnichsen Special

Collections Department. I spent several days going through Metz's collection.

One of the more worthwhile collections for my dual biography was the collection of the journalist and historian Eve Ball.¹⁰ She did a lot of work with the Chiricahua Apaches, and she wrote some classic books about the Apaches and their experiences in New Mexico and Arizona. But beginning in the late 1940s, she also interviewed old timers in Lincoln County about the Lincoln County War, Billy the Kid, Pat Garrett, the Fountain murders, and Oliver Lee.¹¹ These interviews run to literally hundreds of pages. What is so wonderful about her collection is that she typed out transcriptions of all of these interviews. Although she was a prominent New Mexico historian and writer, Eve Ball sold her collection in her later years to the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. I spent a week in the library at BYU going through her papers. I didn't even take lunch there because her collection was so rich and voluminous, and I wanted to see everything in that collection. They were open some days until 9 o'clock at night. I love it when libraries and archives are open late in the evening. It gives you so much more time, especially when you are traveling out of state.

The collection included wonderful interviews with the Jones brothers of Lincoln County, who knew the Kid. The Jones family did not like Pat Garrett. Usually those who like Billy the Kid don't like Pat Garrett – and vice versa. There are not many people who are sympathetic to both. In my book, of course, I try to be objective. [laughs]

One problem for me in writing about these subjects is that there are so many descendants that are so close to this story and still have strong opinions about it. There are descendents of Oliver Lee. There are descendents of Pat Garrett. This week I met, for the first time, Pat Garrett's grandson and great grandson in Albuquerque. These people are still alive and they still have strong feelings. As a matter of fact, even people who aren't connected through genealogy have strong feelings about Billy the Kid.

It's close to people's hearts in some way. They can easily be offended. There is a great quote that I got from the Eve Ball interviews that helped me to deal with writing about certain people and knowing that it might hurt the feelings of their descendants. A man was talking about some of the participants in the Lincoln County War. He said, "You know there are a lot of good old men today who weren't good young men." When I talked to someone about their grandfather, I could think, "I am sure that he was a wonderful grandfather to them and they loved him, but this man was not a very good young man." That helped me to try to be objective and tell the truth, even if it was an unpleasant truth.

I use another great quote from an Eve Ball interview to start one of the chapters of my book (194). She interviewed an old timer in Lincoln County – I think they were talking about the Fountain murders, the killings, the intrigues, the mystery, the Santa Fe Ring, the Lincoln County War. The old timer said, "That's the history of New Mexico: kill somebody or steal something, and you can sure get a good office."

In addition to these special collections, there are also some traditional sources that, in this modern age, some historians don't bother with. I'll tell you a little aside. I spent a lot of time at the Colorado College Library. For a few years I was on their Friends Board, and I was a good friend of the head archivist, Ginny Kiefer. She told me about how students, whose professor brought them to the archive, would get a disgusted look on their faces when they discovered that some of the records they were going to be looking at were not available online. They would actually have to do some work in the archives. I also know a few historians who don't dig that deeply and who thereby overlook some things that were useful historically and that are still useful today.

One traditional source is the clippings file. Years ago, librarians would clip articles out of newspapers, and they would create files for subjects, people, and places. While a lot of these are articles that are available elsewhere, either online or previously published, some are not. One of my best findings was

in the clippings file in the Denver Public Library. They have a Billy the Kid clippings file and a Pat Garrett clippings file. The latter contains a clipping from a newspaper article, probably from around 1902, that was a very long interview with Pat Garrett. Garrett talked about that night at Fort Sumner. He talked about Bob Olinger, the bully – Pat Garrett didn't like Bob Olinger very well. He talked about how he was going to get out of the sheriff business because New Mexico didn't need sheriffs to lead posses anymore – it was becoming too civilized and settled. I think he spoke a little too soon! There were wonderful insights in that interview, and I could not find that article anywhere else. I think it came from *The Denver Times*, and it had the date, but I couldn't find that particular paper on microfilm and it was not available online. I found little bits from that article in other newspapers of the time – newspapers borrowed from one another. But the complete article was only available in that clippings file. That was a lucky break.

Another traditional source is the annotated bibliography. It's sad no one is doing this kind of work any more. In an annotated bibliography, a book or article is listed and then there is a little paragraph about what's in the article. Those are *so* useful. There was an excellent annotated bibliography done by Jeff Dykes on Billy the Kid.¹² It was published in 1952 by the University of New Mexico Press. (That was over 50 years ago, and it's amazing how many obscure things he found even before online catalogues.) I found it very useful because it saved me a lot of time. These traditional bibliographers aren't really out there anymore doing this kind of work, and university presses aren't publishing annotated bibliographies, at least in a printed version.

I have been researching and writing about the American West since the 1980s, and I have seen a tremendous change in the way resources are available via the internet. It has improved publications – articles, books, dissertations – because resources are so much easier to access than they were before. A lot of those private collections that I mentioned to you have been catalogued, and sometimes the

catalogues are available online. Before, you would have to write and ask the archivist what was in the collection, but now you can see online that there's a letter in folder seven or a document in folder eight. If you see enough useful material, then you know that you are going to need to make a trip to take a look at that collection. And there are some institutions that are scanning their manuscript collections and making them available online. Most of the Billy the Kid letters are available online through the Indiana Historical Society in the Lew Wallace Collection. Those were scanned a few years ago, which was very helpful to me. When I was in that part of the book and wanted to refer back to what Billy said to Lew Wallace, I could go to that website, pull the letter up, and see the original – as opposed to digging for Xeroxes. Also, the transcriptions available on websites are not always exact, so it's always best to see the original.

Years ago, I spent a great deal of time going through microfilm and census records. Often it was like looking for a needle in a haystack. You went through six reels of microfilm in order to confirm whether at one time Pat Garrett lived in Uvalde, Texas. And, even if it were there, you might miss it because some of those census takers did not have the best handwriting. Those records can be very difficult to read. Sometimes the microfilm was too faded. And it was tedious – it took forever. Today, almost every census record is available online. Plus, the online version is searchable. You still have to know some tricks. You can't just go with the standard spelling; you have to try variant spellings. You can also narrow your search down by the county and the precinct. You don't have to wait on interlibrary loan. You don't have to visit the family history center of the Mormon church in Salt Lake City. You can do it all at your desk at home. I used the census records a lot in my book because I really wanted to describe these personalities so I wanted to give their ages and where they were born. It adds a little bit to who these people were if you can access that kind of information. One of the funny things that I found – though many scholars have probably seen it – is that in the entry for William Bonny in the 1880 census at

Fort Sumner, his occupation was listed as “works in cattle.” Works with *other* people’s cattle!

Of course, there are lots of online articles. You can pay a subscription fee to certain libraries and then access all kinds of journal articles online so that you don’t have to go through the stacks, pull out an issue, and make a Xerox. You can download the articles to your computer.

There are websites devoted to certain iconic subjects. There are several Billy the Kid websites, and some of those websites have discussion boards. (A problem is that some of these discussion boards don’t last very long because the participants get heated about certain historical issues, and then the board gets shut down.) These websites involve Billy the Kid buffs, and they are out there doing research, too. Sometimes you can run across a little nugget on a discussion board. One of the great clues I got in this way concerned one of Billy’s cohorts, Tom Folliard. While it has been written by historians for decades as “O’Folliard,” there is in fact no such surname. Somehow long ago, it became “O’ Folliard,” and has been repeated that way ever since. Once I became clued into this by the discussion board, I started to do my own research in the census records, and sure enough, I started finding “Tom Folliard” and “Tom Fulliard.” I found his parents in Texas. And I was able to correct that mistake that had been continued for decades. Through a clue on a discussion board and some of my own research to confirm it, I was able to ensure that my book was accurate in that regard. That may seem like a very small thing, but as a historian, you hate to see errors, even miniscule errors. It is always good to be able to correct them.

One of my favorite websites is called “NewspaperArchive.com.” The site includes literally thousands and thousands of newspaper pages that they have scanned digitally. Some libraries pay a subscription fee that allows their patrons to use the website. The Pike’s Peak Library District that I use allowed newspaperarchive.com to scan all of the library’s Colorado Springs *Gazette Telegraphs* on microfilm in exchange for a few years of free

subscription to use the website. The subscription ran out in the middle of my project, so I talked to the director of Special Collections and asked whether there was any chance of extending the subscription. Since many genealogists were using it too, he decided to continue the subscription.

All the *Santa Fe New Mexicans* are available on NewspaperArchive.com. And it’s searchable. Again, you have to know how to search. You have to use various spellings, and you have to try various time periods. For instance, if you find a reference in Frederick Nolan’s *The West of Billy the Kid* to a certain issue of the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, you can put that date in your search bar. It will go right to that issue, and you can look at the original article that Nolan has cited.

