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PATHWAY TO THE SOUTHWEST: TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION ALONG THE GILA TRAIL

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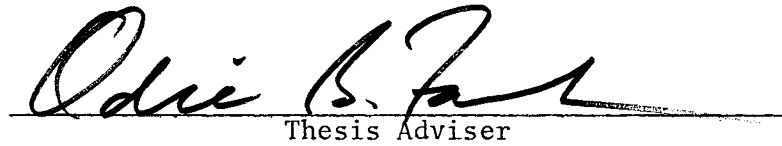

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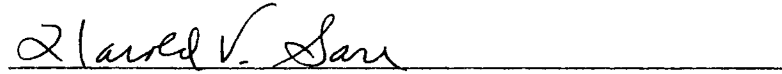

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PREFACE

Anglo-Americans in the nineteeth century were not noted for their tolerance either of other nations or minority groups within their own. Certainly this was true of the rugged individualists who pushed the frontier ever westward during the six decades from 1820 to 1880, for both their words and their deeds reflected little concern for the technicalities of international law or the questions of morality involved in the conquest and occupation of additional territory. That the American Indian or the Hispanic people of the Southwest might have preferred to be left to their own devices was a question which either did not occur to them or was of no concern. The Anglo-American came to their land on business, and if they interfered with the conduct of that business the Indian and the Mexican became uncivilized barbarians in his sight, and were to be dealt with accordingly.

Thus, the literature and the documents of the Anglo-American pioneers who entered the Southwest and subsequently explored, conquered, and developed it, are chronicles that smack of racial and cultural superiority to the modern reader. And this should not be surprising, for the doctrine of Manifest Destiny proclaimed the superiority of Anglo-American civilization and prophesied its ultimate dominion over the continent. The vast majority of those who patronized the Gila Trail in traveling westward reflected this philosophy either in their writings or their actions, and any history which accurately portrays their attitudes

and achievements will, to a degree, convey that prejudice. The reader must be aware of that fact as he approaches this work, and must not mistake the attitudes described as those of the writer, for no student of the American Southwest is more aware and appreciative of the rich cultural and historical heritage of the American Indian and the Chicano. Their contributions to our nation's history cannot be gainsaid.

In the preparation of any work of this magnitude, one incurs more obligations than ever can be repaid, but perhaps the acknowledgment here of my indebtedness to a number of persons will, in a small way, indicate my gratitude. Certainly, I do appreciate their efforts in my behalf, and my only wish is that a more substantial reward could be offered them.

To Dr. Odie B. Faulk, who suggested the topic of the study and with great forbearance and fortitude offered incisive and invaluable criticism throughout its development, must go the first fruits of any offering of thanksgiving. Without his sagacious guidance the work would have been much more difficult, yet I must assume totally the responsibility for any errors in fact or interpretation which may remain.

Also I wish to thank the remainder of my committee, Professors Bernard W. Eissenstat, Michael M. Smith, Neil J. Hackett, and Harold V. Sare, for their most constructive criticism; by pinpointing shortcomings they provided insights which definitely strengthened the thesis. Such patient and competent direction will be remembered always with appreciation.

Behind every doctoral dissertation stands a librarian, and in this case the unsung heroine is Mrs. Mamie Harris of Southeastern State College, Durant, Oklahoma. Her patient and unflagging devotion in

fulfilling my incessant and gargantuan requests for interlibrary loan material qualify her for a twenty-four carat halo. The completion of this work coincided with her last year of active service at Southeastern, and I am sure that I have materially contributed to her appreciation of a period of well-deserved rest. In consolation, I hereby nominate her for librarian of the decade.

Although Mrs. Harris was my direct contact with the librarians of the world, I must also thank Phylis Hinman of the Chickasaw Interlibrary System, Ardmore, Oklahoma, and Mrs. Josephine Monk of the Oklahoma State University Library for their monumental contribution of time and effort in supplying the material necessary for the conduct of this study.

To my division chairman, Dr. Louis G. Johnson of Southeastern State College, I wish to extend my thanks for his cooperation in scheduling my teaching load so as to permit me a maximum of uninterrupted time to do research and to write the dissertation. Without his encouragement and assistance the time involved in completion would have been increased considerably. Also, I very much appreciate the assistance of Dr. Edward L. Byrd, Jr. for his patient proofreading of portions of the manuscript, and I hope that the labor did not seem as dry and exhausting as the passage of which he read.

To my two small sons, Chuck and Chris, I apologize for being absent for the greater portion of their first two years on this planet, and promise to do many hours of happy penance at the park and reading bed-time stories in partial restitution.

For some incomprehensible reason the person most deserving of thanks in this type preface always seems to come last on the list, and

that is the case here. The "little woman" spends about two years of her life being widow, mother, father, research assistant, typist, and girl Friday, and she is rewarded with honorable mention at the most. I confess to conformity, but not to ingratitude. Clyta "Girl-Friday" Harris has surpassed all that reason could demand--but life is seldom reasonable for the graduate student--and the completion of this dissertation is as much her accomplishment as mine. I publicly acknowledge my debt and profusely express my gratitude.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	PRELUDE TO EMPIRE: THE ERA OF THE MOUNTAIN MEN	9
III.	THE PATH TO EMPIRE: COOKE'S WAGON ROAD	41
IV.	AMATEUR IMPERIALISTS AT WORK: THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO AND THE GADSDEN PURCHASE	79
V.	THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH: FORTY-NINERS ON THE GILA TRAIL .	121
VI.	THE BOVINE BONANZA: CATTLE DRIVES ON THE GILA TRAIL . . .	149
VII.	COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION ON THE TRAIL: THE BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND MAIL	174
VIII.	THE CIVIL WAR ALONG THE GILA TRAIL	197
IX.	THE IRON TRAIL: THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD	225
X.	CONCLUSION	255
BIBLIOGRAPHY	. . . .	261

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In The Great Plains, Walter Prescott Webb noted that the settlement of the United States proceeded in an orderly fashion along a line which roughly paralleled the ninety-eighth meridian, but that it then skipped across to the Pacific Coast and the settlement of California and the Oregon territory. Webb contended that when the civilization of the Great Plains was contrasted with that of the Eastern timberlands, a phenomenon became apparent which he called an "institutional fault." At this "fault" which stretches from the middle of Texas to Illinois or Dakota,

> . . . the ways of life and living changed. Practically every institution that was carried across it was either broken and remade or else greatly altered. The ways of travel, the weapons, the method of tilling the soil, the plows and other agricultural implements, and even the laws themselves were modified.[1]

In the process of leaving the "fault," however, civilization did not cross the Great Plains in one great quantum leap. It first reduced itself to its lowest common denominator--the pioneer--who then with suffering and sacrifice measured the distance between East and West. The pioneer's path often took him into the American Southwest where the Gila Trail became the principal artery of transportation and

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[1]Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (Waltham, Mass., 1931), pp. 8-9.

communication between the settled East and the settled West. And in the process of serving as a route of travel, the Trail also evolved into an artery of settlement. Previously, such towns as Tucson and Tubac had been only tiny outposts of civilization in a sea of Indian domination; but with the opening of the Trail, they began to grow, and soon came other towns such as El Centro, Yuma, Gila Bend, Casa Grande, Benson, Bowie, Lordsburg, Deming, and Las Cruces. The importance of these developments to all aspects of the subsequent history of the Southwest is self-evident.

This dissertation principally will be a summary and synthesis showing how Anglo-Americans attempted to cope with the need for rapid transportation and communication through a region where unfamiliar geographic barriers were made more formidable by unfavorable political and economic complications. It will show how the Gila Trail first was opened; how Americans faced the perplexing problems of extreme distance, aridity, and heat; for in the Southwest, the Anglo-American encountered a land without navigable rivers, and with so little water that the great distance between the West Coast and the edge of the Great Plains could be negotiated only with much danger and difficulty. Thus, the pioneer confronted circumstances unique in the history of American civilization, and the response to this challenge was innovation on a scale seldom seen before or after. Many monographs exist on various aspects of this topic, yet no work of the scope herein proposed has ever been completed which would link all the component parts into a comprehensive narrative and place them in proper perspective.

The Gila Trail was the principal artery of transit for this vast region from the time of the mountain men until the building of the

transcontinental railroads. When one of these, the Southern Pacific, ran in close proximity to the Trail, its completion in essence marked the closing of the latter. But during its half-century of service, the Trail was a path over which passed a veritable pageant of history. The route first was opened during the Mexican War by Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke and the Mormon Battalion. Assigned the task of finding a wagon road to connect Santa Fe with the coast at San Diego, Cooke and the Mormons marched. And across the route they opened subsequently passed forty-niners, cattlemen, the Butterfield Overland Mail, freighters, soldiers in both blue and gray, and finally the builders of the railroad, not to mention the Indians--principally several tribes of Apaches who made life uncertain and unsafe for the patrons of the Trail.

The Apaches probably felt no need to justify their harrassment of the whites, but if they had the simple fact that they had dominated the region since the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries probably would have been sufficient explanation. Sometime during this period they overran the lands from West Texas across southern New Mexico and into southeastern Arizona.[2] These areas were occupied by Indians at the time the Apaches arrived, but the identification of these earlier inhabitants is a matter for the archeologist, not for the historian--for the Apaches either assimilated them so well or eradicated them so completely that no historical record remains of them if such ever

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[2]Dan L. Thrapp, The Conquest of Apacheria (Norman, Okla., 1967), pp. vii-xii.

existed.[3]

The Apaches split into numerous sub-tribes or bands in response to the demands placed upon them by the geography of the region. The Lipan Apaches and the Kiowa Apaches occupied the eastern area and roamed the territory from the Big Bend of West Texas northward to Kansas. The Jicarilla Apaches settled into northern New Mexico, while the southern part was the domain of the Mescalero and Warm Springs group. The White Mountain Apaches, the Chiricahua Apaches, the Coyotero Apaches, the San Carlos Apaches, and the Cibecue group inhabited central and east-central Arizona.[4]

The Apaches were not destined to enjoy undisputed possession of the land. The early years of the sixteenth century saw the last sole Indian ownership of the Southwest, for in 1528 the sea cast some eighty Spaniards onto the Texas coast near Galveston Island. Almost eight years later, four surviving members of that band were rescued by fellow Spaniards at a frontier outpost in west-central Mexico. Taken to the viceroy at Mexico City, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca reported that although he had not seen evidence of great wealth during his extensive wanderings, he had heard rumors of seven golden cities somewhere to the north. With those words Cabeza de Vaca created the legend of the Seven Cities of Cíbola which would lure gold-hungry explorers

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[3]The disappearance of the Hohokam is discussed by Edwin Corle in The Gila: River of the Southwest (New York, 1951), pp. 30-31. The problem remains unsolved.

[4]For division of Indians, see E. E. Dale, <u>The Indians of the Southwest</u> (Norman, Okla., 1949), pp. 12-23.

northward into the Indians' dominions.[5]

And so the Spaniards marched north. First Fray Marcos de Niza, a Franciscan missionary, accompanied by friendly Indians from Mexico, penetrated Arizona; the following year, 1540, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado led an expedition across Arizona, New Mexico, the Texas Panhandle, Oklahoma, and central Kansas. He found neither the Seven Cities nor the fabled wealth of the Gran Quivira, only seas of sand and grass; but legends of fabulously wealthy cities died hard in Spanish minds. Although the control of the land returned temporarily to its Indian inhabitants, periodically the conquistadors and their descendants would return to the region.[6]

These incursions created an awareness of the northern territories, and during these years of exploration, settlements in Mexico gradually crept northward. The year 1598 was a milestone in Southwestern history, for it marked the founding of a town in central New Mexico by Juan de Oñate with four hundred soldiers, civilians and Indian allies. The site of the new settlement was the vicinity of Santa Fe, which in 1609 would be established.[7] Thus was begun the Spanish settlement of New Mexico, to be followed almost a century later by the colonization of Texas and Arizona, and, after another half-century, of California.

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[5]John Francis Bannon, The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821 (New York, 1970), pp. 12-15.

[6]Ibid., pp. 15-21. Also see Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1888 (Facsimile ed.; Albuquerque, 1962), p. 64.

[7]Henry G. Albert, ed., New Mexico (New York, 1962), p. 64.

Although the Spanish occupation of these areas was primarily in response to supposed French and Russian threats in Texas and California, respectively, neither of these nationalities proved to be the ultimate antagonist in the contest for control of the Interior Provinces--as the Spanish called the Southwest. It was the Indian who remained master of the situation. Neither Spanish missionaries nor Spanish soldiers could Christianize or chastise the fiercely independent Apaches and Comanches into submission during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[8] This situation certainly was not to be altered during the early years of the nineteenth century, for from the moment in the fall of 1810 when Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla rang the bell that signaled the start of the Mexican war for independence until that goal was achieved a decade later, no military forces could be spared by either side to prevent the Indians from again taking control of the Interior Provinces. Gradually Mexico's tenuous hold on Arizona loosened under the fierce assaults of the Yumas and the Apaches, until by 1830 the only remaining outposts were the small, adobe-walled presidios of Tubac and Tucson. These provided their residents with scant shelter from the showers of arrows that had washed away all other vestiges of Spanish influence in Arizona.[9]

The dawn of the Mexican period found New Mexico in only slightly better circumstances than the territory to the west, for it too was in peril. Plagued by a faltering economy that was dominated by a few

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[8]Bannon, Spanish Borderlands, pp. 170-171.

[9]Ray A. Billington, The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860 (New York, 1956), p. 14.

great sheep barons and even fewer mining magnates, New Mexico's situation was complicated further by an archaic and enthusiastically corrupt government. Spain's imperialistic mercantilist system long had stifled trade between the region and the outside world, thus leaving New Mexicans at the mercy of the merchants of Chihuahua. What little commerce there was flowed north and south along the Chihuahua Trail, and for all practical purposes the trade amounted to little less than tribute collection by the southern imperialists.[10] Atrophy was the natural enough result, and by the 1820s, Santa Fe and Albuquerque were the only population centers of any importance. Under these circumstances a description of the territory as being "of somnolent indifference to both progress and the outside world" was, if anything, an understatement.

The birth of the Mexican Republic brought changes. The new authorities realized that they could not long expect to retain their northern provinces if these were left in a state of disarray with the expansive-minded United States for a neighbor. The only comforting aspect of the situation was the thought that California need not be involved in the revamping project. That province was safe, successful, and satisfied. At the other extreme lay Arizona which appeared impossible to manage, and the Mexican government saw no reason to ride

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[10]See Max L. Moorhead, New Mexico's Royal Road: Trade and Travel on the Chihuahua Trail (Norman, Okla., 1958), pp. 49-52. Also see his article "Spanish Transportation in the Southwest, 1540-1856," New Mexico Historical Review, XXXII (April, 1957), 107-122.

[11]Billington, Far Western Frontier, p. 14.

the see-saw with the Indians any longer. The cycle of conquest, loss, and reconquest was meaningless, but New Mexico was another story.[12]

With 44,000 inhabitants, New Mexico was ten times as populous as Texas, and such resources as it possessed could not be abandoned without an effort to salvage the situation. The solution which appeared most feasible to the authorities was to revive and expand the region's commerce and thereby revitalize its economy and population. It was this decision which opened New Mexico to American trade in 1822, brought Americans to the Southwest in increasing numbers, and reversed the historic pattern of trade and travel for the Interior Provinces. Since the sixteenth century, commerce and communication had moved on a basically north-south axis; the settlements established along the northern frontiers arched northward from west to east, and the principle lines of supply and communication radiated from the outer perimeter inward toward the City of Mexico--as the spokes of a wheel run from the rim to the hub.[13] Thus the Mexican decision to reverse traditional Spanish trade policy in 1822 marked an historical watershed; from that time the lines of communication, commerce, and ultimately settlement began to shift. The tide now flowed from east to west, and it would prove strong indeed. Within three decades a veritable flood of adventurers and settlers submerged Mexico's northern provinces under the sea of American sovereignty.

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[12]<u>Ibid</u>.

[13]For details of pre-1822 commerce and travel in northern Mexico see Moorhead, <u>New Mexico's Royal Road</u>.

CHAPTER II

PRELUDE TO EMPIRE: THE ERA OF THE MOUNTAIN MEN

After 1822 Americans came to the Southwest in increasing numbers. They came because they already had been entering the territory illegally in small groups for nearly two decades. In 1806, when Spanish soldiers arrested Captain Zebulon M. Pike's party at a stockade on the Rio Grande some seventy-five miles north of Taos and took them to Santa Fe, Pike found two Americans already in residence there.[1] Despite Pike's protests, he was escorted south to Chihuahua and there interrogated at length. The Chihuahuan authorities were less than cordial, and after relieving Pike of all documents they could discover, they sent the party back to the United States. News of the brusque treatment afforded this party apparently was enough to discourage any large-scale American penetration of the Spanish frontier for several years thereafter. Then the revolt begun by Father Hidalgo in September, 1810, started rumors of Mexican independence circulating in the United States. This inspired Robert McKnight and James Baird to recruit a group in Missouri in the spring of 1812 and head for New Mexico. Unfortunately the news of independence proved premature, and the party was incarcerated until 1820 when their release was finally

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[1]Jean Baptiste Lalande and James Purcell. See LeRoy R. Hafen, The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West (10 vols., Glendale, Calif., 1965), I, 60.

obtained through diplomatic channels.[2]

Fear of Spanish wrath was no deterrent to American trappers and traders, for despite the unfriendly receptions many received at the hands of the Spaniards, many more came. One of the larger trapping parties to attempt operations in Spanish territory was that of A. P. Chouteau and Julius De Mun of St. Louis, Missouri.[3] They moved westward in the fall of 1815, and for a period of two years trapped beaver near the headwaters of the Arkansas and Platte Rivers. In 1816 the party was enlarged considerably when De Mun returned to Missouri with furs and brought back an additional forty-five trappers.

A party of this size covered considerable territory, and after two years of trapping the Arkansas and Platte region, the trappers were ready to move south toward the beaver-infested Rio Grande and its tributaries. Thus in 1817 De Mun sought and was granted temporary permission to enter Spanish territory and to continue his operations on the Rio Grande. Acting Governor Alberto Máynez, the official who allowed the party to enter the region, was friendly with Americans, but he also was cautious enough to inquire of his superiors about the advisability of his decision. A reply later came from the comandante-general to order the Americans to leave, and Máynez obediently relayed the command to the trappers. The Americans were reluctant to depart from such bounteous regions, however, and tarried longer than they should have, believing that Máynez would not press the issue. They should have left post haste, for in the interim the friendly Máynez

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[2]Frank B. Golley, "James Baird, Early Santa Fe Trader," Missouri Historical Society Bulletin, XV (April, 1959), 171-193.

[3]Thomas M. Marshall, ed., "The Journals of Jules De Mun," Missouri Historical Society Collections, V (1927-1928), 167-208.

was replaced by the decidedly unfriendly Pedro Maria Allande.

As the party was making its final preparations for the long trip home, Spanish troops arrived and placed the Americans under arrest. Chouteau, De Mun, and company then were marched to Santa Fe, relieved of their furs and personal property, and accorded the usual amenities afforded by Spanish prisons. That was in May, 1817. Forty-eight days later they were released, and although their property was confiscated by the officials, the Spaniards generously gave each man a horse and probably advice not to return to Spanish territory. Chouteau, for one, was ready to heed such advice; he returned to the Verdigris River area, founded a trading post, and never ventured into the Southwest again.[4]

Indeed, few were willing to risk such treatment from Spanish officials, in addition to taking the chance of being the honoree at an Indian scalping party or the main course of a grizzly bear's dinner. Probably not more than a dozen significant expeditions were undertaken in the years between the beginning of Mexico's war for independence and the opening of the Santa Fe trade. The opening of that trade did bring trappers as well as traders swarming into the Southwest, and this sometimes created problems, for although the Mexican government legalized trading expeditions for Americans, it did not legalize trapping expeditions. The laws prohibiting such remained on the books; thus the number of trapping expeditions tended to vary in direct ratio to the venality of the Mexican governor at

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[4]Hafen, Fur Trade, I, p. 62.

Santa Fe.[5] When the governor was well disposed toward Americans, the enterprising trappers secured "trading" licenses from him, marched a short distance either north toward the Indian pueblos or south toward Chihuahua, and then turned sharply toward the beaver-rich streams of the Gila-Colorado area.[6]

The trappers first came as members of trading expeditions, but when the traders departed for the return trip they invariably left without a few of the more adventurous souls. Those who remained in Santa Fe, or, as was more often the case, in Taos, spent the summer making preparations for the winter trapping season. Thus did a number of prominent trappers enter the region. Ewing Young started for Santa Fe in the spring of 1822 on a trading venture; Thomas L. Smith and Antoine Robidoux arrived similarly in 1824; and in 1825 a veritable army of Americans descended on New Mexico--one group alone numbered 112 men, two of whom were Sylvester Pattie and his son, James Ohio Pattie.[7] These were but a few of the many who penetrated the Spanish frontier to conduct extensive trapping operations between 1822 and 1826 on the headwaters and tributaries of the Rio Grande and other rivers in the northern part of the Spanish provinces. In three seasons they enjoyed such success that the northern rivers were

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[5]Josiah Gregg noted this problem. See his _Commerce on the Prairies_, ed. by Max L. Moorhead (Norman, Okla., 1954), p. 160.

[6]This was the procedure followed repeatedly by James Ohio Pattie, Ewing Young, and numerous other trappers.

[7]Charles L. Camp, ed., _George C. Yount and His Chronicles of The West: Comprising Extracts From His "Memoirs" and From the Orange Clark "Narrative"_ (Denver, Colo., 1966), pp. 6-7.

practically destitute of beaver.[8] As this circumstance became evident, the trappers looked greedily toward the Southwest and the beaver-laden streams and rivers that constituted the Gila-Colorado system. The trappers had little difficulty infiltrating the Rio Grande region, but the Gila was another matter. There the Spaniards had a very effective force of game wardens--the Apaches.

It was ironic that as viciously as the southwestern Indians fought against the penetration of the trapping parties, they were mainly responsible for the licensing of the most famous of all the trapping expeditions. James Ohio Pattie and his father, Sylvester Pattie, arrived in Santa Fe with the Pratte expedition late in 1825 and requested permission of the governor to trap the as-yet untouched regions of the Gila River. They were told that the governor was not certain he had the authority to license such a venture, but he would consider the matter and give his answer the following day. Returning at the appointed hour, the Patties found the governor disinclined to license them. Being men of the world, they quickly perceived the problem and offered the governor five percent of the take on any expedition which he would sanction. The proposition demanded thought; the governor requested the Patties to return the next day at the same hour.[9]

The Americans were dejected at this turn of events, and apparently were not optimistic about their chances of success the next day.

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[8]Ralph Moody, _The Old Trails West_ (New York, 1963), p. 33.

[9]James Ohio Pattie, _The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky During an Expedition from St. Louis through the Vast Regions Between that Place and the Pacific Ocean, and Thence Back Through the City of Mexico to Vera Cruz, During Journeyings of Six Years, Etc._, ed. by Timothy Flint (1833); edited with Notes, Introductions, Index, by Reuben Gold (1905). (Reprint; Glendale, Calif., 1966), p. 77.

That night, however, messengers brought word of a Comanche raid on a village to the east of Santa Fe. Several Spaniards and two Americans had been killed, and the wife of one American, as well as four Spanish women had been taken prisoners. As the news spread through Santa Fe, the story grew until some women seeking refuge among the Americans told them the Comanches were within Santa Fe. This rumor, the screams of terror piercing the darkness, and the rattle of drums in the town square so alarmed the American party that they stood on their arms through the night, convinced that Comanches "were skulking around, dealing out death in darkness and silence with their arrows." But no attack came, and dawn revealed an army of four hundred men prepared to pursue the raiders. When the governor invited the Americans to join the force, they readily accepted, hoping to ingratiate themselves to the Mexicans.[10]

Four days of hard riding brought the Anglo-American party within sight of the Indians. As the Comanches moved toward a mountain pass, the rescue party chose to divide, the Mexicans coming behind the Indians while the Americans circled in front to block their advance through the pass. By mid-afternoon the maneuver was completed, and the trappers lay hidden as the unsuspecting Indians entered the defile. The first sight which greeted the Americans was the women, naked, driving a large drove of sheep and horses; the warriors rode immediately behind them. When the party closed to within thirty yards of the trappers, the ambush was sprung. As the fusilade burst forth, the women turned and ran toward their rescuers, but three fell victim to Indian lances before they could reach freedom. As James Ohio Pattie and another young man rushed forward

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[10] _Ibid._, p. 78.

to defend the remaining two, Pattie's comrade fell in the attempt. And the instant before a warrior would have plunged his upraised spear into one of the fleeing women, a lucky bullet dispatched him.[11]

The two captives reached Pattie, and he quickly removed them to the relative safety of the trappers' skirmish line. A second massed volley from the American rifles sufficed to scatter the Comanches for a few minutes, but they returned to the attack when they saw that the Mexicans had deserted their comrades. The warriors closed to within pistol shot, and a hot fire fight ensued for ten minutes before the braves were put to flight. After a short pursuit the rescue force returned to the scene of the battle, gathered their dead and wounded, and moved onto the plain to encamp for the night.[12]

The trappers were in luck, for one of the captives who had managed to reach young Pattie was the daughter of the former governor. Pattie solicitously wrapped the beautiful young woman in his hunting shirt and conducted her to safety. That evening in camp she sought out her benefactor and so profusely expressed her gratitude that the strapping American "did not know how to meet her acknowledgments and was embarrassed." Three days later the young lady was joyfully reunited with her father, the former governor, and the old man apparently employed all his oratorical talents in an effort to praise James Ohio Pattie in adequate terms. Again the modest young man was embarrassed.[13]

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[11]Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[12]Ibid., p. 82.

[13]Ibid., p. 83.

Pattie was sufficiently compensated for his chagrin, however. When the party reached Santa Fe, they were greeted with a salute which they returned with their rifles, and a celebration was under way. Two days of dining and dancing followed. Feasts and *fandangos* were fine fun, but the morning of the third day brought the reward the trappers desired most--an official trapping license. Thus in the winter of 1825 began James Ohio Pattie's career as explorer, trapper, and Indian fighter.[14]

The course of exploration which the trappers would follow as they moved into the Southwest was dictated by the geography of the region. The Gila River ran almost directly west to its confluence with the Colorado, whence the river flowed southward into the Gulf of California. The favorite method of operation for these trapping expeditions was to divide along the upper reaches of the tributaries of the large rivers and then trap their way--in teams of two or three--to the junction of the smaller streams with the parent waterway. There the small groups would combine and continue their operations down the river until they had loaded their pack animals and reunited the original party for the return trip.[15]

The usual course for these operations during the first couple of years was down the Rio Grande through Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Socorro to the Santa Rita copper mines for a short period of rest and refitting. From Santa Rita the parties then headed northwest to the

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[14]*Ibid*., p. 84.

[15]For a thorough discussion of the trappers' methods of operation, see Robert G. Cleland, *This Reckless Breed of Men: The Trappers and Fur Traders of the Southwest* (New York, 1950), pp. 10-53.

headwaters of the Gila or the Salt River, and would trap westward along these practically parallel streams to their confluence. Smaller parties might split off the Salt to trap north along the Verde; others along the Gila might turn south at that river's junction with the Rio San Pedro. The ultimate crossroads, however, was the junction of the Gila and the Colorado rivers. Their wanderings were by no means confined to such a simple pattern, but to trace the intricacies of their travels would be not only confusing but meaningless. The important fact is that they gradually moved across southern New Mexico, Arizona, California, and when they had completed their wanderings, they found themselves on the Pacific coast. They thereby became the first Americans to cross the southwest by the route which would be known as the Gila Trail.

The number of Americans who undertook operations in the Southwest during the season of 1825-26 is impossible to determine. After the trapper party performed so well in the rescue of the Spanish women from the Comanches in December, 1825, Governor Antonio Narbona licensed several groups.[16] But he certainly had no idea that he was sanctioning a minor invasion. A year or so later, in correspondence with the governor of Chihuahua, Narbona complained about the trappers' devious methods. Not all had presented themselves for licensing; instead a few had come to Santa Fe, obtained the license, then returned to their

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[16]Narbona cataloged the Americans in a letter to the Governor of Sonora dated August 31, 1826. Se Archive de Governation, Mexico, Commercie, Expediente 44, Tome II, no. 2., quoted in Kenneth L. Holmes, <u>Ewing Young: Master Trapper</u> (Portland, Ore., 1967), p. 27.

waiting comrades at some camp or village outside the capitol.[17] An Englishman who was traveling in Mexico in 1827 estimated their number at about 180 men, but some historians feel this was far short of their actual strength.[18]

It is equally frustrating to attempt an assessment of leadership among the various parties.[19] Those trappers who bothered to recount their exploits to biographers or who left personal memoirs were no help, for every man was his own hero. Their names would figure prominently in subsequent exploration of the Southwest--Ewing Young, James Ohio Pattie, George Yount, William Wolfskill, Milton Sublette, Kit Carson, are but a few--but even if the nominal leadership of the parties could be determined, it would contribute little other than the satisfaction of curiosity. Whether the group of trappers who finally crossed the Colorado and made their way to California was commanded by one of the Patties or by someone else was immaterial when contrasted to the importance of their feat. The credit for first traversing the territory between Santa Fe and the Pacific coast was disputed, however. There is evidence to indicate that Richard Campbell preceeded the Patties to the Pacific, but no account of his specific route or the membership

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[17]Joseph J. Hill, The History of Warner's Ranch and its Environs (Los Angeles, 1927), pp. 72-73.

[18]Holmes, Ewing Young, p. 30.

[19]Joseph J. Hill accomplished much by his painstaking comparison of several trappers' memoirs, but even after his labors much still remains unknown about the membership and leadership of the trapping expeditions. Joseph J. Hill, "New Light on Pattie and the Southwestern Fur Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVI (April, 1923) 243-254. Also see Thomas M. Marshall, "St. Vrain's Expedition to the Gila in 1826," in The Pacific Ocean in History, ed. by H. M. Stephens and H. E. Bolton (New York, 1917), pp. 429-438.

of his party survives.[20] Of the Patties there can be no doubt that they made the trek, but they did it in a most halting fashion.

The Patties either formed or joined one of the first trapping parties licensed by Governor Narbona, and after accompanying the ex-governor and his rescued daughter to their home near Albuquerque, the seven trappers continued on toward Socorro. There they met another party of seven trappers and merged with them for additional defense against the Indians. Passing through Socorro, the enlarged expedition traveled a short distance down the Rio Grande, then marched due west for the Santa Rita copper mines--a distance of about one hundred miles--and then turned to the northwest. Seven days after leaving the banks of the Rio Grande, the trappers stood at the banks of the Gila.[21] The first night's trapping yielded thirty beaver. Quickly the trappers dispersed to trace the course of several streams back into the mountains, agreeing to meet at the main stream again after four or five days; but when the members of the Pattie group returned to the designated spot, they found that the seven newcomers were fair weather friends, for they had moved down the main stream before their comrades could return from their explorations and were trapping so effectively that the Pattie group could catch neither the trappers nor even enough beaver to eat.[22]

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[20]Alice B. Malone, "The Richard Campbell Party of 1827," California Historical Society Quarterly, XVM (1939), 347-354; David Lavender, Bent's Fort (New York, 1954), p. 81. One historian thinks Campbell's route may have been similar to Wolfskill's route in 1831; see William H. Goetzmann, Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863 (New Haven, 1959), p. 48.

[21]Pattie, Personal Narrative, pp. 86-87.

[22]Ibid., pp. 88-89.

The Patties finally reached the confluence of the Gila and the Rio San Francisco, and the latter stream rewarded them for their perseverance. They caught thirty-nine beaver the first night. Ascending the San Francisco, they found themselves in a veritable paradise of game and scenic beauty. The bill of fare was enough to tempt even the palate of a connoisseur--bear, turkey, goose, elk, mountain sheep--and above all, beaver. Two hundred and fifty pelts were taken before the trappers returned to the Gila and cached their furs.[23]

Proceeding down the Gila, the Patties encountered four of the seven trappers who had deserted the parent party some weeks previously. Although the Patties had cursed the deserters and wished "that they might experience no better fate, than to fall into the hands of the savages, or be torn in pieces by the white bears," they quickly repented of such thoughts when the four survivors reached their camp. The seven had received ample reward for their perfidy; they had been attacked by Indians, their horses and supplies stolen, and the party scattered pell-mell in an effort to save their scalps. The following day, two more straggled into the Pattie camp, one of them badly wounded. The six chastened trappers advised their benefactors to abandon the hunt and return with them to the safety of the mines.[24]

Giving up--according to James Ohio Pattie--was the last thing they would consider. Instead, he proposed that the six survivors join the others and take revenge on the Apaches for their depredations. This brave talk fell on deaf ears, for the six were determined to cross

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[23]*Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 92.

paths with those Indians no more. Thus three days later they secured from the Patties three horses and enough food to make the return trip to the mines. The remaining four might have been well advised to have accompanied them.[25]

Continuing down the Gila for five days more, the Pattie party arrived at the scene of the seven trappers' battle with the Apaches--or rather the sight of the attempted massacre. They found the quartered remains of the missing man lying about his head, which the Apaches had impaled on a stick and shot full of arrows. The ghastly sight had a sobering effect, for Pattie related that they "gathered up the parts of the body and buried them."[26]

The trappers had by this time reached the vicinity of present-day Coolidge Dam in Arizona. They had followed the Gila to the point where it descended "into a ravine so narrow as barely to afford it space to pass."[27] Their efforts to circumvent this defile were at last rewarded with the discovery of a path which led to the summit of the mountains, but they were doomed to disappointment when their eyes surveyed the scene beyond. "On every side the peaks of ragged and frowning mountains rose above the clouds, affording a prospect of dreariness and desolation, to chill the heart."[28] It was almost two weeks before the starving and exhausted trappers again stood on the banks of the river.

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[25] _Ibid._

[26] _Ibid._, p. 94.

[27] _Ibid._, p. 96.

[28] _Ibid._

From this time, according to Pattie, the party frequently came in contact with bands of Indians, all of whom were too frightened or too shy to confront the trappers. At first sight of the Americans the Indians would flee in terror, on one occasion even abandoning a small child to its fate with the trappers. Through February and the greater part of March, 1825, the party continued to descend the Gila with little success attending their trapping efforts. They passed the junction of the San Pedro and continued to the point where the Beaver River joins the Gila; there they again found plentiful beaver. They trapped along the Beaver River for about a week, and on the tenth pushed on down the Gila until after ten days they had collected as many pelts as their animals would carry. On the twentieth they prepared for the return trip.[29]

The party had been separated from the other trappers for almost six weeks by this time, and although Pattie notes the presence of Indians quite frequently, they never constituted more than a nuisance. On one occasion they sent a volley of arrows at the trappers--for no good reason, of course--but Pattie intimated that they were encountered by chance. Another such encounter occurred on the twentieth as the trappers were preparing for the return trip, heavily laden with pelts. They arrived at their cache on the Beaver River five days later. There they found the Indians of a more serious mind, as they launched an attack which for several hours kept the entire company "busily occupied in dodging the arrows."[30] Several warriors were killed on the twenty-fifth, but their comrades succeeded in making off with the trappers'

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[29]Ibid., pp. 98-99.

[30]Ibid., p. 101.

horses, and the foot party would attack the trappers as they gave chase to regain their animals and supplies. Young Pattie foiled the plan, however, when he spotted the flanking force before it had taken its position. A hot fight ensued for a few minutes before the Indians fled.[31]

After another confrontation the next morning, the group cached their furs, packed four captured Indian horses with what provisions they had left, and then marched about ten miles before encamping for the night.[32] According to Pattie, that was the last they saw of their painted adversaries, but their trials were far from ended. The party was forced to subsist on little or no food for the next thirty days as it made its way back up river toward the copper mines. On occasion, the monotony of their diet was relieved by the addition of such delicacies as roasted raven, buzzard, and dog--no criticisms of the chef were recorded.[33]

The group obtained some succor on the twentieth, for they were returning to the game-rich upper reaches of the Gila. Along Bear Creek they killed four deer and feasted for three days before resuming their march. Finally they reached the Rio San Francisco and found that the furs previously cached there were safe. Four days later they at last reached the mines, to the astonishment of the Spaniards who indicated they had never expected to see the Americans again.[34]

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[31]Ibid., p. 102.

[32]Ibid., p. 103.

[33]Ibid., pp. 105-108.

[34]Ibid., p. 108.

Thus did Pattie return from his first adventure in the Southwest. The condition of the trappers at the time of their arrival at Santa Rita testified to the hardships they had endured, but there was another version of the tale. It was related by one of the Indians who participated in the attack of March 25, and it tended to belie much of what Pattie would write. Contrary to what the Americans thought, the Apaches were not encountered randomly. They were keeping a very close watch on the trappers because they were amazed at their efficiency in trapping beaver. They watched from behind any convenient bush or rock until they were spotted by the trappers, whereupon the pot shooting would begin. But the Apaches were willing to tolerate such minor annoyances, for the whites were catching many more beaver than they thought possible, and as a bonus they were doing all the squaw's work of scraping, stretching, and drying the pelts.

Under such circumstances the Apaches would have been foolish to interfere with the trappers. They simply followed along as closely as possible until the work was finished, and then they struck. Killing some, they ran the remainder of the party off with nothing but their rifles, and taking the horses and pelts, the Apaches proceeded to enjoy the fruits of the Americans' labor. One prize was particularly noteworthy. Among his possessions, Sylvester Pattie had a red undershirt which our informant seized and wore with signal distinction thereafter. It was thus that he acquired his name, Mangas Coloradas (Red Sleeves).[35]

Whether one accepts Mangas Coloradas' version or James Pattie's version matters little, for the significance of the episode lay in the deep penetration the party made into the heart of the Southwest. They

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[35]Moody, Old Trails West, p. 36.

traveled farther than any Americans ever had into present-day New Mexico and Arizona. As nearly as can be estimated, they reached a point about seventy-five miles southwest of Phoenix on March 25, 1826.