What I found most helpful was being able to put in searches narrowed by a span of years. I would search Pat Garrett, or William Bonny, Billy the Kid, Henry Antrim, and similar terms. I found articles that were published in Pennsylvania or Montana newspapers. Those articles may have been originally published here in the Southwest, but the issues with the original articles have disappeared; fortunately they were copied by other newspapers. Using NewspaperArchive.com, I found all kinds of little nuggets and vignettes that made my book different from previous books. In the bibliography, I included a whole page, double column, of newspapers that I used in researching and writing that book.

One of the best things that I found may seem minor, but is important for Billy the Kid studies. On June 13, 1881, a full month before Pat Garrett shot Billy the Kid, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article that said that Billy the Kid was hanging around Fort Sumner because of a sweetheart. This article was originally published in the *Denver Tribune* a few days earlier. So, a full month before Pat Garrett went after Billy the Kid, it was being published in major newspapers in states far away that “We know where Billy the Kid is. He is at Fort Sumner because of a sweetheart.” When he was in Lincoln, Pat Garrett

was getting those rumors as well, but he found them hard to believe. I thought it was interesting that it was common knowledge because most historians have questioned, “What did Billy do during those several weeks between the time he escaped from Lincoln and when he was killed by Pat Garrett?” But the word was out – as far away as Chicago – that Billy was probably at Fort Sumner. That was a revelation to me! If it had not been for NewspaperArchive.com, I would never have discovered that piece.

Sometimes it is the combination of different types of sources that help you in uncovering another aspect of the story. I can give you an example from the last chapter of my book where I deal with the murder of Pat Garrett on February 29, 1908. I have a lot of information in there that has not appeared before. I don’t believe that the man who was tried for the murder was Pat Garrett’s murderer; there is another individual whom I think was Pat’s killer. As I was zeroing in on this individual – I was using the Leon Metz Collection at the University of Texas at El Paso – I came across an interview that Leon had done in the 1960s with a resident of the area who knew the individual in question. He said, “I believe that at one time this suspect in Garrett’s murder went to prison for a killing in Arizona.” That was a red flag – a little light bulb went off. I wondered whether there is a list of Arizona territorial inmates online. I did a search and, sure enough, there was a list of prison inmates and their prison inmate numbers that the state library had put online. I found the man that I was interested in, and that he was in prison for murder. No one knew about this before. It just appeared in Metz’s interview, which Leon never included in his book.

I then went further. After I knew that this man was a prisoner in Florence, I contacted the Arizona State Library and asked, “What do you have on this individual?” They actually had documents from the inquest involving this shooting in Arizona. Then they told me that all of those prison records had been microfilmed. They sent me a copy of this prisoner’s page in the prison record books. It had a physical description of the man, it told what he was incarcerated for, and it had two photographs. I had never seen a

photograph of this person ever. One photograph was taken when he went into prison, and the other photo was taken when he left prison at the end of his term. I really wanted to use this page in my book so I asked where I could find it. They said it could be found at the local historical society in Florence, Arizona. The Pinal County Historical Society runs a very small museum. I called up the curator there, and she said, “As a matter of fact, the state made digital files of all of these, so I’ll just send you the digital file.” So I was able to include the picture of that man I believe killed Pat Garrett and his prison record in my book. As you can see, that discovery involved the use of a combination of different kinds of traditional sources, including time spent in the archives, as well as online access. Perhaps I could have found that material through a lot of letter writing or personal visits, but it sure was easier doing that search on the internet.

I also want to talk about some lucky breaks I had in the course of researching the book. When I started the book in early 2007, there was an exhibit about Billy the Kid in preparation at the Albuquerque Museum.¹³ The curator, Paul Andrew Hutton,¹⁴ who is a professor at the University of New Mexico, had sought out any artifacts he could find that were related to Billy the Kid. Of course, when Pat Garrett shot him, Billy the Kid didn’t leave a whole estate to be auctioned off – he probably had a good horse, a saddle, and a weapon. At this exhibit I was able to see things that I would not have been able to see otherwise. One example was the .44 caliber Colt Frontier six-shooter that Pat Garrett used to shoot Billy the Kid. It belongs to a private collector in Texas. I asked Paul what kind of insurance value the museum would put on this. He replied, “It is irreplaceable. It is obviously priceless. But we settled on the value of a million dollars for this weapon.” Another weapon that was in the exhibit was the shotgun Billy used to kill Bob Olinger in the famous Lincoln County Courthouse escape. According to the contemporary accounts, when Billy the Kid was done with his killing and getting ready to leave Lincoln, in a fit of rage he broke the shotgun at the wrist and threw it down on Bob Olinger’s body. In the exhibit, there is wire wrapping around the wrist where it was broken and repaired.

After Billy was killed at Fort Sumner, his body was laid out on a carpenter's bench. That carpenter's bench has survived in the Maxwell family since that time. The bench was on display, complete with blood stains. They had a mirror underneath the bench and a flashlight that you could point towards the mirror so that you could see the dark blood stains that had soaked through to the bottom of the bench. There were all kinds of letters and documents from individuals that figured in the Lincoln County War, written by Alexander McSween, Jimmy Dolan, Lawrence Murphy, and others. There was Pat Garrett's law book – he later attempted to become a lawyer. There was Pat Garrett's pocket watch and fob, a bowie knife that Billy had given to a friend, as well as a set of spurs.

That summer in conjunction with the exhibit, there was a symposium. Scholars like Paul Andrew Hutton and Michael Wallis, and enthusiasts and collectors like Robert McCubbin, who owns the butcher knife that Billy held when he was killed, all spoke at that symposium. It was quite inspirational for me to see this collection and attend the symposium as I was starting my research.

I had another lucky break while I was doing research in Las Cruces, when I felt it was critical to get to Pat Garrett's murder site. It's in Alameda Arroyo, which is now within the Las Cruces city limits, but historically when Las Cruces was very small it was about six miles east of town. I had found maps in one of the historians' collections. I rented a PT Cruiser. When I got near, I had to jump a curb to get to a two-track that serviced a power line that dropped into an arroyo. I navigated the curb with the PT Cruiser and slid down a steep sandy bank about a hundred feet. I was determined to drive the remaining couple of miles to the site, but after 500 yards, I encountered deep ditches. I wasn't even sure if I was in the right place, and it was starting to look like I might get stuck. I turned around and somehow managed to get back up the bank with the PT Cruiser. At that point, I was feeling very despondent. Out on the highway there is a historical marker that says that Pat Garrett was killed near there on February 29, 1908. So I decided to park and take a few notes and note the surrounding scenery – the beautiful Organ Mountains were in the distance. As I was standing there writing my notes, a Suburban pulled up. A man got out and said, "Are you interested in Pat Garrett?" I responded, "Yes, I tried to get

over to the murder site. I don't know exactly where it is, and I gave up." He replied, "I know where it is. I'll take you." So I jumped in his vehicle. We drove part way, got out, and then hiked. He took me right to the site. There is a little cement marker there at the spot where Pat Garrett was murdered. What were the chances that as I was standing there, someone would pull up and then offer to take me to the site on a personal guided tour? By the way, his name is Dave Woodwell. He is retired and lives in Las Cruces. I included him in the acknowledgments of the book. He earned it!

There are always lucky breaks when you are researching these subjects. But then there are things that you missed. Once you finish working on something and then it's published, there is always somebody who comes up with something later and says, "Hey, did you see this?" And I am going to mention one of these things. It would not change the book, but I wish I had known it before publishing because it provides such a great assessment of who Billy the Kid was. It comes from a collection at the American History Center at University of Texas at Austin. There was a cowpoke named Tom Burgess who, in the winter of 1880, was working with some other cattlemen for a Texas ranch. They were in New Mexico doing some branding – there weren't a lot of fences then, so they strayed back and forth across the border. One day a fellow cowpoke told him that the young man who had just come into camp was Billy the Kid. He said, "I had never met Billy the Kid, but this man claimed it was him. I'll tell you what my impressions were. He was about 5 feet 9 inches tall and about 160 pounds." The interviewer asked, "Were Billy's front teeth protruded?" He responded, "Well, yes, but not very much. If the Kid didn't grin all the time, I don't think it would be noticeable. But the Kid laughed and joshed a good deal and was always smiling." Now, here is the little tidbit that I really get excited about: He said, "He had on what we call 'California clothes.' That is, clothes a little better than common. All cowboys wore them when they could get them." In the famous tintype that is the only documented image of Billy the Kid, he is wearing an elaborate bib-front shirt with what appears to be an embroidered ship's anchor. You don't see that type of shirt every day. But I had never before heard the term "California clothes." I would have loved to have used that quote, but it came a little bit too late.