If Pattie's first trapping enterprise along the Gila was a failure, his second trip was something less than a success. After resting and resupplying at Santa Fe and hiring eleven Mexicans to augment the four Americans' defensive and portage capabilities, Pattie returned to the scene of his encounter with the Apaches in March. The objective of this journey was to recover the furs which he claimed the trappers had cached when the Indians attacked. The party reached the spot--Battle Hill--found the furs were gone, and returned to a smaller cache on the Rio San Francisco. Pattie was understandably dejected: "The whole fruit of our long, toilsome and dangerous expedition was lost and all my golden hopes of prosperity and comfort vanished like a dream."[36]

James Ohio Pattie was not a man to be denied his fortune, however. He spent the summer of 1825 with his father at the Santa Rita mines, and although the Mexican owner leased the mines to Pattie's father at a very reasonable rate, the son refused to join such a mundane undertaking. Yielding to "an irresistible propensity to resume the employment of trapping," in December, 1825, the younger Pattie joined Michele Robidoux and a party of "French" trappers who passed the mines en route to the western reaches of the Gila.[37] The combined force numbered about thirteen men, only three of whom would return alive.

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[36]Pattie, Personal Narrative, p. 111

[37]Ibid., p. 119.

Pattie's third excursion was marked by good fortune at the outset, for the trappers encountered the group of Indians who had raided his party the previous March. The savages were only one day's march from the site of their battle with the trappers, and were easily identified for they were wearing their victims' clothing and riding their horses. A tense confrontation occurred when Pattie spied one of the Indians "mounted on the self-same horse on which [his] father had traveled from the States." In the face of a leveled rifle and a gruff command to dismount instantly, the brave wisely decided to comply without protest.[38]

The Apache chief apparently appreciated the gravity of the situation, for although at first he had tried to sell the trappers the robes his people had made from the stolen furs, he now quickly agreed to restore all the remaining goods if the trappers would but spare his peoples' lives. It was a sagacious offer. The trappers were in a nasty mood--especially Pattie--and as they faced only twenty warriors, they doubtlessly would not have hesitated to fight. The chief offered his apologies for the earlier raid, lamely explaining that they had thought the trappers were Mexicans. As he now knew them to be Americans, "he was willing to make peace and be in perpetual friendship." Smoke soon ascended from the peace pipe, and as the "friends" sat and puffed the chief described the tribes which the trappers would encounter to the west as "bad, treacherous, and quarrelsome."[39] He was an unwitting master of understatement.

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[38]_Ibid._, p. 120.

[39]_Ibid._, p. 121.

The ill-fated party followed the Gila westward, and by January 28, 1826, arrived at a Papago village. There they received a most unexpected--and to Pattie's mind--suspicious reception. The Papagos rushed out of their village with faces painted and bows and arrows in hand. Realizing they had alarmed the mountain men, the Indians laughingly discarded their weapons and escorted the somewhat relieved whites into their settlement. The French trappers soon dispersed on sightseeing strolls through the village, but Pattie was dissatisfied with his would-be hosts' deportment. His jaundiced eye quickly fell on small groups of natives "collected in gangs and talking earnestly." The headstrong Robidoux was not impressed by Pattie's warning of impending disaster and decided to camp within the village for the night. Indeed, it was only after the exchange of some very hard verbiage that Pattie was able to separate himself from the group and camp--with a fellow cynic--about four hundred yards from the Papago wigwams.[40]

Robidoux's trust was ill-founded. That midnight as the "shrieks and heavy groans of the dying French mingled with the louder and more horrible yells of . . . treacherous and blood thirsty savages . . . ," the wary Pattie and his companion mounted their still-saddled horses and fled to safety. Greatly impressed by the sincerity of the Papagos, the two trappers sought refuge on a "high mountain on the south side of the river, and pushed for it as hard as the horses could endure to be driven." Believing they had put themselves out of immediate danger, they stopped shortly after daybreak to eat and to survey the trail behind them from their lofty vantage point.[41]

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[40]Ibid., pp. 121-122.

[41]Ibid., p. 125.

No sign of Indians could be seen on the plain the two refugees had so recently and so rapidly traversed. As they watched awhile, the only movement noticeable was something resembling a bear wandering toward the mountain. But bears did not wear coats with brass buttons, and that was what glittered in the rays of the sun as the object moved nearer. A moment's reflection produced the conclusion that it was "an Indian, decorated with the coat of the unfortunate Frenchman," and they fixed the form in their rifles' sights. Only Pattie's keen eyesight saved the wounded Robidoux from a deadly volley of trappers' lead. Robidoux "uttered an exclamation of joy and fell prostrate on the earth."[42]

The three survivors' only thoughts were of how best to avoid another encounter with the savages and return to the safety of the mines. That evening they spotted three campfires in the valley below and concluded that the Indians were in pursuit. Leaving the wounded Robidoux with the horses, Pattie and the other trapper set out to reconnoiter the camp. They soon discovered the horses and seeing that they were guarded by only two men, decided to shoot the guards and take as many horses as they could. As he took aim, Pattie heard one guard call to the other to go and awaken their relief. He spoke English! Pattie sprang from concealment and ran toward the startled sentries. But their leveled rifles quickly reminded him to identify himself--"A friend, a friend!" Thus did Pattie join Ewing Young's expedition.[43]

Young was another of the "traders" who had come to Santa Fe to engage in trapping as well as trading. He came with William Becknell

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[42]*Ibid.*, p. 126.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 128.

in 1822 on Becknell's second expedition,[44] and was therefore among the first Americans to arrive in New Mexico after trade was legalized. His trapping career began that fall when he and William Wolfskill trapped along the Pecos River, and Young soon became one of the foremost trappers and traders in the Southwest.[45]

Young, too, had been attracted by the prospects of the Gila-Colorado area, and had planned to move his trapping enterprises westward in the spring of 1826. However, ill health forced him to abandon leadership of his first Gila expedition to Wolfskill and to go to Missouri during the spring and summer for treatment. Returning to Taos late in the summer, Young learned that the Apaches had defeated Wolfskill and forced the party to retreat to Santa Fe empty-handed. He decided that if eleven mountain men could not subdue the Apaches, perhaps three times as many could.[46]

Governor Narbona licensed Young to lead eighteen men on his Gila expedition in the fall of 1826, but he consolidated this group with another and headed westward toward the junction of the Gila and Colorado rivers.[47] Thirty-two men did not appear at first to be a very significant force, but when such names as Thomas L. "Peg-Leg" Smith,

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[44]Holmes, Ewing Young, p. 10.

[45]Ibid., p. 19; and Iris H. Wilson, William Wolfskill, 1798-1866: Frontier Trapper to California Ranchero (Glendale, Calif., 1965), p. 39.

[46]Holmes, Ewing Young, pp. 26-28.

[47]It is not clear where the additional twelve trappers joined the party, but it is certain they did. The accounts generally agree that thirty-two trappers avenged the massacre. See Holmes, Ewing Young, p. 34; Young, Chronicles, p. 32; Wilson, Wolfskill, p. 53; Pattie, Narrative, p. 128.

Milton Sublette, William Wolfskill, George Yount, and Ewing Young were included on the roster, it became formidable indeed. Such men as these were not to be trifled with, and to the unrequited grievances which they already had against the Indians, James Ohio Pattie and friends now added ten more--the massacred Robidoux party.

Retribution fell swiftly and heavily on the heads of the treacherous Papagos. Young was not one to evade a debt of foul deeds, and he immediately led the trappers against the Indians. Carefully concealing themselves in a dry river bed, the avenging party moved to within one hundred yards of the village. When all were ready, two men ascended the bank and were instantly spotted by the Papagos, some two hundred of whom immediately leaped to screaming pursuit of the trappers. If the Indians had assumed these to be the remainder of the Robidoux party, they soon were apprised of their mistake. Apparently intent on dispatching the decoys to join their comrades at that great beaver stream in the sky, the screaming hoard ran precipitously toward the river bed. At a distance of twenty yards, the Americans rose as a single man and delivered a shattering volley. A heap of Papagos were thereby transported to the very regions they had intended to populate with mountain men.[48]

The party then fired as rapidly as they could reload, and as the roar of the big rifles mingled with the screams of the terror-stricken, fleeing savages, pandemonium struck the village. Those warriors who escaped the withering fusilade at the river ran through the wigwams toward a hill half a mile distant--followed by every inhabitant of the

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[48]Pattie, _Personal Narrative_, p. 129.

village except one old, blind and deaf man who sat throughout the entire encounter undisturbed by the trappers, eating his mush. After burning the village and burying the mutilated bodies of the Robidoux party, Young considered the matter closed and moved on to trap the headwaters of the Gila and the Salt. Pattie claimed that 110 Papagos were killed in the ambush.[49]

Indian fighting was not the primary objective of the party, and they spent the first two weeks of February, 1827, trapping the Salt and the Gila Rivers. Returning again to the confluence of these two streams, they trapped their way down the Gila to its junction with the Colorado. The natives they found there were, according to Pattie, "as naked as Adam and Eve in their birthday suit . . . with the finest forms I ever saw, well proportioned, and straight as an arrow." What the Yuma Indians thought of the first Americans they saw was not recorded.[50]

From the Yuma villages, Pattie's association with Young took him north and east again--by what route is far from certain--until the party reached the Santa Rita copper mines in April, 1827. Their wanderings were, if anything, an amplified version of their earlier adventures--a running duel with Indians, grizzlies, and starvation.[51] Although the trappers could hardly have been aware of it, their arrival on the Colorado River was the milestone of their odyssey. They had pushed exploration of the Gila route to a new point. But the last

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[49]Ibid.; For another version of the battle, see Young, Chronicles, pp. 32-33. He agreed that "The carnage was very great."

[50]Pattie, Personal Narrative, p. 131.

[51]Ibid., pp. 131-144; See also Yount, Chronicles, pp. 36-38.

barrier to fall would prove itself a worthy adversary even for the iron-willed mountain men, the desert of southern California.

The expedition which finally traversed the entire distance between New Mexico and California was prompted, although unwittingly, by the new governor of New Mexico, Don Manuel Armijo. While Young and his men were trapping and fighting their way back to Santa Fe, the amiable Governor Narbona was replaced by the less accommodating Armijo.[52] By the time they reached New Mexico, the trappers had accumulated a store of beaver pelts valued at $20,000.[53] Young must have known that Narbona had been replaced, for he secreted twenty-nine bales of pelts in Peña Blanca before proceeding to Santa Fe. His suspicions were well founded, as Armijo sent a squad of soldiers to seize the furs when he learned their location. Only the indomitable Milton Sublette profited from the months of hard work and danger, for when he saw the furs stacked in the square at Santa Fe, the "Thunderbolt of the Mountains" struck. As the Mexican garrison watched transfixed with disbelief, the gargantuan Sublette seized his bundles, bounded across the square, disappeared through a doorway to be seen no more.[54]

As a result of Sublette's raid, several very tense minutes passed when an armed confrontation occurred between the remaining trappers and the Mexican garrison. Finally, Young was arrested, and although he was released shortly thereafter, the balance of the furs was impounded, eventually to be ruined by the elements.[55] James Ohio Pattie returned

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[52]Holmes, Ewing Young, p. 37.

[53]Hafen, Mountain Men and Fur Trade, I, p. 69.

[54]Holmes, Ewing Young, pp. 38-39.

[55]Ibid., p. 40.

to the Santa Rita mines with nothing to show for his trouble other than a few more holes in his already ragged clothes.

Apparently misfortune "took a liking" to the Patties and was determined to be their constant companion. Although they managed to avoid this unwelcome partner for most of the summer of 1827, he returned again in the fall. James had spent the summer engaged in trading and Indian fighting while his father continued his mining career.[56] Sylvester Pattie was at last realizing a profit from his labors. He had accumulated $30,000 which he intended to invest in mining equipment and trade goods, the goods to be used as wages at the mines. The workers preferred merchandise to money, and this suited Sylvester too, for he could realize a two hundred per cent profit on the goods and thereby cut labor costs accordingly. However, someone would have to make the trip to St. Louis to purchase the supplies, and Sylvester asked his son to go. James was not interested in making the journey back to civilization, and instead his father sent one of his Mexican clerks. Pattie never saw the clerk or the money again.[57]

The fall of 1827 thus arrived with the Patties no richer than when they had reached New Mexico. For Sylvester Pattie, however, destitution was not a synonym for despair. Forced to surrender the mines because of his loss, he decided to invest what little he had left in another trapping venture. On September 22, 1827, Sylvester Pattie walked from the custom house at Santa Fe carrying an official permit admonishing Mexican citizens to "Allow Sylvester Pattie to pursue his

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[56]Pattie, Personal Narrative, pp. 144-177.

[57]Ibid., pp. 178-180.

journey with certain beasts, merchandise and money, in the direction of Chihuahua and Sonora." The Patties, with a party of thirty trappers, left Santa Fe the following day, and traveled the familiar trail southwest to the mines, then northwest to the Gila, thence westward along its banks to the Colorado.[58]

The party must not have been well supplied, for by early November they were reduced to the expedient of killing and eating their dogs and horses. In the face of such adversity the party broke up, the majority heading directly for the Colorado, while the Patties and six others trapped on down the Gila.[59] By December 1 the smaller party reached the confluence of the Gila and the Colorado, and arrived at the Yuma Indian villages. Although James Pattie had found the Yumas to be friendly on his previous trip, with only seven trappers as companions he was less comfortable among such a large number of Indians. The party took the precaution of crossing the river and marching sixteen miles before encamping, but the Yumas followed and that night stampeded and stole the trappers' horses and mules. Unable to recover their animals, the Americans decided to attack the Yuma village the next day; in a fit of frustration during that battle the irate trappers burned the village.[60]

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[58]Ibid., p. 181.

[59]Ibid., pp. 183-187. The party included James Ohio and Sylvester Pattie, Nathaniel Pryor, Richard Laughlin, William Pope, Isaac Slover, Jesse Ferguson, and James Putter. George Merle Ellis, "Trapper Trails to California 1826-1832: The Narratives, Journals, Diaries, and Letters of the Mountain Men Who Reached California Over the Southern Routes," (unpublished M. A. Thesis, San Diego State College, 1954), pp. 124-125.

[60]Pattie, Personal Narrative, pp. 189-191.

Without horses there could be no thought of returning over the Gila route to Santa Fe. The Americans were tough, but there was a limit even to the endurance and resourcefulness of a mountain man. Only one possibility remained to preserve their lives--the groups had to move downstream where, if the Indians were correct, they would find Mexican settlements. Log canoes were quickly prepared, and on December 9, 1827, eight canoes loaded with pelts, traps, and trappers, pushed out into the current of the Colorado.[61]

Their troubles receded somewhat as they drifted downriver, for they trapped more beaver than they needed to eat and probably as many as they cared to skin. Another canoe had to be made to carry the additional pelts. But the lessening of their immediate difficulties did not remove the thought of their objective, and the trappers remained always alert for some sign of Mexican settlements, or at least some Indians whom they could question for directions. After sixty or seventy miles of drifting and trapping, there was still no evidence of civilization; then on Christmas Eve they floated into view of a Cocopah village.[62]

If James Pattie was little enlightened by the information he secured from the Cocopahs, he certainly was enlivened by the abundance of female pulchritude. Some things, apparently, caused even a crusty mountain man to wax eloquent. The native beauties

> . . . were in a state of the most entire nudity. . . . Many of the women were not over sixteen, and the most perfect figures I have ever seen, perfectly straight and symmetrical, and the hair of some hanging nearly

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[61]Ibid., p. 192.

[62]Ibid., pp. 193-194.

> to their heels. . . . The night which we passed with them, passed away pleasantly, and to the satisfaction of all parties.[63]

The days to come would bring little additional satisfaction.

Three days later the party arrived at the village of the Cocopah's head chief. By various signs and sketches in the sand, that dignitary reinforced the trappers' belief that the Mexican settlements lay not far to the West. Committing their trusty craft to the current once more, they floated farther downstream, but ever more slowly. Although they stopped frequently and went ashore to search for some signs of Mexican habitation, they found none. Furthermore, the climate was becoming warmer and the beaver fur shorter and consequently of less value.[64]

On January 18, 1828, the party encountered the first evidence of the coastal tide when the river current ceased its flow. Unfamiliar with oceans and tides, the mountain men almost lost their furs and personal possessions when they encamped on the water's edge at low tide and awoke to find the river rising rapidly during the night. By January 28 they concluded that they could travel no farther downstream because of the tumultuous tide, and as hostile Indians prevented a landing on either shore, they decided to travel back upriver as far as possible, cache the furs, and march overland to the California coast.[65]

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[63] Ibid., pp. 198-201.

[64] Ibid., pp. 196-197.

[65] Ibid., pp. 202-204.

After fighting the current for twelve days, the trappers decided not to stay with the river, and on February 10 they beached their canoes. The furs were buried, and each man prepared a back-pack containing two blankets and as much dried beaver meat as he could carry. On the sixteenth the little group shouldered rifles and took leave of the mighty Colorado. Walking was not an easy matter for men who had spent two months in canoes, however, and when they left the river bottom, their grunts of discomfort soon turned into groans of despair. Water was plentiful for the first two days, but when they emerged on to the salt plain, conditions changed. They "began to suffer severely from thirst." The shifting sand made walking doubly difficult, and the searing sun "made it seem as if the heavens and the earth were on fire." For two days their torment was multiplied, until they came at last upon an Indian encampment with water.[66]

Considerable excitement attended the trappers' mad rush for the cool refreshment in the center of the Indians' encampment, but after the intruders had bloated themselves, vomited, and caught their breaths, they managed to assure the returning Indians of their pacific intent. A conference with the chief soon satisfied both groups that there was nothing to fear, and everyone relaxed--everyone except one unfortunate trapper. The women had been amazed by a glimpse of unbelievably white skin beneath his red flannel shirt, and he finally was goaded into stripping naked to satisfy their curiosity. The fascinated females passed the afternoon taking turns standing by the poor fellow comparing their bodies with his, and giggling and giggling and giggling.[67]

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[66] Ibid., pp. 205-206.

[67] Ibid., pp. 207-210.

This was but a subgroup of Indians, and on February 25, their head chief arrived to survey the situation. The trappers conversed with him, and by giving away their red flannel shirts and their blankets they secured two guides to direct them to the Mexican settlements. Everyone was well pleased. The chief gained two blankets and ridded himself of eight strangers; and the trappers were destined at last for the amenities of civilization. They might have had less enthusiasm had they known what lay ahead.[68]

Adversity quickly befell them, for although their Indian guides were hardened to the desert's parsimony with water and generosity with heat, the eight trappers were not. Exhausted by the sand's elusiveness beneath their feet, and weakened by lack of water, they resorted to extreme means to satisfy their thirst.[69] Three days of such torture reduced the elder Pattie and another of the party to a state of helplessness, and the two lay down to await death or the return of their friends should they discover water. Fortunately water was found, and the stragglers rescued. The men had endured the most difficult circumstances the Gila route could offer--the desert of southern California. Refreshed by the cool water from the little stream, James Pattie reflected on their recent passage through the desert: ". . .[W]e saw not a single bird, nor the track of any quadruped, or in fact any thing that had life, not even a spring, weed or grass blade, except a single shrubby tree, under which we found a little shade." He was perhaps

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[68]*Ibid.*, p. 210.

[69]*Ibid.*, p. 212.

the first but not the last Anglo-American to be impressed by this potentially deadly scenery.[70]

Two weeks' more travel brought the eight to the long-sought Mexican settlement. On March 12, 1828, they reached the mission of Santa Catalina on the California coast--about 100 miles south of San Diego. There the first Americans to travel the entirety of the Gila Trail were promptly escorted to the jail until such time as they could be transferred under military guard to San Diego.[71]

The tragedy-filled epic had one more blow in store for the pilgrims. After being moved to San Diego, the weakened Sylvester Pattie died in prison. The grief-stricken James Ohio Pattie could have had little appreciation of the magnitude of the group's accomplishment. Exhausted and depressed, he thought only of the day when he could escape his tormentors and take horrible vengence on them for the suffering they had inflicted on his father and his friends.[72]

More Americans followed in the years immediately after the Pattie expedition of 1828. The enterprising Ewing Young led a party of eighteen trappers from Yuma Crossing to the mission of San Gabriel some time early in 1830,[73] and he returned on a second venture to California in the spring of 1832 by a slightly different route.[74] It was the

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[70]*Ibid.*, pp. 215-219.

[71]*Ibid.*, p. 221.

[72]*Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

[73]Holmes, *Ewing Young*, pp. 44-47.

[74]Job Francis Dye was a member of this party. For his account of the passage, see Job Francis Dye, *Recollections of a Pioneer, 1830-1852: Rocky Mountains, New Mexico, California* (Los Angeles, 1951), pp. 18-27. Also see Holmes, *Ewing Young*, pp. 61-77.

Young expedition of 1829-30 that acquainted Kit Carson with the Gila Trail and the geography of the Southwest.[75] In the intervening period between the first and second Young trips, other parties, both Mexican and American, passed over the general route of the Gila Trail, and by the mid 1830s the route was fairly well known, although many travelers preferred to avoid the dangerous Apaches of the Gila region by using the longer but safer, Old Spanish Trail, which circled to the north of their domain.[76]

The decline of the fur trade during the 1830s ended the reign of the mountain man in the Southwest. The dictates of fashion ruled that the beaver hat be replaced by the silk hat, and the reason for the trappers' excursions into the beaver-rich Gila region was gone. Once again the Indians, the rivers, the mountains--all the landmarks which had become so familiar to the wandering trapper--faded from memory and receded into the realm of myth. A decade passed before the sand, the rattlesnakes, and the grizzlies once again became the targets of exasperated epithets in English.

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[75] Edwin L. Sabin, Kit Carson Days, 1809-1868 (New York, 1935), pp. 37-43.

[76] For details on other expeditions to California see Cleland, This Reckless Breed of Men, pp. 246-275; and Eleanor Laurence, "Mexican Trade Between Santa Fe and Los Angeles," California Historical Society Quarterly, X (March, 1931), 27-39.

CHAPTER III

THE PATH TO EMPIRE: COOKE'S WAGON ROAD

As they awaited the order to fire, the American artillerymen stared down the barrels of their cannon into the little adobe town scattered at the feet of the surrounding hills. Its squalid appearance certainly did not recommend it as a provincial capitol--the legendary Santa Fe should have been more stately. Such thoughts quickly vanished as torch touched fuse and seemingly freed all the fires and smoke and thunder in hell from a single piece of black iron. The crew swarmed to service the cannon as its companions repeated the tumultuous performance until the echos rebounding from the surrounding hillsides transformed the singular reports into a rolling, roaring rumble. Then came silence.

The "Battle of Santa Fe" was over. Actually, it was never fought, for the barrage had not been fired in anger; the gunners' signal had accompanied the fluttering of the Stars and Stripes as the flag was hoisted over the Governor's Palace and caught the cool evening breeze over the surrounding adobe rooftops. The cannon thundered in salute and celebration because not a single drop of Mexican blood had been required to propitiate the gods of war. To Americans the events of August 18, 1846, were reason enough to be jubilant, for the outbreak of the Mexican War brought them into the Southwest once again, this time not as poachers but as conquerors. One of President James K.

Polk's primary objectives in the war with Mexico was the swift occupation of New Mexico and California and their connection by an overland route.[1] With the inception of hostilities, Commodore Robert F. Stockton and Colonel John C. Frémont seized the province of California, and it was Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny's artillery that saluted the surrender of Santa Fe.

The conquest of New Mexico was noteworthy, but it accomplished only half of General Kearny's mission.[2] He now had to consider how best to open a line of communication with California and reinforce the American expedition already there. Between Santa Fe and San Diego lay eleven hundred miles of generally uncharted, rugged country, mostly desert, but with enough mountains to remind the traveler periodically that spacial dimensions included up and down as well as across. Such geography often had vanquished the formidable mountain men two decades before, and they had been familiar with the territory; Kearny and his staff were not, yet they had to march an army from New Mexico to California.[3]

The Army of the West was, to say the least, heterogenous. To conquer and occupy New Mexico, to open a road to California and to secure that province, Kearny had a main force of 1638 Missouri volunteers and a reinforcing battalion of about five hundred Mormon

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[1]Allan Nevins, ed., Polk; The Diary of a President, 1845-1849 New York, 1929], p. 108.

[2]Ibid., p. 107.

[3]The officers were issued Tanner's map for use on the march. It was totally inadequate for the regions west of Santa Fe, as it was compiled from information gathered by John C. Frémont's California expedition of 1843-1844 which had not entered the Southwest. See Goetzmann, Army Exploration, p. 127.

infantrymen. The Missourians reached and conquered Santa Fe in August, but by the time Kearny was ready to push on to California with a flying column, the Mormon Battalion still had not arrived in New Mexico. Beset with numerous problems on the road between Council Bluffs and Santa Fe, it was marching about five weeks behind. Accordingly, when Kearny made what he considered to be satisfactory arrangements for the government of the newly conquered province, he decided to strike for California without them. They could follow if and when they arrived--the governorship of California awaited the general.

At two o'clock on the afternoon of September 25, the general, his staff, three hundred mounted dragoons, and a caravan of wagons and pack animals moved south from Santa Fe. Mounted on Mexican mules which the natives assured them would traverse the desert much better than the fine Missouri horse flesh exchanged for them, the dragoons were in high spirits and looking forward to the adventure of seizing an empire on the Pacific.[4] But the first day's enthusiasm did not prevent them from noting that some things were not as they should have been, for after having traveled only thirty-five miles a few of the poorest mules were exhausted. It was "a bad prospect for California to have the animals giving out the first day."[5] In the days and weeks

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[4]Ross Calvin, ed., Lieutenant Emory Reports (Albuquerque, 1951), p. 77; John S. Griffin, A Doctor Comes to California: The Diary of John S. Griffin, A Doctor with Kearny's Dragoons, 1846-1847, ed. by George W. Ames, Jr., (San Francisco, 1943), p. 17; Dwight L. Clarke, ed., The Original Journals of Henry Smith Turner: With Stephen Watts Kearny to New Mexico and California, 1846 (Norman, Okla., 1966), p. 76.

[5]Griffin, Diary, p. 17.

ahead, the process would become a familiar one--men and mules wilting in the mid-day heat, then shivering as the biting cold of the desert night plunged the mercury in the thermometer below the freezing mark.[6] There was no respite from the vicious cycle; after fighting the shifting sands for hour after endless hour to move a few short miles, the column usually would encamp with little grass and less water for the animals--and the troops were only slightly more fortunate.[7] Such hateful surroundings quickly aroused the disgust of the column's surgeon, Dr. John Strother Griffin. He reflected on the second day's march: "It is said that there is gold in the sands, and that a man can make a living washing dirt, it is well this can be done for I am damned if anyone could make a living ploughing."[8]

The first two weeks clearly demonstrated that the project of moving troops and wagons to San Diego would be an enterprise requiring much time and more effort. The wagons were falling far behind the rest of the column, thus slowing its movement to a crawl. In fourteen days of hard marching the command had covered only half the distance from Santa Fe to the Santa Rita copper mines, a journey the mountain men regularly had made in less than a week. The men and the mules had to fight for every round the wagon wheels turned; plagued by deep sand and increasingly steep hills, they proceeded "with great difficulty."[9] But during the first week of October two events transpired which changed the nature of Kearny's mission.

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[6]Calvin, Emory, p. 78.

[7]Clarke, Turner, p. 77.

[8]Griffin, Diary, p. 17. Turner concurred: Clarke, Turner, p. 79.

[9]Calvin, Emory, p. 82; Clarke, Turner, p. 79.

News reached the struggling column on October 2 that Brevet Lieutenant Colonel James Allan, commander of the Mormon Battalion, had died.[10] As some doubt existed about the loyalty of the Mormons, Kearny decided that their commanding officer should be a regular army officer. Accordingly he summoned Captain Philip St. George Cooke the following day, appointed him a lieutenant-colonel of volunteers, and ordered him to return to Santa Fe and assume command of the Battalion when it arrived. The thought of nurse-maiding an infantry unit--volunteers at that--rather than riding at the head of a cavalry company headed for the conquest of California did not appeal to the new lieutenant colonel. Dejectedly he turned and rode back toward Santa Fe to await his charges.[11]

Cooke would have been equally disappointed had he remained with the column, for on the morning of October 6 the troopers sighted a rapidly moving cloud of dust propelled by horse-like legs below, all manner of habidashery protruding above, and an occasional wildly gesticulating arm extending from the side. Although Kearny's eyes might at first have classified it as a dust devil, his ears might have reclassified the apparition as an Indian attack. Neither would have been correct. When the dust cleared, it revealed Kit Carson leading a party to Washington, D. C. The reason for their exuberance soon became cause for widespread disappointment among Kearny's troopers--

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[10] Griffin, Diary, p. 19.

[11] Otis E. Young, The West of Philip St. George Cooke, 1809-1895 (Glendale, Calif., 1955), pp. 183-184.

California had been conquered, and Colonel John Charles Frémont was governor.[12]

Dr. Griffin probably reflected the attitude of most of the command when he lamented that

> . . . the general feeling was one of disappointment and regret--most of us hoped when leaving Santa Fe--that we might have a little kick up with the good people of California but this totally blasted all our hopes and reduced our expedition to one of mere escort duty.[13]

It was a piece of foul luck for the general too; he had hoped to cover himself and the Army of the West with glory by bringing the conquest to fruition. Now all he could do was hasten his progress toward California and assume command of the occupation forces as soon as possible.

Kearny quickly decided to split his command, send two hundred of the dragoons back to Santa Fe, and march for California with the remaining one hundred dragoons as fast as he could. Furthermore, he now had at hand an experienced guide who previously had traveled the Gila route, and who could therefore escort the expedition to California at a much quicker pace than the column previously had managed. Kit Carson's name thereby was added to the lengthy list of disgruntled Americans on the Gila Trail, as Kearny insisted that Thomas Fitzpatrick take Carson's dispatches on to Washington while Carson returned to California with the dragoons. It was a bitter pill for Carson, for he was only 150 miles from his wife and home, and he was quite eager to be presented personally to President Polk in Washington.[14]

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[12]Clarke, Turner, p. 79; Calvin, Emory, p. 87; Griffin, Diary, p. 20.

[13]Griffin, Diary, p. 20.

[14]Sabin, Kit Carson Days, p. 67.

But Kearny prevailed, and on October 7 the drastically reduced detachment ". . . put out with merry hearts and light packs . . . with . . . every man feeling renewed confidence in consequence of having such a guide."[15] Their confidence was only superficially justified, for even the reduced number that Carson now led toward the Santa Rita mines found the going exceedingly rough. Captain Henry Smith Turner entertained his doubts about the feasibility of the undertaking:

> This life is short and uncertain at best, . . . why abandon a fond wife and sweet children to roam through a wilderness? . . . What toil, what labor, shall I have to undergo before I shall be again with my family. . . ?[16]

Perhaps the general could not have explained to his adjutant the reasons which compel a man to abandon home and family, but he quickly provided an answer to his question about future hardships. The trail was becoming too rough for the wagons, and on the tenth Kearny decided to abandon them and proceed with pack animals. The column could move much faster than the seven or eight miles it was averaging daily with the wagons, and, moreover, Carson declared that it simply was impossible to get them through.[17] The command waited four days as pack saddles were brought up, and on the fifteenth they finally turned west from the Rio Grande and headed for the copper mines.[18]

Abandoning the wagons may have given Colonel Cooke another headache later, but it certainly made travel much easier for General Kearny's troopers. In its last day's march with the wagons, the Kearny

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[15]Griffin, Diary, p. 20; Calvin, Emory, p. 88.

[16]Clarke, Turner, p. 81.

[17]Griffin, Diary, p. 21.

[18]Clarke, Turner, p. 83; Calvin, Emory, pp. 92-96.

command had made only eight miles; the first day without them it marched twenty-four miles. Relieved of their wheeled burdens and the harshness of the Rio Grande Valley, the men became noticeably encouraged.[19] They passed the copper mines on the eighteenth, and by three o'clock on the afternoon of October 20, the Army of the West stood at the banks of the Gila River. It was a refreshing sight, for in its upper reaches the Gila "is a fine bold, beautiful mountain stream," luxuriantly lined with "cotton wood timber" and filled with "fine fish." The day has yet to dawn when a Missourian does not know what to do with such surroundings.[20]

It was well that some portion of the Army of the West could enjoy itself, for back in Santa Fe Colonel Cooke and the Mormon Battalion were having their difficulties. No doubt the colonel, too, would rather have been fishing in the cool, refreshing Gila; certainly his new command would have wished him there--if not in hotter regions. The colonel was not a man to neglect his job, however; he was regular army, having entered the United States Military Academy in 1823, and at age eighteen was the youngest member of the Class of 1827.[21] At the academy Cooke was surrounded by cadets whose names were to become legendary: Jefferson Davis, Albert Sidney Johnson, George H. Sibley, Leonidas Polk.[22] Cooke later established a reputation as an outstanding

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[19]Griffin, Diary, p. 23; Clarke, Turner, p. 84; Calvin, Emory, pp. 96-97.

[20]Griffin, Diary, pp. 24-25.

[21]Hamilton Gardner, "The Command and Staff of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War," Utah Historical Quarterly, XX (Fall, 1952), 331-351.

[22]Young, Cooke, p. 23; Gardner, "Command Mormon Battalion," 336.

Indian fighter; in 1832 he participated in the Black Hawk War and fought with the assistance of such volunteer elements as a lean, lanky captain of volunteers named Abraham Lincoln.[23] At the beginning of the Mexican War, he was serving as captain of dragoons at Fort Crawford, Wisconsin, and his attachment to the Army of the West had dashed his hopes for fame, glory, and promotion in the expeditions into Mexico itself. Little could have been expected of the California assignment, but to find himself in command of a battalion of Mormon volunteer infantry charged with opening a wagon road--the sum total of insult added to injury had never been exceeded![24]

The distaste which Cooke evinced for his lot was certainly sensed by his new command, and they enthusiastically reciprocated. The hatred of many Mormons for gentiles knew no bounds; in fact, considering the persecution to which the sect had been subjected, their enlistments in the United States Army appeared strange. In 1839 the Mormons had been driven from their prosperous settlements in Missouri and forced to take refuge in Illinois. The legislature of that state had granted them a generous charter permitting the establishment of Nauvoo and the organization of the "Nauvoo Legion" for defense, but their unusual religious practices and their conspicuous prosperity had brought toleration to an end in 1844. On June 24, that year the prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were murdered by a gentile mob. For the following eighteen months a state of siege prevailed, and so much blood flowed that Governor Thomas Ford finally appealed

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[23]Gardner, "Command Mormon Battalion," 337.

[24]Young, Cooke, pp. 173-175.

for a "peaceable means of accommodation whereby the Mormons may be induced to leave the state."[25]

The autocratic Brigham Young, who succeeded Joseph Smith as head of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, soon had realized that the position of the Mormons in Illinois was untenable. Although Young at first requested asylum from the Governor of Arkansas,[26] the Mormons had been considering a move farther west for at least six months. In February, 1844, Joseph Smith had ordered an exploration party to go to California and Oregon, and apparently Texas also had been under consideration as a possible area for immigration. Refused asylum in Arkansas by Governor Thomas Drew,[27] Young also had rejected a proposal from Governor Ford advising him to conquer, settle, and establish an independent government in California.[28] But what had appeared unreasonable in April, 1844, was less so by September. The violence intensified, and between the mob and the wilderness Young and the Mormons had no choice. On September 16, 1845, the Council had published a proclamation to:

> . . . . the mob party . . . who have been and are still engaged in burning the houses and property of the peaceable citizens of Hancock County: . . . that it is our intention to leave Nauvoo and the country next spring; provided that yourselves and all others will cease hostile

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[25]Frank A. Golder, The March of the Mormon Battalion from Council Bluffs to California (New York, 1928), p. 25.

[26]Letter from Brigham Young to Governor Thomas Drew. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 41-45.

[27]Letter from Governor Thomas Drew to Brigham Young. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 46-49.

[28]Letter from Governor Thomas Ford to Brigham Young. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 37-38.

> operations, so as to give us the short but necessary time for our journey; . . .[29]

By spring the Mormons were exploring every possible source of financial aid for their projected westward removal. At this point their interests chanced to coincide with those of President Polk--the Mormons wished to travel to a far western area, and Polk was anxious to occupy California as quickly as possible after the long-expected war with Mexico began. Negotiations between the church and the President ensued, war was declared on May 12, 1846, and on June 3 the President authorized the enlistment of a Mormon Battalion in the Army of the West.[30]

The solution of one problem carried in it the seeds of another, however; Brigham Young had to demonstrate the consistency of a policy which called for a forced removal from the United States and simultaneous military duty in its armed forces. His intellect was adequate to the task, for he intimated to the Mormons that the plan was a trap laid by their arch-enemy, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. Benton did not expect the Mormons to accept service; indeed, said Young, he hoped they would not, for then they could be labeled as traitors and summarily exterminated.[31] Benton doubtless was not involved in the decision to recruit a Mormon Battalion, but Brigham Young realized the magnitude both of the opportunity and the problem which lay before him. The opportunity to move a large contingent of

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[29]Proclamation of Council of Twelve Apostles of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[30]Nevins, Polk's Diary, pp. 106-110.

[31]Golder, March of Mormon Battalion, pp. 33-34.

his people westward at government expense made Young willing to accommodate his gentile persecutors; the problem of persuading his less far-sighted followers probably spawned the Benton story.[32] It worked.

On June 19, 1846, General Kearny issued an order to Captain James Allen of the First Regiment of Dragoons at Fort Leavenworth instructing him to proceed to the Mormon settlements and recruit "four or five companies of volunteers" to be marched to California; they were to serve "for twelve months . . . receiving pay and allowances during the above time, and at its expiration they will be discharged, and allowed to retain as their private property, the guns and accourtrements furnished them at this post." Kearny did not doubt that Brevet Colonel Allen, as he thereupon became, would ". . . in a few days, be able to raise five hundred young and efficient men for the expedition."[33] Kearny was correct, for the Mormons found the young colonel sympathetic and likable; furthermore, he had the approval of Brigham Young and God. Young later explained Allen's success in recruiting the Battalion:

> When Captain Allen read his papers, the power of the Almighty was upon us and it overshadowed him, and he became our friend straight way; if he had lived he would have remained our friend.[34]

Captain Allen did not live, however; he died of pneumonia on August 23 before he could depart Fort Leavenworth.[35] Lieutenant

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[32]Young's version of the story is cited in Golder, March of Mormon Battalion, pp. 104-105.

[33]Kearny's order. Quoted in Golder, March of Mormon Battalion, pp. 101-102.

[34]Ibid., pp. 104-105, 109-111.

[35]Ibid., pp. 150-151.

Andrew J. Smith of the First Dragoons thereupon assumed command of the Battalion, and under his direction the Saints marched from Council Grove on August 31. Between October 9 and 12 they finally straggled into Santa Fe. Smith showed little ability for managing the expedition, and his decision to turn south short of Bent's Fort brought much unnecessary hardship and suffering upon the men. A member of the Battalion, Henry William Bigler, noted Smith's decision with monumental understatement: "He determined to take a much shorter route, although wood and water were less plentiful."[36] Within three days, "teams gave out and men, too, for want of water." So desperate did their condition become that when the column

> . . . came to a small dirty, muddy pond of water, tramped up by the buffalo . . . well mixed with their green manure and . . . at a temperature of about ----. . . The men drank without complaining, but gracious how sick it made some of them.[37]

To give further encouragement, an express from General Kearny met the command on October 3 and informed them that if they were not in Santa Fe by the tenth they would be rejected. In desperation,

> . . . the sick were left with a few to take charge and bring them up, and all the strong and able had to proceed on a forced march to Santa Fe, where they arrived on the ninth, and on the twelfth the rear arrived.[38]

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[36]Erwin W. Gudde, ed., Bigler's Chronicle of the West: The Conquest of California, Discovery of Gold and Mormon Settlement as Reflected in Henry William Bigler's Diaries (Berkeley, 1962), p. 24.

[37]Ibid., p. 26. Daniel Tyler hinted that he feared Smith "desired to use up the teams and leave the Battalion on the plains helpless. . . ." Daniel A. Tyler, A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War (Reprint, Chicago, 1964), p. 159.

[38]Gudde, Bigler, p. 26; Tyler, History, p. 163.

The Battalion reached Santa Fe 486 strong, but in wretched condition.[39]

> It was enlisted too much by families; some were too old, some feeble, and some too young; it was embarrassed by many women; it was undisciplined; it was much worn by traveling on foot, and marching from Nauvoo, Illinois; their clothing was very scant, there was no money to pay them, or clothing to issue; their mules were utterly broken down; the quartermaster department was without funds, and its credit bad; and animals were scarce.[40]

Apparently Cooke recognized the magnitude of his assignment. To march such men from Santa Fe to San Diego would make the colonel a miracle worker; to march them and open a wagon road to the Pacific simultaneously--that was a task seemingly for the Almighty himself.

Cooke may have been disgusted, but he certainly was not discouraged. Immediately he bombarded the Battalion with a number of orders as prescriptions for its ailments. The Saints assuredly could not hope to reach California encumbered by the sick and so many women; eighty sick men and a number of women and children were ordered to proceed to Pueblo and winter there at a Mormon settlement.[41] This resulted in the first clash of wills between the authoritarian colonel and his suspicious, stubborn troops. Cooke gave a protesting delegation a few "very saucy" words to the effect that he too would enjoy the company of his wife on the journey.[42] Although the ineffectives

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[39]Philip St. George Cooke, William Henry Chase Whiting, Francois Xavier Aubry, Exploring Southwestern Trails, 1846-1854, Vol. VII of Southwest Historical Series, ed. by Ralph P. Bieber (12 vols.; Glendale, Calif., 1938), p. 65. (Hereafter referred to as Bieber, Cooke's Journal.)

[40]Tyler, History, pp. 173-174.

[41]For a list of those returned, see Ibid., pp. 169-170.

[42]Young, Cooke, p. 189.

and the women departed as ordered, there still remained in Santa Fe at least twenty-five women and many children. Obviously Brigham Young had intended the government to transport as many Mormons as could travel with the Battalion; Colonel Cooke thought otherwise.

Had the commander been able to order manna to fall from heaven as easily as he ordered the sick and the women to Pueblo, his problems would have been solved more easily. Such, unfortunately, was not the case; badly needed provisions simply were not to be had in Santa Fe. Mules were procured with the greatest difficulty, and the poor creatures stood starving at their new masters' tethers for want of sufficient grain supplies.[43] Several days of foraging finally produced a trickle of rations. On the sixteenth a shipment of salt pork arrived--there had been none in the town for two weeks--and beeves were driven in on the following day. Informed that Kearny had abandoned his wagons for pack saddles, Cooke prudently ordered a supply of the latter, and they also arrived on the seventeenth.[44]

Men and animals consumed supplies whether they were marching or in camp; no one was more aware of this fact than Philip St. George Cooke. He believed that ". . . every preparation must be pushed--hurried. . . ."[45] On the eighteenth, sixty days' rations were issued and that evening the Battalion was ordered to prepare to march on the morrow. Cooke knew they were not ready, but the point had been reached where further delay would result in deterioration rather than

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[43]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, pp. 66-67.

[44]Ibid., p. 67.

[45]Gardner, "Command Mormon Battalion," 341.

improvement. Thus shortly after noon on October 19, 1846, 397 men, 5 women--"laundresses" whom Cooke had reluctantly allowed to go along, provided they paid their own expenses--accompanied by 16 mule-drawn wagons, 6 large ox-carts, and the women's private vehicles, moved south and that evening encamped six miles from Santa Fe; the Battalion was at last on the march.[46]

If Cooke had expected the Mormons to be a trail-wise unit after their long and arduous march from Council Bluffs to Santa Fe, he was quickly relieved of any such misconception. He had passed the afternoon of departure in Santa Fe attending to all the last-minute business that inevitably arose under such circumstances, and he rode out to catch the column late in the afternoon. When he rode into the camp at sunset, he found the men had encamped in sandy creek bottoms where a flash flood would have swept them and their equipment away with no hope of remedy; the mules were running loose without ropes and picket pins, and the cattle were so closely herded that they could not avail themselves of the meager grass which the cite afforded. Cooke knew "the Battalion were never drilled, and though obedient, have little discipline." Nevertheless, he thought they exhibited "great heedlessness and ignorance and some obstinacy."[47]

Such chaos notwithstanding, Cooke intended to perform his duty and to accomplish his mission: "I have brought road tools and am determined to take through my wagons. But the experiment is not a fair

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[46]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 68.

[47]Ibid., p. 69; Robert S. Bliss, "Journal of Robert S. Bliss With the Mormon Battalion," Utah Historical Quarterly, IV (1931), 67-69.

one. . ."[48] Sergeant Daniel Tyler, a Mormon, agreed with Cooke, and thought it only ". . . justice to the Colonel and the Command . . ." to note the emaciated condition of the animals, some having "been driven all the way from Nauvoo the same season."[49] The situation was only aggravated by the command's undisciplined manner, but this their commander immediately moved to correct. Riding back and forth along the length of the column, he undertook to supervise personally every aspect of the march, at least until he could issue orders with relative certainty that they would be carried out. Checking the livestock, he discovered ten beeves missing; finding that the corporal responsible had mistakenly left them in Santa Fe, Cooke halted the wagon and ordered the guard to walk the eight miles to the town and retrieve the cattle. Returning again to the column's head, he found it stalled as "The whole train of wagons watered the mules by driving into a small stream and waiting upon each other until they drank (with much difficulty)." They thus passed an hour while their commander fumed over their failure to bring buckets from Santa Fe as he had ordered.[50] October 20, 1846, was undoubtedly one of the longest days in Cooke's life; as he moved from one crisis to another he had no help, for he complained to his journal that evening that "the staff officers are still in the rear."[51]

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[48]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 69.

[49]Tyler, History, p. 175.

[50]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, pp. 70-71.

[51]Ibid., p. 71.

The remedy for such problems was a combination of specific directives and the passage of time; Cooke very quickly provided the directions. He issued orders prescribing the care of draft animals; he insisted the men pack up and be ready for the road "without loss of time after reveille"; and he reminded them that "When the guard is stationed, death is the punishment awarded by law to a sentinel who sleeps on his post in time of war, which now exists."[52] Understandably, the first week was hell; Cooke was omnipresent, cajoling and castigating, and not without some success, for he sardonically noted that on one morning he "got the companies under arms . . . nearly by the time the music ceased. . . ."[53] Apparently the Mormons were almost a match for the indomitable dragoon; he angrily complained

> . . . I had repeatedly ordered [things done] eighteen hours before, and then had to do it myself. A dumb spirit has possessed all for the last twenty-four hours, and not one in ten of my orders has been understood and obeyed. All the vexations and troubles of any other three days of my life have not equalled those of the said twenty-four hours. . . . I have to order and then see that it is done. There is a wonderful amount of stolidity, ignorance, negligence, and obstinacy which I have to contend against.[54]

If Cooke did nothing else, he quickly established his reputation as a disciplinarian. As Sergeant Tyler and the men struggled and sweated "with long ropes to help the teams pull the wagons over the sand hills. . . ," Tyler noticed ". . . the commander perched . . . on one of the hills, like a hawk on a fence post, sending down his orders with the sharpness of--well, to the battalion it is enough to say--

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[52]Tyler, History, pp. 178-179.

[53]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 72.

[54]Ibid., pp. 83-84.

Colonel Cooke."[55] Cooke did drive the Battalion hard, but he drove himself harder; suffering from influenza, he choked on the hot dust by day and shivered in the cold air by night.[56] Here was a hard and demanding man; yet he earned the respect of troops who "found the judgment of Colonel Cooke in traveling much better than that of Smith, in fact, it was first class. He never crowded the men unnecessarily. . . .[57]

There was method in the madness which appeared to grasp Cooke as he prodded the command through the dust and the mud of the Rio Grande Valley. In the heat and the cold he was unrelenting. He knew the expedition was enduring tremendous hardship and being subjected to "very severe work . . . ,"[58] but he knew that much worse conditions would soon prevail. He had to take their measure, and by November 10 he was ready to separate the sheep from the goats. He had reached the point where Kearny had turned westward from the river, and he finally believed that the unit as it was then constituted could not "go on so, with any prospect of a successful or safe termination of the expedition."[59] He not only had fifty-five ineffectives in the ranks, but the amount of rations was insufficient to carry the Battalion to California. Cooke therefore decided to cut his losses, tighten his belt, and "by patience and perseverance and energy to accomplish the undertaking. . .[60]

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[55]Tyler, History, p. 181.

[56]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 74.

[57]Tyler, History, pp. 184-185.

[58]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 93.

[59]Ibid., p. 94.

[60]Ibid., p. 95.

Patience and perseverance would certainly be required, for although Cooke was personally familiar with the territory thus far covered, he was now about to leave the Rio Grande and march into unknown country. The guides who had been sent to him by Kearny were unfamiliar with the terrain, and Cooke soon became distrustful of their scouting reports. Under such conditions he again trimmed the command by sending fifty-eight of the sick and ineffective back to Santa Fe and reorganizing the balance of the command. Spartan measures were instituted to carry the Battalion through the dangerous undertaking which it now faced; nothing was to be taken which was not absolutely essential. Even tent poles were abandoned and muskets substituted in their place; all spare oxen were to be packed with two hundred pounds; and Tyler thought their antics in protest

> . . . laughable to witness . . . as they kicked up before and reared up behind; they bellowed and snorted, pawed and plowed the ground with their horns, whirling and jumping in every direction.[61]

Even the commander found a bit of humor in the episode, describing the "irresistible ludicrous" dance of the oxen as a "perfect jig!"

Following the uncertain lead of the guides, the reformed Battalion again resumed its march on November 11, and on the thirteenth it turned west and marched away from the Rio Grande. But the men soon veered southward again, and on the fourteenth Cooke complained that Antoine Leroux, his guide, had "only reached about forty miles from the river!" The colonel was becoming less and less trustful of the scouts and more and more confident of his own judgment. He did not believe he had a

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[61]Tyler, History, pp. 202-203; Gudde, Bigler, p. 28; Bieber, Cooke's Journal, pp. 95-97.

"guide that knows anything about the country; and I fear such exploring, as we go, will be very slow or hazardous work."[62] Matters worsened quickly, and for a week the column inched its way southward with an occasional sidestep to the west. Cooke impatiently followed the advice of the guides, when he could get it; at one point he wrote:

> . . . no guide is here for tomorrow. There is a mountain before us--to the west--tapering to a distant point on the left and sinking to a high ridge on the right; but where is water or our most advisable course? Heaven knows! We are exploring an unknown region with wagons.[63]

One week after leaving the Rio Grande the command had reached a point on the Miembres River about twenty miles southeast of present-day Silver City, New Mexico. On the twentieth the order was given to rest for a day while the guides scouted the area ahead for water and a possible route. Cooke was obviously nearing the end of his patience, and taking the guides with him he ascended a nearby hill to survey the surrounding countryside. There he had a "long and anxious conversation with the guides."[64] He especially was concerned over the fact that Kearny had wanted him to establish a wagon road over the Gila route, and yet the column was moving farther south, away from the route of the Army of the West. The guides argued that the only feasible course lay slightly to the southeast to Janos, then west to Fronteras, then northward along the Rio San Pedro to its junction with the Gila. As Tyler put it, Cooke was "dumbfounded"; taking counsel with the officers on his staff, he assented to the guides' proposed route, and on the morning of the twenty-first the

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[62]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 100.

[63]Ibid., p. 594.

[64]Ibid., p. 105.

Battalion marched again on a slightly southwestwardly course.[65]

Cooke was not alone in thinking the route wrong; the Mormons were as anxious as he to move for California. When the line of march was struck again in a southerly direction, Private Nathaniel V. Jones complained that it should have been to the west and that they were traveling south "contrary to the feelings of the two-thirds of the Battalion."[66] Their course soon veered southeastward--and that was the last straw. The guides had led Cooke to believe Janos lay to the southwest; he had not agreed to this: "I have followed them in almost every direction but east," he complained, and calling a halt, he rose in his saddle and looked down the Janos road then to the southwest. "This is not my course. I was ordered to California; and by God, I will go there or die in the attempt! Bugler! Blow the right!" From the troops came the cry, "God bless the Colonel!" All the hardships, hard words, and hard feelings which had accumulated through the miles of dust and sweat faded away in that moment, and Tyler noted that as "The Colonel's head turned and his keen, penetrating eyes glanced around to discern whence the voice came . . . his grave, stern face for once softened and showed signs of satisfaction."[67] If Cooke ever doubted the loyalty of his troops, such thoughts now vanished; that evening found the "Brethren truly rejoicing . . . to turn west again, trusting in the Lord to guide our Pilots day by day."[68]

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[65]*Ibid.*, pp. .05-108; Tyler, *History*, pp. 205-206.

[66]Nathaniel V. Jones, "Journal of Nathaniel Jones With the Mormon Battalion," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, IV (1931), 6-24.

[67]Tyler, *History*, p. 207.

[68]Tyler, *History*, p. 207.

The decision to turn west and follow the more direct route to the Gila was universally popular, but it entailed severe hardships. Each mile advanced was gained only after the most painstaking labor.[69] The men had to endure all the trials of the desert, imagining at one point that they beheld "a vast luminous sea, or lake, to which the outline of the mountain gave a far shore. . . ."[70] On November 23 Cooke saw a strange sight, indeed: "a river, apparently, but we believed it sand . . . but it seemed not at all . . . the most extraordinary ground that had ever been seen. The dry bottom of a vast shallow lake . . . nearly as smooth and hard as polished marble!"[71] The Battalion had reached Las Playas (near the spot where James Johnson had heineously murdered the Apache chieftan Juan José and a number of his tribe by means of a concealed cannon ten years before).[72] A week after the decision to turn west, the Brethren's rejoicing was noticeably restrained; the effort of passing over mountains and down grades up to forty-five degrees had cooled their ardor somewhat, and information from the Apache Chief Manuelito indicated that more of the same could be expected before the column reached the rancho San Bernardino. The strain on the men was all but unbearable, and Captain Henry Standage one evening "laid down without supper, too tired to cook." He thought "the path . . . traveled today was in reality a rugged one and such as I never wish to travel again. . . ."[73]

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[69]Tyler, History, p. 207.

[70]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 111.

[71]Ibid., pp. 112-113.

[72]Thrapp, Conquest of Apacheria, pp. 10-12.

[73]Standage, in Golder, March of Mormon Battalion, pp. 187, 189.

The rancho San Bernardino with its "old houses and a remarkably fine spring fifteen paces in diameter" was finally reached on December 2. There the expedition rested for a day while Colonel Cooke parleyed with the Indian chiefs whom Manuelito had persuaded to come in with him. In treating with them, Cooke looked past their "ugly and squalid" appearance and discerned characteristics which would prove to be formidable when Apache-American relations later broke down. Although the chiefs swore friendship toward Americans though the "sun and moon" should fall, Cooke saw before him some of the finest cavalry in the world, riding "fine horses" and armed with very "formidable-looking lances, with guns, and bows."[74]

Other talents than Indian fighting were soon demanded from the Battalion, for after a few days' march from the San Bernardino they came upon a particularly ferocious herd of wild cattle. The men had been sniping at the cattle for several days as they marched toward the Rio San Pedro; Standage estimated that the number of cattle spotted on the fifth amounted to not less than four thousand head. To prevent straggling and wastage of ammunition, Cooke ordered company commanders to give "no permission to leave the column of march or the camp, and muskets will not be fired at game."[75] Tyler noted that the prohibition on wild bull shooting "was the only order not strictly obeyed."[76]

The bulls apparently tired of such one-sided fun and launched an attack of their own. As the column marched near the rancho San Pedro

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[74]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 103.

[75]Tyler, History, pp. 214-215.

[76]Ibid., p. 215.

on the eleventh, it encountered a particularly large number of the cattle, and very soon the men were obliged to lay down a hot fire to defend themselves from their charges. Although Cooke previously had ordered muskets to be carried unloaded, he quickly issued the order to load--an unnecessary command since most of the men had ignored the previous order directing them to unload. Considerable excitement ensued as the animals vented their fury on men and mules alike. Men jumped atop wagon wheels, climbed the few available mesquite bushes, or took whatever shelter was available and soon

> . . . the roar of musketry was heard from one end of the line to the other. One small lead mule in a team was thrown on the horns of a bull over its mate on the near side, and the near mule, now on the off side and next to the bull, was gored until he had to be left with entrails hanging a foot below his body.[77]

The colonel also got into the action when he "saw an immense coal-black bull charge on Corporal Frost of Company A. . . . I was close by and believed the man in great danger to his life and spoke to him."[78] Bigler and Tyler gave a somewhat different account of the incident. When the mounted Cooke first spotted the bull, he ordered Frost, "with his usual firm manner of speech," to load his gun; this Frost could not do as it was already loaded, contrary to the Colonel's previous orders. The bull spotted them and charged; Frost made no move; the bull came on; assuming the corporal to be stupefied, Cooke hollered, "Run, run, God damn you, run!" But the man calmly raised his musket, took aim, and dropped the bull at the last possible moment. Cooke must not have awaited the outcome, for Bigler says he "turned around and swore that man was a

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[77] _Ibid._, p. 219.

[78] Bieber, _Cooke's Journal_, p. 143.

soldier."[79] Casualties in the engagement amounted on the bovine side to some twenty bulls killed, several score others mortally wounded, while the Battalion suffered the temporary disability of three of its number: Lieutenant George Stone (later a governor of California) wounded himself in his right thumb with his own rifle; Private Amos Cox was severely gored in the right thigh; and Sergeant Albert Smith received some broken ribs.[80] The first Battle of Bull Run, as Cooke dubbed it, was won by the Mormon Battalion.

The excitement of the battle with the bulls had not subsided when the guides returned to camp to report news of potentially more action for the battle-hardened veterans. Leroux had discovered a group of Mexicans and Indians distilling mescal near an abandoned ranch about fifteen miles from the river. From them he had learned that the Mexicans were garrisoning Tucson in a fashion to make a fight of it if the Battalion attempted to pass that way. He also learned that the best road available to the column lay through Tucson and along a route roughly paralleling the northwestwardly course of the Rio Santa Cruz--not along the Rio San Pedro. By Leroux's estimation it would save near one hundred miles and place the command on the Gila River very near the site of the Pima and Maricopa villages, a saving of time and rations Cooke could not ignore. His route therefore was to be through Tucson, garrison or no garrison.

On the thirteenth the line of march was resumed for about seven or eight miles, but the men were halted early in the afternoon and given a

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[79]Gudde, Bigler, p. 32; Tyler, History, p. 220.

[80]Tyler, History, p. 219; Standage, in Golder, March of Mormon Battalion, p. 192; Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 143; Gudde, Bigler, p. 32. Bliss, "Journal," 80; Jones, "Journal," 8.

long drill. Cooke personally supervised the operation, drilling "first a company in front of the others, then the battalion, principally at loading and firing, and in forming column from line and line from column."[81] On the fourteenth, the column pressed on, and Cooke, leading a flying column, moved ahead and captured the mescal-making Mexicans. They offered no resistance; in fact, the sergeant informed Cooke that his commanding officer wished to avoid any confrontation and hoped that the Americans would pass on either side of the town. If they would thus oblige him, although he had orders to the contrary, he would offer no resistance to their passage. This the colonel declined to do, and sent the sergeant back to insist that Tucson be thrown open to trade with the Battalion. He assured the Mexicans that if no resistance were offered, the Americans would not molest the small garrison.[82]

On the evening of the sixteenth, as the column lay within half a day's march of Tucson, Cooke parleyed with two Mexican officers who came out in a final attempt to arrange an accommodation which would avoid bloodshed. Cooke calmly demanded that the garrison surrender two cavalry carbines and three lances as a token of submission, and that the town be thrown open "for the purposes of trade and refreshment." The garrison would be paroled on its oath not to serve against the United States during the current war. The officers dutifully recorded his words and left.[83]

The following morning at a point about six miles from Tucson, a messenger met the advancing Battalion and presented a letter from the

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[81]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, pp. 146-147.

[82]Ibid., p. 149.

[83]Ibid., p. 151.

commandant: "as a man of honor he could not submit to the terms." Nothing remained to be discussed, and as the rider galloped away Cooke turned in his saddle and ordered the Battalion to load muskets. It appeared they would be needed. Before the order could be carried out, however, more Mexicans appeared bearing news that the garrison had abandoned the town. The loading order was countermanded, and the Battalion marched into Tucson escorted by about a dozen "well-mounted citizens." Kearny had conquered Santa Fe without bloodshed, and now Cooke took Tucson without firing a shot.

As the Americans marched through the town, the inhabitants rushed to bring them "water and other little tokens of respect"; perhaps they were hoping to forestall any plundering or rapine by demonstrating their friendly disposition toward the conquerors. Tyler remembered

> . . . with much gratitude, the silver-haired Mexican, of perhaps more than three score years and ten, who, when signs of thirst were given, ran to the brook as fast as his tottering limbs could carry him, dipped up his water, and, almost out of breath, but with cheerful countenance delivered the refreshing and much needed draught.[84]

If the hundred or so remaining villagers had been fearful of plunder, they quickly were relieved of that worry, for the Battalion marched through the town and encamped on the stream about half a mile distant. The reports had been true; the garrison and perhaps as many as four hundred of the citizens had fled to the mission San Xavier del Bac.[85]

Colonel Cooke took advantage of the temporary halt at Tucson to undertake a bit of diplomatic work. He wrote a letter to José Antonio

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[84]Tyler, History, p. 227.

[85]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 153.

Comadurán, commandant of the presidio of Tuscon, and to Manuel Gándara, the governor of Sonora, apologizing for his incursion into Sonora, and for the necessity of using "about thirty fanegas of wheat from the public granary." Cooke had by then grasped the strategic importance of the route which he had traversed, and the insinuations which followed were intended as more than idle flattery:

> Be assured that I did not come as an enemy of the people whom you govern; they have received only kindness at my hands. Sonora refused to contribute to the support of the present war against my country, alleging the excellent reasons that all her resources were necessary to her defense from the incessant attacks of savages, and that the central government gave her no protection and was therefore entitled to no support. To this might have been added that Mexico supports a war upon Sonora. For I have seen New Mexicans within her boundary trading for the spoil of her people, taken by murderous, cowardly Indians who attack only to lay waste, rob, and fly to the mountains; and I have certain information that this is the practice of many years. Thus one part of Mexico allies itself against another. The unity of Sonora with the states of the north, now her neighbors, is necessary effectually to subdue these Parthian Apache. Meanwhile I make a wagon road from the streams of the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean, through the valuable plains and mountains (rich with minerals) of Sonora. This, I trust, will prove useful to the citizens of either republic, who, if not more closely, may unite in the pursuits of a highly beneficial commerce.[86]

If Cooke had correctly judged the mood of Sonorans, and if American statesmen had been as prescient as the Colonel or possessed his knowledge of the region's geography, the need for the Gadsden purchase might never have arisen.

The command resumed its trek toward the Gila River on the morning of December 18, and a difficult march it was. Although the route along

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[86] Ibid., pp. 159-160.

the western side of the Santa Catarina mountains was relatively flat, the shortage of water made it a punishing experience. Some of the mules died; Bigler noted "it was most impossible to get the teams along, and no wonder, for they had neither grass nor water for two days."[87] Fortunately grain had been found at Tucson in sufficient quantities to provide reserves for the march to the Gila. But there was none to waste. When Cooke found another mule appropriating his riding mule's ration, he angrily drove the animal away; yet despite Cooke's repeated gesticulations and insulting oaths, he insisted on being a messmate to the colonel's mule. Turning to Bigler, who had been detailed as his orderly for the day, Cooke shouted, "'Orderly, is your gun loaded?' 'No, sir.' 'Load your gun, and I'll shoot the Goddamned mule!'" Without further comment he turned and walked back into his tent. Bigler recognized the animal as one belonging to one of his friends, and "Quick as thought he bit off the bullet, put it into his pocket, emptied the powder from the cartridge into his gun and rammed the paper on top of it." It had occurred to Bigler that the colonel "was only a little vexed and in reality did not wish to kill the mule."

In the meantime the vexatious animal had returned to the shared feast, and Cooke stomped from his tent to where Bigler stood. "Is your gun loaded?" he asked. "Yes, Sir," replied Bigler. Taking the weapon, Cooke ran to within ten feet of the thief and loosed a thunderous broadside. The animal stood as before, matching the colonel's mule bite for bite. Cooke threw the gun to the ground, "looked daggars at the orderly," and as he turned on his heel and walked toward his tent remarked in

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[87]Gudde, Bigler, p. 35.

no uncertain terms that the gun had been improperly loaded. Probably only a few heard his comment amid "roars of laughter from teamsters and others. . . ." Bigler thought the bugler "would die laughing."[88]

On December 23, 1846, the exhausted command reached the long-sought Pima villages on the Gila, 701 miles from Santa Fe by Cooke's calculations.[89] There they found a brief respite from the tortuous trail, and the men quickly fell to trading scraps of clothing and trinkets, even cutting the buttons from their shirts, in exchange for corn, beans, and other morsels of food. The Pimas were an agrarian people, peaceful and friendly, who feared neither white nor Apache but were content to farm and manufacture blankets and other fabrics from their cotton. Tyler thought them a "fine looking race of people . . ." from whom "our American and European cities would do well to take lessons in virtue and morality. . . ."[90] Even Cooke was much impressed by what he saw; certainly the sober and hard-working Mormons were, and the colonel suggested to some of the Mormon officers that they might consider returning there to settle among those people. The Pimas apparently thought the idea acceptable, for the "proposition to this effect was favorably received. . . ."[91]

The Indians might have been friendly and peaceful, but they were not by any means naïve. In fact, they proved to be such sharp businessmen that Cooke thought it necessary to prohibit private trading with them

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[88]Ibid., pp. 35-36; Tyler, History, p. 233.

[89]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 171.

[90]Tyler, History, p. 234.

[91]Ibid., p. 236.

so that he could resupply the Battalion without having to bid against his own people. This order was not greeted with enthusiasm by the men, but the prices demanded by the Indians for their goods had become exorbitant, and some regulatory measure was clearly necessary. The natives drove a hard bargain for a good mule or a bushel of corn, yet they were not thieves; they delivered several mules and other goods which had been left with them by Kearny. Their honesty proved to be a matter of some note; Tyler remarked that they certainly deserved exception from the rule that "no Indian is good until buried six feet under ground."[92] The relations of the two people were so cordial that as the troops marched away on the twenty-third, Colonel Cooke stopped at the chief's hut and congratulated him on his peoples' virtues. To "add to their comfort and welfare," he presented the chief with three ewes and their lambs.[93]

The afternoon of their departure from the Indian villages also brought news of the Army of the West. Kearny had written some dispatches which the three riders had carried from Warner's Ranch; one letter was from Captain Turner and recommended its bearer, Francisco, to Cooke as a dependable guide who would assist the Battalion in its march from the villages to California.[94] Kearny's column had made the trek with pack mules in twelve days, but the general expected the wagons to consume from forty to sixty days in passage. The letter also reported the revolt by native Californians against the American forces, but gave no indication of its status other than to remark "that the safety and conquest of

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 172; Tyler, History, p. 235.

[94] Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 173.

California depended upon the prompt and energetic action of the general and command."[95]

The news of the uprising in California gave added encouragement to Cooke's inclination to leave the river where it turned northwestward and march a distance of about forty miles where it again returned to a southwestwardly course. By taking the cutoff and avoiding the river's horseshoe bend he saved at least one hundred miles, although the more direct route was waterless. On the evening of the twenty-sixth the exhausted and dehydrated column again struck the Gila. The route along the river was difficult in the extreme, for when the trail was not marked by entangling undergrowth along the marshy river bottom, it was hampered by bluffs which often appeared insurmountable. Cooke thought it "the most desert uncouth, impracticable country and river of our knowledge."[96] He felt as if every day there was to be an "experiment or venture--a great difficulty to be overcome--and to be then rejoiced as one day less of such."[97] The suffering of the animals exceeded that of the men, for they were forced to subsist off what dead grass they could nibble during the evenings, and the sheep in particular were soon being left behind to meet their fate as best they could.

The mules were one resource that could not be abandoned, however, and the poor beasts could find no respite from their labors. To alleviate their lot somewhat, Cooke decided to take two of the less useful

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[95]Tyler, History, p. 235.

[96]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, p. 178.

[97]Ibid., p. 181.

wagons, dismantel them, and lash their beds together to form a pontoon. In this craft he decided to place "all the baggage that he could risk, and, after a trial, probably much more."[98] The Mormons were not impressed with this innovation, fearing the loss of much valuable foodstuff if the venture should fail. The sight of 2500 pounds of sorely needed provisions resting in the wagon-boats "cast a gloom over the men generally,"[99] and well it might, for they would see their food no more. Lieutenant Stoneman was placed in command of the "Navy of the West," and it was launched into the swift current of the Gila as the Battalion marched away along the shore. That was on January 2, 1847;[100] no further news was had of the "Navy" for three days, when it was learned that Lieutenant Stoneman's craft had engaged a hostile sandbar and was forced to strike its colors.[101]

Another week of hard marching brought the haggard men to the junction of the Gila and the Colorado. Cooke was striken by its resemblance to the Missouri "in size and color of the water."[102] Notwithstanding the obviously "rich soil" of its immense bottoms," he believed it "to be the most useless of rivers to man. . . ."[103] The colonel's diplomatic foresight was much better than his agricultural predictions, but his opinion may have been influenced by the fact that he somehow had to transport his

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[98]Ibid., p. 187.

[99]Tyler, History, p. 239.

[100]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, pp. 188-189.

[101]Ibid., p. 194.

[102]Ibid., p. 200.

[103]Ibid.

command across this western Missouri in nothing other than his "Navy," which finally had been brought down the Gila after being relieved of its priceless cargo.[104]

The better part of three days was passed in crossing the Colorado, an undertaking which placed a severe drain on the pitifully fatigued men and animals. Despite all their hardships and the "mind full of anxiety" which Cooke professed, the commander's wry sense of humor marshalled one last assault on the sober dignity of his charges. As one crew attempted to pole Stoneman's pontoon craft across the river, the men suddenly found that the bottom had eluded their poles. As he watched from the shore, Cooke advised them to "Try the other side [of the raft]," which they did to no avail. Thereupon the colonel gravely removed his hat and called to them: "Goodbye, gentlemen! When you get down to the Gulf of California, give my respects to the folks!" Replacing his hat, he turned his horse and rode away without looking back.[105]

The river was crossed, after which the Battalion faced the last but not least significant barrier before reaching the safety and succor afforded by Warner's Ranch. Before them lay that same burning stretch of desert which had reduced the Pattie party to a state of stupor nearly two decades before. Ninety miles of barren landscape with a temperature range that during the day would do justice to the nether regions, and during the night would freeze water--if there were any, which there was not. Cooke pushed the Battalion across fifteen miles of this wasteland immediately to a well which Kearny had dug during his passage. Through

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[104]Ibid., pp. 200-202.

[105]Young, Cooke, pp. 218-219.

further digging and by lining its bottom with a washtub to prevent quicksand seepage, water sufficient to satisfy the needs of the moment was obtained.[106] It was the last which most of the men and mules would taste for three days and two nights.

The march across the desert literally disintegrated the command. Men and animals were strung out along a line several miles in length, and it was with the greatest difficulty that they moved at all. Some relief reached them on the fifteenth when fresh mules and cattle from Warner's Ranch intercepted the Battalion, and the worst animals were replaced. Many of the replacements, however, proved to have too much spirit, one running off carrying harness and all. With this relief came the sad news of the Battle of San Pascual and of the loss of many friends and comrades. The column moved on in spite of all, and another day's hard travel brought the lead wagon to the life-giving waters of the Cariza. The desert had been conquered.[107]

Refreshed by the cool, clear water from the stream and strengthened somewhat by renewed rations of beef, the men pushed on to the last leg of their march. The weakened condition of the command did not permit an exceptional rebirth of energy, and consequently their progress was still made at the price of much pain and suffering. Yet their will was renewed, for not even a wall of solid rock could stop them at this point. And that is exactly what Cooke confronted on the nineteenth; a rocky defile that had to be passed proved too narrow for the wagons. The commander dismounted, and taking a pick personally attacked the impeding

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[106]Bieber, Cooke's Journal, pp. 204-205.

[107]Ibid., pp. 209-215.

rocks. Before long the wagons rolled again, and the command passed on toward Warner's Ranch.[108]

On January 21, 1847, the Mormon Battalion arrived at Warner's Ranch. Tyler was impressed with the fact that Warner's was the first house that the column had encountered since crossing the Colorado into California. There the men enjoyed their first full meal since they had feasted on the spoils of victory after the "Battle of Bull Run." It was a welcome relief to receive a full four-pound beef ration, and although it was without salt, some comfort could be taken from the fact that it was fat and juicy.[109] Only one day's rest was taken before the colonel pushed his command on toward his prescribed goal of San Diego. Late on the evening of January 29 the weary Battalion encamped amidst "extensive gardens and vineyards, wells and cisterns," surrounded all about by olive groves, and "the picturesque date trees flourishing and ornamental."[110] His mission concluded, Cooke "rode down by moonlight and reported to the general in San Diego."[111]

The following day, Cooke issued Order Number 1, Headquarters Mormon Battalion, Mission of San Diego:

> The lieutenant-colonel commanding congratulates the battalion on their safe arrival on the shore of the Pacific ocean, and the conclusion of the march of over two thousand miles. History may be searched in vain for an equal march of infantry. Nine-tenths of it has been through a wilderness where nothing but savages and wild beasts are found, or deserts where, for want of water, there is no living creature. . . . Thus, marching half naked and half fed,

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[108]*Ibid.*, pp. 222-223; Tyler, *History*, pp. 247-249.

[109]Tyler, *History*, p. 249.

[110]Bieber, *Cooke's Journal*, p. 238.

[111]*Ibid.*

> and living upon wild animals, we have discovered and made a road of great value to our country. . . .[112]

Cooke was correct to commend his men for their unparalleled efforts, for they had indeed discovered a road of great value. Perhaps no one realized this more than did Philip St. George Cooke, for he earlier had asked a very significant question:

> Will not this prove the best emigrant's route from Independence to California, by the road I came? . . . Emigrants could very cheaply supply themselves with cattle, mules and sheep in New Mexico. If their destination was Southern California, there could be no question as to the best route.[113]

Within two years, there would be thousands of Americans who would agree that the Gila Trail indeed was the best route to California.

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[113]*Ibid.*, p. 172.