End Notes

1. Mark Lee Gardner's academic books include *Wagons for the Santa Fe Trade: Wheeled Vehicles and Their Makers, 1822-1880* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); *The Mexican War Correspondence of Richard Smith Elliott* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997, co-edited with Marc Simmons); and *Brothers on the Santa Fe and Chihuahua Trails: Edward James Glasgow and William Henry Glasgow, 1846-1848* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1993). He has also written a number of books for the Western National Parks Association on such topics as Bent's Fort, Fort Bowie, the Washita Battlefield, Geronimo, and Custer.
2. Mark Lee Gardner, *To Hell on a Fast Horse: Billy the Kid, Pat Garrett, and the Epic Chase to Justice in the Old West* (New York: William Morrow, 2010).
3. James Donovan is author of *A Terrible Glory: Custer and the Little Bighorn - - the Last Great Battle of the American West* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2008) and of *Custer and Little Bighorn: The Man, the Mystery, the Myth* (Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 2001).
4. Leon Metz of El Paso, Texas, was a past president of Western Writers of America, as well as of the El Paso County Historical Society. He is author of *Roadside History of Texas* (Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1994) and numerous books on El Paso. His book *Pat Garrett: The Story of a Western Lawman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1974) is the seminal biography of Pat Garrett.
5. Maurice G. Fulton (1877-1955) taught English at the New Mexico Military Academy. His papers reside in the Special Collections of the University of Arizona Library. His book *History of the Lincoln County War* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980) was an early scholarly treatment of the topic.
6. Until his retirement, Robert Utley was Chief Historian and Assistant Director of the National Park Service. He is a founding member and former president of the Western History Association. The winner of many awards, he is widely considered to be a dean of historians of the frontier West. His books *Frontiersmen in Blue* and *Frontier Regulars* are classic treatments of the history of the U.S. Army and the American Indians in the period from the Mexican War to the end of the frontier. His books *Billy the Kid: A Short and Violent Life* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1991) and *High Noon in Lincoln* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987) are essential reading on the Lincoln County War and Billy the Kid.
7. Frederick Nolan is a British writer and one of the leading authorities on the Lincoln County War. His books include *The Life and Death of John Henry Tunstall* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2009), *The Lincoln County War: A Documentary History* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2009), and *The West of Billy the Kid* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).
8. Don Cline is the author of *Antrim and Billy* (College Station: Creative Pub., 1990). Cline has deposited internment records from Fort Sumner and proceedings of the court martial of Lieutenant Colonel Dudley at the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives.
9. Herman Weisner was for many years a resident of Organ, New Mexico, near Las Cruces. He was the author of *The Politics of Justice: A.B. Fall and the Teapot Dome Scandal, A New Perspective* (Albuquerque: Creative Designs, 1988).
10. Eve Ball (1890-1984) was a long-time resident of Ruidoso, New Mexico, on the edge of the Mescalero Apache reservation. Beginning in the late 1940s and over three decades, she conducted interviews with Apaches and ranchers from southern New Mexico. Her books include *In the Days of Victorio: Recollections of a Warm Springs Apache* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970) and *Indeh: An Apache Odyssey* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).
11. Albert Jennings Fountain was a lawyer and politician in southern New Mexico in the post-Civil War era. He came into conflict with rancher Oliver Lee and lawyer Albert Fall both over politics and over land holdings. He and his eight-year-old son Henry disappeared in the countryside near Las Cruces in early 1896. There was evidence that the two were murdered, and Pat Garrett participated in the murder investigation. Fall successfully defended Lee and two other men against murder charges. Fall was later a key figure in the Teapot Dome Scandal.
12. Jeff Dykes produced the annotated bibliography *Billy the Kid: the Bibliography of a Legend* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1952).
13. The exhibit at the Albuquerque Museum, during the period May 13-July 22, 2007, was titled *Dreamscape Desperado: Billy the Kid and the Outlaw in America*. For a review, see *Desert Tracks*, June 2007, page 24.
14. Paul Andrew Hutton is Professor of History at the University of New Mexico. He is past Executive Director of the Western History Association and past president of the Western Writers of America. His book *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999) won the Billington Prize and the Spur Award. He has edited and contributed to many books, including *The Custer Reader* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004) and *Soldiers West: Biographies from the Military Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009). He is an avid collector of Billy the Kid memorabilia.

An Incident in the Lincoln County War

by Marc Simmons

[*Editors' note:* Marc Simmons is an independent historian living in Cerrillos, New Mexico. He has written more than 40 books on the history of New Mexico and the Southwest. This article is taken from his regular column, "Trail Dust," which he writes for the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. He has published a number of other articles on the Kid in *Stalking Billy the Kid* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2006.)]

Recently, I stumbled upon a brief account of an incident from the bloody Lincoln County War that was recorded by Eugene Manlove Rhodes in 1933. At that time, Rhodes was a well-known author of Southwestern novels who had lived and written for a while in Tesuque. He had spent his youth breaking horses on ranches east of present-day Truth or Consequences. That was in the 1890s when survivors of the war in Lincoln County littered the landscape. From one or more of them, he heard this story.

At the center of the story are two men: Harvey Morris and Tom O'Folliard. O'Folliard was a young man from Zavala County in southern Texas, who showed up in southeastern New Mexico at the height of the Lincoln County War. He attached himself to the faction headed by attorney Alexander McSween. Morris, who was 30 years old, had come out from Kansas hoping that New Mexico's climate would cure his bad case of tuberculosis. He began "reading law" under McSween's direction. As is well known, the McSween faction included the charismatic Billy the Kid. O'Folliard idolized Billy – they were about the same age – and soon developed a liking and respect for the older Morris.

Arrayed against the McSween partisans were the forces of corrupt merchant James J. Dolan, collectively described as "the most notorious gang of cutthroats in southern New Mexico." In mid-July 1878, Alexander McSween's large U-shaped house in the center of the town of Lincoln was besieged for five days by some 30 or more of his enemies. About 10 of his own men assisted McSween in defense of

the building. Among them were Billy the Kid, Tom O'Folliard, and Harvey Morris.

Early on the fifth day, an attacker managed to start a fire at the end of one of the legs of the U. During the day, the blaze moved slowly from room to room, with the occupants retreating ahead of it. By nightfall, the McSweenites were cornered in the last room and were forced to break out or be burned to death. Billy with four or five others decided to dash through the east door into the very teeth of their foes. They hoped, by serving as a decoy, to give McSween and two others a chance to escape by the north side.

Billy the Kid led the way, firing as he ran. Behind him, Harvey Morris stepped into the open and was instantly killed by a single shot. Tom O'Folliard followed. What happened next was the incident that Gene Rhodes wrote about in 1933. According to him, Tom had just started to run the gauntlet through a hail of lead when he reached the body of Harvey, lying face up. He stopped in flight, bent down and gently picked up his friend in his arms. Only then did he realize the man was dead. So slowly he laid the body down again, being careful not to drop it.

How could he have made such a pause and lived? Rhodes explains that the moment O'Folliard stopped and leaned down, the two dozen black-hearted assailants, all in the same instant, held their fire. It was



Billy's grave stone at Fort Sumner.
photo by Deborah Lawrence

part of their heritage and tradition, the author claimed, to value high courage and loyalty to a fallen friend. Not a single one of the shooters, even in their bloodlust, was willing to kill Tom O'Folliard in that brief golden interval. But as soon as O'Folliard was running again, all bets were off and the spray of bullets resumed.

Tom and Billy miraculously survived and escaped, but not so Alexander McSween and the two men at his side. The deaths that night of July 19, 1878, concluded the "Five Days Battle" and also ended the Lincoln County War. A year and a half later, on December 19, 1880, O'Folliard was slain by Sheriff Pat Garrett on the edge of Fort Sumner. At the same place, as is famous in Western lore, Garrett killed Billy the Kid in the Pete Maxwell house on the evening of July 14, 1881. Today the two young outlaws lie buried side by side in the historic Fort Sumner cemetery. Another follower of the Kid who died by the gun, Charlie Bowdre, is also there. A single large tombstone for the threesome has one word at the top: "Pals."

In my wide reading of the literature on the Lincoln County War, I had not found confirmation of O'Folliard's "heroism" during the break-out, as described by Rhodes. Then a few days ago, I discovered a couple of lines on the incident by a leading historian of the era, Frederick Nolan. In his imposing book *The West of Billy the Kid*, he classifies the O'Folliard story as one of the many myths that have grown up around the Lincoln County War. That could well be, but myths often have some kernel of truth buried within them. About this one, we will probably never know the answer for certain.