CHAPTER IV

AMATEUR IMPERIALISTS AT WORK: THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO AND THE GADSDEN PURCHASE

The southwestern boundary of the United States became a crucial issue in December, 1844, although no one may have realized it at the time. It was then that Asa Whitney first proposed his plan for the construction of a transcontinental railroad.[1] Although Whitney envisioned a northern route for the first iron trail to the Pacific, increasing evidence of the project's technological feasibility soon embroiled the issue in sectional politics. The senators and representatives of Northern states generally were satisfied with Whitney's proposed route, differing principally over which of the Northern states should be the eastern terminus. But before long, however, spokesmen for the several sections were proposing variations on Whitney's theme more in tune with their respective region's interests. Representative Stephen A. Douglas put forth an alternative to the original plan on October 15, 1845; he suggested Chicago as the eastern terminus of a road that would run from there via Rock Island, Council Bluffs, and South Pass to an undetermined western

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[1]N. H. Loomis, "Asa Whitney: Father of the Pacific Railroads," Mississippi Valley Historical Association, Proceedings, VI (1912-1913), 166-175; M. L. Brown, "Asa Whitney and His Pacific Railroad Publicity Campaign," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XX (September, 1933), 209-224.

port, probably San Francisco Bay.[2]

In November, 1845, at the Southwestern Convention in Memphis, Southern interest in the Pacific railway project was clearly demonstrated by Colonel James Gadsden, who reported that his committee found two possible routes, both originating at Memphis, the western terminus being either San Francisco, or far to the south at Mazatlán on the Gulf of California.[3] These proposals were made six months before the outbreak of the Mexican War, although all routes traversed and terminated on Mexican soil. The hue and cry for annexation of sufficient southwestern territory to make a future southern railway route possible increased after the inception of hostilities with Mexico; the question in many Southern minds was not whether Mexican land should be seized, but how much should be taken to insure a Southern railroad route. John C. Calhoun suggested consideration of a line from El Paso through the Gila Valley to San Diego, and, accordingly, Secretary of State James Buchanan instructed the American representative to negotiate a territorial settlement which would at least include the line of the Gila River.[4]

If Nicholas P. Trist silently congratulated himself on a job well done as he signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, he may well have been the first and only person to offer the compliment. Others such as Lieutenant Philip St. George Cooke and

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[2]Robert C. Russel, _Improvement of Communication with the Pacific Coast as an Issue in American Politics, 1783-1864_ (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1948), p. 12.

[3]_Ibid._

[4]Buchanan to Trist, July 13, 1847, _Senate Executive Document_ 52, 30 Cong., I Sess., 90 (Hereafter cited as _SED_ 52.)

Major William H. Emory, would have insisted territory well to the south of the Gila be included within the new southwestern boundary of the United States as defined by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This the document which Trist signed did not do, and therein lay the seeds of a dilemma which would sprout crises for eight years more, until the Gadsden Purchase at last brought the disputed area into the possession of the United States.[5]

In 1846, no one was certain about the geography of the Southwest; many guides could be found to conduct a party to Santa Fe, El Paso, or other points on the ground, but the location of these points with respect to exact longitude and latitude was the purest speculation. When Kearny and the Army of the West took the field at the beginning of the Mexican War, they were issued Tanner's new map of 1846 and Mitchell's map of 1846, both of which were based on data from Captain John C. Frémont's California expedition of 1844, and Lieutenant Charles Wilkes' expedition to Oregon and California in 1841; yet neither of these parties had penetrated the Southwest![6] As the Army of the West and the Mormon Battalion crossed New Mexico and Lower California, therefore, Kearny and Cooke were forced to feel their cartographic way; and the maps later compiled by Lieutenant Emory constituted the only reliable information extant on the region. Most of Emory's

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[5]Although Trist's work has been praised by numerous prominent historians, Professor Jack Nortrup severely censured him for his blatant disregard of instructions and strategic considerations in negotiating the treaty. Jack Nortrup, "Nicholas Trist's Mission to Mexico: A Reinterpretation," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXXI (January, 1968), 321-346.

[6]Goetzmann, Army Exploration, p. 155.

observations and the accurate geodetic data contained therein were not known to Nicholas Trist, however, and he relied principally upon Disturnell's Map of the United Mexican States, as Organized and Defined by Various Acts of the Congress of said Republic and Constructed According to the Best Authorities, seventh edition, published in New York in 1847. Actually, Disturnell's map was a plagiarism of a plagiarism;[7] the only accurate information Trist possessed was the latitude of San Diego as calculated by Lieutenant Emory; this had been communicated to him by Secretary Buchanan on July 19, 1847. But he was no better informed with Emory's data in hand, for Trist had no way of establishing by correct longitude and latitude an eastern terminus for the boundary line.[8]

Thus handicapped--and the Mexican officials were no better informed--Trist had negotiated the settlement on the assumption that Disturnell's map represented a reasonably accurate approximation of El Paso's location.[9] In fact, it did not; Disturnell placed El Paso at 32°15' north latitude, 104°39' west longitude, while the correct position was 31°45' north and 106°29' west. Converted into mileage, this meant that on his map Disturnell had El Paso thirty-four miles too far north and 116 miles too far east. Trist could not be censured for negligence, however, for he gathered what supplementary

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[7]This generated much confusion, for the American map attached to the treaty was the seventh edition of Disturnell's map, while the Mexican copy was the twelfth edition. All, however, were based upon a plagiarism in 1828 by White, Gallaher, and White of Tanner's map of Mexico of 1825. Ibid.

[8]Ibid., pp. 155-156.

[9]Nicholas P. Trist, "Memorandum," January, 1848, quoted in William H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and Scientist in the Winning of the American West, (New York, 1966), p. 258.

information he could. The other sources available to him differed widely, one placing the town at 32°9' and another situating it at 32° 50'--but none indicated it to be over one degree farther south than on Disturnell's map.[10] That Trist was aware of his dilemma was indicated by the exasperated note he attached to the compilation: "All these geographical notes are replete with errors; for nothing is positively known, and the only basis for them consists of ill-formed conjectures and worse information."[11]

On the basis of these "geographical notes . . . replete with errors," the negotiators delineated the boundary between the United States and the Republic of Mexico:

> The boundary line between the two Republics shall commence in the Gulf of Mexico, three leagues from land, opposite the mouth of the Rio Grande, otherwise called Rio Bravo del Norte, or opposite the mouth of its deepest branch, if it should have more than one branch emptying directly into the sea; from thence up the middle of that river, following the deepest channel, where it has more than one, to the point where it strikes the southern boundary of New Mexico (which runs north of the town called Paso) to its western termination; thence northward along the western line of New Mexico, until it intersects the first branch of the river Gila; (or if it should not intersect any branch of that river, then to the point on the said line nearest to such branch), and thence in a direct line to said river, until it empties into the Rio Colorado; thence across the Rio Colorado, following the division lines between Upper and Lower California to the Pacific Ocean.
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> The southern and western limits of New Mexico, mentioned in this article, are those laid down in the map entitled _Map of the United Mexican States_ . . . Revised edition. _Published at New York, in 1847_, by J. Disturnell; . . . And in order to preclude all difficulty in tracing

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[10]Captain Robert E. Lee provided Trist with a memorandum based on the works of several Mexican authorities. _Ibid._, p. 258.

[11]Goetzmann, _Army Exploration_, p. 156.

> upon the ground the limit separating Upper from Lower California, it is agreed that the said limit shall consist of a straight line drawn from the middle of the Rio Gila, where it unites with the Colorado, to a point on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, distant one marine league due south of the southernmost point of the port of San Diego, . . .

To accomplish the designation of the boundary line on the ground, the treaty also provided that

> . . . the two Governments shall each appoint a commissioner and a surveyor, who, before the expiration of one year from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty, shall meet at the port of San Diego, and proceed to run and mark the said boundary in its whole course to the mouth of the Rio Bravo del Norte.[12]

Ratifications of the treaty were duly exchanged on May 30, 1848, but before the prescribed year had passed, many Americans were having second thoughts about the boundary of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The process of appointing the American boundary commission was afflicted by the same partisan political paralysis which had complicated the negotiation and ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As Nicholas Trist was settling down to an existence in oblivion, the guardian of his orphaned treaty was hurriedly trying to assemble a team of politicians and scientists who would consummate Article V of that document. For the office of boundary commissioner, Polk first appointed Ambrose H. Sevier, whose Arkansas constituency had declined to return him to the United States Senate in the election of November, 1848. Sevier's only apparent qualification for the position was his record of faithful service to the Democratic party; it would appear his luck was all bad that year, however, for he died before the Senate could

[12]Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, reprinted in Charles W. Elliot, American Historical Documents 1000-1904 (New York, 1963), pp. 289-305.

confirm him.[13]

The mantle next fell to John B. Weller, a one-term Democratic Congressman from Ohio, who as a candidate for Governor of that state had shared the unlucky Sevier's fate at the polls. The Whigs contested the appointment hotly, charging that Weller was a lame-duck's midnight appointee, and even went so far as to introduce a bill in the House withholding funds for a Commissioner's salary when such had been appointed "without authority of law."[14] The measure could not pass the Senate, however, and Weller was given a reprieve. It was likely this would be temporary, for on March 4, 1849, the newly elected Whig administration would take office. Under such circumstances, the most advisable course open to Weller was to organize his party quickly. Secretary of State Buchanan probably had more in mind than the May 30 provision of the treaty when he instructed Weller that "No time should be lost in organizing the commission on our part, preparatory to its departure for the place of destination."[15]

Joining Weller in the scramble to depart Washington before a new administration could void his commission was Andrew Belcher Gray, Polk's choice for surveyor. The twenty-nine-year-old Gray thus added another position to a resume which already had greater variety than length. Born in 1820, this son of a British consul early demonstrated an aptitude for engineering, and before the age of eighteen had

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[13]Paul Neff Garber, _The Gadsden Treaty_, (Reprint; Gloucester, Mass., 1959), p. 11.

[14]_Congressional Globe_, 30 Cong., II Sess., 617. (Hereafter cited as _Cong. Globe_.)

[15]Buchanan to Weller, January 24, 1849, _SED_ 34, 31 Cong., I Sess., Part I, 2-3

participated in a survey of the Mississippi Delta under the noted astronomer and engineer Andrew Talcott. From 1839 to 1840 he served as a midshipman in the Texas Navy, a distinction shared by few people, then was appointed by the Republic of Texas as surveyor for the Republic's boundary with the United States.[16] Commended by Texas for meritorious service in this, he left to work for the United States' War Department in the survey of the Keweenaw Penisula of Michigan. Texas soon called again, and during the Mexican War he joined the Texas Rangers and served on the new state's northern frontier against the Indians. He soon would see further service on the southwestern frontier, for on January 10, 1849, President Polk named Gray surveyor on the United States Boundary Commission.[17]

To perform the actual work of the survey, Polk appointed several well-qualified members of the Army's Corps of Topographical Engineers; Brevet Major William H. Emory was named Chief Astronomer and Commander of the Escort, and his assistants were to be Lieutenant Amiel Weeks Whipple and Brevet Captain Edmund L. F. Hardcastle. Emory's credentials for the position were impeccable. He was a graduate of West Point, Class of 1831, who had served with some distinction in the army until 1836. In that year he resigned his commission to be eligible for an appointment to the Corps of Topographical Engineers then in the process of formation. On July 7, 1838, Emory received a commission

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[16]"Message of the President Communicating . . . the Proceedings of the Commissioner Appointed to Run the Boundary Line Between the United States and the Republic of Texas," _SED_ 199, 27 Cong., II Sess., 61.

[17]L. R. Bailey, ed., _The A. B. Gray Report: and Including the Reminiscences of Peter R. Brady who Accompanied the Expedition_, (Los Angeles, 1963), xi-xii.

as a first lieutenant in the new organization, and during the following decade he served with particular distinction in a number of capacities with the engineers. With the outbreak of the Mexican War, Emory was attached to General Kearny's command on the march to the Pacific, and he not only compiled a valuable survey of the Gila route, but also fought with such valor in the battles on the coast that he was rewarded with a brevet captaincy. It was this assignment which especially prepared him for the task he undertook in 1849 as Chief Astronomer for the boundary commission.[18]

Lieutenant Whipple, though not as distinguished as Major Emory, was a very talented engineer. Born in 1818, he had attended Amherst College before entering the United States Military Academy in 1837, whence he graduated in 1841. He did not participate in the Mexican War, as from 1844 to 1849 he was working on the survey of the northeastern boundary of the United States. His call to join the Mexican boundary commission removed him from that duty.[19] Emory's other assistant, Captain Hardcastle, was a Marylander a West Point graduate--Class of 1846--and a veteran of the campaigns in Mexico during the war. His brevet captaincy was also a reward for outstanding bravery; he had been especially conspicuous at the battle of Molino del Rey. During his service in Mexico Hardcastle had surveyed the valley of Mexico, and thereby had gained much valuable experience for the work to

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[18]Goetzmann, Army Exploration, pp. 128-130.

[19]Grant Foreman, ed., A Pathfinder in the Southwest: The Itinerary of Lieutenant A. W. Whipple During his Explorations for a Railway Route From Fort Smith to Los Angeles in the Years 1853 and 1854 (Norman, Okla., 1941), p. 7.

which he was now assigned.[20]

A political cartoonist could do more justice to the situation in Washington at the end of February, 1849, than can an historian; it is easy to imagine Polk doggedly barracading the front door of the White House against the infuriated Whig administration-elect, while his boundary commission appointees frantically scramble out the back door and over the hill toward the southwest. The subsequent conduct of the Whigs indicates that they would have taken action to disappoint the commission had it been within reach when they assumed office;[21] only by a mere five days did the members escape such a fate. Weller and most of the others departed on March 1. The Commissioner and several assistants traveled down the Mississippi to New Orleans, there to take ship for Panama. Major Emory remained with Hardcastle until the latter and the heaviest equipment were aboard the steamship Panama and enroute on a voyage around the Horn. He then boarded a ship bound for the Isthmus. Gray, accompanied by Major Emory's brother Frederick and several others, traveled the rivers to New Orleans, hoping to follow Weller's route; all the while, poor Whipple was stranded at Cambridge, Massachusetts, testing the instruments he somehow had collected from the northeastern boundary survey, West Point, and even the Smithsonian

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[20]Goetzmann, Army Exploration, p. 158.

[21]Lewis P. Lesley, "The International Boundary Survey from San Diego to the Gila River, 1849-1850," California Historical Society Quarterly, IX (March, 1930), 4.

Institution.[22]

If the members of the commission thought they had endured unusual difficulties in leaving Washington, they soon discovered that worse problems awaited them on their journey. President Polk had unwittingly complicated their passage with the announcement in December, 1848, of the discovery of gold in California. By March, 1849, the overland trails, the isthmanian route, and the long long, tack around Cape Horn were being taken by thousands of forty-niners whose anxiety to reach California was exceeded only by their ignorance of the disappointing fate there awaiting the majority of them. When the appointees traveling by way of Panama reached that point, they were engulfed in the swarm of gold seekers. Weller had neglected in his haste to arrange for through passage, and the officials were forced to cool their heels in hot Panama until May 13. An estimated 4,000 men were in desperate competition for any means of passage from the Isthmus to California. Ironically it was on the Panama, carrying Hardcastle and the heavy equipment, that Weller finally obtained berths for ten of the party to San Diego. Weller, Gray, and Emory thus reached the designated meeting point on June 1, 1849, only to discover that though they were one day late, the Mexican commission would be later still, exactly one month and two days later.[23]

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[22]Emory, Report of the United States and Mexican Boundary Commission, SED 108, 34 Cong., I Sess. (2 vols.), I, 3. Hereafter cited as Emory, Report. Goetzmann, Army Exploration, p. 159; Ewing, Report of the Secretary of the Interior . . . In Relation to the Operations of the Commission Appointed to Run and Mark the Boundary Between the United States and Mexico, SED 34, 31 Cong., I Sess., 8. Hereafter cited as Ewing, Report.

[23]Ewing, Report, 8; Emory, Report, 3; Goetzmann, Army Exploration, p. 160.

The Mexican boundary commissioner was General Pedro García Condé. He enjoyed an advantage over his American counterpart, for he not only was a politician but a professional soldier and engineer as well. The general had joined the Spanish army in 1818 at the age of 12, and managed to emerge from the Mexican Revolution on the winning side. He rose steadily through the following years until in 1837 he was appointed sub-director of the Military College in Mexico City. By 1843 he had attained the rank of brigadier general, and in 1844 he was promoted to the national government as Secretary of War and Marine. After the Mexican War he was elected to the national senate, and from there he had been chosen Boundary Commissioner. He brought considerable experience with him, for he had served as a captain of engineers from 1828 to 1833, during which time he had the first geographical map of the state of Chihuahua. His knowledge of the terrain which the commission had to survey therefore was formidible.[24]

The joint commission met on July 6, 1849, and in one day settled such ceremonial details as the exchange of credentials and formal introductions. The next day survey operations were under way, and the initial task of separating Upper and Lower California was begun. Major Emory's experience and expertise now became fully evident. He quickly organized his men into three parties; Emory and his group would establish an observatory just so-th of San Diego to determine exact longitude and latitutude for the initial point on the Pacific Coast;

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[24]Odie B. Faulk, Too Far North, Too Far South (Los Angeles, 1963), p. 18.

Captain Hardcastle would march eastward to the confluence of the Gila and Colorado Rivers, making preparations for the eventual marking of the boundary on the ground; Lieutenant Whipple would take a third party to the mouth of the Colorado River, thence to its junction with the Gila, mapping the area and determining the exact longitude and latitude of the confluence.[25] Although the Whipple party experienced considerable difficulty in coping with the desert and the numerous appeals for help from would-be millionaires who had chosen the Gila Trail as their path to the gold fields,[26] Emory and Hardcastle had little trouble completing their assignments.

But the vexations which had beset the commission thus far were as nothing when compared with the imbroglio soon to follow. Weller had no way of knowing, but as he handed his credentials to Condé on July 6, the order revoking them had been issued ten days previously by the new Secretary of State, John M. Clayton.[27] If the Whigs had been seething in impotence before March 4, they were determined after assuming power that the Democratic appointees would be removed; no doubt the charges leveled at Weller were trumped up, although much conspicuous bickering and complaining had erupted among the members of the commission as

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[25]Emory, Report, 4; Arthur Woodward, Feud on the Colorado (Los Angeles, 1955), p. 75.

[26]John James Audubon's son was one of those crossing the Gila Route, and he wrote to the Lieutenant commanding Whipple's escort: "If you do not get the means of supplying the cravings, and that speedily of the starving who must pass your post this winter, I would not be in your position for any consideration." Quoted in Goetzmann, Army Exploration, p. 162.

[27]Ewing, Report, 9.

early as their arrival in Panama en route to California.[28] Specifically Clayton charged the commissioner with extravagance, failure to proceed with the work, failure to render quarterly accounts, failure to provide names of employees, failure to control dissention, and improper organization. Weller certainly could not be accused of extravagance--even Whipple would have agreed with that; he was at work three days after the Mexican delegation arrived in San Diego. His accounts and records arrived in Washington the day after his recall order was issued, although they were not due until the end of the quarter; and if squabbling constituted misconduct, the Whigs themselves would have been liable to impeachment.[29]

Six days prior to issuing Weller's order of recall, Secretary Clayton had appointed a new boundary commissioner in an extremely unusual fashion. The letter communicating John C. Frémont's appointment as commissioner was dated June 20; the letter notifying Weller of his removal was marked June 26; the following day, Weller's employee roster and his accounts were received. This negated the charges leveled in the letter of the twenty-sixth, and it was apparently to avoid giving Weller time to respond to his "premeditated political proscription" that the secretary wrote to Frémont on the twenty-eighth. Clayton

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[28]Whipple had whined loudly over a shortage of funds with which to pay his expenses; many egos were badly bruised when several members had to be left in Panama because WEller could only secure ten berths on the steamer Panama; two officers had engaged in a brawl in the public square at San Diego over the honor of another man's California sweetheart; other complaints were of a similar nature. See the correspondence in Cong. Globe, 31 Cong., II Sess., 78-84.

[29]For the charges and Weller's defense, Ibid.

reminded Frémont of his appointment and informed him that a letter had also been drafted, notifying Weller of his removal,

> ". . . which, however, it is deemed advisable you should not deliver or forward to him until you are about to enter upon the duties of the office. The letter for him which is herewith transmitted you will consider as addressed to yourself, when you shall have communicated to him that above referred to."[30]

This meant that Weller would continue to labor in ignorance of his disappointment and at his own expense, for the letter which Frémont carried also notified Weller that the State Department had "deemed it necessary to suspend the payment of your drafts, of which a memorandum is subjoined."[31] Weller's status had been altered from public servant to public slave.

This might not have been so bad had Frémont proceeded immediately to seek out Weller and inform him of the events that had transpired, but he did not. Weller remained officially ignorant of his removal--he quickly heard rumors of it--but his efforts to continue the work of the commission were greatly hampered. He was short of funds, and in an attempt to gain some assistance he journeyed to Monterey to plead with General Bennett Riley. Riley too had heard the rumors and consequently refused Weller's request that he negotiate a draft for ten thousand dollars; it was then that Frémont, the commissioner designate, arrived. Frémont surveyed the situation, decided not to communicate the contents of Clayton's letter to Weller, and, instead, helped him to cash his draft at San Francisco. Previously Frémont was undecided whether he wanted the commissioner's job or a United States Senate seat from

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[30] *Ibid.*, 79.

[31] *Ibid.*

California. One look at the prevailing circumstances solved his decisional delimma.[32]

During the Congressional debates on the controversy, Senator William McKendree Gwin described the situation very aptly;

> What was to be done? Mordecai still sat at the king's gate, and his ministers were miserable until he could be got rid of. A gentlemen was found to undertake the task. It was the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary of State was sick and tired of his vain attempts to butcher this official incumbent. He was handed over to more skillful and experienced hands, a man who had mind enough to conceive a plan and vigor enough to execute it. He made short work of the job.[33]

Short work had been a long time in coming, however, for Weller did not receive official notification of his recall until December 18, 1849. Meanwhile, Frémont had decided against accepting the job, Weller's ten thousand dollar draft was protested and returned by the State Department, and the bankers seized Weller's personal assets to satisfy the draft. His ruin was complete and his bitterness boundless. His anger with his old home-state enemy, Thomas Ewing--now Secretary of the Interior--flowed freely through his pen.[34]

Major Emory was thoroughly disgusted with the affair so brutally culminated on December 18, and insult had been added to injury by the appointment of Frémont as Weller's successor. In 1847, a feud between

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[32]Ibid., p. 80. It is worth noting that although Frémont subsequently won his coveted Senate seat, he drew a short term and served only from December, 1850, to March, 1851, at which time he was replaced by none other than John B. Weller. See Lesley, "International Boundary Survey," 97-98.

[33]Cong. Globe, 31 Cong., II Sess., 80.

[34]Weller's letter to Ewing is reprinted in Cong. Globe, Ibid.

Frémont and Kearny over the governorship of California had resulted in Frémont's arrest and subsequent court martial, at which Major Emory was General Kearny's chief witness against Frémont. That Frémont should now be placed in a position of authority over him was more than Emory could tolerate, and he requested release from his duty as astronomer to the commission. His value was fully recognized, however, and the request was denied. A compromise was reached by allowing Emory to transfer to Washington and complete his work on the maps while Captain Hardcastle placed the monuments on the ground.[35]

Thus, the western portion of the boundary survey was completed despite the political back-biting and petty quarreling that had confronted the work at every turn. And it was a job well done, for the topographical engineers had demonstrated considerable ingenuity in the process of surveying and marking the boundary. When Weller was finally removed and no successor to Frémont had been named, it was Major Emory who acted as commissioner _ad interim_. His able direction insured the successful completion of the work and the removal of the commission's equipment to El Paso; the joint commission was adjourned to meet there on the first Monday in November, 1850.[36]

On August 30, 1850, the ship bearing the United States' Boundary Commission docked at Indianola, Texas, but the coiterie which paraded ashore bore little resemblance to the group which had left California that spring. The men were nattily attired in red and blue uniforms

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[35]Goetzmann, _Army Exploration_, pp. 165-167.

[36]_Ibid._, pp. 166-167.

topped by broad-brimmed white felt hats,[37] and the commissioner rolled out a carriage that would have excited the envy of the Tsar of Russia. The four-horse rockaway was nothing less than a wheeled fortress. Attached to the luxurious interior was a virtual arsenal: one double-barreled shotgun, one repeating rifle, two Colt's six-shooters, and just to be safe, each of the passengers wore a pair of Colt's five-shooters, while the driver sported a pair of Derringers. Desperados beware, for as the commissioner boasted,

> "We were thus enabled in case of necessity, to discharge a round of 37 shots without reloading; besides which, Sharp's rifle could be fired at least six times a minute."[38]

The commission looked different, and was different, for the Whigs at last had taken their revenge on Polk's appointees. Following the abortive attempt to replace Commissioner Weller with Fremont, President Zachary Taylor nominated John Russell Bartlett for Commissioner, and on June 15, 1850, his appointment was secured.

Bartlett's appointment, not to mention his qualifications, was bizarre. He wanted to be ambassador to Denmark, but denied paradise in Copenhagen, he settled for perdition in El Paso. A Rhode Islander by birth and a New Yorker by reisdence, John Russell Bartlett was a bibliophile of some notability whose tastes also involved him in

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[37]John Russell Bartlett, Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora and Chihuahua, Connected with the United States and Mexican Boundary Commission During the Years 1850, '51, '52, and '53, Vol. I (2 Vols.; New York, 1854), p. 20.

[38]Ibid., p. 48.

ethnology, history, and geography. Until 1849 he had been a partner in a book-selling business in New York City which had been a gathering place for the literati, and it was there that he met and became associated with Albert Gallatin, the Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Jefferson and Madison. Bartlett's circle of acquaintances included such names as Ephriam George Squier, John Lloyd Stephens, George Folsom, Doctor F. S. Hawks, Henry Schoolcraft, and occasionally Edgar Allan Poe.[39] Although the book-selling business might have been intellectually enriching, monetarily it was not remunerative. Bartlett in 1849 returned to Rhode Island to seek a more financially rewarding career at the time of the accession of the Whig administration. Bartlett was a Whig, and as there undoubtedly was a number of governmental positions open to Whigs, he decided to go to Washington and seek appointment as ambassador to Denmark. It is possible that his association with Gallatin--a lifelong diplomat--and his ethnological connection with Professor C. C. Rafn of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries of Copenhagen combined to produce this project. But it was not to be; for although Bartlett had the backing of such influential politicians as John C. Calhoun, Jefferson Davis, Thomas Hart Benton, and Stephen A. Douglas, it was another man who sailed for Copenhagen.[40]

Misfortune often keeps company with opportunity, however, and thus did Bartlett chance upon the offer of the United States Boundary

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[39]John Russell Bartlett, "Autobiography," pp. 32-39, as quoted in Goetzmann, Army Exploration, pp. 168-169. (Hereafter cited as Bartlett, "Autobiography".)

[40]Faulk, Too Far North, pp. 40-42.

Commissioner's job. It took him no time to dispel his disappointment and to fancy himself a great explorer "thrown among the wild tribes of the interior . . ." where ". . . there would be a wide field for new exploration." Overwhelmed at the magnitude of the enterprise which lay before him, Bartlett thought he ". . . would prefer the office of Commissioner to that of any other." Besides, it offered an exciting departure from the "sedentary character" which had marked his life, and it would satisfy his "great desire for travel."[41]

With a couple of notable exceptions, Commissioner Bartlett assembled an entourage of less than distinguished dimensions. Poor Bartlett, a beneficiary of the spoils system, he now became its victim. He was totally unable to resist the pressures put upon him to employ the sons, nephews, and friends of the politicians to whom he owed his own appointment. He soon found himself at the head of an expedition bearing more resemblance to a crusade than a boundary commission. It included a collection of field scientists from the various learned societies, no less than fifty mechanics, a motley collection of friends and relatives who had come "to see the elephant," and--almost as if by chance--a detachment of topographical engineers.[42]

Practically without exception, the members of the commission were men whose background and experience ill-suited them for the mission which they now undertook. It soon became obvious that such a collection of prima donnas could not coexist without considerable friction--and

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[41]Bartlett, "Autobiography," pp. 50-51.

[42]Bartlett, *Personal Narrative*, I, p. 6.

the friction quickly produced sparks. Two confrontations marred the voyage to Indianola, as the ranking naval officer, Lieutenant Isaac G. Strain and Brevet Lieutenant Colonel John McClellan, the chief Topographical Engineer, matched egos and nerves.[43] The march from Indianola to San Antonio was nothing short of disaster. One member of the party quickly shot a Mexican in a dispute over firewood;[44] one of Colonel McClellan's officers shot the wagonmaster and then committed suicide before a jury could complete deliberations and declare him innocent by reason of self-defense; and the poor wagonmaster lingered ten miserable days before expiring.[45]

It was 165 miles from Indianola to San Antonio, but the commission took nearly a month to cover the distance. The quarreling and bickering which had characterized the voyage from New York intensified on the trail as Colonel McClellan contested quartermaster James Meyers choice of campsites, issuance of supplies, or anything in particular and everything in general. Lieutenant Strain decided to desert the landlubbers and return to Washington; once there, he preferred charges against Colonel McClellan before the Secretary of the Interior.[46]

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[43]"Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Communicating . . . A Copy of the Charges Preferred Against the Present Commissioner Appointed to Run and Mark the Boundary Lines Between the United States and Mexico," SED 60, 32 Cong., I Sess., 53.

[44]Bartlett, Personal Narrative, p. 32

[45]"Report of the Secretary of the Interior Made in Compliance with a Resolution of the Senate Calling for Information in Relation to the Commission Appointed to Run and Mark the Boundary Between the United States and Mexico," SED 119, 32 Cong., I Sess., 390, 396.

[46]"Report . . . Communicating . . . Charges . . .," SED 60, 50-51.

McClellan apparently gave some cause for the intense hatred with which his companions regarded him, for shortly thereafter Bartlett gave him the stark choice of resigning or facing charges of "habitual drunkenness and conduct unbecoming an officer."[47] McClellan responded by demanding a court martial which he hoped would provide him the vehicle to transport the commissioner to perdition. He charged that Bartlett had maintained Quartermaster Meyers in office despite personal knowledge of fraudulent activities, and that the Commissioner's brother, George F. Bartlett, had transported substandard trade goods to the commission's outpost at government expense and was selling them to the workers at considerable personal profit.[48] The members of the commission quickly followed their leaders' example and began sniping at either Bartlett or McClellan, as their personal interests dictated.

Secretary of the Interior Alexander H. H. Stuart provided a temporary respite to the bikering by recalling McClellan and Strain, discharging Quartermaster Meyers, and demoting George Bartlett to a less noticeable but equally profitable position.[49] The change proved to be but a temporary breastwork against the flood of blood, for when the reformed group reached Socorro, the killing resumed. The teamsters

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[47]Bartlett, Personal Narrative, pp. 28, 30.

[48]"Report . . . Communicating . . . Charges. . . .," SED 60, 3-4.

[49]"Report of the Secretary of the Interior Made in Compliance with a Resolution of the Senate Calling for Information Whether any Steps were Taken to Investigate the Charges Preferred by Colonel McClellan Against the Commissioner to Run and Mark the Boundary Between the United States and Mexico," SED 89, 32 Cong., I Sess., 2.

were an especially lawless element, and during a drunken spree they gunned down a bartender. With great mockery they laid out the corpse before proceeding with their attempt to rid New Mexico of hard liquor. Still in their cups that night, they fatally stabbed Edward Clarke, son of Senator John Clarke of Rhode Island and shot a man who attempted to intervene.[50]

The other members of the Commission, assisted by the local citizenry, seized the ruffians--an easy task as they made no attempt to leave--and brought them to trial before a local judge and jury. With loaded pistols in hand, the jurors heard the evidence, returned a guilty verdict, and listened with evident satisfaction as the judge pronounced sentence. His Honor noted with some regret that the gang leader had escaped the fate to which he commended the three convicted prisoners. With little ceremony and less hesitation the murderers were escorted to the edge of town and hanged. A few weeks later the gang leader was apprehended and with equal certitude dispatched to the hereafter.[51]

Such disruptive activity certainly left Bartlett in an unfavorable situation by the time of his first meeting with General Condé. On December 3, 1850, the two Commissioners met at El Paso, and with disorganization and dissention at his back Bartlett entered preliminary discussions with the talented general.[52] The issue was quickly joined, for Condé now had a disputable point, and he intended to press his

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[50]Bartlett, Personal Narrative, pp. 157-158.

[51]Ibid., pp. 163-164.

[52]Ibid., p. 151.

advantage to the utmost in achieving a settlement more favorable to Mexico than to the United States. Almost immediately the question of Disturnell's map emerged. Obviously the process of conducting the actual survey was clearly provided for in the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but the point of origin for that survey was not clearly defined because of the obvious inaccuracy of Disturnell's map. If Condé could defend his contention that the point of origin for the survey would correspond to the lines of longitude and latitude on Disturnell's map rather than to the actual location of El Paso and the Rio Grande on the ground, he would allow Mexico to retain a rectangle of land extending approximately 34 miles longitudinally and 110 miles latitudinally to the north and west of El Paso. South of the line which thus would define the international border would lie the Santa Rita mines and the potential railroad route provided by the Mesilla Valley.[53]

Appropriately enough, the dispute was settled by a compromise on Christmas day. Three weeks of complicated negotiations apparently convinced both commissioners that their respective cases were weak enough to demand such a solution, and in the end they split the difference. Bartlett conceded the initial northern point to Condé, and the latter agreed to fix the western point at the Rio Grande on the ground. Thus the survey would begin forty-two miles north of El Paso at 32°22' north latitude, and on the river at 106°29' west longitude rather than 104°39'. From that point the survey would proceed three degrees west then turn north to intersect the Gila or its nearest

[53]"Report of the Secretary of the Interior," SED 119, 146-148.

branch.[54] The balance of the line to the Pacific was clearly defined in the treaty, and therefore presented no problem other than that of physically tracing it upon the ground. That was work for engineers, not diplomats.

Congratulations would have been premature. At this point, technicality intervened to overrule practicality. The provisions of the treaty stipulated that any business conducted by the commission was to be the unanimous act of both the American and Mexican commissioners and surveyors. But the American surveyor, A. B. Gray, had been detained by illness and had not arrived at El Paso at the time of the verbal agreement. As the Mexican government already had lodged formal complaints about delays with Washington, Bartlett decided that the most expeditious solution for the problem was to appoint Lieutenant Whipple surveyor ad interim so the compromise could be concluded legally.[55] Bartlett received official sanction for this from the Secretary of the Interior, who ruled that Whipple's official acts as surveyor ad interim would "be considered binding" on Gray.[56] As General Condé was agreeable to this procedure, the Joint Boundary Commission met formally on April 24, 1851, and in the presence of witnesses the commissioners and the surveyors signed the agreement establishing the initial point "on the right bank of the river Bravo or Grande del

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[54]Bartlett, Personal Narrative, pp. 201-203.

[55]Whipple signed the agreement under protest. Whipple to Bartlett, El Paso, December 12, 1850, SED 119, 247.

[56]Stuart to Daniel Webster, Washington, February 11, 1852, SED 119, 124-125.

Norte (32°22'). . . ."[57]

Having thus settled the only procedural problem of any significance, Bartlett dispatched his forces to begin the actual work of completing the survey. Leaving one crew to survey the Rio Grande to its mouth, the Commissioner moved his camp to the Santa Rita copper mines. There, while the Apaches and the Navahos gleefully stole everything they could carry away on the Commission's horses and mules, the parties of surveyors moved into the field to begin operations.[58] The Commissioner himself had better things to do; he spent most of May and June on an excursion into Mexico, traveling as far south as Arizpe, Sonora, before once again returning to the copper mines.[59] This return was just before the arrival of a New Mexican trading party whose chief business was bartering contraband to the Apaches for goods and slaves which the Indians had captured in Mexico. This particular party held one Inez Gonzales, a young Mexican girl who apparently had been obtained by barter with the Indians. When Bartlett was informed of her plight, he reacted as would have any self-respecting medieval knight--he sent United States' Dragoons to her rescue. The young lady was properly cared for until she could be restored to her parents. Nor was Señorita Gonzales the only beneficiary of the Commissioner's benevolence, for

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[57]Copy of the document, SED 119, 233-234.

[58]Bartlett, Personal Narrative, I, p. 346.

[59]Bartlett to Stuart, Santa Rita del Cobre, July 1, 1851, SED 119, 411-416.

he also sent the dragoons to rescue two Mexican boys who also were subsequently returned to their families.[60]

Bartlett's personal odyssey was interrupted temporarily by the storm of contention which blew into camp on July 19 in the form of A. B. Gray, the official surveyor. Gray's reaction to the Bartlett-Condé agreement was as emphatic as it was instantaneous: all work was halted until the issue of the initial point could be reconsidered.[61] Gray quickly acquired allies in his fight to block acceptance of the compromise. He was supported by Colonel McClellan's recently arrived replacement, Lieutenant Colonel James Duncan Graham of the Topographical Engineers. As he prepared to assume his duties as "chief astronomer and head of the scientific corps," Colonel Graham summoned Lieutenant Whipple, his subordinate, to El Paso for consultation. After being informed of the situation by Whipple, Graham concurred with Gray and joined the latter in protesting the Bartlett-Condé agreement.[62]

What followed was a controversy of much length and complexity. The issue was at once political and practical, private and public, civilian and military. The Whigs were committed to the defense of their appointee, Bartlett, which put them in the impractical position of defending the surrender of valuable and hard-won territory to Mexico; the members of the commission were men afflicted with intense personal jealousy of each other, and their official status made their conduct

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[60]Bartlett, Personal Narrative, I, pp. 306, 353, 399; Also see letters in SED 119, 258-261.

[61]"A. B. Gray Report and Map, Relative to the Mexican Boundary," SED 55, 33 Cong., II Sess., 21-23.

[62]"J. D. Graham, Report on the Subject of the Boundary Line Between the United States and Mexico," SED 121, 32 Cong., I Sess., 599.

a matter of public policy. Anti-expansionists had little interest in acquiring the disputed area for a railroad route, while the military men were concerned not only with the potential for expansion but believed rapid communication in the Southwest to be absolutely essential to the fulfillment of defensive obligations incurred by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

While charge and countercharge flew between El Paso and Washington, Commissioner Bartlett departed the copper mines at the head of a party of fifty-seven men for another of his excursions into Mexico. Almost a year would pass before he again would return to the field headquarters of the commission. His wanderings during that time accomplished two outstanding--if not equally important--things: he added much color and adventure to his subsequent Personal Narrative, and he gave his opposition sufficient time to muster their forces for a counterattack.[63]

On June 28, 1852, former boundary commissioner John B. Weller arrived in Washington. Weller came there on official business, for he was the newly-elected senator from California. Weller was a man inclined neither to forgive nor forget, and he quickly concentrated his efforts on revenging himself at the expense of the Whigs.[64] He initiated a debate in the Senate during which he familiarized that body with the history of the commission and attacked Bartlett's handling of its affairs. Weller was primarily interested in vindicating his own

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[63]Bartlett, Personal Narrative, I, pp. 353-505, II, pp. 1-378.

[64]Cong. Globe, 32 Cong., I Sess., 814-816.

reputation and diminishing that of the Whigs, but during the course of the debate, Senator Thomas Jefferson Rusk of Texas shifted the emphasis of the discussion away from personalities and onto the subject of the Bartlett-Condé agreement.[65]

Rusk spoke for a growing number of southwestern men when he protested that he did

> . . . not intend to vote another dollar to this boundary commission--so far from it, I mean to resist the appropriation of any more money until we have some assurance that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and not the negotiations between the commissioners is to settle the initial point of the line upon the Rio Grande.[66]

This was not the first rumbling of discontent from the South, for earlier in the session the entire Texas delegation had signed a letter to President Millard Fillmore protesting the compromise to which Bartlett had committed the United States. The senators noted in their letter that

> . . . a much better route for a road than the one in view might be selected a few miles to the southward of the true boundary line; . . . and that inasmuch as such a work would operate very beneficially for Mexico in protecting her northern frontier from Indian depredations, we are inclined to believe that for a consideration . . . Mexico might be induced to grant the right of way in question.[67]

A few days later the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reiterated this viewpoint when on August 24 Senator James Murray Mason of Virginia submitted a report which concurred with surveyor Gray's estimation of the value of the territory and the potential for a Southern railroad route. The report also disputed the opinions of the

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[65]*Ibid.*, 1660.

[66]*Ibid.*

[67]*SED* 6, 33 Cong., Special Sess., (2 vols.), I, 141-143.

Secretary of the Interior about the validity and the binding nature of the Bartlett-Condé agreement with Whipple's signature attached as surveyor *ad interim*.[68]

There was now sufficient opposition to the compromise to permit the attachment of a proviso to the boundary commission's appropriations bill which stipulated

> ". . . that no part of this appropriation shall be used until it shall be made to appear to the President of the United States that the Southern boundary of New Mexico has not been established further north of El Paso than is laid down in Disturnell's map."[69]

The measure passed the House, the President signed it into law, and subsequently he ordered the survey discontinued as his examination of the evidence convinced him that the appropriation could not be spent without violating the proviso.[70]

The President's decision to halt did not come until December, 1852. In the interim between Gray's protest in July, 1851, and the time of the President's decision, much work had been done on the survey. Although Bartlett spent most of the time touring Mexico and the western United States, the surveyors somehow managed to proceed with the business at hand. Gray and Lieutenant Whipple were running the line of the Gila to the Colorado, and probably would have completed that portion of the survey had they not exhausted their supplies sixty miles short of the Colorado.[71] Thus forced by necessity to discontinue survey

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[68]*SED* 345, 32 Cong., I Sess., (2 vols.), II.

[69]*Cong. Globe*, 32 Cong., I Sess., 2402-2407.

[70]J. D. Richardson, ed., *Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* (10 vols.; Washington, D.C., 1907), V, 173.

[71]*SED* 119, 32 Cong., I Sess., 305-307.

operations, Gray decided to march to the junction of the Gila and the Colorado and the military outpost which he believed to be there. Much to their surprise and consternation, the beleagured Americans found the occupants of the fort wearing their stripes on their faces rather than on their sleeves. The fifteen hundred Yuma Indians who held the crossing refused the Americans passage in the two flatboat ferries, and gave every indication of being ready to attack. The party encamped and made preparations to receive the expected assault.[72]

Perhaps the precautionary measures of the soldiers gave the Indians pause, for the next day no attack came. As dusk approached the chief and his leading warrior, Juan Antonio, came to inquire about the amount and location of the party's money, and during the ensuing conversation the families of the two Yumas wandered into the camp. As the negotiations proceeded, a young girl approached Juan Antonio and whispered in his ear; Juan repeated the message in similar fashion to the chief. Soon a full-blown pow-wow was in progress with the discussants casting furtive glances at Lieutenant Whipple while they reflected on the course of the conversation. Finally the interpreter told Whipple that the indians believed they had seen him before, and asked if he had come to the Colorado from the Pacific two years previously. Whipple said that he had.[73]

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[72]"The Boundary Line: Trials and Adventures of the Surveyors as Described by General Frank Wheaton," _Tucson Arizona Daily Citizen_, July 27, 1895, cited in Faulk, _Too Far North_, pp. 91-93.

[73]_Ibid_.

For many minutes past the atmosphere had been supercharged with tension, but the Lieutenant's reply instantly converted threats to thanks. It was soon explained that this girl was the one whom Whipple had saved from starvation on his earlier trip to the junction of the rivers. He had taken the hungry girl to his tent, given her a watermelon and a mirror--thus satisfying both her hunger and her femininity--and showed her such kindness that she still recognized him after two years. The Yumas cheerfully ferried the Americans across the river about an hour later.[74] Perhaps only Captain John Smith could have appreciated fully the method of Lieutenant Whipple's deliverance.

While Gray and Whipple thus were occupied on the western portion of the survey, Gray's replacement arrived at El Paso where he relieved Colonel Graham of his duties with the survey. Major William Emory thus found himself once more attached to the commission which he so profoundly despised. This time, however, he served as chief surveyor and astronomer, combining the positions held by Gray and Graham. This was the solution in Washington to the deadlock over Gray's refusal to sign the Bartlett-Condé agreement offered by the Secretary of the Interior. Both protestors were replaced with a military man who was under orders to sign the agreement. This put Emory on the horns of a dilemma indeed, for since his arrival on November 25, 1851, he had faced the problems of conducting a survey with few supplies and no funds and of appending his signature to a political document which subsequently could ruin his career.[75]

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[74]Ibid.

[75]Goetzmann, Army Exploration, p. 182

Emory solved the more dangerous of the two problems first. Secretary Stuart's orders left him no room for debate: he had to sign the Bartlett-Condé document. Yet his signature as surveyor would preclude any further discussion of revision of the agreement, as it was the absence of the surveyor's signature on which the revisionists based their case against the compromise. Furthermore, Emory knew well what others only suspected, that the best route for the Southern railroad lay south of the border which thus would be established. The major was trapped into sharing "the fate of everyone who throws a stone into a nest of rotten eggs," and thereby is "a little splattered by the explosion."[76]

That Emory was able to emerge unscathed from such a predicament was ample testimony to his ingenuity. He complied with his instructions and signed the document, but he attached a very significant proviso stating that the initial point of the boundary as therein defined was the decision of the commissioners alone. By putting his signature on the agreement, he was merely witnessing the signatures of the Commissioner Bartlett and surveyor _ad interim_ Whipple. As added insurance against future misrepresentation of his intentions, Emory secured a statement from the Mexican surveyor confirming that the initial point was "agreed upon by the two commissioners and nothing else."[77] With a single stroke of the pen, the major had obeyed his orders from Secretary Stuart, satisfied the Mexican commissioner, left the expansionists room to repudiate the agreement, and saved his own career.

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[76]Emory to Volney Howard, San Elizario, June 1, 1852, William H. Emory Papers, Quoted in Goetzmann, _Army Exploration_, p. 184.

[77]Emory, _Report_, I, 6-7.

Having thereby eliminated the most pressing problem, Emory turned to the more mundane enterprise of surveying the line of the Rio Grande south from El Paso. His own words best describe what he found at El Paso:

> On my arrival here I found things more complicated than I had expected, a large party, half with Colonel Graham at this place, and the other half with Mr. Bartlett God-knows-where, the whole numbering one hundred and upwards, no money, no credit, subdivided amongst themselves and the bitterest feeling between the different parties. Little or no work has been done, and yet the appropriation is all gone and that of next year anticipated.[78]

The major duplicated the procedure followed earlier in California. Borrowing cash from friends and requisitioning supplies from various army posts, he immediately began organizing for work. To Emory, the solution was simple:

> I have taken a different course from Colonel Graham, he stood still until he could get things fixed to his liking. I have taken the means at hand and pressed the work to the utmost limits, indeed beyond them, and intend when a stop takes place to put the saddle on the right horse.[79]

The stop was not long in coming, for as Emory, Gray, and Whipple sweated their way down their respective rivers and Commissioner Bartlett toured Mexico and the southwestern United States, the fight had erupted on the floor of the United States Senate which produced the Mason proviso to the deficiency bill carrying an appropriation of $120,000 to complete the survey. As it had not been made to appear to the President's satisfaction

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[78]Emory to James A. Pearce, January 15, 1852, draft, Emory Papers, as quoted in Goetzmann, Army Exploration, p. 182.

[79]Emory to Pearce, January 15, 1852, Ibid, pp. 182-183.

> ". . . that the southern boundary of New Mexico is not established by the Commissioner and Surveyor of the United States further north of the town called Paso than the same is laid down on Disturnell's map. . .,"

Fillmore accordingly ordered the work halted in December, 1852.[80]

The Secretary of the Interior on October 15, 1852, forwarded instructions to Bartlett which, in fact, dictated the cessation of surveying activity. Stuart informed Bartlett that because of the Mason proviso and the lack of funds for the commission, he could no longer negotiate drafts on the Treasury. If he could not hold the commission together until such time as Congress reconvened in December, he was to disband and return to Washington.[81] The letter reached Bartlett at Ringgold Barracks, Texas, in December. Obviously, he had no choice but to discharge the commission and take ship for the capitol. This he did on December 22, 1852, and on January 8, 1853, the discredited commissioner was homeward bound on the steamer _Louisiana_.[82] The climate in El Paso indeed had proved hotter than in Copenhagen.

Thus five years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the boundary between the United States and Mexico still was not established. And the situation was growing rapidly to crisis proportions, for as the treaty anniversary approached--February 8--it appeared that a second war would be fought for possession of the disputed territory. Governor Ángel Trías of Chihuahua had sent five hundred soldiers and an artillery unit to occupy the region following

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[80]_Cong. Globe_, 32 Cong., I Sess., 1660.

[81]Quoted in Bartlett, _Personal Narrative_, II, pp. 522-524.

[82]_Ibid._, pp. 522-524.

the conclusion of the Bartlett-Condé agreement.[83] This action was only of a temporary nature, for Trías was forced to withdraw his forces because he had no funds to support them; but it brought an immediate reaction from the governor of New Mexico, William Carr Lane. Lane immediately requested military assistance from Colonel Edwin V. Sumner, commander of the Department of New Mexico. When Sumner refused for want of orders from his superiors, Lane moved to protect what he considered to be the best interests of the United States. He hastily assembled a force of New Mexican and Texan volunteers and resolutely declared: "If duty calls upon me to occupy and protect this country, provisionally, until the line shall be definitely established, I will do it. . . ." Do it he did, for he marched his force to Dona Aña and on March 13 proclaimed that the disputed territory would "be held provisionally by the United States until the question of boundary shall be determined by the United States and the Mexican Republic. . . ."[84]

The Chihuahua state legislature was not sitting on its hands in the face of such threatening action. In February it recalled General Trías to the governorship. The general gave Governor Lane proclamation for proclamation. He stated that historically and legally the area in dispute had belonged to Chihuahua, and in very direct language told Lane, I will make use of all necessary means for the defense and preservation of the territory of Messila (sic) in case of an attack and the

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[83]A. B. Gray, "Report of A. B. Gray, with a Map in Relation to the Mexican Boundary," SED 35 Cong., II Sess., 25.

[84]William G. B. Carson, ed., "William Carr Lane, Diary," New Mexico Historical Review, XXXIX (October, 1964), 300.

responsibility will rest exclusively on Your Excellency for the consequences. . . ."[85] Matching his words with deeds, the general marched a fresh brigade off toward El Paso, and obtained an order from the Mexican government placing the militia under arms to supplement the regulars. A pitched battle appeared imminent.

War would have served the interests of neither party, and both governments suddenly sobered at the thought of it. The United States had a weak claim, and the newly established dictator of Mexico, General Antonio López de Santa Anna, had an empty purse. Those obviously were good grounds for negotiation--a weak claim recognized and an empty purse filled. The problem remaining was to discover a discreet method of satisfying both nations' needs. Both parties apparently recognized the truth of a statement penned by the man who had begun it all, Nicholas Trist. In a draft of a letter to the New York Evening Post, Trist had written:

> A war began (sic) for the Mesilla Valley might last an age until at length our Eagle, our most democratic and truly Christian Eagle, perching herself upon the southernmost cliff of Cape Horn, should begin to weep after the fashion that eagles are used to weep, at their being nothing more left to civilize.[86]

President Franklin Pierce used the occasion of his assumption of office in March, 1853, to begin the process of settlement by negotiation. To supersede the Whig appointee as minister to Mexico, the President chose General James Gadsden of South Carolina. The

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[85]Quoted in Faulk, Too Far North, p. 121.

[86]Trist to the New York Evening Post, draft, Vol. 32, 1848 misc., and Vol. 34, June 20, 1849 - February 23, 1853, Trist Papers, Library of Congress, quoted in Goetzmann, Army Exploration, pp. 190-191.

circumstances of General Gadsden's nomination were interesting. He was recommended to the President by the new Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis. Secretary Davis was a thoroughgoing expansionist, but oddly enough General Gadsden was not. However, as president of the Louisville, Cincinnati and Charleston Railroad, Gadsden had dreamed of consolidating a Southern regional system which, subsequently, would be expanded to transcontinental dimensions. His study of this project had convinced him that the Gila route was the most practical for a Pacific railroad, but the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo almost certainly precluded such a possibility. Gadsden therefore had come to believe that both geography and practicality dictated a rectification of the boundary, and he also believed that such a modification would have to be at Mexico's expense.[87]

Immediately after the President nominated him as minister to Mexico in May, 1853, Gadsden began gathering information about that country. He held lengthy consultation with the former surveyor for the American Boundary Commission, A. B. Gray, and from these Gadsden gained considerable insight into what territory he would have to obtain to guarantee a route for a transcontinental railroad route. And when the minister received his instructions from Secretary of State William L. Marcy on July 15, that was exactly what he was bid to do: obtain the railroad route, and in addition, secure release from Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which bound the United States to financial liability for Indian raids into Mexico; he also was to establish the rights of American citizens using the Isthmus of Tehauntepec as a route

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[87]Garber, The Gadsden Treaty, pp. 74-82.

to the west coast, and to secure a resumption of commercial relations with Mexico.[88]

By August 20, 1853, Gadsden was in Mexico City, and having cleared the preliminary diplomatic niceities away, was about the business of negotiating the settlement with Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations Manuel Díaz de Bonilla. For three weeks the two ministers wrangled over the solution to their differences, but to no avail. Finally at a meeting with Santa Anna himself on September 25, Gadsden obtained the dictator's approval for negotiations for a new boundary. Although such a settlement would not come cheaply, Gadsden wrote Secretary Marcy that it had better come quickly. The political situation in Mexico was so unstable that revolution was an ever-present possibility.[89] Fortunately Marcy heeded Gadsden's urging, and on October 22 he dispatched Christopher L. Ward to Mexico with memorized instructions for the American minister. The Mexicans were to be made four offers. They were, in order of preference: 1) $50,000,000 for a boundary which would give the United States the northern part of Cowhuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and all of Baja California; 2) $35,000,000 for a line farther north that left Mexico possession of Baja California; 3) $30,000,000 for a line still farther north, yet including Baja California; 4) $20,000,000 for the same line as in offer 3, but excluding Baja California. If none of these settlements was obtained, he was instructed simply to get sufficient territory for a railroad route and a release from the obligations imposed by Article XI. For

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[88] Ibid., pp. 81-85.

[89] Ibid., pp. 86-89.

this last alternative, the United States would pay up to $15,000,000.[90]

Ward arrived and delivered the instructions to Gadsden, who armed with his new authority immediately began bargaining with the Mexicans. One by one the Americans' offers were refused until Gadsden was left with the last and least, a transcontinental railroad route in return for $15,000,000. To emphasize the seriousness of further delay, the minister told Santa Anna that negotiations would be rewarded with a "good imdemnity" but that a failure to negotiate "would compel the United States to occupy the disputed territory one way or another."[91] Such words quickly ruffled feathers, but the mention of $15,000,000 just as quickly smoothed them. The "Treaty of Boundary and Cession" therefore was signed on December 30, 1853.

Although it might have been expected that the Gadsden Treaty would be approved quickly by the United States Senate, it in fact was not. Spoils politics again entered the picture, and at least two groups with vested interests in an enterprise involving a projected railroad across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec sought to have those interests protected in the treaty. There apparently was considerable discussion on this point. Most of what actually transpired is still unknown, for the Senate debated the matter in secret session, a veil of secrecy that never has been lifted. It is clear that there was little opposition to the settlement over the boundary provisions. The Tehuantepec controversy almost wrecked the treaty, however, for on April 17, 1853,

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[90] Ibid., pp. 91-93.

[91] J. Fred Rippy, "A Ray of Light on the Gadsden Purchase," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIV (January, 1921), 238.

it appeared dead. After being defeated that day by a vote of 27-18, the Senate voted the following day to reconsider the measure. One week later, with an amendment protecting American interests in Tehuantepec, the treaty was ratified by a vote of 33-12.[92] As finally drawn, the boundary between the United States and Mexico began in the middle of the Rio Grande at 31°47', north latitude, ran west one hundred miles, then turned south to 31°20', continued west to where it intersected the 111 meridian, then ran slightly northwestward in a straight line until it intersected the Colorado River twenty-eight miles below its confluence with the Gila. It then ran up the channel of the Colorado until it reached the boundary between upper and lower California.[93]

The Gila Trail and the southern railroad route thus became a part of the territorial United States. All that remained was the relatively simple task of marking the new border on the ground, and appropriately enough the man chosen to complete the task was Major Emory. On August 16, 1854, he accepted the post of commissioner and chief astronomer, and taking a highly skilled group of fifteen men he proceeded with his usual dispatch to accomplish the job. He arrived in El Paso at the end of November, 1854, and in slightly less than eleven months, from then to October 14, 1855, the survey was completed. Seven years, eight

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[92]For a discussion of the ratification of the treaty, see Robert R. Russel, _Improvement of Communication with the Pacific Coast as an Issue in American Politics, 1783-1864_ (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1948), pp. 143-149.

[93]Garber, _Gadsden Treaty_, pp. 123-125.

months, and twelve days had passed since Nicholas Trist had signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but at last the international boundary had been removed as a barrier to communication and transportation across the Southwest. In retrospect it would appear to have been the most minor of a multitude of obstacles.

CHAPTER V

THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH: FORTY-NINERS ON THE GILA TRAIL

Commenting on the climate of the Lone Star State, General William Tecumseh Sherman once said: "If I owned Hell and Texas, I'd rent out Texas and live in He.." Texas was hot, West Texas particularly so. It was so hot that to the weary nineteenth-century traveler even the muddy waters of the Pecos River were a source of cool refreshment. This was especially true of those hardy souls who chose to abandon kith and kin in the spring of 1849, and cross the continent to search for riches in the gold fields of Calfironia. News of the great discovery at Sutter's Mill had traveled from the West to the East in a tea caddy, and in his message to Congress in December, 1848, President James K. Polk proclaimed:

> It was known that mines of the precious metals existed to a considerable extent in California at the time of its acquisition. Recent discoveries render it probably that these mines are more extensive and valuable than was anticipated. The accounts of the abundance of gold in that territory are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service, who have visited the mineral district and derived the facts which they detail from personal observations.[1]

It was official. The President himself had confirmed that the "supply was very large, and that gold was found at various places in an

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[1] House Executive Documents 1, 30 Cong., II Sess., 10. (Hereafter cited as HED.)

extensive district of country." A man could be rich if only he would go to California. Thus the United States experienced the most extensive demographic upheaval in its seventy-five-year history. From the factories in the East, from the corn fields of the Midwest, from the cotton plantations of the South, men everywhere abandoned all else to rush for the gold as lemmings rush for the sea. Nothing appeared to deter them, not even the heat and dust of West Texas.

But heat and dust, though bothersome, could be managed with some precaution. A more dangerous and unpredictable factor was the Indian, for the Southwest was the domain of the lrodly Apaches. He who dared traverse the country was wise always to be on the alert fot them and their neighbors, the Comanches. A moment of carelessness would bring an eternity of regret. No one was more aware of that fact that Major Robert Simpson Neighbors as he rode toward the banks of the Pecos River accompanied by the notorious Comanche chieftans, Santana, Mopechuchope, and Pochanaquarhip (Buffalo Hump). It was Neighbor's business as a federal Indian agent to prevent the Indians from doing what they did best--raiding and killing. As the primary road from San Antonio to El Paso was bringing too many forty-niners within striking distance of hostile war parties, Neighbors was attempting to persuade the Indians to abide by a peace treaty and, concurrently, discover a less dangerous route for the gold rushers.[2]

As the party approached the river, Jim Shaw--a Deleware scout--rode in to report "that all the Indians in the world were then just ahead,

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[2]Benjamin Butler Harris, The Gila Trail: The Texas Argonauts and the California Gold Rush, ed. Richard H. Dillon (Norman, Okla., 1960), Note 25, pp. 45-46.

bathing in the Pecos. . . ."[3] Having blundered into such a situation, Neighbors quickly decided there was nothing for it but to bluff his way through. Summoning his courage, he rode directly for the bathers, charging down upon them "in dashing style, all the time making friendly signs, gestures, and salutations. . . ."[4]

Seeing the Indians among Neighbor's party, the "Indians" who had been cavorting in the river suddenly abandoned their frolic, and "[b]y a common impulse rushed into camp." They were more than slightly surprised and alarmed at the sudden intrustion, and, as they raced to seize their weapons, it became quite obvious that they were anything but Indians. No one among either of the two parties was pausing to reassess the situation until they could contemplate their guests over a rifle sight. Then, in the instant that a man pauses before firing a weapon, both groups of "Indians" realized their mistake. For a long moment, the unwitting hosts "stood naked with rifle presented."[5]

When the two parties exchanged greetings, they discovered that their business carried them in opposite directions for the same reason. The swimmers were members of the Isaac H. Duval party, bound for the gold fields of California, and Major Neighbors was in the process of scouting a route from San Antonio to El Paso which would carry the forty-niners away from the more heavily traveled Comanche war paths. This trail became the celebrated Upper Road, more popularly known as the Ford and

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[3]*Ibid.*, p. 47.

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]*Ibid.*

Neighbors Trail.[6]

Texans had responded earlier than other Americans to the cry of "Gold, gold--gold on the American River!" Both longitude and latitude gave them an advantage over their eastern brethren, for they could begin the journey in February and March of 1849, while their Yankee cousins still floundered in snow drifts, and they had to travel only half as far as those from the East. The Duval party was one such group. It had departed Johnson's Station on April 10, 1849, each man taking musket, mule, and meat--on the hoof and with horns still attached--and traveled south almost to Waco before striking westward toward the fork of the Concho River and the Colorado River of Texas. There the party followed the course of the Colorado northwestward to Big Spring before swinging toward the southwest and the Pecos River, following the approximate route of present-day U.S. Highway 80.[7]

The reaction of the Duval party to Major Neighbors' boisterous arrival was the only sensible one travelers through the region could have made. In fact, Colonel Harvey Mitchell, an old settler on the Brazos, had sagely advised the group to "Shoot at every Indian you see and save them a life of misery in subsisting on snakes, lizards, skunks, and other disgusting objects."[8] The Indians for their part were willing to reciprocate the sentiment. Any white man was fair game, as members of

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[6]They spent from March to June of 1848 searching for a practical route. Their trail cut the time of the march from San Antonio to El Paso from around one hundred days to about thirty. See Mabelle Eppard Martin, "California Emigrant Roads through Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (April, 1925), 292-293.

[7]Harris, Gila Trail, pp. 31-33.

[8]Ibid., p. 31.

the Duval party already knew; for while they had been encamped at Johnson's Station, they complained that "[h]ostile, wild Indians visited the Station almost nightly. They stole animals, shot at the sentries and committed any deviltry their mischievous hands found to do."[9] Even more painful evidence had come to their attention in an encounter with a Comanche war party along the Colorado. The fifteen warriors were driving a herd of some five hundred stolen Mexican horses and mules to a trading station on the Brazos when they encountered a hunting expedition from the Duval party. Invited to the whites' camp, the Indians warily accepted the invitation and soon found themselves involved in "an interchange of amusements."[10]

The Indians first demonstrated their choreographic skills, "accompanied by shot shaken in gourds, with war hoops and jumping (which they think is dancing.)" The forty-niners then took their turn, and

> . . . with violin music danced cotillions upon the green prairie, each Indian dance being the gentleman and each white representing the lady. . . . What a travesty! What a mocking of calisthenic exercises followed![11]

All laughter died the next morning when one of the Texas Rangers who spoke Spanish managed to have a conversation with one of the five Mexican lads who accompanied the braves. The boy related a tale of slaughter and brutality which brought fire to the whites' eyes and ice to their veins; the Indians had massacred his entire village, sparing the boys only to serve as slaves to work the horses. Confronted with the accusations, the Indians had little to say about the youths but

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[9] Ibid., p. 30.

[10] Ibid., p. 35.

[11] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

foolishly

> . . . exhibited indentation inserted with paint in the middle of their bows, stating that each represented a Mexican killed in their last raid, the larger dents representing adult males, the lesser and least ones adult females, smaller children, and babies.

One Texas "counted on a warrior's bow seventy and more dents." It was too much to bear. "And now white blood got boiling mad. . ." and "became possessed . . . with a consuming, burning thirst to exterminate these red demons . . . to begin the work of destruction at once, and to rescue the boys."[12] However, cooler heads prevailed, and with no regrets the groups parted company the following morning. Thereafter the response of the Duval party to Indians was swift and certain, as Major Neighbors discovered.

The Duval and Neighbors parties encamped together overnight, and the next morning went their separate ways. The forty-niners pushed along the Pecos until they reached a point just short of the Texas-New Mexico line before once again turning westward. As they approached the Sacramento Mountains, they turned toward what appeared to be a very low pass through the "range of plateau-top, pine-covered mountains." As the party marched closer, it soon became apparent that the estimation both of the elevation of the pass and of the amount of ease with which it could be surmounted had been incorrect. As the angle of ascent became more severe near the summit of the pass, the more confident members bet that they could finish the trek within an hour. The issue was soon decided, for from two o'clock until sunset "was consumed without anyone

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[12] Ibid., p. 36.

attaining the giddy heights. . . ."[13]

As they crossed the summit and descended rapidly to the plain three or four miles distant, the group became the first to traverse Guadalupe Pass, the route by which the Butterfield Overland Mail would travel in later years. It was but one of many such firsts for the Duval party of 1849, for only a few miles distant from the base of the pass, they encamped on the shore of a small crystalline lake. There, though it was unshaded by trees, the party found the water to be cool and sweet. It was indeed a fortunate tack that the party had pursued, for about thirty miles east of El Paso, they found "a mountain of rocks lying across [their] course. . . ." At first sight, the obstacle appeared to be impassable, but as they approached to within half a mile of it, "they perceived an aperture in the rocky mass the width of an ordinary door." Passing through the narrow defile, the party suddenly found itself in an area of about one hundred acres which was a veritable garden of Eden when compared with the surrounding countryside. The grass was plentiful, and the boulders were found to be dish-topped "and filled with the purest, coldest water, several hundred gallons sometimes occurring in one body." This place they named Hueco Tanks--_hueco_ in Spanish meaning "hole" or "hollow."[14]

On the morning of June 6, 1849, the Argonauts crossed the Rio Grande and entered El Paso. There they found a lively and colorful town of eight to ten thousand people, guarded by a garrison of five hundred Mexican troops. The party bought supplies of wine, dried beef, dried

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[13]_Ibid._, p. 48.

[14]_Ibid._, pp. 49-50.

mule meat, beef tallow, and flour before moving on three or four miles south of the city to encamp. There their troubles began. The Alcalde of Isleta, on the Texas side of the river, had warned the Americans to "guardarse por the Gor damme Mexicanos in otro lado del rio," and had proudly boasted that "Me Americano--Gor damme Mexicans otro la'o del rio." Apparently they had not taken his advice seriously, for when they awoke on the morning of June 7, they found two of their mules missing. The shortage was worsened the next morning when three more were discovered stolen; finally four were taken on the night of June 10. Benjamin Butler Harris, the chronicler of the group, remarked that: "At this rate, we were likely soon to be unhorsed."[15]

John Brazelton and Calfin H. Rolfe, both ex-Texas Rangers, and William Hammock, a Mexican War veteran, went to search for the animals on the morning of the twelfth. Unable to locate the mules in the countryside, they entered El Paso, seized one of the townsmen, and after the fashion of Texas Rangers, quickly obtained the information they sought. The animals were concealed in a house to which the citizen would lead them. Arriving at the designated dwelling, the Texans released their informant and proceeded to kick down the door. Therein they found some green feed and a lariat, and as they rushed out the back door they spotted the culprit and an accomplice leading the animals away. As the two would not heed the order to halt, they were shot dead and the stolen mules were recovered.[16]

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[15]Ibid., pp. 52, 58.

[16]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

Before returning to camp with their stock, the Texans paused to refresh themselves with a little wine, and also took the local garrison commander as their unwilling guest. The colonel was fortunate; his bugler was shot for refusing the Americans' hospitality. While the little party sat drinking wine, the alarm had been sounded throughout the town, and the militia as well as the garrison were called to arms. The situation became a matter of concern to the members of the party encamped outside town when an unarmed member of the search party returned to report what had been done. The fourth man reported to his comrades that a force of several hundred Mexicans already had responded to the alarm and were preparing to capture the three Americans in the saloon. A rescue party was organized quickly, but before they reached town they encountered the three men riding leisurely toward camp. Far from being alarmed, Calvin Rolfe proposed that the fifteen Americans return and take the town. The others declined his offer.[17]

For a while it appeared that the matter might result in further bloodshed. Soon after the rescuers and the rescued returned to camp, a messenger from the Mexican prefect brought a note demanding the surrender of the three men who had done the shooting, and also a note from the American consul advising compliance with the demand. The consul noted that already there were over seven hundred men prepared to attack the party of forty-niners. A vote on the proposition of surrender was unanimously defeated, whereupon one man suggested that they "retreat to the American side of the river and die like Americans, on American soil." Harris noted that "At the word 'retreat' rifles were pointed at him for

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[17]*Ibid.*, p. 59.

its suggestion. So, his motion failed for want of a second." The group merely proceeded on its journey, but for several days thereafter, the men were careful to take up strong defensive positions before encamping in order to meet the expected attack. As no attack came, they soon relaxed and continued their march to Janos, thence northwestward to intercept Cooke's Wagon Road.[18]

These Americans were destined for more adventure before they arrived at Janos, however. While availing themselves of the hospitality of the village of Corralitos where they paused to rest and refit for a few days, the Duval party participated in the pursuit of a band of Apaches who raced down from the foothills and made off with a portion of the community's livestock. As usual, the raiders made good their escape with booty intact; they were perhaps very fortunate to have done so, for Harris remarked that "the voyage had rendered our disposition so warlike that, through pure wantoness or thirst for adventure, we rejoiced in the opportunity of a fight."[19] Indeed, the monotony of the overland trail was enough to make any man mean.

The monotony of the trail was temporarily forgotten as the Americans were treated to feast and fandango for several days following the expedition against the raiders. Although they had managed to capture only two Indians and had failed to regain a single head of the stolen stock, their demonstration of willingness to assist the Mexicans brought from the latter a most gracious response. It may even have been more than gratitude which prompted the local populace to such generosity, for the

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[18] Ibid., pp. 59-61.

[19] Ibid., p. 64.

man who had led the expedition against the Indians was the famous Indian fighter, General Félix Zuloaga. While everyone else was celebrating, General Zuloaga was lucubrating--to what end the Americans soon discovered.[20]

When the Argonauts again resumed the journey, they found themselves in more pleasant surroundings than they had become accustomed to encountering. As they traveled along the banks of the Casas Grnades River toward Janos--a distance of about twenty miles, nature changed the color scheme from the dull brown tones of the arid wastelands to the lush green hues reserved for the fertile bottomlands where lifegiving water abounded. So pleasant was the change that instead of traversing the short distance in a day's time, the party decided to encamp about halfway "amid very tall giant cottonwoods, lambsquarter weeds ten to twelve feet high, and grass waist high."[21] In such surroundings, the trials of the trail for a moment could be forgotten.

Such serenity could not last. At about one o'clock in the morning the camp was awakened by cries of "Amigos! Amigos!" The jittery Americans at first thought they had been overtaken by the armed force from El Paso, and were about to have revenge visited upon them for the shooting of the mule thieves. Vengence was the motive for the visit; however, the Americans were not to be its victims, but its perpetrators. General Zuloaga had arranged a meeting with the Apaches at Janos under the pretext of exchanging prisoners, but rather than an exchange he intended to ambush the Apaches and slaughter them with the assistance of the

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[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., pp. 64-65.

accommodating Americans. About half of the Duval party agreed to cooperate on condition that at the prearranged signal they should be permitted to step from hiding and fight the Indians in the open. The plan miscarried, however, when the leery Apaches spotted the other half of the Americans approaching the town before the ambushing party could spring the trap.[22]

Although the Americans did not know it at the time, the party of Indians who had escaped ambush were actually planning an ambush themselves. The leader of the band was none other than Mangas Coloradas, and he delivered his account of the proceedings to the travelers after they resumed their march for California. As they approached the Sierra Madre Mountains, Mangas and about four hundred braves attacked the Duval party in an open spot in the foothills. The Anglos quickly formed a square and returned the raiders' fire. Fighting in an open space was as distasteful to the Apaches as to the Mexicans, and after carrying on a running fight for several miles and being unable to destroy the advance group before the balance arrived, Mangas signaled for a parley. He made the forty-niners what must have seemed to him an extremely attractive offer: the Americans would combine forces with the Apaches and together they would exterminate the Mexicans, the Apaches taking the scalps and personal property of the victims and the Americans keeping the land. He thought this possible and desirable because the Americans did not wear crosses, the "Mexicans were damned Christians (_cristianos malditos_) but that [the] Indians and Americans were _gringos_ (heathen)." The refusal of this proposition disgusted Mangas almost as much as its offer did

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[22]_Ibid._, pp. 65-66.

the Americans.[23]

If Duval and the members of his expedition thought this was the end of their Indian troubles, they were badly mistaken, for the Apache telegraph (smoke signals) soon carried word of the party's progress heavenward for all to see. As their unseen companions kept watch, the Americans marched on and intercepted Cooke's Wagon Road at Guadalupe Pass. Following Cooke's trail, they soon found themselves among the wild cattle of the San Bernadino Ranch where the Mormon Battalion had fought the "Battle of Bull Run" three years previously. No such large-scale attack was mounted by the bovines this time, but a little skirmishing did produce some fresh meat for the hungry men.[24]

There the Duval party again broke new ground, for the Apache smoke signals had so alarmed them that they decided to strike directly westward from the ranch rather than following Cooke's course north toward the San Pedro River. The course of the river bottom provided ideal circumstances for an ambush, and the unwillingness of the Apaches to stand and fight in open country already had been demonstrated to the Americans. Therefore they decided to march west almost to the future site of Nogales before swinging northward toward Tubac and Tucson. Tubac they found deserted. It was an erie sight which greeted the travelers' eyes,

> for the wheat crop in the fields was ripe for the sickle. The bell and costly pictures, with other ornaments, were still in the church. Peaches and other fruits were ripening on the trees. Streets were uninvaded by weeds and the buildings still shone with new white-wash. There was not

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[23]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 67-71.

[24]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 72-73.

> a human soul to enliven all this silence. It was a most eloquent stillness.[25]

Reaching Tucson, the Duval party found itself again in the mainstream of traffic on the Gila Trail. The extent of the gold rush can be judged from Benjamin Butler Harris' statement that there were four to five hundred emigrants in the town during a two-day period. Tucson was enjoying a tourist boom! The local residents were conducting a brisk business in supplying travelers on the Gila Trail with staples such as corn, flour, dried beef, and any other items which they could either produce or procure. The weary traveler apparently found much relief in simply finding civilization after the weary trek over the trail from Santa Fe or Janos, for Harris remarked that "*Fandangos* were going all the twenty-four hours of the day."[26]

Tucson would provide the party with its last *fandango* until it reached San Diego. The desert once again confronted them as they marched north to reach the Gila River. One and one-half days of forced march put the men on the banks of that stream, whose course they followed westward once more. At a distance of ten or fifteen miles from the villages, Pima Indians intercepted the lead elements of the party and refreshed them with gourds of water, roasted pumpkin and green corn. The reception impressed Harris:

> Finding a heathen people so kind, good, sympathetic, simple, honest, and hospitable was indeed a surprise well worth all the toil and privation of the trip and calculated to make Christianity blush for its meager attainments and to revive hope for human Utopia.[27]

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[25]*Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

[26]Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[27]*Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

The Pimas were as close to Utopia as the trail-worn travelers would come, for their encounters with Indians returned to a more familiar pattern when they reached the Colorado River and the Yuma villages. Once again they faced the old problem of thievery and hostility. "The rascally Yumas would come boldly into camp, professing friendship, but woe betide a man's scalp were he caught out alone and unarmed."[28] Two members of another company refused to heed the warnings of the more experienced men and went fishing by themselves. Shortly thereafter gun-fire was heard from the direction of the river; the search party surmised that the two had carelessly left their guns standing against a tree where the Indians could first seize them, then their owners. No further trace of the men was found.[29]

Leaving the river, the Argonauts began the last leg of their journey over the Gila Trail, but as had those who preceeded them they found it to be as difficult as any portion previously traversed. The desert was burning hot, but gold fever burned even hotter in the men's heads, for here they encountered a caravan of Mexicans returning home from the diggings. The sight of golden nuggets from a pack on a mule whose "only load was the precious metal" quickly renewed all hands in their determination to make it through. Theirs was not an easy passage: "Dead animals lined the road, and being dry, had been stood on all four feet by irreverent humorists in ghastly mockery and gloomy fun." Their discovery of water in a stream which supposedly had not flowed for ninety years made the crossing much less arduous for the Duval party.