From "Trail Dust: Sidekick Idolized Billy the Kid through Tumultuous Times."

The Santa Fe New Mexican, August 8, 2009.



Museum Exhibit Review

Faces of the Frontier: Photographic Portraits from the American West, 1845-1924

The museum exhibit *Faces of the Frontier* features over 100 portraits of men and women who explored and developed the American West during the 80 years between the U.S. annexation of Texas and the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924. It chronicles such events as on-going conflicts between Native Americans and non-natives, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, the emergence of the national parks movement, and the admittance of 19 new states west of the Mississippi. Visitors will encounter portraits of individuals such as Kit Carson, Geronimo, John Fremont, Sitting Bull, Calamity Jane, Jessie James, Annie Oakley, and Brigham Young.

Frank H. Goodyear III, associate curator of photographs at the National Portrait Gallery, is the exhibition curator. The exhibition opened last year at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. It is currently at the San Diego Historical Society until June 6, and then it will hang at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, until January 2, 2011. The accompanying book, published by the University of Oklahoma Press, contains an introduction and two essays that place the more than 120 photographs in the political and economic context of the times. The book also includes brief biographical sketches of those that posed for the camera. Of particular interest is Goodyear's discussion of the ways in which photography contributed to Americans' interpretations of the West.

Book Reviews

To Hell on a Fast Horse: Billy the Kid, Pat Garrett, and the Epic Chase to Justice in the Old West

Mark Lee Gardner

New York: William Morrow, 2010.

ISBN 978-0-06-136827-1.

325 pages, 26 illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Hardback, \$26.99.

The saga of Billy the Kid has inspired novels, histories, biographies, films, poems, and songs. Pat Garrett, on the other hand, is remembered primarily for that famous shot in the dark on July 14, 1881, when he killed Billy. And this is despite that fact that Garrett was later involved in two famous unsolved murder cases in the American Southwest: the murders of Albert J. Fountain and his son Henry in 1896, and his own murder in 1908. In *To Hell on a Fast Horse*, historian Mark Gardner stresses that Garrett's hunt for and execution of Billy is one of the greatest legends of the Southwest, and he contends that the two men were inextricably linked. In this well-researched dual biography of Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid, Gardner maintains an objective perspective on both men, never letting the iconic Billy upstage the Lincoln County sheriff.

Much of the literature about the Kid, a.k.a. William Bonney, a.k.a. Henry Antrim has served to obfuscate his life. The author of books and articles on the American West, Gardner uses primary sources such as newspaper articles, private collections of historians donated to archives, and government documents to bring the outlaw's life into focus and to document the Lincoln County War, the Kid's daring escape from the Lincoln on April 28, 1881, and Garrett's hunt for Billy.

The dual biography begins *in medias res* in Las Vegas, in the Territory of New Mexico, during Christmas week in 1880. Billy's capture and confinement was making national headlines as Pat Garrett arrived in Las Vegas with his four prisoners, one of whom was the young *desperado* with sparkling blue eyes and buck teeth. Gardner's

description of their arrival and the subsequent events is based in part on two eyewitness accounts: westbound train passenger Benjamin Miller's version of the events and an interview by a newspaper reporter with train engineer Dan Daley, an interview that until now has been overlooked by other historians. Gardner proceeds to elucidate the Kid's imprisonment in Santa Fe, his trial in Mesilla, and his journey to the Lincoln jail. He then jumps back in time to record Garrett's earlier life, from his childhood in Louisiana through his experiences as a farmer, trail cowboy, and buffalo hunter in Texas, to his arrival in Fort Sumner. Next, he summarizes Billy's early life, from New York to Wichita to Silver City, to his first murder in Camp Grant, Arizona, and his escape to Lincoln County. The following chapters detail the Lincoln County War, Garrett's appointment as sheriff, Billy's escape from the Lincoln jail, his days as a cattle thief, and his ultimate murder by Garrett in Fort Sumner.

Because the chronology is not straightforward, a caveat is necessary: *To Hell On a Fast Horse* assumes a knowledge of Billy's history that many Americans – other than the Kid-obsessed – lack. For readers not fully versed in the nuances of Lincoln County's tangled affairs, the first third of the book will have its share of stumbling blocks. However, it is an intrinsically fascinating story, which Gardner develops with interesting anecdotes and revealing quotes.

A meticulous researcher, Gardner is not afraid to take a stand on controversial issues related to the Kid. For example, the Kid's escape from the Lincoln County Courthouse on April 28, 1881, continues to provoke heated discussion among Billy the Kid scholars, with some historians and buffs arguing that Billy was slipped a pistol in an outhouse prior to his escape. Gardner theorizes that the Kid overpowered Deputy James Bell and shot him with the deputy's own revolver.

Historians also dispute the details of the Kid's death. Gardner bases his description of the shooting primarily on the accounts of Garrett, his deputy John

Poe, and contemporary newspaper reports. In late June or early July of 1881, Garrett had received news that the Kid was in the vicinity of Fort Sumner. On July 14, Garrett and his deputies went to Sumner to question Pete Maxwell about the whereabouts of the Kid. Around midnight, Garrett went to Maxwell's house. Although there are conflicting reports on where Billy was spending his nights while he was at Fort Sumner, Gardner contends that he was staying at the home of Celsa and Saval Gutiérrez. Near midnight on July 14, Billy was hungry, so grabbing a butcher knife from Celsa's kitchen, he went to Maxwell's house get a slice of meat for a late-night supper. Hearing noises, he entered Maxwell's bedroom where Garrett was standing in the shadows. "¿Quién es? ¿Quién es?" the Kid asked. Garrett replied by shooting at him twice. Buffs and historians disagree also as to whether or not the Kid had a pistol when he was shot. According to Gardner, it is ridiculous to think that he would have gone anywhere without a fire arm.

Although the title of the book, *To Hell on a Fast Horse: Billy the Kid, Pat Garrett, and the Epic Chase to Justice in the Old West*, suggests that the biography is primarily about Billy the Kid's attempts to elude justice, Garrett survived Billy by 27 years, and the final chapters of the book focus on Garrett's life after the death of Billy the Kid. Gardner describes Garrett's experiences as a lawman, his rise to power and attempt to find and arrest the murders of attorney Albert Fountain and his eight-year-old son, who disappeared near the White Sands in 1896, and Garrett's interactions with President Theodore Roosevelt. Most interesting, however, is Gardner's account of the murder of Pat Garrett himself on February 29, 1908, and his conclusion as to the actual killer. Many historians believe that that Wayne Brazel murdered Garret—after all, Brazel confessed to the shooting and was tried for and acquitted of the murder in 1909. Also implicated in the crime was Jim Miller, an outlaw who some believed was hired by enemies of Garrett, and Oliver Lee, who allegedly took part in an elaborate conspiracy made up of businessmen and outlaws to kill Garrett. But Gardner has another suspect, and he presents his

evidence at the book's conclusion.

Given the author's commitment to using an array of primary and secondary sources, the most troubling aspect of *To Hell on a Fast Horse* is the lack of numbering of the endnotes. This is especially unfortunate for readers who don't want to accept Gardner's commentary at face value and need access to his source material. They are forced to skim through the notes for an entire chapter in an effort to locate a desired source. This problem could be partially redressed in a future edition of the book by citing the page numbers to which the notes correspond.

This reservation aside, Gardner's dual biography is clearly written and well argued. Mark Gardner's extensive research and his choice to make both Billy and Garrett the primary focus have helped make *To Hell on a Fast Horse* an interesting alternative to previous interpretations of Garrett's manhunt for the Kid. It will offer students of southwestern history and Billy the Kid buffs some illuminating data and a good read.

Walter Drew Hill

On the Western Trails:

The Overland Diaries of Washington Peck.

Susan M. Erb, editor.

Norman: Arthur H. Clark Co., 2009.

ISBN: 978-0-87062-379-0.

296 pages, illustrations, maps.

Hardback, \$45.00.

On the Western Trails contains two diaries of the travels of Washington and Mercy Peck on the southern emigrant trails. The Pecks' extensive moves during the settlement of the West contribute to the historic significance of the diaries.