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[28]*Ibid.*, p. 87.

[29]*Ibid.*, p. 89.

After resting by the stream for a day and a half, they pushed on, and on August 19, 1849, arrived at Warner's Ranch. From this point the journey was relatively easy, and by the last week of September, the Duval Argonauts had made it to the mines.[30]

Many of those who wished to travel the southern route found their ardor considerably diminished by the rumors of Apache depredations and the hardships to be endured on the trail itself. Such confrontations as the Duval party had with Mangas Coloradas were to be avoided if at all possible. The difficulty lay in that portion of the Gila Trail which ran southwest from near the present site of Lordsburg, New Mexico and skirted around the southern end of the Chiricahua Mountains before turning northward up the valley of the San Pedro to a point almost directly east of Tubac. Travelers who followed Cooke's route found themselves in the heartland of Mangas Coloradas' territory for almost the entire distance. In addition, a route running directly westward from Lordsburg to Tucson would save between 125 and 150 miles of arduous travel.

Mangas himself provided the impetus which resulted in the most significant change in the course of the Gila Trail. After his encounters with the Mexicans at Janos, and the Duval party north of Janos, Mangas shifted his raiding operations eastward into the Rio Grande Valley. By early September he was creating such a disturbance there that Colonel John C. Hays, Indian agent for the Gila district from which Mangas came, took the field to find him and arrange a peace treaty. The wiley Apache would not meet with Hays, but withdrew into the mountainous

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[30]*Ibid.*, pp. 93-108.

regions of Mexico to avoid contact. Frustrated in this attempt to bring one band of Apaches to terms, Hays decided to see what sort of arrangements could be made with Cochise and the Chiricahua Apaches. This meant a trip to Arizona via the Gila Trail.[31]

Accompanied by a small detachment of soldiers, Hays rode into El Paso on his way to Arizona. There he found that news of Mangas' operations had caused such alarm among the forty-niners that many were hesitant to move any farther west. Hays had acquired quite a reputation in both the Texas war of independence and the Mexican War, and his arrival at the head of the troops inspired a large number of the fearful travelers to request him to lead an expedition through to Arizona. This Hays agreed to do, and he set about organizing the caravan along military lines. The company consisted of one hundred men and pack mules and a train of eight wagons from the Pine Bluff Company and the Frémont Association. The travels of this newly formed company were recorded in great detail by one of the Frémonters, Robert Eccleston. As a result, the story of the most significant alteration in the course of the Gila Trail was well documented.[32]

The progress of the Hays caravan was routine for the first few days after their departure from El Paso on September 25, 1849,[33] but the travelers were confirmed in the correctness of their decision to have Colonel Hays guide them through. On September 12 a band of Apaches

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[31]G. P. Hammond and E. H. Howes, eds., Overland to California on the Southwestern Trail, 1849: Diary of Robert Eccleston (Berkeley, 1950), pp. v-vi.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., pp. 149-150.

attacked and soundly defeated a detachment of United States Cavalry commanded by Lieutenant O'Brien from Fort Hancock, and matters were being aggravated further by the activities of one John Joel Glanton, who organized a scalp hunting party and began shooting every Indian in sight. It attacked a party of Mescalero Apaches, led by Gómez, killed eleven and took three prisoner. Mexican officials at Chihuahua City paid two hundred dollars for each warrior's scalp and three hundred dollars for each prisoner, a very lucrative business if one could shoot straight and run fast. The problem was that the Indians were just as indiscriminate in their retaliations, and the immigrants on the overland trails were paying the fiddler while Glanton enjoyed the pleasure of the dance.[34]

Hays was taking no chance that the Apaches would take their pound of flesh from his caravan; he moved as rapidly as the condition of the road and the stamina of the men and animals would allow. By October 2 they had reached Las Cruces, New Mexico, and on the third they came into camp about three miles north of Doña Ana.[35] Another week found the party on the west bank of the Rio Grande near where Fort Thorne would be established in 1853.[36] There they found signs of a large Indian encampment and took additional precautions against a surprise attack. Despite the obviously competent leadership of Colonel Hays, rumors about Indian depredations and ambushes flew from one end of the train to the other. One, the most reliable which Eccleston heard, related an account of a pitched battle between some Missourians and the Apaches in which

[34] Ibid., pp. 137-138.

[35] Ibid., p. 160.

[36] Ibid., p. 167.

fifteen of the latter were killed; it was expected that another battle would follow shortly about ninety miles farther on as the Indians were in hot pursuit.[37]

The journey passed day after day without the expected attack, however, and gradually the train wound its way along Cooke's Wagon Route. The Mimbres Mountains fell behind and the Pyramid Mountains loomed to the front of their line of march when the column halted to consider the possibility of attempting to continue directly west instead of following Cooke's route to the southwest. That campsite was at the southern end of the Burro Mountains (just a few miles east of the present town of Lordsburg, New Mexico). As the immigrants and soldiers pondered the problem, someone spotted a large dust cloud approaching the campsite. All took it to be the long awaited Apache attack. Amidst scurrying and scampering, horses and mules were secured to wagons, barricades were erected, and weapons were loaded, but the four hundred "Apaches" who rode up bore much resemblance to Mexican cavalry. General José María Elías was returning from a search and destroy mission against the Indians. His efforts had produced five Apache casualties, and three Indian children had been captured at a cost of six Mexicans killed.[38] Colonel Hays scouts were not satisfied with the General's raid, for they had convinced the Apaches to talk peace and the Mexicans had scattered them before they could be brought into the American camp. All further efforts to bring them in proved fruitless.[39]

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[37] Ibid., p. 170.

[38] Ibid., pp. 174-176.

[39] Ibid., p. 176.

Hays thereupon decided to strike directly west and attempt to save the 125 or 150 miles which the ox-bow in Cooke's route would require, a savings of ten to twelve days' time. It was a gamble at best, for no one knew whether the new, more direct route had sufficient water or pasturage to support the passage of such a body of men and animals. Hays' decision was one to which most willingly committed themselves, as a vote on the matter produced "a large majority in favor of the new route." On October 18 the wheels of the Hays caravan rolled, and where the tracks of Cooke's wagons had turned toward the southwest, the Hays wagons pushed on west. The Tucson cutoff was about to be discovered.[40]

The first few days brought no particular problems, and the road was not much worse or better than that encountered between El Paso and the cutoff. October 19 brought a cold, northerly wind which chilled both bodies and spirits, however, and a shortage of water was beginning to plague the party also. Eccleston complained of a thirst which only an extremely dry and cold climate can produce. Finally, after a forty-eight hour period of drought, he "obtained a drink and felt as if water was never as grateful before."[41]

The road was rough, and the shortage of water and grass soon brought nerves to an edge and produced dissention in the camp. The Indians again made their appearance, and fear of an attack grew when the trail descended into a region of thick chapparel ideal for an ambush. The hot dust of the day and the cold dryness of the night added to the misery which men and animals alike had to endure. Between October 21 and 23

[40]Ibid., pp. 176-177.

[41]Ibid., p. 179.

they again were forced to encamp without benefit of water, all amidst various sightings of hostile Indians skulking around the campsites.[42]

They were now approaching the Chiricahua Mountains. Eccleston commented, "The road was tolerable good till we reached the pass, which was indeed a romantic one."[43] Had Eccleston known how true his statement was, he might have considered himself a prophet. He referred to Puerto del Dado, however, and had no way of knowing that the "romantic" gap in the mountains later would be called Apache Pass. The only Apache then in sight was the small boy whom General Elías had captured and traded to Colonel Hays as a peace hostage. Ironically, there in the shadow of Apache Pass, one of the women in the party "cut his [the hostage's] hair, washed his face, put a gown on him, and altogether made him look quite slick."[44]

The Chirichahua Mountains faded from sight on the eastern horizon as they traveled, and the Dragoon Mountains rose in the west. The weather became more moderate and spirits rose to the extent that Eccleston wondered at the dry, level bed of a great lake, Willcox Playa. It was "some 10 miles in width, and perhaps from 40 to 60 or even more in length, without the least sign of animal or vegetable life upon [it], level and beautifully smooth." A light shower settled the dust, and the wagons rolled almost effortlessly over the level ground like wheeled ships on an earthen sea.[45] As he drove his wagon along one evening

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[42]*Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 184.

[44]*Ibid.*, p. 185.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 189.

after sunset, even Eccleston waxed poetic, and "could not help exclaiming with the poet Moore: 'How sweetly does the moonbeam smile.'"[46]

When the caravan finally came to water at the San Pedro River on the evening of October 29, it had been forty miles on the road from Croton Springs where its members had last tasted the crystal liquid. Eccleston's commentary switched from poetry to prose, very descriptive prose at that:

> Even to want a drink is something. The day was very warm and the dust thick, which, added to the rest, made our march tedious.

But the San Pedro was still just as cool and refreshing as it had been to the Mormon Battalion and the Mountain Men who had slaked their thirst at its waters in years past. Eccleston "was extremely thirsty, and my mare, I thought, would never stop drinking."[47]

Crossing the river was another matter; after bogging down in its mud, the travelers were forced to build a bridge of brush to get the wagons across. The diarist was not inclined to agree with Colonel Cooke's opinion of the San Pedro as "a beautiful little river." He disliked the aggravation created by the brushy growth which obscured the river from view until one practically stood on its banks, and those banks were almost perpendicular in addition to being very boggy. All things considered, Eccleston was happy to be across the San Pedro and on the road again.[48] He had passed very near the site of the present of Benson, Arizona, and was slightly more than forty miles from the

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[46]Ibid., p. 190.

[47]Ibid., p. 191.

[48]Ibid., pp. 192-193.

booming tourist center of Tucson.

Although the party continued to fret about the possibility of an Indian attack, it was a prairie fire which almost brought the journey to a premature end. As the travelers lay in camp on November 1, some of the men let a camp fire get into the tall, dry grass. Very soon the wind was shipping the crackling flames toward the tethered livestock. The fire "spread with the rapidity of lightning," and to save the oxen, the men "ran as never men ran before." The fire jumped a small ravine and surprised the party by dashing for the wagons. "Such a scrambling and pulling of wagons and letting down of tents was never seen."[49]

On November 4 the Hays party beheld the grandeur of the mission San Xavier del Bac, the "white dove of the desert," which confirmed that they were but a short march from Tucson. Eccleston mistook the Papagos of San Xavier for Apaches, but was duly impressed by the beauty of Father Eusebio Kino's white-walled mission. On the sixth the Americans rolled through Tucson and encamped about two miles north of the town. There they rested and made preparations for the hard push across the waterless stretch of desert which lay between Tucson and the Pima villages on the Gila. Some of the members of the party rode into Tucson and bartered for supplies, Eccleston being particularly delighted by the rare treat of some milk and tortillas. Although they could obtain no sugar or molasses, they did find wheat, flour, and corn in abundance. The only fresh vegetables they found were pumpkins and peppers.[50]

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[49]*Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.

[50]*Ibid.*, pp. 199-202.

There had been persistent rumors of gold strikes on the Gila, and while the caravan was encamped outside Tucson, a meeting was called to consider the possibility of exploring that region before moving on for California. The matter was thoroughly discussed, and then a motion was passed that a committee of one member from each mess be sent to examine the region and report back to the balance of the party. The continued influx of travelers returning from the California gold fields tended to diminish the ardor of those who had wished to tarry on the Gila, however. One Mexican youth passed by who had earned $350 in seven days with a common wash basin; he was returning home for the winter and planned to resume his prospecting in the spring.[51]

The sight of gold made the men impatient, and to complicate matters further, Colonel Hays fell ill and was not expected to be able to travel for some time. Dissention arose over whether the party should await the outcome of their comrades' investigations on the Gila or move on to where they knew they could find gold. Eccleston's mess was one of those which opted for immediate departure, and by 1 p.m. on November 13, he again was on the road for California.[52]

Five days later the California "sooners" were at the Pima Indian villages along the banks of the Gila. The trail from Tucson had been a difficult one, and Eccleston was obviously impressed by the numerous skeletons which testified to the danger of the passage. Once among the Pimas, his thoughts strayed as had those of Major Emory and James Ohio Pattie when they first observed these people. He was impressed by Juan

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[51]*Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

[52]*Ibid.*, p. 204.

José, the head chief, who proudly displayed his letters of commendation from the many Americans who had passed through his land, but Eccleston was even more impressed by the fair members of the tribe. The women wore only a minimum of clothing in the form of a serape around their hips, and Eccleston commented that they undoubtedly displayed "some of the finest figures I have ever seen." This was not peculiar to the women, however, for he noted also that "They all appear very healthy and I only noticed one deformed person among them."[53]

As he moved from the Pimas to the Maricopas, Eccleston apparently was tempted to tarry awhile as Pattie had, for there he obviously was very taken by a young maiden who

> . . . was perhaps the best-formed woman I ever saw. In fact, she was a perfect model worthy of a Powers or a Vanderlyn, beautifully proportion [sic] and of middle stature, every movement was a specimen of native grace. Her hair was plastered up, but with such taste as to look like a coronet. About her neck hung some handsome beads. She was without clothing above the waist, which is, with them, below the pit of the stomach, below which she wore a serape of domestic manufacture, which hung gracefully over her well-proportioned limbs.

Nowhere else in his diary did Eccleston pen such a description, and he evidently entertained considerable sentiment for this exotic beauty, for he presented her with a ring from his collection of trade goods.[54] But gold fever burned hotter than the fires of love, and he soon turned his back on the "specimen of native grace" and resumed his travels.

Worse was yet to come, for the trail between the Pima villages and the junction of the Gila and Colorado Rivers was exceeded in its harshness only by the desert of southern California. Ample testimony to that

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[53] Ibid., pp. 209-210.

[54] Ibid., pp. 211-212.

fact was encountered all along the road, it being littered with a succession of abandoned "wagon bodies, wagon wheels, tires, ox yokes, staples and rings, boxes, barrels, tubs, ox chains in any quantity." Passing one abandoned wagon, Eccleston noted an engraving on one of its boards: "Damn the jackass team that can't eat leather and go to California, Damn such a country, signed W. S. Bratton."[55]

Apparently the torture of the trail drove men to madness, for they would fight over the most trivial matters and seemingly looked for reasons to kill. Farther down the trail were two graves; on the headboard of one was a note explaining the circumstances which had provided them their occupants. The two men were teamsters, and had made the journey together from Arkansas. They arrived at the site of the graves on September 5, and, explained the note:

> They were both herding oxen about 1¼ miles above here when they commenced quarreling about something of no importance. Hickey struck Davis and they got fighting. Davis whipped Hickey whereupon Hickey, after getting up, stabbed near the shoulder, the knife entering some of the cavities of the heart. He died in twenty minutes.[56]

What followed was frontier justice at its best. The murderer was arrested on the general order of the remaining immigrants in the party, a jury was convened to hear the evidence, and it returned a verdict which found the defendent guilty of murder in the first degree. The sentence was death by firing squad. The executioners were selected by the simple method of a lottery, but of the twelve so chosen, only six were to fire rifles containing both powder and ball, the remaining six

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[55] Ibid., p. 215.

[56] Ibid., p. 217.

weapons were loaded with blank charges. The weapons were secretly loaded so that no one would know who among the twelve fired the fatal shots. The squad was assembled, and the murderer joined his victim an instant after the guns roared.[57]

It was December 12, 1849, when Eccleston first saw a Yuma Indian. He found the two who visited the camp to be more than happy to share his food and drink, but of little help when his horse strayed from camp.[58] If the Yumas were of no assistance, they at least did not practice their usual trickery on Eccleston's party. He records no loss of mules or oxen in fording the Colorado; as the Yumas had cultivated a taste for meat, it was apparently a rare occasion when they did not drown at least one in the process of swimming a herd across.[59]

From the Colorado to the gold fields was all that remained of a journey that began for many of the Hays party in New York. They found the going just as rough as had those who preceeded them, but they too found the refreshing waters of New River. For those who were able to avail themselves of its water, this mysterious stream provided considerable refreshment on the last part of the Gila Trail. Hopefully Eccleston found much comfort for himself for he passed Christmas Day there, and he certainly took little comfort in anything else. His thoughts turned to home and family, and sad though he was, he still found reason to hope.

> But we should not complain, as many have faired worse than even us, and we have the cheering hope that,

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[57]*Ibid.*

[58]*Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

[59]*Ibid.*, pp. 234-236.

> by untiring industry and unwavering perseverence we will finally succeed in our enterprise and return to the arms of our family and friends, enjoying richly the fruits of our labor.[60]

The hopes of all who traveled the Gila Trail to the golden land in 1849 were never better stated.

The expeditions led by Duval and Hays constituted an important part of the history of the Gila Trail, for over the routes which they pioneered flowed almost all the immigrants who came to California by a southern route during the gold rush years. The people who crossed the Santa Fe Trail to Santa Fe usually followed the Hays cutoff from Cow Spring directly west to Tubac, thence north to Tucson; those who started for California from Texas usually followed the path of the Duval party south of El Paso, then west through Janos, across the San Pedro River to a point southeast of Tubac, thence north to Tubac and Tucson. At Tucson, both variants merged again with Cooke's Wagon Road. Both would continue to play an important role in the development of California and the Southwest, for across the Duval route would come most of the trail herds which would provide beef for the hungry miners. And over the Hays route would roll the coaches and wagons of the Butterfield Overland Mail, carrying letters to the folks at home which sometimes told of the accumulation of great riches, but more often related the heartbreak of failure and frustration.

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[60]*Ibid.*, p. 245.

CHAPTER VI

THE BOVINE BONANZA: CATTLE DRIVES ON THE GILA TRAIL

The tens of thousands of forty-niners who rushed to California to search for gold soon found themselves searching more for something to eat. California's first two years under the Stars and Stripes were hardly different from the preceeding twenty under the Eagle and Serpent; the region still bore more resemblance to the sleepy isolated Mexican state which it would become. The transition did begin rapidly in 1849 as the influx of population created a demand for goods and services which far surpassed all possibility of satisfaction. Everything was in short supply, and consequently prices were extremely high.

In the face of such inflated costs, many men found it expedient to improvise rather than to purchase the things they needed. In some cases this could be done, but food was not something which had an acceptable substitute. Those who had endured the hardhsips of the overland journey would testify that water could not replace milk, nor could boiled shoe leather pass for beef. Regardless of all other circumstances which they were forced to endure, men could not survive without food; and the overburdened productive capabilities of California in 1849 could not provide this in sufficient supply. The notations made by one young immigrant lawyer who arrived in California late

in the year well illustrated the situation:

> Flour, $1 per lb.; bacon, $1.50 per lb.; fresh beef from 37½ to 50 cents; milk, $1 per pint; sugar, coffee each 50 cents per lb.; eggs, $1 apiece; potatoes, $1 per lb.; molasses, $5 per gallon; beans, 65 cents per lb.; onions, $1.50 to $2 per lb. . . . This is the range of prices since the rainy season commenced; . . . At other seasons prices are not much below the above rates. Hauling from Sacramento City is from $15 to $20 per hundred; has ranged from $25 to $50.[1]

Although the prices quoted were hign, at least the commodities could be had. At one point this immigrant, who had arrived in California penniless, noted that pepper and salt were not available.[2]

The demands arising from the California gold rush had a particularly important effect on the cattle industry, both within the territory and throughout the Southwest, as beef was the one food item for which the miners would apparently pay almost any price. Traditionally, the cattle industry in California had concerned itself with the slaughter of the animals for hides and tallow only, the carcass having practically no value; that changed almost immediately after the hard-working forty-niners arrived.[3] Obviously, a man expending the amount of energy required to carry on mining operations needed more than cereals and vegetables to sustain him, and to the American that meant beef--and plenty of it.

The shift from the slaughter of cattle for hides and tallow to slaughter for food brought with it a rise in cattle prices commensurate

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[1]Marjorie T. Wolcott, ed., Pioneer Notes from the Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes (Los Angeles, 1929), p. 61.

[2]Ibid., p. 54.

[3]Robert Glass Cleland, The Cattle on a Thousand Hills (San Marino, California, 1951), p. 102.

with the demand. Prior to 1848, the average full-grown steer seldom brought above four dollars, and more often would bring only two or three dollars. By the spring of 1850, a similar animal commanded a price of from twenty to thirty dollars on the hoof.[4] The ranges of California could not meet the sudden level of demand which arose in the twelve-month period between June, 1848, and June, 1849. A report submitted to Secretary of State John M. Clayton estimated that there were 120,000 people in California in 1850, and that in 1854, that number was projected to increase to 520,000. The report assumed a normal consumption rate of one-half beef per person per year, and it estimated that sixty thousand cattle would be needed for food consumption in 1850, and 260,000 would be needed for the year 1854.[5] California did not have that many cattle. The United States Census (California Section) for 1860 showed the state in 1850 as having had 4,780 oxen, 4,280 milch cows, and 253,599 other stock cattle.[6] The shortage would have to be alieviated from outside.

Oddly enough, Californians did not appreciate the magnitude of the opportunity which lay before them, but did recognize a quick dollar when they saw it. What should have been the beginning of a tremendous growth in the native cattle industry became, instead, its ruin. Rather than plowing their excess profits back into production, the rancheros simply sold their herds into extinction, thereby driving prices even higher as demand increased and supply dwindled. The money that should

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[4]Report submitted to the U. S. Secretary of State, cited in Bayard Taylor, Eldorado (New York, 1949), p. 349.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Joseph C. G. Kennedy, complr., Agriculture of the United States in 1860 (Washington, 1864, pp. cxv, cxvii.

have gone into breeding stock went into ostentatious display, for the natives were "strong on pretty." Horace Bell, an old pioneer, wrote an excellent description of the process. The scene was Los Angeles during the gold rush:

> The streets were thronged throughout the entire day with splendidly mounted and richly dressed _caballeros_, most of whom wore suits of clothes that cost all the way from $500 to $1,000, with saddle and horse trappings that cost even more. . . . Of one of the Lugos, I remember, it was said his horse equipments cost over $2,000. Everybody in Los Angeles seemed rich, everybody _was_ rich, and money was more plentiful at that time, than in any other place of like size, I venture to say, in the world.[7]

Such prosperity, when properly handled was a boon, but it was not properly handled, and the Californians were headed for a bust. Easy come, easy go was their philosophy, as Charles Nordhoff, another pioneer, saw it.

> The Yankee demand for beef made the cattle owners suddenly rich, and they made haste to spend what they so easily got. Saddles trimmed with solid silver, spurs of gold, bridles with silver chains, were among the fancies of the men; and a lady in Santa Barbara amused me by describing the old adobe houses, with earthen floors covered with costly rugs, four-posted bedsteads with the costliest lace curtains, and these looped up with lace again; and the _señora_ and _señoritas_ dragging trains of massive silk and satin over the earthen floor. It must have been an odd mixture of squalor and splendor.[8]

The capital extracted from the cattle industry thus did not return, and with increasing demand during the period from 1849 to 1854, the price level rose to a point which made it profitable to satisfy the demand from the great cattle ranges of Texas and the Mississippi Valley region. During the early part of the boom period, beef cattle were

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[7]Cleland, _Cattle_, p. 107.

[8]_Ibid_., p. 106.

bringing as high as seventy-five dollars, while small calves were worth twenty dollars to twenty-five dollars a head.[9] In the face of continued shortage, prices continued to rise, and by 1854, a longhorn which had been purchased in Texas for five dollars to fifteen dollars would bring from sixty dollars to one-hundred fifty dollars in California, perhaps even more.[10]

By 1849-50, therefore, a second rush was on, a rush to meet the forty-niners' demands for beef. Trail herds began moving from all along the eastern edge of the Great Plains. One of the first cattlement to profit from the trade was T. J. Trimmier of Washington County, Texas. Oral tradition has it that Trimmier trailed a herd of five hundred cattle to California in 1848 where he sold the beeves for one hundred dollars each. As he returned to Texas in 1849, he supposedly met numerous droves along the way. The Houston _Telegraph_ reported on March 8, 1849, that "three or four thousand horses and mules . . . besides numerous herds of cattle, . . ." were gathered on the Texas frontier preparatory to starting over the trail for California.[11]

Very soon tens of thousands of cattle were crossing into California over the various overland immigrant routes. The Los Angeles _Star_ of September 18, 1852, reported that more than ninety thousand cattle and nearly twenty-five thousand sheep had passed Fort Kearny during the

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[9]William H. Davis, _Seventy-Five Years in California_ (San Francisco, 1929), p. 323.

[10]Joseph G. McCoy, _Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest_, Vol. VIII of _The Southwest Historical Series_, ed. by Ralph P. Bieber (12 vols. 1 Glendale, Calif., 1940), p. 26.

[11]Quoted in James G. Bell, "A Log of the Texas California Cattle Trail, 1854," ed. by J. Evetts Haley, in _Southwestern Historical Quarterly_, XXXV (January, 1932), 209.

spring and early summer of that year. The following year Governor Bigler's figures showed an increase in the state's bovine population of more than sixty-one thousand head, twenty-four thousand having come through Beckwith's Pass, thirteen thousand arriving by way of the Carson River Trail, fifteen thousand coming from Sonora, and nine thousand completing the long trek over the Gila Trail.[12]

The extent of this trail driving activity can be perceived best by comparing the census figures for 1850 with those of 1860. Excluding milch cows and oxen, the total number of cattle in California in 1850 was 253,599; in 1860 that number had climbed to 948,731.[13] This tremendous increase did not come from stock native to the state, for the years of greatest demand were marked by climatic conditions most unfavorable to increased production of livestock; even in the face of such circumstances, short-sighted Californians were selling their brood stock for slaughter. After 1850-51 most of the beef which the hungry miner wolfed down before hurrying back to his diggings came from the Midwest, and many of the forty-niners' meals followed them to California over the Gila Trail from the great cattle ranges of Texas.[14]

J. Frank Dobie wrote that an old ex-Texas Ranger had told how some Texas cattlemen once had attempted to improve their stock by importing some blooded bulls from up North, but the experiment failed as all the

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[12]Figures quoted in Cleland, _Cattle_, p. 108.

[13]Kennedy, _Agriculture of U.S._, pp. cxv, cxvii.

[14]Dobie notes that "It is estimated that the drives to California that began in 1850 aggregated 100,000 head. The 'Report on Cattle, Sheep and Swine,' by Clarence Gordon, in Vol. III of the _Tenth Census of the United States (1880)_, is replete with figures. I have a mass of records on drives before the Civil War that show a much livelier movement than chroniclers of the cattle trade seem to have been aware

newcomers died. "Texas fever?", asked Dobie. "No," replied the old Ranger, "they were simply walked to death by them Texas cattle."[15] Although the Texas Longhorn left much to be desired when he appeared in his ultimate form on a plate, he was eminently suited for the trip to his final goal. Had legs and horns been the standard of value in cattle, none could have surpassed the Longhorn, and this had made him valuable principally for his hide, horns, and what tallow could be extracted from his generally wiry carcass. Yet it was said the hungry miners would eat anything that bellowed, and as there was no way to get cattle to California in sufficient numbers other than driving them the Longhorn became valuable as a beef animal. As Dobie wrote, "They furnished their own transportation, rustled their own forage, and asked no odds."[16]

"Trailing" a herd of longhorns was no small chore, but it was an art which could be mastered. Cattle, like humans, were creatures of habit, and once those habits were learned, they could be turned to good use as an instrument of control:

> There was always a leader, who assumed his place at the head of the herd and there kept it day after day. . . . The stronger, more alert and energetic animals inclined to work towards the lead, the weak and lazy towards the rear. . . . When cattle were thrown off the trail for grazing, relative positions among them would be changed, but, back in travel formation, they would be resumed.[7]

Herds also had other characteristics which proved troublesome under

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of." Even if one accepts the government's figures on this, the average over the decade of the 1850s would have been 10,000 head per year from Texas, although it would have averaged more before 1855 and less after that year. See J. Frank Dobie, The Longhorns (Boston, 1941), p. 363, Note 14.

[15] Ibid., p. 69.

[16] Ibid., p. 71.

trail conditions. They would easily take to water in fording rivers and streams, or they would be balky and panicky. Either case could be dangerous, as too much desire to get into the water would result in as many drowned cattle as would balking and bunching up on the banks or in the stream. Some herds were prone to run and stampede at the slightest scare, and even the arrival of strays back with the main herd was known to result in a midnight stampede.

Trail herds generally were no larger than 500 to 1,500 cattle. Dobie states that a sure way to spot an imposter was by his account of the size of the herds he had trailed.[18] The one instance in which the number of cattle exceeded the normal thousand or so head was on a drive to California in 1869; that herd, numering 15,000, was driven in four divisions and combined only when there was danger of an Indian attack at night.[19] Surprisingly, when trouble came, it many times took the form of the lowly heel fly. The signal of the insect's attack was simple and certain, for whether loose on the range or moving along the trail under herd, the Longhorns

> ". . .h'isted their tails and bolted as if highlife had been poured on their backs.... The sound of its buzzing seems to make cattle lift their tails straight up. You can see one tail go up, then a dozen or more, before the cattle break."[20]

The Gila Trail was well known by the time the trail herds were ready to strike out for California, but the dangers which lurked along

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[17] _Ibid._, pp. 71-72.

[18] _Ibid._, p. 84.

[19] _Ibid._, p. 85.

[20] _Ibid._, p. 191.

the way also were well known, for as one writer put it:

> . . . [M]en with a lingering prejudice in favor of preserving their hair on their heads usually avoided it. Athwart that trail lay the Apaches and the scalp sat loose on the skull of the man with temerity to travel it. Even so a few Texas drovers had the cold nerve to make the attempt. . . . [B]ut most men--even Texans--were willing to yield . . . exclusive right to the route as long as Mangas Coloradas, Cuchillo Negro, Deladito, and the rest of the Apaches cared to dispute its use. Some few who did not subscribe to this feeling salted the desert with their bones.[21]

Nevertheless, there were a few Texas drovers with the "cold nerve" to face the Apaches, deserts, and whatever else stood between them and one hundred dollars-a-head profits on their Longhorns. They had the bovine that could make the trip, too; for better than any other animal except perhaps a camel, he could stand the shortage of water which characterized the Gila Route. He was accustomed to a climate where "bullfrogs could live a lifetime without ever learning to swim." And so the lanky longhorn lumbered westward to nourish the forty-niner who had preceeded him across the Gila Trail.

Few of the drovers who go 'em up and moved 'em out over the Gila Trail in those early years were thoughtful enough, or educated enough to leave a written record of their experiences on the trail. Two of those who did, however, were Michael H. Erskine and James G. Bell. Having diverse backgrounds and attitudes, the two men saw two different and yet complementary scenes as they traveled across the Southwest. Erskine was a rough frontiersman type, a cattleman from Seguin, Texas, and his extremely practical eye transmitted the more essential messages to his ever alert brain: Indian sign, suitability of grass for

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[21]Paul I. Wellman, The Trampling Herd (New York, 1939), p. 60.

pasturage, availability of water. The younger, more romantic Bell saw the territory through the eyes of one who was unfamiliar with geography and life in the Southwest. Bell's family had come to Texas only two years prior to his cattle driving adventure, and the former Tennesseean could not but marvel at many of the sights which Erskine so took for granted that he failed to mention them. Erskine's herd departed Texas about six weeks in advance of the outfit for which Bell worked, but they traveled in very close proximity after entering the Apache country south of Santa Cruz and Tucson.[22]

Erskine gathered about a thousand Longhorns at San Antonio and started down the trail with them on April 24, 1854. The first month was so filled with turmoil and unending labor that he was unable to do anything other than summarize what had transpired before May 26 in one long entry. As usual, the herd had been exceptionally jittery during the first days on the road and had stampeded for several consecutive nights. The drovers must have been good men, for despite the continual scattering of the steers they somehow managed to keep them together--until they endured their first prairie storm.[23]

The afternoon of May 3 brought the high white thunderheads whose boiling, bilious presence on the horizon at dusk generally preceded a night of most frightful display by nature. The flashes of lightening momentarily blinded the prairie traveler while the thunder deafened his ears to the howling wind which drove first rain then hail down on his

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[22]Bell, "Cattle Trail," 210-211.

[23]M. H. Erskine, "A Cattle Drive from Texas to California: The Diary of M. H. Erskine, 1854," ed. by W. S. Sanderlin, in The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXVII (Jan., 1964), 399-400.

cowering head. Erskine's drove ran as if to reach the ends of the earth, and when dawn came he had three hundred less cattle than when the sun last shown. The riders worked into the night of May 4 gathering the strays and regrouping the herd, but again they broke away. The cowboys' frustration must have known no limits as they spent the following week searching every ravine and patch of woods for the missing animals. Erskine appeared almost relieved to write that the loss from the stampedes was not "more than sixty head."[24]

Their problems were compounded by those of their friends who were also on the march to California with their cattle, for there were herds both to their front and rear. When storms again broke on the nights of May 21-22, Erskine put a double guard on his cattle and managed to contain them, but a smaller herd of about two hundred head which was on the trail nearby stampeded into the midst of his, resulting in more lost time as the strangers were cut from his herd. Despite all those mishaps, the drove crossed the Nueces River on the twenty-third and encamped on Turkey Creek.[25]

Storms continued to disrupt their progress, for on May 26 and 27, the cattle again were frightened into a stampede by the fury of thunder and lightening. This time, they really scattered; Erskine noted that although the cowboys had followed the herd for five or six miles in the dark they managed to stop only "a portion." The portion, when counted, turned out to be 547 head, but they were very fortunate in the location of the stampede on this occasion as it was open country and

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[24]*Ibid.*

[25]*Ibid.*, 400.

the strays were not too difficult to round up. Yet by the twenty-eighth they still were short 115 head, and while they tarried and searched the clouds came again. About an hour before daybreak on the thirtieth the cattle were off and running once more, splitting into four bunches which the cowhands somehow managed to contain fairly well. After that episode the longhorns apparently were content to trail, for Erskine noted that they were much subdued in the following days.[26]

The rains were at once the drovers' biggest headache and their greatest blessing, for although they scattered the cattle and cost many hours of searching and driving, they did spare the herd from the usual shortage of water which afflicted travelers on the Gila route and they caused the grass to grow tall. Only at two or three points on the trip would the cattle become desperate for water, this on the last portion of the journey over the desert region east and west of Yuma Crossing. Despite the delays incurred while storms scattered and drovers regrouped, the drive arrived at the Pecos River in mid-June. Now the monotony and the extra hardships brought by nature were beginning to show; Erskine recorded on June 22 that "Some of the hands for a few days passed has been puting (sic) on, complaining, and snapping at everything . . . ." This apparently was of no consequence, for he noted that "John threatened to thrash one, and things have gone on more smoothly."[27]

The miles passed under hoof rather uneventfully for the next two weeks, and the drovers had unusually good luck recovering and bringing up strayed stock. On June 28, Erskine counted 926 head of stock, but

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[26]Ibid., 400-401.

[27]Ibid., 402

the next night brought trouble. As the company made preparations to get underway on the morning of the twenty-ninth, it discovered three of the work steers missing. They apparently had not simply strayed, for mingled among the tracks of the missing steers were moccasin tracks. Retribution for the foul deed was swift and certain. Fourteen of the cowhands mounted up and went after the thieves, tracking them over difficult terrain. After some ten miles of such torturous travel, cowboys found Indians, and the fray was underway. The fifty or so Apaches were apparently taken wholly by surprise, and scattering to the nearby rocks they fought for an hour before abandoning the field--and the spoils--to the attackers. No steers were found, but the eight horses and two mules which returned with the avenged cowhands were considered sufficient compensation. Of course, it never occurred to the Americans that this particular band of Indians might have had nothing to do with stealing their stock.[28]

From this time, they sighted signal fires on the surrounding hills by night and fresh Indian signs on the trail by day. Thereafter Erskine put his hands on the alert, and through their precautions they lost no more cattle to maurauding Indians. His policy was wise, for he "expected an attack and was prepared for it." Such an event would have come at a particularly bad moment, for the party had entered a dry stretch of country; although there was water sufficient for the horses and oxen, the herd had none for three days. At last on July 7, they stood at the banks of the Rio Grande, and Erskine wrote with notable pride that his company had "accomplished what no other has done. Traveled 100 miles in 3 days with a drove of cattle of 875 head and

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[28]Ibid., 403.

not loose (sic) one, either in driving or watering at the River."[29] A count of the herd a few days later revealed that Erskine's estimate had been on the conservative side, for the herd actually numbered 915 head--a loss of only eleven since June 27.

A week later the drive arrived at El Paso, and, passing beyond the settlement, the men went into camp to refit and repair for the remainder of the trip. A few steers were sold to an American army detachment for the handsome price of forty dollars each. While the boss dined with the post commander, the boys sought relief from the worries of the past couple of months in their cups. They apparently were successful in their flight from reality, for Erskine very tersely noted that "Various hands got drunk."[30] Some of the drovers must have been very fond of their liquor; this would not be the last time that white lightening would stampede the cowhands.

Another week of trudging through heavy sand along the Rio Grande put the cowmen at Fort Thorn, the point where they would turn west and intercept Cooke's Wagon Road. There they crossed the Rio Grande in a government boat, for which they paid nothing, but they did have to pay the four soldiers who operated the ferry the handsome sum of nine dollars. The commanding officer at Fort Fillmore had given Erskine a letter of introduction to Major Israel Bush Richardson of Fort Thorn, and the major very generously wined and dined Erskine during his stay. Again, however, some of the boys took this as the signal to imbibe a

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[29] _Ibid._, 404.

[30] _Ibid._

bit too much themselves, and the boss's patience expired. The cowhands apparently became obstinate when inebriated, as Erskine complained that they "refused to do duty." They pushed the wrong man, however, for Erskine left three of the four to cool in the guardhouse as the balance of the crew rode away from the fort on August 5.[31]

The next several weeks' travel were expected to be especially hard, but recent rains proved an ameliorating factor of considerable importance. They traveled hardly a single day without finding water alongside the road, and this facilitated their passage immensely. Between August 15 and 19, it rained every day or night, and the supply was therefore replenished daily. An extra bonus was the fresh grass which the unusual rains had brought forth; this the cattle relished, and it provided them enough strength to allow another stampede on the night of August 27.[32]

They finally were traveling up the San Pedro River Valley, and better terrain for an ambush had seldom been seen. The Apaches appreciated that fact and put it to good use; on the twenty-fifth they attacked a drove which had been trailing about five or six days ahead of Erskine's. Killing one man, they made off with twenty steers. This success emboldened them, and shortly thereafter they fell upon another herd and relieved it of 140 cattle. Another man by the name of Fairchild was killed and his entire herd taken. Again, the reaction of the drovers was to implement firmly the policy of an eye for an eye. The several droves which happened to be in the vicinity of Santa Cruz went into camp,

[31]*Ibid.*, 405.

[32]*Ibid.*, 406.

and the combined crews rode off to find the offending Indians. Sixty-four angry Texan cowboys was not something to be taken lightly, a fact soon impressed on a band of Apaches. On September 5 the cowboys encountered some forty Indians driving sixty-five cattle northward. No questions were asked about whence they came or where they were going--an Indian was an Indian, and those cattle would be a start toward replacing the several hundred recently stolen. When the smoke cleared, there were thirty-one Indians and one cowboy dead. Only nine of the band had managed to escape; the cowboy fatality was actually a Mexican rather than a Texan.[33]

From that time the herds trailed in closer proximity to each other, although there was no further activity from the Apaches. The journey from the river to Tubac, through Tucson, and to the Gila River was very calm when compared with the events around Santa Cruz. The grass was as plentiful as could be expected, perhaps even better, for it continued to rain with fateful regularity. The cowhands swore at the thunderclouds, but had they fared as badly as some of their predecessors on the trail between Tucson and the Colorado River crossing at Yuma they might have exhibited quite different sentiments. By September 26 the drive had arrived at the Pima villages on the Gila. Interestingly, the drovers found the Pimas to be thieves who required watching closely.[34]

The chief aggravation for the balance of the trip down the Gila was the bad condition of the road. A small taste of desert heat was given the party shortly before they completed the last stretch to the Colorado

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[33] *Ibid.*, 407.

[34] *Ibid.*, 408-409.

River. Three steers died for lack of food and the balance of the herd panicked and stampeded, not once but three times. This resulted in a shortage of forty head when the dust cleared.[35]

On October 29, slightly more than six months after leaving San Antonio, the drovers pushed their charges into the meadows surrounding Warner's Ranch. California could not have looked better, and the trail weariness of man and beast could be seen in Erskine's short but eloquent entry for the day: "We travled (sic) today 15 Miles to Warners Ranch--stoped (sic) 2 miles short of the old Ranch--at some trading shanties--purchased provisions of Mr Smith. Flour 10 cents. Bacon 40 cents. A Mule gave out---."[36]

Erskine did not sell his trail weary herd immediately; instead he decided to winter it near Warner's and drive to the markets in northern California in the spring. Before turning the Longhorns out to pasture, the crew branded them and took a count. They had brought the herd through with a loss of less than two hundred head, for 814 remained and twenty had been sold at the outset of the drive. Considering the depredations visited on earlier drives and the hardships of the trail which Erskine escaped because of the unseasonably heavy rains, his accomplishment was spectacular.[37]

For the greater part of the six months on the trail, James G. Bell had traveled about six weeks behind Erskine, working a herd owned by John James. James was a man with considerable experience on the frontier, a

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[35]Ibid., 410.

[36]Ibid., 411.

[37]Ibid., 412.

pioneer surveyor and land speculator. James apparently had been excited by the success of James Campbell, a fellow San Antonian who had driven a herd to California in 1853 and who had returned with a large profit and an even larger tale of his experiences. Campbell organized another drive in 1854, and not far behind came his neighbor John James. As James Bell wished to emigrate to California and join his brother, who had gone out in the first wave of forty-niners, he decided to attach himself to the outfit being organized by John James and work his passage through. Not only would this provide money, but also the safety of numbers, something not to be ignored in a land filled with hostile Apaches.[38]

Bell obviously was inexperienced in the ways of life on the trail, for the first night out a bit of carelessness lost him his mule--and being on foot in the middle of nowhere was an invitation to disaster. A good brisk hour of exercise followed in the morning; after finally catching the errant beast, Bell was cautious thereafter not to neglect his security. A tenderfoot, it took Bell a while to accustom himself to the routine of existance away from the conveniences of civilization, but he thought the open air most beneficial; yet throughout his fatiguing trek he complained of little other than the inadequacy of facilities for personal hygiene.[39]

After a few days on the trail the drovers slaughtered a beef for provision, and the process interested Bell enough to warrant a detailed

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[38]Bell, "Cattle Drive," 210-211.

[39]At each watering place affording enough depth and surplus, Bell took great delight in bathing and donning fresh linens. At one point he noted that he had had two baths in one day and had washed his clothing for the third time since leaving home. He thought of himself a "first rate washwoman." Bell, "Cattle Drive," 216.

record of the incident. Their efficiency in butchering and processing the animal was something to be admired. After skinning, "half of the beef is dissected, the entrails then taken out, the ribs are left whole and roasted before the fire, the other half and head is made into ropes and exposed on a line in the sun until jerked."[40] To add variety to this diet as they traveled those first weeks, the men found wild grapes, plums, and walnuts in profusion, and when added to "a fine steak spitted and broiled," it was fine fare. The addition of an occasional treat from nature's larder was necessary to prevent even the best from becoming commonplace. On one occasion some soldiers dragged a waterhole and netted some buffalo fish. The cowboys bought two weighing about twelve or fifteen pounds for twenty-five cents each and rushed back to camp. These were men who enjoyed their food, for Bell remarked: "I have never seen any fish half so fat. Our mouths are filling with water in anticipation of the enjoyment of the supper. . . ."[41]

Those lighter moments tended to be left behind as the trail from San Antonio became longer and longer. After almost a month on the trail, Bell had even lost track of time; as he finished an entry in his diary he suddenly realized that the day just completed had been Sunday. "No matter," he thought, "it is all the same to us, we work as much on Sabbath as on week days. Not one half the men know how long we have been out."[42] To add to this sense of depression, he and some of the men stumbled on the grave of a woman known to one of the others from

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[40]Ibid., 212.

[41]Ibid., 217.

[42]Ibid., 218.

Mississippi, and he confided that "a feeling of desolation and insignificance came over me. . . ."[43]

To add further to the discomfort of loneliness which apparently beset men on the trail, they now were entering the region where constant guard would have to be mounted against the possibility of Indian attack. As the drovers in Erskine's party, the combined tensions began to tell, for Bell complained:

> . . . we live verry (sic) poor, cooking bad and verry (sic) little to cook. Some men who, when living in town appear to have a good deal of nobleness, are entirely different under different circumstances, a land speculator cannot be an honest man from the very nature of his occupation.[44]

Apparently the boss did not want to be so generous with his produce as the hired help thought he ought to be, for when a beef was killed the following day, "a considerable portion disappeared immediately; for the men were tired out on bacon."[45]

For Bell, happiness was a bath and some clean clothes. To obtain them he was willing to risk even ill health, for he believed that when one bathed there was danger that cold would result "from opening the pores and clearing the dirt off the skin." Yet his excitement at the prospect of once more immersing himself and shedding his collection of good earth was too much to be deterred even by that possibility. "Just think of it." he wrote, "I'll have a plunge into the water! and clean linnen! wont (sic) it be glorious; . . . If anyone could see the men

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[43]*Ibid.*, 219.

[44]*Ibid.*

[45]*Ibid.*, 220.

together it could be sworn they were all millers--so dusty."[46] The refreshing water relieved the weary cowboy somewhat, and he confided to his diary that he felt "about as well as could be expected of a man who is on this trip for it is rough, and no mistake." However, the strain was putting his nerves on edge; a locust on a nearby bush so annoyed him he scarcely had the patience to make his diary entry.[47]

Bell gave the folks back home a picturesque description of conditions on the trail. His was most probably the typical experience of a cowhand who worked the doggies for wages and carried most of his possessions tied to his saddle:

> I find the blue coat to be perfectly superfluous and generally carry it tied behind the saddle, pants in my boots, both boots and pants begin to have a rather shocking appearance for after eating (having left my handercheifs at home--I use the pants for wiping knife & hands on; in riding the bosom of my check shirt works open, and along down the center of my breast is a brown strip like the stripe on a black Duchmans back. My nose and ears and neck are undergoing the scaling prossess untill I look as scaly about the face and gills as a buffalow fish. My riding outfit consists of--on either side of the horn is a rope and canteen, behind the cantle is my tin cup and iron spoon, while occasionally there is to be found a dead rabbit hung by the neck waiting to be devoured. And when we expect to travel over dinner time, a slab of jerked beef finds itself flaping aginst the side of the mule.
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> My bed is made with the over and Indian rubber coat next the ground, saddle at the head, horse blanket on the saddle to make it soft, bed blanket over all, and myself on top of that; sometimes to luxuriate a little I pull off my boots and hat. When it rains I roll up into a ball like a porcupine, and spread the

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[46]*Ibid.*, 221.

[47]*Ibid.*, 222-223.

> gum coat over me. I like to sleep in the open air, for when I get up in the morning my sleep has been refreshing and comfortable.[48]

Perhaps the most pressing of all needs which confronted him on the trail was his desire for some form of socializing. One of the herds to the front boasted the luxury of a "parson" in its midst, and the "Rev Gentleman" had visited Bell's camp and promised to return and deliver a sermon. Although Bell did not particularly feel in need of spiritual food, he thought he could sit and "listen with patience to the greatest *ass* who had ever been *called*."[49]

James was not as fortunate with his cattle as was Erskine, for as the herd neared the Rio Grande, this last long waterless stretch cost the lives of several head, and an additional seventy-five went mad with thirst and stampeded into nowhere in search of water. Ironically, the greatest number of dead cattle were those that had come nearest making it to the river.[50] After the harrowing experience of crossing the wasteland between the Pecos and the Rio Grande, the drovers encamped near El Paso and spent the last week of July gathering strength for the push up the river to Fort Thorn.[51]

Ten days of travel put the drive at Fort Thorn, and there the cowboys crossed the Rio Grande and again turned west, having intersected Cooke's Wagon Road.[52] The prospect of encountering a few Apaches brought

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[48]*Ibid.*, 224. No changes in spelling are made.

[49]*Ibid.*, 228.

[50]*Ibid.*, 230-231.

[51]*Ibid.*, 290.

[52]*Ibid.*, 294.

a little more excitement to the drive, and at Cow Spring signal fires were spotted on the surrounding hills; all assumed them to be of Indian origin.[53] Nothing more came of it, however, and the passage through Guadalupe Pass and around the southern end of the Chiricahua and the Dragoon Mountains proved to be little more than drudgery. The unseasonably wet weather spared them the necessity of enduring the torturing thirst which normally plagued the traveler, but too much of a good thing proved as bad as not enough. Finally the rain-drenched Bell complained that "This is going to California with a vengeance, in fact a man would not see the Elephant with two tails, if he had no more comforts than we have."[54]

It was not a matter of mere discomfort for at one point lightening struck and killed two large white steers and stunned several cowboys who were in camp almost 150 yards distant.[55] Death could come quickly from nature as well as from Apaches.

Although Bell was a tenderfoot, he was a man with an understanding of the future of the territory through which he was passing. He noted on several occasions what fine agricultural prospects the country appeared to afford. As the drive moved through Santa Cruz, he noted the obvious fertility of the surrounding fields; he thought, "a more desirable place for farming purposes could not be wished for." The land was deserted, though, because of maurauding bands of Apaches.[56] They

[53]Ibid., 297.

[54]Ibid., 303.

[55]Ibid., 304.

[56]Ibid., 307.

were the terror of the inhabitants of this region, and their depredations robbed the people of their productive potential; residents could or would do little other than huddle in the shadow of their adobe walled houses, seeking shelter from the lance and the arrow of the Indian raider. However, there was great potential in this land, and Bell was prescient enough to recognize it despite its deserted and neglected state, for he noted:

> The soil and the climate is of such a character that all the necessaries of life, and a great many of the luxuries, could be raised; either from indolence or Indian depredations, it is not done.[57]

Not all things were as obvious to the young cowboy, for as the drive moved north of Tucson and neared the Gila River some of the hands captured a native of the country thereabouts and brought him into camp. Bell's description leaves little doubt about his identity:

> . . .[I]ts body is covered with rings of yellow and brown scales, short and fleshy tail, strong legs with five sharp exposed claws like a cat's, large blunt mouth with sharp tooth and no fangs.[58]

James G. Bell had just seen his first Gila Monster; had he known its disposition and deadly potential, he doubtlessly would have been less curious. Apparently the men had killed him, for no mention is made of any attempted attacks on the captors. Had the monster been alive he might well have given a good account of himself.

Bell's trip was not a pleasant one. The loss of many cattle to thirst, the elements, and to poisoned herbs cut into the profit of the

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[57]*Ibid.*, 314.

[58]*Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 48.

drive, and at the Colorado River crossing the cattle again were poisoned by their pasturage.[59] Bell summed it up well when he wrote that he was "doged tired of this trip, it seems the nearer I get to the end, the more I dislike it, one trip does for a lifetime."[60] By the time the James drove arrived in California, the price on cattle at Los Angeles had dropped to twenty-five to thirty dollars per head.[61] That spelled the end of the large overland drives, for a profit of ten to fifteen dollars was not enough to induce a man to drive a steer 1500 miles through some of the most rugged country in the world. Although the boom was ended, however, many a cowboy returned to Texas with the memory of fine grasslands at various points along the trail. Those who returned would be the wave of the future for Arizona and New Mexico, for the great potential of these two future states lay in mining and ranching. Wise were those cowboys who could endure the hardship of the Gila Trail and yet recognize the value of such a land.

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[59] *Ibid.*, 56.

[60] *Ibid.*, 55.

[61] *Ibid.*, 58.

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION ON THE TRAIL: THE BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND MAIL

Californians of the 1850s were a demanding lot. Longhorns no sooner had arrived to satisfy their demand for food than they demanded that the government establish better routes of communication to relieve their isolation. They were in a strong position to demand both, for the riches rolling out of its mountains made California a possession to be appreciated and protected. Yet its only connections with the rest of the Union were either the tenuous sea routes--to Panama and thence across the Isthmus, or else the painfully long voyage around the tip of South America--or one of the long and arduous overland routes. The hope of all concerned had been that a transcontinental railroad would be the means by which the West Coast would be united with the East, but it quickly became obvious that sectional controversies raised by the mere mention of the project would block its inception for years to come.

Desire to be the eastern terminus of a transcontinental railroad was running high in all sections of the nation, and the general enthusiasm for the idea apparently was the motivating factor behind feelers which the new administration of Franklin Pierce put out in the summer of 1853. On a tour of the eastern states, several cabinet officers

made speeches advocating the construction of such a line; at Philadelphia and New York, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis spoke for the project in terms of urgent military necessity as the President sat listening to his remarks.[1] Yet the reaction which burst forth from strict constructionists on the issue soon cooled what little ardor Pierce might have had; in December he told Congress that "no grandeur of enterprise and no present urgent inducement promising popular favor" would dim his vision of the "lights of the Constitution as expounded and illustrated by those whose opinions and expositions constitute the standard of my political faith. . . ."[2]

Californians voiced their dissatisfaction with this state of affairs in no uncertain terms. On March 18, 1854, the state legislature approved a joint resolution asking that the state's senators and representatives be instructed to support the passage of a law by Congress to supplement the weekly sea mails by routes "most expeditious and practical."[3] Another joint resolution specifically requested improvement of the military and post roads across the plains, as these were considered "absolutely necessary for the preservation of the lives and the property of the emigrants who wish to settle within our borders."[4] The shift of emphasis from railroads to military and post roads was the result of a recognition of realities by Californians. The

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[1]Russel, _Improvement of Communication_, p. 187.

[2]_Ibid._, pp. 187-188.

[3]"Resolutions of the Legislature of California," _Senate Miscellaneous Documents_ 49, 39 Cong., I Sess., Unpaginated. (Hereafter cited as _SMD_.)

[4]_SMD_ 2, 34 Cong., I and II Sess., Unpaginated.

first attempts at establishing overland mail service by way of Utah between 1851 and 1854 had been little worse than disaster. The mails had been delivered with great irregularity, if at all; it was clear to everyone concerned that a considerable investment of time and money would be necessary before roads or equipment would be adequate for the job.[5] During these years it also became obvious that the construction of a railway would be deadlocked by political considerations, and the obvious course therefore became pursuit of improved wagon roads and increased mail service.[6]

California did not stand alone in the fight to secure better communications with the East. New Mexico had been organized as a territory in 1850, and by 1855 its people too were memoralizing Congress for improved communication. The territorial Council and House of Representatives bitterly complained

> . . . that the people of this Territory have suffered for many years for want of a semi-monthly mail between this Territory and the United States. Our geographical position, being in the centre of the American continent without navigable rivers or means of communications by railroad, renders our situation as remote from the federal capital in communications through mail facilities as the Sandwich Islands. . . . We think that we deserve, and know that we need, the boon asked for in this memorial. We would, therefore, call your attention to this subject.[7]

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[5]LeRoy R. Hafen, The Overland Mail, 1849-1869 (Cleveland, 1926), pp. 63-70.

[6]Russel has an excellent chapter discussing the Congressional deadlock over construction of a transcontinental railroad. See his Chapter XII, Improvement of Communication, pp. 187-201.

[7]Quoted in O. O. Winther, "The Southern Overland Mail and Stagecoach Line, 1857-1861," in New Mexico Historical Review, XXXII (April, 1957), 83-84.

Not all agitation came from out of the West, however, for the commercial interests along the eastern edge of the Great Plains had a vital interest in seeing some form of communication opened with the Pacific Coast. Missouri joined those who called on Congress to act, but the "Show Me State" took an extra step. In February, 1855, the General Assembly of Missouri passed an act incorporating Missouri and California Overland Mail and Transportation Company, with an authorized capital stock of three million dollars on which bonds could be issued. When the incorporators met to organize and prepare for the sale of stock, a committee was appointed to inform Congress of the inception and progress of the project. In language common to such documents, the committee substantiated the need for improved communication, and called upon Congress to support their self-help effort by granting

> . . . the necessary right of way to construct roads; to donate a reasonable amount of public lands for the same purpose; to give them such military protection as may be necessary; and such compensation for the transportation of the government mails and stores as may be just.[8]

Then the Missourians became specific. The large expenditure being made on the ocean mails was noted, a fact which long had been a sore point for Californians who claimed that they labored under the yoke of a steamship monopoly. The Missourians requested consideration for the wishes of the inland states and the overland routes they so ardently desired. They asked for alternate sections of land along each side of the right of way (a proposal later incorporated into laws authorizing the construction of railroads), requested a military

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[8]Quoted in Hafen, Overland Mail, p. 82.

police to guard the mails and the way-stations, and a ten-year contract for mail delivery at a rate not to exceed three hundred dollars per mile per year. Congress turned a deaf ear to this request, and the project apparently never moved beyond the promotional stage.[9]

Although talk continued about the prospect of a transcontinental railroad, action was concentrated on achieving the more realistic alternative of a wagon and post road. The people of California demonstrated their concern over the problem in the winter of 1856, when 75,000 of them signed a massive petition to be laid before Congress; it called for a wagon road from Missouri to California. Lavishly bound in two huge volumes which weighed almost one hundred pounds, the books appropriately had a title page illuminated with California gold leaf.[10]

The logjam in the Senate finally was broken when Senator John B. Weller of California managed to pass two bills which established and funded military roads, one to run from Missouri through South Pass and Salt Lake to Carson Valley, and the other to stretch from El Paso to Fort Yuma.[11] The measures died in the House, however, because the Republican majority there objected to the fact that Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War and a Southerner, would direct the expenditure of the funds. To satisfy these critics, Weller succeeded in passing through the Senate and into the House a measure creating a pork-barrel road from Fort Ridgeley, Minnesota, to South Pass, with the $50,000

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Cong. Globe, 34 Cong., I Sess., 1297-1298.

[11] Ibid., 1289, 1299, 1304, 1485, 1964.

appropriation carried therein to be expended by the Secretary of the Interior--a Northerner. This bill the House passed, but still killed the other measures.[12] A total of five bills met a similar fate between February and August of 1856.[13]

Clearly, the wagon road project was embroiled in the sectional controversy surrounding the railroad proposals. Almost everyone believed that the opening of a wagon road and mail route would presage the construction of a railroad over that route. Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri confirmed this conclusion when he pointedly remarked that "The post route and the branches are a skeleton of the future railroad."[14] Nothing could be conceded then, for to allow a Southern road would be to allow a Southern railroad route, and the same held true for the Northern and central routes.

If no specific proposal for instituting an overland mail service could survive the gauntlet of Congressional debate, Senator Weller decided that perhaps a vague measure with fewer exposed vital spots could survive the sectional pummeling attending passage. In August, 1856, he therefore proposed that authorization be given the Postmaster-General to let a contract for overland delivery of mail over a route whose eastern terminus should be on the Mississippi River and whose western one be at San Francisco. The contractor who bid successfully

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[12] _Ibid._, 1166, 1451, 1474, 1597, 1616, 1630-1632, 1834.

[13] Curtis Nettles, "The Overland Mail Issue During the Fifties," _Missouri Historical Review_, XVIII (July, 1924), 521-524.

[14] _Ibid._, 523.

for the service would have full discretion to decide what route he would follow between those two points. The contract price for these services was not to exceed $500,000 per annum for a semi-weekly schedule which allowed nineteen days for the passage between East and West.[15]

Senator Weller introduced this formula in the Senate on August 16, 1856, as an amendment to the Post Office Appropriations Bill. Weller argued that national security demanded that the mails be delivered over American territory rather than trusted to sea routes or passage through other nations. The usual rebutals were given; Senator James M. Mason of Virginia for example, wondered how long it would be before this original sppropriation, not large within itself, would require other expenditures for "an armed force, at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect this mail to California across the continent."[16] Weller's arguments were more convincing, however, and the amendment passed the Senate before adjournment, yet did not pass through the Conference Committee.[17]

The measure therefore was returned to the Senate where during February, 1857, it again emerged form committee for debate on the floor. The new amendment was essentially unchanged from the version rejected by the Conference Committee in August, but debate was more protracted this time and slightly more impassioned. Weller repeated the arguments he had presented in August and put his request pointedly:

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[15] Cong. Globe, 34 Cong., III Sess., Appendix, 321.

[16] Cong. Globe, 34 Cong., I Sess., Part iii, 2202.

[17] Ibid., 2225.

"Now give us a mail."[18]

The problem was thorny, indeed, for although the politicians could not agree upon a specific route neither did they wish to write a blank check to the Postmaster-General for opening a mail over one overland road. The questions smacked of such doubts. Senator John Bell of Tennessee asked what guarantees could be given that the most practical and expeditious route would be taken; Senator John Crittendon of Kentucky echoed this doubt. The Senator from Georgia, Robert Toombs, also failed to see what advantage could be gained from such an ill-advised action, and further added that he did not think California so badly served by the present steamship mail service.[19] When the talking stopped and the vote was taken, the amendment passed 24-10.[20]

The doubting Senators surprisingly had all been Southerners, but there was good cause for their hesitance in accepting a measure which left so much to the discretion of the Postmaster-General. Had the proposal for the improvement of communication over the military roads been accepted, there would have been no such hesitation, for this would have brought the expenditure of funds under the direction of Jefferson Davis, whose opinions they knew well. This had failed, and those whose doubts overrode their desire to see a mail route opened between the Mississippi and San Francisco were all Southern Senators.[21] Thus

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[18]Cong. Globe, 34 Cong., III Sess., Appendix, 307-308.

[19]Ibid., 309-315.

[20]Ibid., 321.

[21]Those who voted against the bill were Asa Biggs, North Carolina; Clement Clay, Jr., Alabama; John Crittenden, Kentucky; Robert Hunter, Virginia; James Jones, Tennessee; James Mason, Virginia; David Reid,

approved by the Senate, the measure again went to the Conference Committee; there it was approved and forwarded to both Houses. It then passed as a part of the total post office bill.

The compromise, as finally passed, was incorporated into Sections 10 through 13 of the bill.

Its provisions were:

> SEC. 10. *And be it further enacted*, That the Postmaster General be, and he is hereby, authorized to contract for the conveyance of the entire letter mail from such point on the Mississippi River, *as the contractors may select*,[22] to San Francisco, in the State of California, for six years, at a cost not exceeding three hundred thousand dollars per annum for semi-monthly, four hundred and fifty thousand dollars per annum for weekly, or six hundred thousand dollars for semi-weekly service; to be performed semi-monthly, weekly, or semi-weekly, at the option of the Postmaster-General.
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> SEC 11. *And be it further enacted*, That the contract shall require the service to be performed with good four-horse coaches, or spring wagons, suitable for the conveyance of passengers, as well as the safety and security of the mails.
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> SEC. 12. *And be it further enacted*, That the contractors shall have the right of preemption to three hundred and twenty acres of any land not then disposed of or reserved, at each point necessary for a station, not to be nearer than ten miles from each other; and provided, that no mineral land shall be thus preempted.
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> SEC. 13. *And be it further enacted*, That the said service shall be performed within twenty-five days for each trip; and that before entering into such contract, the Postmaster-General shall be satisfied of the ability and disposition of the parties *bona fide* and in good faith to perform the said contract, and shall require good and sufficient security for the performance of the same; the service to commence within twelve months after

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North Carolina; John Thompson, Kentucky; Robert Toombs, Georgia; and David Yulee, Florida. See *Ibid.*, 321.

[22]Footnotes added.

the signing of the contract.[23]

The Bill specifically gave the contractor complete freedom to select whatever point on the Mississippi he wished, but named San Francisco as the western terminus. The measure also gave the Postmaster-General unrestricted choice of contractors regardless of low bid, and, in effect, negated the latitude granted to the contractor in choosing the eastern terminus of the route. If a contractor wanted the job, he apparently must adhere to the expressed or implied wishes of the Postmaster-General; otherwise, there was nothing to prevent the awarding of the route to one who would. And if southerners had previously doubted the Southern proclivities of the Postmaster-General, they needed worry no more after President James Buchanan assumed office in March, 1857.

The man whom Buchanan appointed to replace Postmaster-General James Campbell was Aaron Vail Brown, a man with impeccable Southern credentials. Born in Virginia in 1795, Brown had moved to Tennessee at the age of twenty, and there he studied law before entering into partnership with James K. Polk. Before many years he had become involved in politics and was elected to the Tennessee legislature for 1831-1832. In 1839 he was elected to Congress, from which he retired in 1845 to become the governor of his state. His stature within the Democratic party was impressive, and his willingness and ability to serve the interests of the South were unquestioned.[24]

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[23]United States Statutes at Large, 34-35 Cong., Vol. XI, 190.

[24]Hafen, Overland Mail, p. 103.

Postmaster-General Brown immediately turned his attention to the establishment of overland service to California under the provisions of the newly enacted postal bill. He advertised in April for bids on the contract, and nine were received. One did not meet the specifications and was ruled invalid as a result. Of the remaining eight, one was submitted by James E. Birch, one by James Glover, one by S. Howell and A. E. Pace, one by David Mitchell and Samuel Churchill, one by William Gilpin and others, one by James Johnson Jr., and Joseph Clark, and three by John Butterfield and Associates. Two of the bids specified a central route, one described a northern route from St. Paul, Minnesota, two specified no route, and the balance all proposed southern routes to California.[25]

None of the proposals satisfied Postmaster-General Brown, however, for he knew very well where he wanted the line to run. He desired dual eastern termini, one at Memphis, the other at St. Louis:

> . . . converging at Little Rock, Arkansas; thence, via Preston, Texas, or as nearly so as may be found advisable, to the best point of crossing the Rio Grande, above El Paso, and not far from Fort Filmore; thence, along the new road being opened and constructed under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, to Fort Yuma, California; thence, through the best passes and along the best valleys for safe and expeditious staging, to San Francisco.[26]

Provisions of the postal bill pertaining to the selection of the route (Section 10) clearly stated that the eastern terminus would be selected at the contractor's option so long as it was on the Mississippi River.

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[25]"Report of the Postmaster-General, 1857," SED 11, 35 Cong., I Sess., 987-988.

[26]*Ibid.*, 990.

After "full and mature consideration," Brown had decided that the route he prescribed offered "more advantages and fewer disadvantages than any other."[27] To the pro-slavery Brown and the majority of the cabinet, the obvious advantage was that it would serve as a model. More specifically he wanted one that would pave the way for an eventual all-Southern route for a transcontinental railroad; he therefore would not countenance any but an all-Southern route for the pilot project. Indeed, the Legislature of Texas had incorporated the Memphis, El Paso and Pacific Railroad on February 4, 1856; thus Brown's choice of Memphis as one of the eastern termini became understandable.[28]

Brown met with considerable criticism for his arbitrary choice, which was a patent violation of the law enacted by Congress. He defended himself with the argument that his actions were in the best interests of all concerned and, marshalling supportive evidence from the reports of Captain Randolph B. Marcy, who had traversed the region many times, and those of former United States Boundary Commissioner John R. Bartlett, he proclaimed a southern route to be the most practical and feasible of all possible passages across the continent.[29] Furthermore, a good portion of his proposed route was already under development, as Congress had appropriated $200,000 in 1856 to construct a wagon road between the Rio Grande and Fort Yuma.[30] Then Brown

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[27] Ibid., 988.

[28] Roscoe P. Conkling and Margaret B. Conkling, The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869 (2 vols.; Glendale, Calif., 1947), I, note 97, pp. 119-120.

[29] SED 11, 998-1001.

[30] Ibid.

revealed his basic motivation for demanding that the mail routes from the eastern termini converge at Little Rock, Arkansas:

> As the pioneer route for the first great railroad that may be constructed to the Pacific, the Postmaster-General has bestowed upon it all the labor and examination possible. He contends that since the railroads have not concentrated at one point on the Mississippi, this pioneer mail line should point the way by choosing some point west of that river at which the future railroads might concentrate and from which point the line to the Pacific could be projected. . . . Thus it is that we have found west of the Mississippi what we could not obtain on it--a common concentration of railroads to a single point from which the future railroad may commence, swollen and enlarged in its common stem by the contributions of the railways coming in from nearly every State of the Union.[31]

Obviously, that "point" was going to be a southern one if Brown had any say in the matter. He did, and it was.

None of the bidders had submitted a proposal for the route as specified by Brown, but with a $600,000 contract as compensation for the adjustment all quite naturally agreed to have their bids altered to meet his requirements. The award finally went to John Butterfield and Associates of New York.[32] Congress already had written the specifications under which the service was to be performed; the only clauses which should have given Butterfield pause for thought were those which required service to commence within twelve months after he signed the contract, and provided that the passage should consume no

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[31]*Ibid.*, 1004.

[32]The contract names John Butterfield of Utica, New York; William B. Dinsmore, New York City; William G. Fargo, Buffalo; James V. P. Gardner, Utica; Marcus L. Kinyon, Rome, New York; Alexander Holland, New York City; and Hamilton Spencer, Bloomington, Illinois. *Ibid.*, 988.

more than twenty-five days each way.[33] The signing took place on September 11, 1857.

At fifty-six years of age, John Butterfield was as impressive in appearance as he was in action. Sitting atop massive shoulders, his head provided a large frame in proportion to the features which it displayed: high, wide forehead above deeply set eyes, and dark, bushy eyebrows which appeared to rest on the solid base of a prominent nose, all depending on a firm, square jaw for ultimate support. His mode of dress became a model of frontier fashion for young men: high leather boots into which his breeches were tucked, and covering all a long, yellow linen "duster." The flat-crowned "wide-awake" hat which he wore soon inspired the appearance of copies in the store windows of many Missouri and Arkansas merchants.[34]

Butterfield's background suited him to the undertaking now before him, for he had been one of the organizers of the American Express Company. That achievement was testimony to his abilities; two of the three lines which merged to form it had been in such fierce competition with Butterfield that, when he offered the merger proposition, Wells and Company, and Livingston and Fargo were only too happy to accept.[35] His success was phenomenal and his reputation solid. The ventures he promoted were of such a nature as to provide a valuable public service and yet yield a substantial profit. He was involved in many enterprises from banking to telegraphy to Great Lakes shipping. Anything

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[33]See Page   above.

[34]Conkling and Conkling, <u>Overland Mail</u>, pp. 34-35.

[35]<u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 31-32.

endorsed by John Butterfield had no problem obtaining capital. So respected was his opinion that Europeans came to America to consult him on their transportation problems. And his laurels had been won through sheer genius, for he had no formal education; his eye was his judge, and his memory was his bookkeeper.[36]

Butterfield's motto might well have been: "All things come to him who waits, if he worketh like the Devil while he waiteth." Before the contract had been awarded to him, he had set to work to organize the joint stock company which would finance the enterprise: The Overland Mail Company. With John Butterfield as president, the joint-stock company had no difficulty capitalizing its stock in the state of New York at two million dollars.[37] Thus when the contract was awarded the Overland Mail Company was ready to go to work organizing its physical structure rather than losing valuable time putting together a corporate structure. This was critical, for there were but twelve months allowed before the first mail had to be accepted, and in that short time way-stations, supplies, stock--everything--had to be arranged along the 2,795-mile route to sustain the first coaches which would roll across the continent.

To be certain that they did roll, Butterfield himself immediately set out on a survey along the eastern portions of the route. Very

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[36]Ibid., pp. 32-34.

[37]The original officers were John Butterfield, President; William B. Dinsmore, Vice-President; Johnston Livingston, Secretary; and Alexander Holland, Treasurer. The directors were William G. Fargo, Hamilton Spencer, James V. P. Gardner, D. N. Barney, E. P. Williams, Marcus L. Kinyon, Hugh Crocker, Giles Hawley, and David Moulton. The head offices were located at 84 Broadway, New York City. See Ibid., p. 123.

quickly he divided the route at El Paso and sent Marcus L. Kenyon by ship to San Francisco to begin recruiting drivers and personnel at the western end of the line while he supervised that process in the East. A preliminary survey was made of more than two thousand miles along the western portion of the route, after which construction crews took to the field to improve the roadway, cut grades, construct bridges, and in other ways make passage over the road possible. Other crews were assigned the job of constructing way-stations, digging wells, or building reservoirs. More than one thousand horses and five hundred mules had to be distributed to the various stations; 250 stagecoaches and special mail wagons, along with fleets of specialty wagons (such as freight wagons and water wagons), also had to be apportioned, not to mention the equipment and supplies which had to be moved along the line. This constituted a major freighting enterprise within itself. Before the first letter was on its way to California, the Overland Mail Company had invested approximately one million dollars to pave its way.[38]

The equipment was first class. The stages at first were the famous Concord spring wagons which could carry four passengers with baggage and five or six hundred pounds of mail. Within a couple of years a larger coach would be in use and would accommodate six to nine passengers inside and up to ten more outside on top. Four horses or mules usually pulled these "swift wagons," as the Indians called them, but in particularly sandy or mountainous terrain as many as six would

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[38]Grant Foreman, "The California Overland Mail Route Through Oklahoma," in the Chronicles of Oklahoma, IX (September, 1931), 302.

be employed.[39]

At selected points along the route, stations were erected where fresh stock was corraled, meals were prepared for passengers, supplies were stored, and company personnel were housed. These were an average of twenty miles apart, but the range was from a minimum of nine to a maximum of sixty miles. By September, 1858, 141 stations were listed. They were appropriate to their surroundings; in the Mississippi Valley the common construction was of logs, while through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California the building material was either stone or adobe. Where possible, existing structures were rented, and two to four employees would be housed at these home-owned stations; where the company owned the structure, the normal staff numbered four to six men; in areas where Indian depredations were a problem, the crew was increased to eight or ten men.[40]

The preparations were pushed forward with great energy, and in the summer of 1858 John Butterfield made an inspection tour of the route. Along the way he assembled his employees and reiterated the regulations which were to govern their conduct. Practically nothing was left to chance; every man knew what his responsibilities were, and he knew also that he would be held responsible for his performance. Security was the chief concern, for the mails and the passengers had to be protected from such diverse antagonists as the elements and the Indians. Butterfield preferred to use the carrot rather than the

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[39]"Report of the Postmaster-General, 1858," SED 1, 35 Cong., II Sess., 741-743.

[40]Conkling and Conkling, Overland Mail, pp. 134-135.

stick; employees were to be armed, but those arms were to be used only when the lives of the passengers or the safety of the mails were clearly in danger. To decrease the chances of attack by white outlaws, the company would not allow the shipment of gold or silver. These would be carried by the express companies specializing in such shipments, and it was assumed that knowledge of the fact would deter potential highwaymen.[41]

The interests of the company were to be safeguarded as far as possible, but in cases involving the favorite sport of the Indians--horse stealing--force was to be employed only when the lives of the passengers or employees were in peril. If property was taken by Indians, the district superintendent was to do all in his power to secure its return peacefully. If he was unsuccessful in his efforts, he was to report the matter to the nearest military garrison; but under no circumstances was he to attempt repossession by force.[42]

As drivers and conductors were the point of contact between the company and the customer, these men were given very specific instructions about their conduct and their responsibilities. To promote the greatest efficiency and safety, each driver was charged with the task of knowing his stretch of road of about sixty miles length. Over that portion, except in case of emergency or incapacity he would do all the driving in both directions. He would be boarded and housed at the station on one or the other end of his road, but it was his duty to

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[41]Butterfield's Special Instructions, quoted in Waterman L. Ormsby, The Butterfield Overland Mail, ed, by Lyle H. Wright and Josephine M. Bynum (San Marino, Calif., 1954), p. i.