In the early 1800s, the peripatetic Pecks lived in Canada. They emigrated to Illinois and Wisconsin and then back to Ontario in the 1840s. In 1850,

they went west to to participate in the California Gold Rush. Following the Mormon Trail to Salt Lake City and then the Salt Lake/Los Angeles wagon road (which coincided in part with the Old Spanish Trail), they arrived at the San Gabriel Mission in Southern California in late December 1850. From there, they followed El Camino Real north, settling in Nevada City, California. They returned to Canada via steamship in 1854. In 1857, they moved to northwest Missouri, and in 1858 they took the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico. After a failed effort to get to California over the Beale Wagon Road, they settled near Fort Stanton, New Mexico, until the start of the Civil War. In 1861, the Pecks moved to Southern California, using the Apache Pass variant of the Southern Emigrant Trail from Las Cruces to San Gabriel. Following the Civil War, they moved several times, from San Gabriel to Washington Territory to the San Francisco Bay area to Prescott, Arizona, and back to Washington Territory, where they died in the late 1800s.

The diaries of Washington Peck that are included in *On the Western Trails* concern the 1850-1851 trip from Ontario to Nevada City and the 1858 trip from Missouri to New Mexico, to Arizona on the Beale trail, and back to New Mexico. Although Peck's trail diaries focus primarily on locations, river crossings, scenery, grass, water, and firewood, they include a number of interesting anecdotes concerning encounters with Indians, Mormons, and "bad men." A Peck descendant, Susan Erb skillfully uses appropriate secondary sources, diaries of others whose travels coincided with the Pecks', newspaper accounts, and Peck family documents to provide commentary and historical context to the diaries. She also relates the history of the extended Peck family during the periods when they were not travelling the trails, supporting the narrative with maps and illustrations.

The Pecks' story is fascinating. They lived near York (today's Toronto) during a period of conflicts between settlers and the British government over landowner's rights and over religious freedom – the Pecks were Methodists in a region of Anglican control. Residing

in Illinois during the period when the Mormons occupied Nauvoo, Washington Peck testified against a Mormon counterfeiter shortly before Joseph Smith was killed. The ambulant couple arrived in Salt Lake City during a period of rapid growth and early Mormon-emigrant conflict. While in California, they experienced floods, fires, and droughts. Later in life, Washington Peck was a delegate to the Washington territorial legislature, Mercy Peck was an early suffragette, and both became ardent spiritualists.

There are a number of aspects of the Peck experiences that will be of particular interest to enthusiasts of the southern emigrant trails and the history of the frontier Southwest. Washington Peck was voted captain for the 1850 trip from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles; Alexander Fancher and his family (who later were victims of the Mountain Meadows Massacre) were initially members of the party. On the abortive trip to Arizona over the Beale Wagon Road, Peck was instrumental in feeding and helping the surviving members of the Rose-Baley party who were struggling back to Albuquerque following their battle with Mohave Indians on the Colorado River. (See *Desert Tracks*, January 2003.) The Pecks arrived at Fort Stanton the day before Lydia Spencer Lane arrived and then settled at the junction of the Rio Bonito and the Rio Ruidoso – the heart of what became Lincoln County – where they were the neighbors of Hugh Beckwith, who later was leader of the Seven Rivers Gang during the Lincoln County War. They fled New Mexico as the Civil War began and as Indian raids on settlers increased, and travelled through Apache Pass shortly after the Bascom Affair. Later, they were neighbors of L. J. Rose in Southern California. Their son, Edmond Peck, made a major silver strike – leading to the Peck Mine – near Prescott, Arizona, and Washington and Mercy moved to the area for a few months in 1876.

The 22nd volume of the Clark Company's American Trails Series, *On the Western Trails* is well researched and well written. We recommend it highly to readers of this publication.

Deborah and Jon Lawrence

Southern Trails Chapter News

Chapter Meetings

The Southern Trails Chapter (STC) held two meetings recently: one at the Avi Resort and Casino in Laughlin, Nevada, on November 13-15, 2009, and another at the Tubac Golf Resort and Spa in Tubac, Arizona, on February 12-14, 2010. The major emphasis for both meetings was the chapter's efforts, outlined further below, to attain National Historic Trail (NHT) status for the routes of southern emigrant trails. Talks by Albert Eddins, David Welch, and Reba Wells Grandrud focused on the effort needed to attain NHT status, and the progress being made by the chapter towards this goal. Lee Kreutzer from the National Park Service gave a presentation on the National Trail System Act. In addition, talks were given by the following individuals on the history of various branches of the southern emigrant trail network: David Miller on the trails east of the Rio Grande River, T. Michael Smith on the Salt Lake to Southern California Road, Dennis Casabier on the Mojave Road, Tom Jonas on the Kearney Pack route down the Gila River, Kevin Henson on the Mormon Battalion, and Jim Turner on the Pima Indian Villages. Tracy DeVault gave talks on the Trail Turtles' efforts to map the southern trails and also on the John Chaffin grave marker project. The guest speaker at Laughlin, Cliff Walker, discussed Indian slavery on the western trails. At Tubac, the guest speaker was Don Garate, who impersonated Juan Bautista de Anza.



Don Garate impersonates Juan Bautista de Anza.
courtesy Albert Eddins



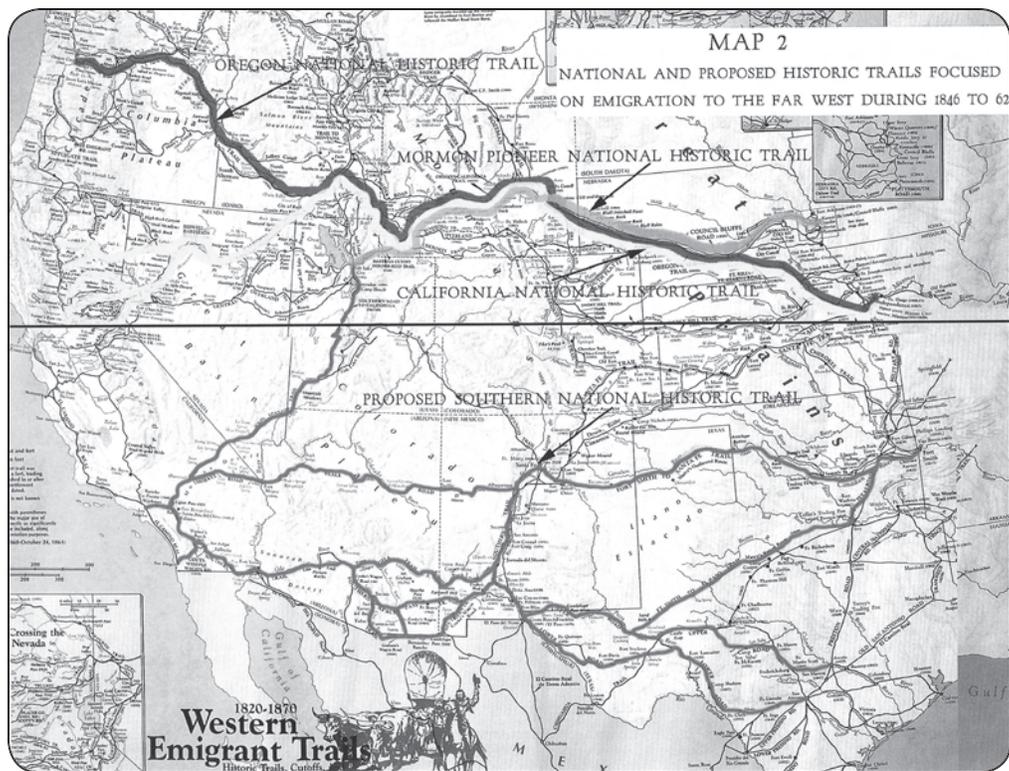
Don Buck and Jere Krakow inspect the walls of Fort Paiute on the Mojave Road tour. *courtesy Albert Eddins*

Both meetings included tours. At the first meeting, participants saw Camp Beale Springs, the town of Oatman, and other sites in the vicinity of Fort Mojave. As many as 15 people participated in a four-day 4x4 tour over the Mojave Road across the Mojave Desert. At the Tubac meeting, an all-day bus tour included such sites as Missions San Xavier del Bac and San José de Tumacácori, as well as the ruins of missions in the vicinity of Tumacácori. The latter sites are not open to the public and require special permission to visit.



STC tour group at San Xavier del Bac.
courtesy Albert Eddins

A chapter business meeting is scheduled for August 13 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the OCTA convention in Elko, Nevada. A full chapter meeting is being planned for this fall in Silver City, New Mexico. A tour before or after the fall meeting is being planned to the headwaters of several historically important rivers, such as the Colorado, the Arkansas, the Rio Grande, the Canadian, the Pecos, and the Gila.



Southern National Historic Trail Proposal

The effort to attain National Historic Trail designation for the southern emigrant trail received official sanction from the OCTA Board of Directors at OCTA’s annual convention in August 2009. Once the proposal circulated through OCTA’s legislative committee and was discussed with others, the recommendation was made to expand the proposal to include a larger number of trails through the Southwest, including trails through Texas and Oklahoma, the Salt Lake to Southern California Road, the Beale and Mojave Roads, and other segments in addition to the main southern emigrant trail from Santa Fe to Tucson to the Yuma Crossing and through the Southern California desert to Los Angeles. There are disadvantages in trying to include too many trails under the umbrella of “southern emigrant trails.” There are, however, important benefits, which include working with the full support of the national organization and of the Utah Crossroads Chapter in seeking federal support.

In late February of this year, an OCTA delegation went to Washington, D.C., and worked to obtain the support of key legislators for the Southern Trail

proposal. The group included Albert Eddins, Bill and Jeanne Watson, Bill Martin, Vern and Carol Osborn, Jere Krakow, Pat Hearty, and Reba Wells Grandrud. The delegation visited the offices of 62 congressmen, meeting with key congressional staff members and providing them with information packets describing the proposal and the various routes of southern emigrant trails. Based on these contacts, Eddins believes there is a possibility that a feasibility study could be authorized by the end of this year. Eddins stresses that the chapter needs to continue making contacts with federal and local legislators to convince them that the southern trails deserve NHT recognition. He thinks that a crucial factor will be to make a strong case for the economic benefits of NHT status, both to congressmen and to the communities that the trails traverse. He argues that the chapter needs to obtain the support of chambers of commerce, small businesses, social organizations, and government officials in towns along the trails. These groups are in the best position to convince their federal legislators to vote for the bill.

If you are interested in contributing to this effort in any way, contact Albert Eddins at aseddins@msn.com or call 480 575-2733.

Tres Alamos and John Calhoun Johnson's Grave

John Calhoun Johnson was an important figure in early California history. He had emigrated to California prior to the Gold Rush. He was perhaps the first man to run mail over the Sierra Nevada, and in the process he was instrumental in developing a trail across the mountains that became known as Johnson's Cutoff. He was one of the first lawyers in California. He held several positions with the county and state governments and was the first Adjutant General for the California Militia during the El Dorado Indian Wars of 1850-51. His ranch east of Placerville was a campsite and safe haven for emigrants who had just crossed the mountains into California.

In the spring of 1876, the 54-year-old Johnson left his wife and six of their children in Placerville, California, to join his friend Henry Clay Hooker and pursue farming along the San Pedro River south of Tres Alamos. The town was north of Benson, Arizona, on the west side of the San Pedro River opposite to where Tres Alamos Wash enters the San Pedro from the east. Johnson's 23-year-old son George Penn Johnson joined him on the journey to Arizona. At Tres Alamos they bought supplies from Cassius N. Hooker's store and started farming with a partner Calvin Mowry. On September 13, 1876, while George was away, Apaches killed Johnson and Mowry while the two men were working near the San Pedro River. When George returned to the farm, he found his father's mutilated body. He took the body to Tres Alamos and buried him in a small cemetery on Cassius Hooker's property. In order that the grave would not be desecrated, George had "a rock too big for a man to move" placed on his father's grave. Mowry's body was discovered later and buried on the farm. George returned to Arizona 40 years after his father's death and was able to locate the grave.

A symposium of the Southwest Chapter (now the Southern Trails Chapter) of the Oregon-California Trails Association was held in Las Cruces, New Mexico, in March 1994. At that meeting, Jack Root, a founding member of the chapter, presented a paper titled "Search for Tres Alamos." Jack had received an article titled "Apache Harvest" written by one of the descendants of John Calhoun Johnson. Jack's paper described how he had made several visits to look for the grave in the general area where Tres Alamos was located. He made a thorough search in the vicinity of a small cemetery in the area but did not find "a rock too big for a man to move." I visited the area several times in the early 1990s, but did not have any luck finding the grave. Recently, the Trail Turtles have been able to determine the exact location of Hooker's property, and we used this new information as the basis for our field trip.

For more information, see the following (available on request):

"Search for Tres Alamos" by Jack Root, in *Proceedings of the 1994 Trails Symposium*, Southwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association.

"Apache Harvest" by Ellen Osborn, in *Copper State Bulletin*, Arizona State Geneological Society, Tucson, 1990.

"John Calhoun Johnson," Mark Rayner, www.rayner.us/ancestry/john_calhoun_johnson.htm.

Tracy DeVault

Field Trip to Tres Alamos

by *Richard Greene*

Tres Alamos was a small community along the San Pedro River north of Benson, Arizona, that formed in early trail days near the emigrant trail river crossing just west of Nugent's Pass. Were it not for those who find the dusty corners of southwest history interesting, the town would be lost to memory.

On Wednesday, April 21, the day before the scheduled mapping trip, several Trail Turtles – Ken and Pat White, Bert Eddins, Cam Wade, Tracy and Judy DeVault, Rose Ann Tompkins, Kay Kelso, and Richard and Marie Greene – met in Benson for a trip to Tres Alamos. Our goal was to search the area for the grave of John Johnson, which was marked with “a rock too big for a man to move.” (For the story of John Calhoun Johnson, see the text box on page 27.)

The Tres Alamos site is along Ocotillo Road, which runs north from Benson. Our research had located the site of the old community and the property of Cassius Hooker where Johnson was buried. We searched a hilly, rocky, bushy area for the “big rock.” Bert found a very large rock, but Richard examined it and tossed it aside, declaring that it was not “too big for a man to move.” Cam located another – with a similar result. Richard discovered an area of several possible graves, with old glass pieces lying around. Tracy “witched” the spots using his witching antennas, but he convinced no one, even when his witching antennas moved across his body – due to the wind. Bert tried witching, but didn't want his photo taken while doing it.

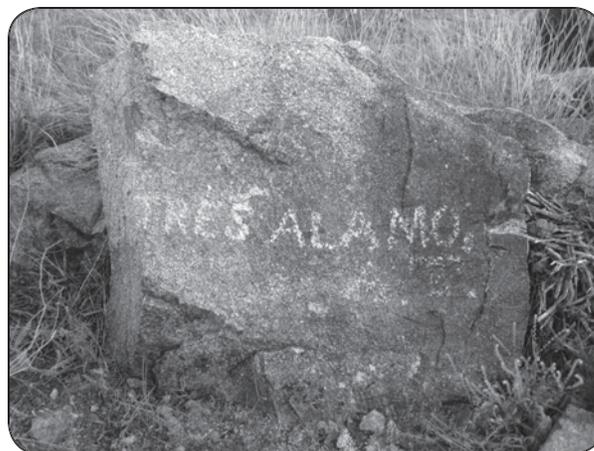
By 1:30 pm we were finished and had not found the big rock. Most of the group headed to Benson to find a motel. Richard and Marie, however, stopped at the Singing Wind Bookstore (which is north of Benson on West Singing Wind Road). The owner, Winifred (Win) Bundy, gave the Greens a tour, explaining how the 100,000 plus books were organized in the old ranch house. Bundy connected the Greens to a local historian who unfortunately didn't know the location of the grave. The historian, who had heard

of Johnson, had contributed to a book on the history of Tres Alamos, and he promised to try to find an out-of-print copy of the work. Bundy's son is also a local historian; she promised to consult with him concerning the Johnson grave.

Brock and Levida Hileman drove from Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, to join the mapping trip. They reported that there was still snow on Cooke's Peak – very unusual for late April. The plan was to meet the following day to begin mapping. The weather was getting worse: the wind was howling and the forecast was for stormy weather. It was a good night to sleep in a motel.

The next morning, with a few hours to kill before the scheduled departure, Richard, Ken, and Pat tried to find the Tres Alamos Cemetery. Tracy had a topo map showing a cemetery in the area, but after driving to the vicinity, the three could not find any cemetery. Unfortunately, the topo did not show the recent development and new dirt roads. After talking to some power line workers, who could find no cemetery on their GPS, and after further fruitless searching, Ken, Pat, and Richard returned to Benson.

On April 23, with a free afternoon in Benson after our visit to Croton Springs, Richard decided to look again for the Tres Alamos cemetery and the Johnson grave. At the Benson Historical Society museum, Connie Benjamin photocopied an article on Johnson and told Richard to see the historian at the



The “Tres Alamos AT” rock. *courtesy Tracy DeVault*

feed store. Although the latter had never found the Johnson grave, he showed Richard a Cochise County Historical Society publication entitled “Tres Alamos” that contained a photo of a rock (not the Johnson grave rock) on the cover inscribed with “TRES ALAMOS, AT.” The “AT” stood for Arizona Territory. This suggested that the inscription was made prior to 1911 when Arizona became a state. Apparently, knowledge of the rock was a secret shared by only a few until a photo of the rock appeared in the historical pamphlet. Having obtained the location of the “Tres Alamos” stone, Richard and Tracy abandoned the search for Johnson’s grave and set out to find the “TRES ALAMOS, AT” rock.

The directions got them to the general area, and while Richard and Tracy were searching, Mike Volberg drove by. Mike, who had also visited the Benson museum, had been exploring the area looking for a historic site known as Hooker Hot Springs. He spotted Richard’s truck and stopped to see what Richard and Tracy were doing. Richard stopped a cowboy who told the three to talk to a woman named Lisa, who had just pulled up behind them. Lisa knew exactly where the rock was. Richard had to give Lisa his name and address in case the rock “was stolen.” Lisa pointed out the rock’s location. Mike, Tracy and Richard went up on a hill to see the rock, which was a 3’ x 5’ x 1’ slab – there was no danger of them stealing it. It was nearly dark, and the search was over.



Dos Cabezas at dawn. *photo by Cam Wade*

The Trail Turtles 2010 Spring Mapping Trip

by Richard Greene

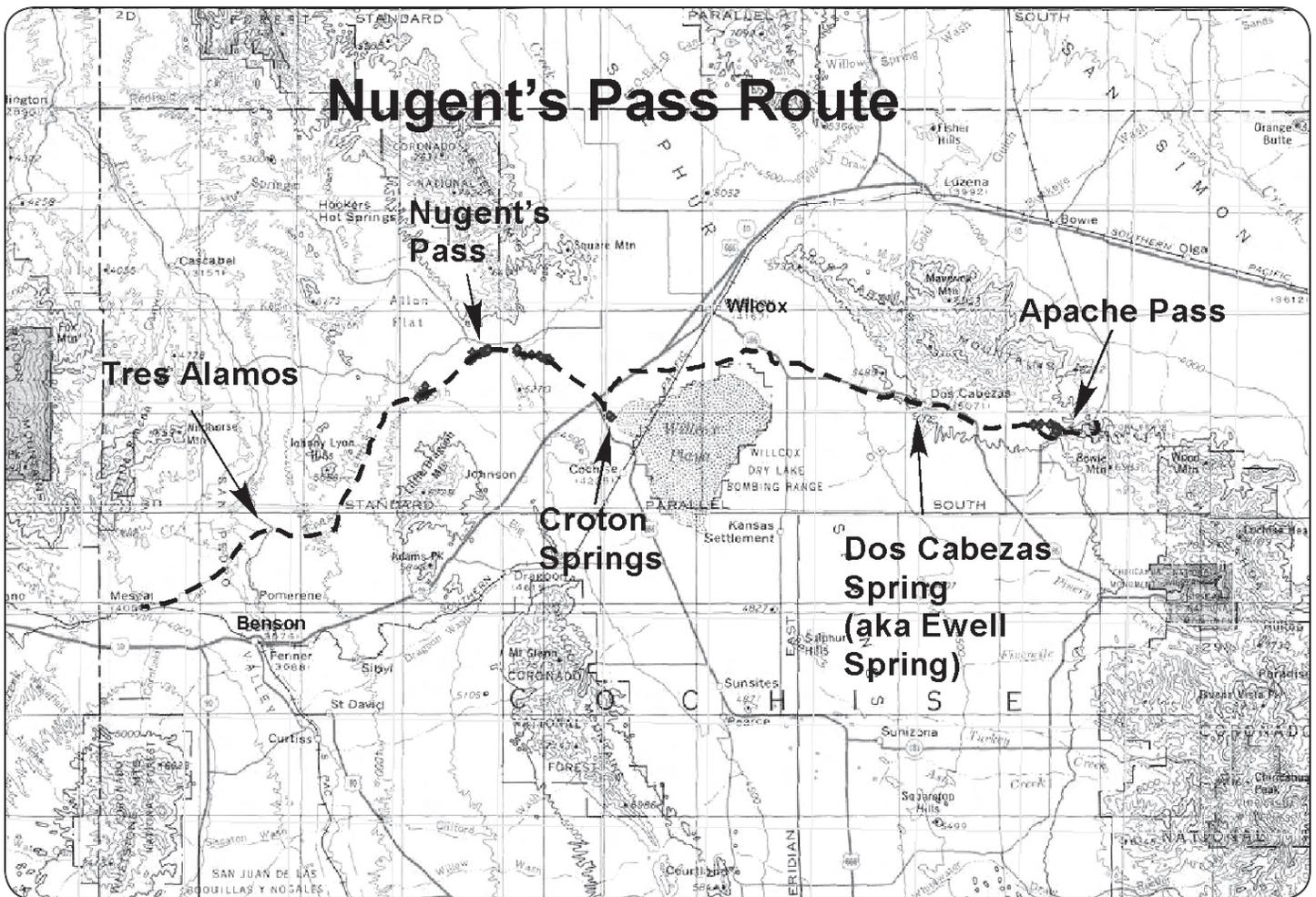
Thursday, April 22: We left Benson at 11:00 a.m. The last member of the mapping group, Mike Volburg, had just arrived, giving us a total of 13 Trail Turtles – Ken and Pat White, Bert Eddins, Cam Wade, Tracy and Judy DeVault, Rose Ann Tompkins, Kay Kelso, Richard and Marie Greene, Mike Volburg, Brock and Levida Hileman, and Dave Ottens – in nine vehicles. The 50 percent chance of rain that was forecast for the next two days was a cause for concern, so instead of going to Nugent’s Pass we decided to head to the less remote country west of Fort Bowie.

It was 69 miles from Benson to Apache Pass. We arrived at 12:30 p.m. We had barely parked when the weather got gusty and cold and began to sleet. There was still snow on the Chiricahua Mountains. A park ranger stopped to warn us about illegal immigrants using this area.

We divided into two groups: Pat, Ken, Cam, Rose Ann, Kay, Brock, Levida, and Richard would work the stretch by the Apache Pass road; Tracy, Mike, and Bert would follow a trace towards Dos Cabezas. The latter had been worked a number of years ago up to a certain point; we now were going to try to extend the trace further.

Pat found a mule shoe and Cam found a horseshoe. There were specks of rust parallel to Apache Pass Road but there was nothing more of significance in this area. We searched for awhile but with diminishing returns. When the weather degraded from bad to atrocious we decided to return to the vehicles. It took some shuttling with the available vehicles to gather up the stragglers along Apache Pass Road.

Tracy’s group was moving further away from Apache Pass Road. Eventually Tracy radioed that because of the time it was taking to walk out, someone should contact Larry Ludwig at Fort Bowie about our arrival



and the possibility of camping in the maintenance parking lot. Part of the group drove to the Fort Bowie parking lot and met with Larry.

Larry approved the use of the Administration Room for us. The room was bare, but it was warm and we were out of the cold weather. We chatted about future mapping options, including doing those small unmapped areas between previously mapped areas, as well as redoing old GPS readings that were subject to “dither.” Bert filled us in on his progress with attaining National Historic Trail status for the southern trails. By 8:00 p.m. we were all in bed. The bad weather continued all night –with gusty winds, freezing temperatures, and occasional sleet and snow flurries.

Friday, April 23: Larry had given us information on Croton Springs, an important trail landmark. To get there, we retraced our route from Apache Pass to Dos Cabezas. This section of the highway runs close to

the trail, which we will map in the future. Eventually the trail heads west and runs across the north side of the Wilcox Playa. We continued on to Wilcox and headed west, turning south on Highway 191. Within two miles, we pulled off the highway in view of a windmill, tank, and corral, which was as close as we could get to the springs.

After walking through brush and muddy grass clumps, we found scattered mounds or hummocks that covered the Croton Springs area. In trail days there were a number of springs in this area, and it was an important watering spot for travelers. One mound had a lot of old glass and pottery shards scattered around. A number of rocks in the area had rust marks. We met two hydrologists researching the local history of water flow over a period of thousands of years. They told us that the pumping of ground water in the Kansas Settlement area had lowered the water table, which was why there was no longer surface water at Croton Springs.



One of the (dry) Croton Springs. *photo by Ken White*

It was cold, so we decided to spend the night in a motel in Benson. Ironically, Benson had not had any snow or sleet the previous day or overnight. Several of us spent the afternoon searching again for historical sites around Tres Alamos. (See accompanying article.)

Saturday, April 24: We could see snow on the Chiricahuas. Dave Ottens, a friend of Charles Townley, had arrived to join us for the day. We drove north on the east side of the San Pedro River and drove through Pomerene with its cultivated fields, nice homes, school, and feed lot – it was a green country at this time. The road turned from asphalt to dirt, and we got off the maintained road to take a winding descent to Tres Alamos Wash. The old emigrant trail followed this broad wash. We had to deal with cattle gates and the slow, bumpy, and sandy 12-mile drive. At 10:25 a.m., twenty-one miles from Benson, we came out of the wash on to a good dirt road. We passed a woman on an ATV with seven cattle dogs.

After another 6 miles, we parked on top of a rolling and isolated landscape. Just after 11:00 a.m., we headed across shoulder-high clumps of grass into a wide, low-lying field and through a line of trees where we thought the trail would be. Mike found some old cans while Ken and Pat found some rust specks on a few rocks. Tracy and Cam found an old camp, but the artifacts dated from the 1920s. Around 1:00 p.m. we started drifting back to the vehicles to try another area. It was windy, sunny, and warm.

After lunch we drove 10 miles past the 3 Links Ranch (which contains substantial buildings on an expansive green plateau – it was wonderful, except for the feedlot). We turned south off Cascabel/3 Links Road on to a ranch road and made our way to the trail intersection just east of Nugent’s Pass.

Cam, Dave, Pat, and Ken went east, following a drainage, and found some rust. The drainage was significant – deep and wide in places with parallel drainages nearby – and the group was confident that it had once been the emigrant trail. Mike, Tracy, and Richard went west following the same drainage towards a low “dip” on the ridge that marked Nugent’s Pass. Where it flattened out, they found a sardine can key, two parts of a horseshoe, a metal strap, and two glass pieces, but no rust on the rocks that were all around. (The next day others did find rocks with rust.) They walked to a point where a two-track crossed the drainage on the far (west) side of Nugent’s Pass.

At 4:30 p.m. we were back in camp. We retired early to our vehicles. The lights of Wilcox gleamed through a gap in the hills. A three-quarter moon lit up the campsite. This was good camping.

Sunday, April 25: This was to be our last day of mapping. Daylight came at 5:15 a.m. and the sun shone on our camp by 6:00 a.m. It had been a



Trail up Tres Alamos Wash. *photo by Judy DeVault*

mild night and it was a cool morning, but the sun soon made it comfortable. Green vegetation was everywhere on the mountains, hills, and rolling land. Lots of spring flowers were out, and the hedgehog cactus was in bloom.

Rose Ann particularly wanted to visit Nugent's Pass, so the whole group made the hike except for Richard, who took the trail that Ken, Pat, and Cam had traversed the day before going east. On the hike up Nugent's Pass, Tracy used his metal detector to find mule shoes and a wagon clevis pin in a wash. The others found glass pieces and rusty rocks.

The group was back by 10:30 a.m. Near camp, Pat found a piece of a burner lid from an early wood stove. After a discussion, we resolved to check out the trail further east. We left camp, and went east on Cascabel Road. Our maps showed an access road to the trail area. When we arrived at the area where we expected to find the access road, it turned out to be the entrance of a private motorcycle racing club, the "Inde Motorsports Ranch." The ranch was open to members and invited guests only. We could hear and see motorcycles racing around the track. The aerials showed that our trail was south of the club's property. We called from the gate, and we were told, except for on racing day, we were welcome.



Clevis pin found near Nugent's Pass. *photo by Tracy DeVault*

The next closest access point was the "Bayo Telles" ranch road a couple of miles back. This meant we would have a lengthy walk before we got to the area where we thought we might find trail. Tracy drove down to the ranch house and got approval for us to be on the ranch. We drove through the ranch yard and followed a ranch road to a dead end at a green gate where we parked.

Ken and Pat went to check a trace closer to the parking area. Tracy, Cam, and Richard headed toward a round hill in the distance. Tracy estimated it was 1.5 miles to where the trail would be. They followed a drainage that appeared to run the course of the trail, but nothing was found except part of a barrel hoop, which had handmade rivets holding two pieces together. It was a long walk, with not much to show for the effort. About 2:30 p.m. the Turtles began the return to the vehicles. The mapping trip was over.



Rose Ann Tompkins at Nugent's Pass.



Trail Turtles waiting for dinner. *photo by Cam Wade*

From the Editors

In February 2010, Jim Turner, an Arizona historian, gave a talk at the Southern Trails Chapter's meeting in Tubac, AZ, on the Pima villages, highlighting the interaction between emigrants and the Pima. We include the first half of his paper on this topic; the second half will be presented in an upcoming issue of this publication.

Despite the countless books and films about him, William H. Bonney remains stubbornly elusive. Mark Gardner seeks to increase our understanding of Billy the Kid and his nemesis, Pat Garrett, in his new book *To Hell on a Fast Horse*, which Walter Drew Hill reviews in this issue. We also include an edited transcription of a talk that Gardner gave at the New Mexico History Museum in Santa Fe on March 26, 2010. The talk focuses on the methods, both traditional and web-based, that Gardner used while researching the book. Gardner's methodology will certainly be of interest to anyone undertaking genealogical or historical research. Given this issue's focus on the enigmatic Kid, we have included a brief article by Marc Simmons on an incident in the Lincoln County War. We thank Bonny Holder, of Cedar Crest, NM, for the cover of this issue – a reproduction of her painting, *Billy in Arizona*. Ms. Holder has been a Billy the Kid historian for many years; her art can be viewed on her website: picasaweb.google.com/BonnyHolder.

We review *On the Western Trails* by Susan Erb, a book in the Arthur Clark Company's American Trails Series. The book includes two diaries of Washington Peck, who traveled southern trails during the 1850s.

In this issue, we include a news item that is based on reports from Albert Eddins, the Southern Trails Chapter's president. Eddins discusses two recent meetings, which focused on promoting the chapter's major project: attaining National Historic Trails status for the network of southern emigrant trails.

The Trail Turtles were highly active this spring. Richard Greene and Tracy DeVault report on the mapping trips to Apache Pass and its environs. Reports on other trips, including one to Anza Borrego and an exciting canoe trip on the usually-dry Gila River east of Yuma, will be included in upcoming issues.

Deborah and Jon Lawrence

A Visit to John Chaffin's Grave

Left to right: Rose Ann Tomkins, Tracy DeVault, Judy DeVault, and Ellajean Bledsoe, of Lincoln, Nebraska, viewing the gravesite of Bledsoe's great-great grandfather, John Chaffin. The grave is located on the Southern Trail north of Deming, New Mexico, and near the east entrance to Cooke's Canyon. The Trail Turtles have been researching Chaffin and his descendants for some time. (See "Finding Ellajean Bledsoe" by Tracy DeVault, *Desert Tracks*, June 2008.) The Southern Trails Chapter is working on a project to place an OCTA marker at John Chaffin's grave.

Rose Ann Tompkins

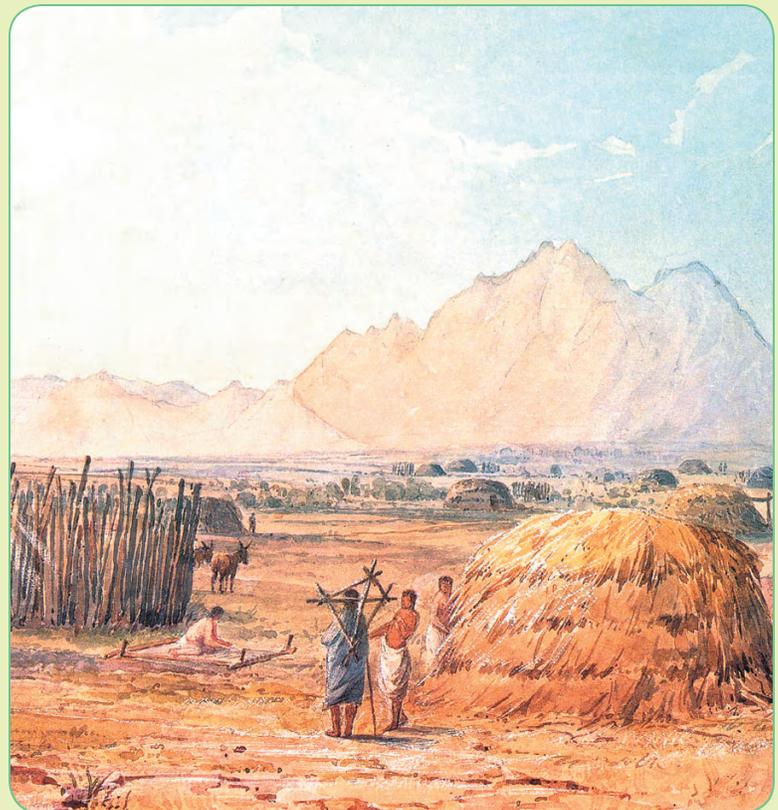


Southern Trails Chapter

Oregon-California Trails Association



OCTA:
The Oregon-California
Trails Association



A view of the Pima Villages.
From the Bartlett boundary survey.