[42]Ibid.

take any incoming stage onto the road within ten minutes of its arrival, regardless of what time of day or night it arrived.[43]

No stage would roll away from the station without a conductor in the box beside the driver. He was charged with ultimate responsibility for the safety of the passengers and the mail and must, if the occasion arose, protect them even at the risk of his own life. His ride was approximately twice the distance of the driver's, for he was usually detailed a route between stations of about 120 miles. If he found that the conductor who was to relieve him was incapacitated or absent, however, he was required to continue the journey until he could be relieved by another conductor or by the division superintendent. The conductor soon became known as the man with the horn, as it was customary for him to announce the stage's approach with a loud blast from his bugle some two miles from the station. This gave the station master sufficient time to prepare a fresh relay of horses and to be ready to receive the passengers and mail if any were to be left.[44]

Changing horses was just the beginning of the station master's job. After the stage departed, he had to groom and feed the tired and hungry animals which had just completed their labors. The station keeper had to move quickly when the horn announced the coming of a stage because a delay of more than ten minutes in a relay stop could mean the loss of his job. If the passengers were scheduled to be fed, the time naturally would be longer, but this was not always the case. He performed

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Butterfield's Special Instructions, quoted in Ormsby, Butterfield Mail, p. i.

the hard, unexciting work of keeping the station supplied with feed for the horses and mules, food for the passengers and the crew, and enough teams of well-shod horses and mules to keep the stages rolling at their scheduled speed--or better.[45]

The number of people thus employed by the Overland Mail has been estimated at two thousand men during the height of its business on the southern route, that number exclusive of supervisory personnel.[46] They were a dedicated and experienced group of men, dedicated to the person of John Butterfield and experienced in the coaching business. The first through passenger on the route from east to west, Waterman L. Ormsby, wrote of their exceptional competence:

> The employees of the company, I found, without exception to be courteous, civil, and attentive. They are most of them from the East, and many, especially of the drivers, from New York state. I found the drivers on the whole line, with but few exceptions, experienced men. Several are a little reckless and too anxious to make fast time, but as a general thing they are very cautious.
>
> All the superintendents are experienced stage men: . . . The road agents, or sub-superintendents, are also, all of them, men of much experience, and the company appears to have taken every care to have their employees reliable.[47]

To emphasize this courteous and competent image, John Butterfield personally prepared a set of special instructions for all employees of the company. Articles 15 and 19 stated:

> All employees are expected to show proper respect to and treat passengers and the public with civility, as well as to use every exertion for the comfort and convenience of passengers.
>
> It is expected of every employee that he will further the interests of the Company by every means in his power,

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[46]Conkling and Conkling, Overland Mail, p. 130.

[47]Ormsby, Butterfield Mail, pp. 94-95.

> more especially by living on good terms with all his fellow employees, by avoiding quarrels and disagreements of every kind and nature with all parties, and by the strictest attention of each and every one to his duties.[48]

As he concluded his customary pep talk to the crew at the way-stations which he toured immediately before the opening of service in the late summer of 1858, Butterfield added what became a familiar battle cry for him: "Remember boys, nothing on God's earth must stop the United States mail!"[49]

Those few people who watched John Butterfield transfer the first mail to the waiting coach on September 16, 1858, might have turned to each other as the stage rolled away and asked, "Who would want to stop it?" Only a dozen letters and a few newspapers were entrusted to that first, historic ride on the Overland Mail out of St. Louis. Interest was so low that the St. Louis newspapers ignored the event. Waterman L. Ormsby, correspondent for the New York _Herald_ and first through passenger on the line, had an appreciation for the magnitude of the event which he witnessed that morning. He knew, as few people did, what ramifications the passing of those two small mail pouches would have, and he wrote to his readers:

> . . . I could not but think that the time was not far distant when the overland mail from St. Louis would be of less insignificant proportions, and when I might look back upon that day as our fathers do now upon the time when to imagine a railroad would have been a carte blanche for the lunatic asylum. I looked forward in my imagination to the time when, instead of a wagon road to the Pacific, we should have a railroad; and when, instead of having to wait over forty days for an answer from San Francisco, a delay of as many minutes will be

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[48]_Ibid_., p. i.

[49]Conkling and Conkling, _Overland Mail_, p. 130.

looked upon as a gross imposition, and of as many seconds as "doing from fair to middling."[50]

Twenty-three days later, on October 9, St. Louis came alive with excitement as the first mail from San Francisco rolled into town in the unheard-of time of just twenty-three days and four hours. Butterfield went out to meet and ride into town with this first arrival from the West Coast. Accompanying him was G. Bailey, special agent of the Post Office Department who had been the first overland passenger to come from the West Coast to the East. In a style which spoke eloquently of the hardships of the trip, Bailey complemented the company on its accomplishment:

> The various difficulties of the route, the scant supply of water, the long deserts, the inconvenience of keeping up stations hundreds of miles from the points from which their supplies are furnished; all these and the minor obstacles, naturally presented to the successful management of so long a line of stage communication, have been met and overcome by the energy, the enterprise, and the determination of the contractors.[51]

To President Buchanan, Butterfield telegraphed the following message:

> Sir: The overland mail arrived today at St. Louis from San Francisco in twenty-three days and four hours. The stage brought through six passengers.

In most prophetic terms the President replied:

> Sir: I cordially congratulate you upon the result. It is a glorious triumph for civilization and the Union. Settlements will soon follow the course of the road, and the East and the West will be bound together by a chain of living Americans which can never be broken.[52]

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[50]Ormsby, Butterfield Mail, p. 2.

[51]Postmaster General's Report, 1858, p. 751.

[52]Quoted in Hafen, Overland Mail, p. 95.

The time about which the President spoke was not to come immediately, for the Butterfield Overland Mail coaches rolled along the course of the Gila Trail for only two and one-half short years before the nation, and consequently the service, was disrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War. In that time the Butterfield Overland Mail compiled a service record of legendary proportions; the coaches went through, and they went through on time. With the outbreak of war in the spring of 1861, however, the federal government moved the route north to protect communications with California. Soon the ruts cut along the trail by the Overland Mail were deepened by the wheels of Union and Confederate cannon as the Rebels rode west on the Gila Trail to conquer New Mexico and Arizona, and the Federals rode east over it to chase them out again.

CHAPTER VIII

CIVIL WAR ALONG THE GILA TRAIL

The Civil War was not a phenomenon peculiar to the eastern portions of the United States. Secessionist and Unionist arguments were just as hot and frequent west of the Mississippi as they were east of it. The remark of a young lieutenant stationed at Fort Union, New Mexico, typified the situation as of February, 1861: "Nothing but secession talked of at the Post." As time passed, the discussions became more heated; in March the lieutenant angrily wrote: "I became involved in several very bitter political discussions here and threatened, if an effort was made to seduce my regiment from its allegiance, I would assume command myself and fight it out."[1]

The young officer's loyalty certainly was commendable, but most people would have wondered exactly for what or whom he proposed to "fight it out"--the rocks and the cacti, or the Mexicans? Apparently New Mexicans had little interest in the outside world, and the outside world reciprocated. What little contact the territory had with the "States" was through trade between northern New Mexico and Missouri, and southern New Mexico and Texas; but even this was not significant enough economically to make the alignment of the region with the Union or the Confederacy critical. Instead, New Mexico's importance lay in its

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[1]John Van Deusen DuBois, Campaigns in the West, 1856-1861, ed by George P. Hammond (Tucson, 1949), p. 110.

geographical position: it was the key to Pacific expansion for the seceding Southern states. The Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph of May 12, 1862, cogently analyzed the situation from the Confederate viewpoint:

> . . . the Federals have us surrounded and utterly shut in by their territory with the privilege of fighting us off from commerce with the Pacific as well as with Northern Mexico. They confine slave territory within a boundary that will shut us out of 3/4 of the under-developed territory of the continent adapted to slavery. They also render it utterly out of the question in future years to take advantage of the changes in our neighboring Republic and add to our Confederacy those rich states of Mexico, so necessary to our future development. They destroy all prospect of a railroad to the Pacific for us, and thus make our commerce forever tributary to them. We must have and keep [New Mexico] at all hazards. . . .[2]

Thus some Southerners saw that although their immediate survival depended upon success in the East, their future prosperity depended on possession of the Gila Trail and the southern railroad route to the Pacific which it provided.

Southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico were sympathetic to the Confederate cause,[3] and the Confederate government certainly longed to see them wrapped in the folds of the Stars and Bars. President Jefferson Davis believed that "with New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Utah there would be plenty of room for the extension of slavery, which would greatly strengthen the Confederate States."[4] Even north of the southern tier of Western territories, there was considerable dissention

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[2]Quoted in Martin Hardwick Hall, Sibley's New Mexico Campaign (Austin, 1960), p. 4.

[3]Rupert N. Richardson and Carl C. Rister, The Greater Southwest (Glendale, Calif., 1935), pp. 264-265.

[4]Quoted in Ray C. Colton and Carl C. Rister, The Greater Southwest (Norman, Okla., 1959), p. 11.

and division over the issue of secession. Colorado held a number of secessionists, estimated by the Governor at about 7500, who were planning the seizure of Fort Wise and Fort Garland in order "to surround New Mexico and invade it from the North."[5] The people of New Mexico were not waiting upon the actions of others to place them squarely on the Confederate side, however, for on March 16, 1861, a convention at Mesilla voted what amounted to articles of secession for the territory. Repudiating the governments of the territory and the United States, the delegates declared their allegiance to the Confederacy and their willingness to fight for the cause:

> Resolved that we will not recognize the present Black Republican Administration, and that we will resist any officers appointed to this Territory by said administration with whatever means in our power.[6]

Although Arizona was still part of New Mexican Territory at this time, Arizonans wanted separate territorial status, and they too held a convention. Gathering at Tucson in August, 1861, they declared themselves ready for territorial status, and went so far as to elect Granville Oury their delegate to the Confederate Congress.[7] Even the New Mexican delegate to Congress, Miguel Otero, was working to gain the sympathy of his constituents for the Southern cause, and on February 15, he issued an address calculated to "disaffect them toward the Union, and

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[5]War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 vols.; Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. IV, p. 73. (Unless otherwise noted, all references hereafter are from Series I, and will therefore be cited simply as O.R., Vol. number, page number.

[6]Sixth resolution of the Convention, quoted in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 39.

[7]Colton, War in Western Territories, p. 10.

incite them to favor the Rebellion."[8]

If the Federal government was aware of the pro-Southern agitation within the Southwestern territories, it evinced no particular concern. During the spring and summer of 1861, the War Department continued to transfer regular troops to the Eastern theater. In May, General Winfield Scott ordered approximately 3,400 men transferred from the region to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This drain of enlisted personnel was matched by the resignations of many commissioned officers, who then offered their services to the Confederacy. By June the Union officer in command of New Mexico, Colonel E. R. S. Canby, was having to appoint non-commissioned officers to act as commissioned officers. Then came yet a second withdrawal of regular troops on June 14, and Canby was lamely told to fill the gaps left in his ranks by recruiting volunteers.[9] The general attitude among Union officials appeared to be that expressed by Secretary of War Simon Cameron in reply to a warning from Secretary of the Interior Caleb Smith about the security of the Southwestern territories. With great nonchalance, Cameron informed Smith that "measures have been taken or will be taken commensurate with its importance. . . ."[10]

There could be no doubt that the Confederate government appreciated the value of the area, both for the route of communication and commerce which it afforded, and for the considerable amount of military material

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Reports of the Committees of the Senate of the United States 108, 37 Cong., III Sess., 366, 372. Canby to Assistant Adjutant-General, August 16, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 61.

[10] Quoted in Colton, War in Western Territories, pp. 11-12.

which its numerous forts contained. There was speculation and some evidence to indicate that Secretary of War John B. Floyd had placed officers with secessionist sympathies in strategic positions in New Mexico and had stockpiled unusually large amounts of material there in expectation that it would be transferred to Southern hands when the break with the Union came.[11] Whatever truth there may have been in these rumors, the Confederates moved with dispatch once hostilities commenced in April, 1861, and within a few weeks, New Mexico was invaded by a rebel force.

On July 23, Colonel John Robert Baylor rode across the Texas border into New Mexico at the head of 258 Mounted Rifles of the Second Texas Regiment. This was the beginning of the Confederate invasion of New Mexico. Baylor marched his men north along the Rio Grande for forty miles, and encamped on the night of the twenty-fourth within half a mile of Fort Fillmore. During a previous survey of the area, he had decided it would be possible for his small force to surprise and capture the garrison with a daring dash on the fort at dawn. The maneuver probably would have succeeded had it not been for two of the Confederate pickets who were former U. S. Army veterans; they left their posts that night and warned the Union commander, Major Isaac J. Lynde, of Baylor's plan. The sound of the long roll on the drums calling the garrison to arms fell on disappointed Rebel ears.[12]

Had Baylor known the garrison's true situation, he undoubtedly would have been less disheartened by his misfortune. Major Lynde had

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[11]Ibid., p. 6.

[12]Baylor to Washington, September 21, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 17.

complained of the indefensible nature of the fort when he assumed command of it on July 4, 1861. He had noted that the post was surrounded by low sandhills covered with a heavy growth of chaparral which would make defense against a force with artillery impossible; to add to the complications, the Fort's supply of water was one and one-half miles away. Nor did he believe that the fort or even the Mesilla Valley was worth the trouble it would be to defend it.[13] Canby apparently agreed with him, for on July 15 he informed Lynde that Fillmore would be abandoned as soon as the remaining troops from Arizona arrived at the post.[14] Probably as a result of this knowledge, Lynde had taken no measures to improve the defenses of the fort; indeed, on the day of Baylor's arrival, he had sent a wagon train of supplies north to Fort Craig in charge of a lieutenant with a small detachment of troops.[15]

As his plan to surprise the garrison had been foiled, and as it also appeared Lynde would not sally forth and give him battle in the strong position which he held in the sandhills, Baylor decided to cross the river and occupy the town of Mesilla. The town was a strategic point, and if the Yankees should decide to occupy it before Baylor could seize it, it would prove a difficult position to assault; conversely, if he should take it, the Federals would find him just as difficult to dislodge.[16] Baylor therefore marched to the town, where the pro-Southern

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[13]Lynde to Canby, July 7, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 58.

[14]Canby to Assistant Adjutant-General, August 16, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 64.

[15]M. L. Crimmins, "Fort Fillmore," in New Mexico Historical Review, V (October, 1931), 330.

[16]Baylor to Washington, September 21, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 17.

population turned out, and "Vivas and hurrahs rang them welcome from every point."[17]

Hearing of the occupation of the town, Lynde decided to follow the Confederates and see if they could be dislodged or persuaded to surrender. Leaving the fort in the care of one infantry company, the band, and some convalescents, Lynde marched for Mesilla with six companies and three howitzers--a force of 380 men to Baylor's 258.[18] If Baylor needed any more warning of the Federal's approach than the large cloud of dust which they kicked up, he soon had it, for in advance of the command Lynde sent Adjutant Edward J. Brooks and Surgeon James Cooper McKee to demand Baylor's unconditional surrender. Baylor calmly replied that he thought the proposition ill-timed. "We will fight first," he said, "and surrender afterward."[19]

Some would not apply the term "fight" to what followed. The sandy soil made it difficult for Lynde to get his pieces positioned properly, and their grape and canister therefore had little effect on the entrenched Confederates. He then formed the cavalry for a charge at a distance of about 250 yards from the Rebel positions; before they could attack, Baylor's men opened with their small arms and laid on such an effective fire that the cavalry broke and fell back in disorder over the infantry. With three men killed and six wounded, Lynde lost his taste

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[17]Mesilla _Times_, July 27, 1861, quoted in Hall, _Sibley's Campaign_, p. 26.

[18]Lynde to Acting Assistant Adjutant-General, September 26, 1861, in _O.R._, Vol. IV, p. 4.

[19]Baylor to Washington, September 21, 1861, in _O.R._, Vol. IV, p. 17.

for battle and retreated to the safety of the fort.[20]

Baylor watched the withdrawal, but could not believe it was genuine; he lay on his arms all night awaiting the second attack he thought most certain to come. But it did not.[21] When morning arrived, Baylor sent out scouts to locate the Federal force. Much to his surprise, he discovered that Lynde actually had retreated and that his men were now working furiously on breastworks around the fort. If Lynde were going to stand on the fort, then artillery would be necessary to dislodge him, and Baylor sent an order to Fort Bliss requesting field pieces to support an attack on the Union position.[22]

Lynde had indeed decided to make a fight of it at the fort, but once again his nerves or his dislike of the region gained the upper hand and he countermanded with an order to abandon Fort Fillmore and move to Fort Stanton. Stanton was 150 miles northeast of Fillmore, and as the march would be made with a hostile force in the rear, Lynde gave orders for the destruction of all property which the transport on hand could not carry.[23] By one o'clock on the morning of July 27, the Union command was on the march, but it was to be a short one. The shortage of water and the fatigue brought by the blistering heat of the summer sun soon put many troops on the ground, and there they were soon captured by

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[20]Lynde to Acting Assistant Adjutant-General, September 26, 1861, in _O.R._, Vol. IV, p. 4; Baylor to Washington, September 21, 1861, in _O.R._, Vol. IV, pp. 17-18.

[21]Baylor to Washington, September 21, 1861, in _O.R._, Vol. IV, p. 18.

[22]_Ibid._

[23]Lynde to Acting Assistant Adjutant-General, August 7, 1861, in _O.R._, Vol. IV, p. 5.

the pursuing Rebels.[24] Lynde had made a fatal mistake, and some had protested his action. Captain C. H. McNally had argued that abandonment of the fort was foolish, for he believed it could be held by three hundred men against three thousand.[25]

Baylor's spies soon informed him of the column's departure from Fort Fillmore. The column of dust raised by their movement was clearly visible against the Organ Mountains to the north, and with his field-glass Baylor was able to discover Lynde's movement at a distance of about fifteen miles. Quickly he ordered his command to pursue--he would head them off at San Augustine Pass.[26] As he rode after the fleeing Federals, Baylor passed many along the road who simply tossed down their arms and asked for water. With no difficulty Baylor put a column between the stragglers and the main force which had already made it through the pass.[27]

Warned of the enemy's approach, Lynde gave the call to arms, but only about a hundred infantrymen responded. When Captain Alfred Gibbs came up and reported the capture of the rear guard at the pass, along with three of the four howitzers, Lynde lost what little will he had to resist. He sent a messenger to inquire on what terms Baylor would accept the surrender; without hesitation the Confederate replied that it would be unconditional. "Under the circumstances," Lynde thought that ". . .it was worse than useless to resist; honor did not demand the sacrifice of

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[24]Ibid., p. 5.

[25]Statement of Captain C. H. McNally, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 13.

[26]Baylor to Washington, September 21, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 18.

[27]Ibid.

blood."[28] Few of Lynde's officers agreed with him, and Dr. McKee was particularly vehement in his denunciation of the episode:

> Eleven companies . . . of infantry and cavalry, between five and six hundred veterans well disciplined and drilled troops with two pieces of artillery . . . arms and equipment, some two hundred cavalry horses, mules and wagons and two or three hundred head of beef cattle were unconditionally surrendered. . . . Was there ever such a suicidal, cowardly, pusillanimous surrender as that in all history?[29]

Thus ended the "Battle of Mesilla."

Lynde's incompetent action, for which he was subsequently court-martialed and dismissed from the service, virtually cleared southeastern New Mexico of Union forces and left the way open for an attack up the Rio Grande against Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Baylor's force was far too weak for that project, and he contented himself with the capture of Fort Fillmore's supplies. He parolled the garrison--what could he do with a body of prisoners twice the size of his own command and away from his base of operations?--and five days later proclaimed himself Governor of the new Confederate Territory of Arizona. This was comprised of all the territory south of the thirty-fourth parallel from Texas to the Colorado River. The territorial capitol was Mesilla, and all the laws in force before the date of the proclamation not in conflict with the constitution of the Confederate States of America were to remain in force.[30]

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[28] Lynde to Acting Assistant Adjutant-General, August 7, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 6.

[29] Quoted in Colton, War in Western Territories, p. 17.

[30] Proclamation of Baylor, August 1, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, pp. 20-21.

The Gila Trail now belonged to the Confederacy, if it could be held. In a report to President Davis, Judah P. Benjamin reported that Baylor's timely action had secured for them a most valuable portion of territory, which afforded the Southern states a pathway to the Pacific.[31] Baylor thought the region well worth the taking, for it afforded not only an avenue of communication with the West Coast, but also mineral wealth of considerable proportions. Yet he knew well that it would not be held as easily as it had been taken, and he urgently requested that sufficient forces be sent by the Confederate government to secure the territory permanently.[32]

Baylor's spectacular success ignited a flurry of activity among both Federal and Confederate officials, as one rushed to regain New Mexico and the other pushed efforts to consolidate its hold on the prize. Colonel Canby moved as quickly as his circumstances would permit in an effort to hold the line against further Confederate advances. Several skirmishes during the fall convinced him that a major Confederate offensive was likely to come soon, and he proceeded to reinforce and supply the garrisons at Fort Craig and Fort Union. Those small towns which were in the path of the anticipated offensive also were given additional defensive touches. Canby considered Fort Union the key to his defenses; it had to be held at all costs for it was the last line of Federal defense in New Mexico. He went so far as to move the site of the old fort to a spot about a mile out on the plain and away from the base of the mesa, and there breastworks were constructed and all the quarters

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[31]Benjamin to Davis, December 14, 1861, in O.R., Series IV, Vol. I, p. 791.

[32]Baylor to Van Dorn, August 14, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 23.

made bomb-proof. Fighting Apaches was one thing; fighting white men with modern weapons was quite another.[33] By early September his defensive preparations were almost completed.

The construction of defenses was Canby's easiest task, for he was chronically short of troops. The New Mexican volunteers with which he had hoped to replace his losses of regulars he found to be most unreliable. Specifically he complained that they were deficient in self-reliance, military spirit, and ability to speak English. How was he even to train such men?[34] Furthermore, the shortage of funds had created much discontent among those who had been mustered into the service, and, finally, three of the volunteer companies had revolted.[35]

Before Canby could organize his forces for a move into the Mesilla Valley, he hears rumors of a large-scale Confederate invasion which caused him to resume defensive preparations. Desperate for men, Cánby appealed to Governor William Gilpin of Colorado for assistance. Gilpin responded with enthusiasm to the Colonel's plea, and by December, 1861, two companies of Colorado Volunteers were on the march for New Mexico. One of the companies was detailed to Fort Union, and the other was sent south to reinforce the garrison of Fort Craig.[36]

These men came none too soon, for the rumor of a two-pronged Rebel attack by columns coming up the Rio Pecos and the Rio Grande was only

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[33]Canby to Assistant Adjutant-General, September 8, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 69.

[34]Ibid., December 8, 1861, p. 78.

[35]Ibid., January 20, 1862, pp. 86-87.

[36]Ovando J. Hollister, Boldly They Rode: A History of the First Colorado Regiment of Volunteers (Lakewood, Colo., 1949), p. 107.

partly false; the newly appointed commander of all Confederate forces in New Mexico had arrived at Fort Bliss and was making preparations for an assault up the Rio Grande. Brigadier-General Henry Hopkins Sibley assumed command of the "Army of New Mexico" on December 14, 1861, and immediately turned his attention to the conquest of the army's titular territory.[37]

Sibley's orders called for him to raise a force of three regiments and drive all Federal forces from the Territory of New Mexico.[38] He not only was to defeat the enemy in battle, but also was expected to provision his own army from the spoils captured in the process. He was further to recruit his numbers by offering equal position to any Union soldier who would abandon the Federal Standard and serve the Confederate cause.[39] In other words, General Sibley was given permission to organize an army from scratch, go into the enemy's territory, defeat him in battle, then occupy the territory with the sustenance captured from the enemy.

In General H. H. Sibley the Confederacy had a man willing to attempt the task. On December 20, 1861, he addressed a proclamation to the people of New Mexico, informing them that an army was entering the territory in the name of the Confederate government. He reminded New Mexicans that geography, institutions, commercial interest, and future destinies all dictated that New Mexico belong to the Southern Confederacy. His army came as friends and liberators, he said, and civilians would be well treated as long as they did not offer opposition. To his former

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[37]Sibley, General Order No. 10, December 14, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 157.

[38]Cooper to Sibley, July 8, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 93.

[39]Ibid.

comrades in the Union army, Sibley sent a message of reconciliation, but it was to be reconciliation under the Stars and Bars, not under the Stars and Stripes.[40]

Sibley was aware of the discontent which had spread among the people of Arizona, and with an eye toward placating them and opening the Gila Trail for the benefit of the Confederacy he ordered Captain Sherod Hunter to march with one company of Baylor's command to garrison Tucson. Sibley realized that there was much sentiment for the Southern cause not only in Arizona but in southern California as well, and a garrison at Tucson might encourage the immigration of volunteers to fill his army's ranks.[41]

Moreover, those ranks were daily growing thinner, for the army had been striken by that traditional plague of armies, smallpox and pneumonia. Furthermore, his supplies were dangerously low, and the area around El Paso could afford little comfort to the forces which Sibley had assembled; it had been all they could do to support Baylor's force before he moved north. As Sibley was confident of moving into New Mexico without resistance and taking possession of the garrisons, forts, and supply depots, he hastened his departure and began his march northward early in February.[42]

Colonel Canby was prepared by that time, for he had concentrated a force of 3,810 men at Fort Craig in anticipation of the move Sibley now made. Of this large number, however, a majority were New Mexican volunteers and militia, and Canby had no confidence in these troops. Should

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[40]Sibley to People of New Mexico, December 20, 1861, in O.R., Vol. IV, pp. 89-90.

[41]Sibley to Cooper, January 27, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IV, p. 170.

[42]Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 507.

the Confederates come and offer battle, it was his intention not to expose these men in such a fashion as to require them to maneuver either in the presence of the enemy or under fire. He thought that they must be positioned and allowed to fight from a stationary point or else they would be of no value.[43] He soon had the opportunity to test his theory, for on February 16, 1862, Sibley's army advanced to within one mile of Fort Craig and challenged the garrison to an open fight. Fearing the dependability of the New Mexicans, Canby refused, and the Rebels withdrew to the last bank of the river. Actually, Sibley had little choice but to draw Canby out, for his reconnaissance had revealed that the Federals were well entrenched in the bosque above the fort, as well as within the adobe-walled structure itself. Without artillery the Rebels would have been slaughtered in an attack on the position, hence Sibley began maneuvering for time and position.[44]

Canby rose to the bait, for as the Confederates made camp on the twentieth they were attacked by a Union force which had crossed the river beside the fort and positioned themselves around a large ravine through which they believed the Confederate force would move. The preparations were completed and skirmishers moved forward to draw fire from the Confederate batteries so their positions could be charted. Then everything went sour, for when the batteries roared, the New Mexicans fulfilled Canby's worst expectations and panicked. His inability to restore these troops to order and the difficulty of the terrain convinced Canby

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[43]Canby to the Adjutant-General of the Army, March 1, 1862, in <u>O.R.</u>, Vol. IX, p. 488.

[44]Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in <u>O.R.</u>, Vol. IX, p. 507.

that withdrawal was the wisest move. The cavalry made a demonstration against the Rebel's right flank, and the main body of troops withdrew across the river to safety in the fort. An infantry unit was left to watch the Confederates, who proceeded to make camp directly opposite the fort.[45]

Sibley reported that although he was feeling quite ill on the morning of February 21, he assumed the field command. He had good reason to be sick, for during the night between two and three hundred of his draught animals had stampeded from want of water, and almost all had been rounded up by chuckling Federals and hurried into the fort. Consequently the Confederates were forced to abandon thirty of their supply wagons, the ones containing the entire equipment of kits, blankets, books, and papers of the Fourth Regiment. This was a loss they could ill afford.[46]

By 8:00 a.m. the Confederates were beginning their northward movement; at approximately the same time, Colonel Canby ordered Colonel Benjamin S. Roberts to take the regular and volunteer cavalry north to occupy and hold the ford at Valverde. He was followed by a detachment of artillery and four companies of infantry, two of which were volunteers. A force of more than five hundred men had already been sent across the river to harass the rebels and make demonstrations against their flanks and rear.[47] When Roberts arrived at the ford, he found a

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[45]Canby to Adjutant-General of the Army, March 1, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 489.

[46]Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 508.

[47]Canby to Adjutant-General of the Army, March 1, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 489.

Confederate force of 180 cavalry had preceded him. Perceiving that a successful crossing could spell disaster for the Union forces, Roberts immediately sent the regular cavalry across the river to throw the Rebels back.[48] Thus began the first major battle between the Confederate and Union forces in the Southwest, the Battle of Valverde.

It was an all-day affair. Both sides fought valiantly and hard, but the superior determination of the Confederates combined with the cowardliness of the New Mexican Volunteers proved to be Canby's undoing. The struggle moved from the banks of the river to a low ridge of sand hills a few hundred yards distant by noon. There the Confederates made a determined stand, and with fierce counterattacks throughout the afternoon the Rebels finally obliged Canby to retire back across the river. It was an orderly withdrawal except for the volunteers, and the Union force marched to the fort in good order. Canby reported that "Although defeated, my command is not dispirited. All feel that greater injuries have been inflicted upon the enemy than we have sustained ourselves, and that what we have lost has been without loss of honor."[49]

Although he may not have known it, Canby was right, for Sibley reported his killed and wounded at almost two hundred men--whom he could not easily replace--and the loss of his wagons had added further to his plight. Technically he was the victor, yet a hostile force-in-being still threatened his army, which now had only five days' rations remaining.[50] Sibley was caught on the proverbial horns of a dilemma: should

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[48]Roberts to Nicodemus, February 23, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 494.

[49]Canby to Adjutant-General of the Army, March 1, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 491-492.

[50]Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 508.

his Confederate force invest the fort and attempt to take it by assault or seige and thus acquire the needed supplies, or should it move up the river as rapidly as possible and obtain provision at Socorro or Albuquerque? Either choice again presented him with problems; if he attacked the fort and failed, his expedition was doomed to capture or starvation. If he moved north without first reducing it, he left his flank and rear as hostages to his men's stomachs. A council of war produced a vote in favor of bypassing Fort Craig and seeking to resupply farther north. This decision was Sibley's fatal mistake. No matter what he accomplished from this point on, he had a large hostile force across his line of communication and supply; and if he chanced to be defeated and have to retreat, the Federals would perform a blocking maneuver for any pursuing column and thereby crush Sibley's command between two Union forces. Yet short of retreat, he had no other choice.[51]

As Sibley advanced toward Socorro, he sent forward a flying column which succeeded in capturing the town from its militiamen without combat. The main force arrived soon thereafter, and some supplies were obtained from the town; however, the bulk of the booty consisted of medicines and other hospital goods. The soldiers were given a temporary reprieve from hunger. Their horses were not so fortunate; although many mounts had been killed at Valverde there was not sufficient forage to supply the remainder, and they were dying at the appalling rate of almost a hundred per day. Obviously Sibley would soon be commander of a large infantry unit. The animals were better provisioned when the command moved on to Albuquerque, but death forced the dismounting of the entire Fourth

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[51]Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 509.

Regiment in order to provide horses for the entirety of the Fifth Regiment and the two artillery batteries. The dismounted Texans did not take kindly to their fate, and one disgruntled "infantryman" remarked that such a land obviously was "never intended for white folks," and that the "first man that ever came to the country ought to have been killed by the Indians."[52]

The Confederate situation did become momentarily brighter when Sibley sent a flying column forward to capture Albuquerque before the Union forces could remove the large store of supplies believed to be deposited there. Captain Herbert M. Enos learned of the column's approach and tried desperately to remove or destroy all public property that might be beneficial to the Confederates; on the morning of March 2, he finally gave the order to burn the buildings housing the remaining supplies, as he feared the momentary arrival of the enemy. However, the townspeople foiled this maneuver; they put out the fires before the supplies were totally destroyed.[53]

Colonel Canby had dispatched a force of volunteers from Fort Craig under Major James L. Donaldson to impede the progress of Sibley's forces in any way possible, and to circle in front of them to remove or destroy any consumable supplies they found.[54] Furthermore, Canby authorized the major to use the colonel's name and defend the district around Santa Fe according to his best judgment.[55] The Union commander had decided to

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[52]Hall, Sibley's New Mexico Campaign, pp. 112-113.

[53]Enos to Donaldson, March 11, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 527-528.

[54]Canby to Adjutant-General of the Army, February 23, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 633.

[55]Ibid.

remain at Fort Craig, harass the Confederates in every way possible, and await the arrival of sufficient reinforcements from Colorado and California to deliver Sibley a death blow.[56] When the defeated Rebel column attempted a retreat down the Rio Grande, Colonel Canby and Fort Craig would be waiting.

While the Confederates were rejoicing at the good luck they were having in Albuquerque and anticipating even more of the same when they arrived at Santa Fe, Major Donaldson was arranging a disappointment for them. On March 4 he entered Santa Fe, decided that town was indefensible, and chose to fall back on Fort Union (which was northeast of the capitol). He was not going to leave a prize for the Rebels, however. The supplies cached at Santa Fe amounted to over $250,000 in goods, and these Donaldson loaded into a train of 120 wagons and shipped off under escort of two hundred troops for the safety of Fort Union. The Confederates would find no succor in Santa Fe.[57]

While these larger stores of supplies were being moved from Sibley's reach, he was having amazing luck in taking the little plums. As the Rebels at Albuquerque surveyed their conquest, Southern sympathizers were moving to seize the small outpost of Cubero sixty miles to the west. It was defended by Captain Francisco Aaragón and forty-two Hispano and three Anglo soldiers. On the morning of March 3, Dr. F. E. Kavenaugh and three other pro-Southern men rode up to the post and demanded that Aaragón surrender in the name of the Confederate States of America. The captain was given ten minutes to decide what he would do. He surrendered

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[56]Canby to Donaldson, March 7, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 647.

[57]Donaldson to Paul, March 10, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 527.

rather than risk combat with the four Rebels. Sixty stands of arms, medicinal supplies, and three thousand rounds of ammunition were thus captured and the garrison was paroled on oath to procede to Albuquerque and turn their equipment over to the Confederate garrison there. Two days later, twenty-five men under Captain A. S. Thurmond arrived to secure the easily won prize, and Kavenaugh relinquished command of his fort.[58]

Sibley's time was growing short, however, for on February 22 seven companies of the First Colorado Volunteers left Denver and on March 3 another three companies left Fort Wise. The columns united on the Purgatoire River near the Raton Mountains on March 7, and the Regiment hurried to New Mexico.[59] The "Pikes Peakers" arrived at Fort Union on March 11, their reception a joyous one.[60] As the commission of Colonel John P. Slough was senior among the officers of the fort, the Coloradan assumed command of all troops in the district of New Mexico not directly under the command of Colonel Canby. Prior to Slough's arrival, Colonel G. R. Paul had sent a message to Canby suggesting a union of their forces in anticipation of an action against Sibley. Canby refused this suggestion and ordered Paul to concentrate his forces and await the arrival of further reinforcements.[61] When Canby learned that Slough had

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[58]Thurmond to Commanding Officer C. S. Forces, March 19, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 528-529.

[59]Ovando Hollister, Boldly They Rode, p. 46.

[60]Ibid., p. 52.

[61]Paul to Canby, March 9, 1853, and Canby to Paul, March 16, 1853, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 653.

arrvied and superseded Paul in command, he gave him essentially the same order.[62]

Canby did state that Slough was free to harass the enemy while he awaited the reinforcements, but if he sallied forth from the fort he was to leave it with a reliable garrison at all times.[63] Slough placed his own interpretation on these instructions, and decided to march practically the entire command to Bernal Springs. Slough figured that the troops could protect Fort Union as much from there as they could in the immediate vicinity so long as they interposed themselves between the fort and Sibley's forces; furthermore, they could give better protection to Santa Fe while still aggravating Sibley. Despite Colonel Paul's protests, Slough and the garrison marched for the springs.[64]

Even as the Union troops paraded out of the fort, Sibley was leaving Albuquerque to move against Fort Union.[65] On March 22, Major Charles L. Pyron marched a large detachment of Confederates out of Albuquerque toward the northeast. Pyron's six hundred men arrived at Apache Canyon[66] and went into camp at Johnson's Ranch near the mouth of the canyon. They sent their horses to a nearby ranch to regain their strength after so much hard riding, and the men settled down to stand

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[62]Canby to Slough, March 18, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 655.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Paul to Slough, and Chapin to Paul, March 22, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 655.

[65]Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 509.

[66]Apache Canyon was the name given to the western end of Glorieta Pass, which is about twenty miles southeast of Santa Fe.

picket.[67] Pyron was unaware that a Union force was marching toward the upper end of Glorieta Pass, and would soon engage his men in the fiercest combat ever fought in New Mexico.

As Slough moved southwest from Fort Union, he decided to send Major John M. Chivington, known to his Colorado volunteers as the "Fighting Parson," with an advance of some three hundred men to scout around Santa Fe. Slough had received reports that only one hundred Confederates remained in the capitol, and he wanted Chivington to dispose of this force.[68] Chivington rode for Santa Fe, about thirty-five miles distant. He never made it, for as his column rode through Glorieta Pass on the night of March 25 it ran directly into Pyron's Rebels who were encamped at the southwestern end of the Pass in Apache Canyon. At about two o'clock on the morning of the twenty-sixth, the Federals captured several Confederate pickets, and, after interrogating them, Chivington decided to abandon his plan for an attack on Santa Fe and move against the Rebels in the Pass. Shortly after 2:00 p.m. on the twenty-sixth, the two forces made contact, and a brief but deadly encounter followed. The Union troops were spoiling for a fight, and they certainly found one. Their determination yielded results as the Confederates finally broke and began a precipitous retreat out of the canyon. The Federals pursued them closely, and captured a number of prisoners. The Battle of Apache Canyon ended with that brief fire fight, but it was merely the dress

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[67]Hollister, _Boldly They Rode_, p. 167.

[68]Slough to Adjutant-General U. S. Army, March 30, 1862, in _O.R._, Vol. IX, p. 534.

rehearsal for the main act.[69]

Both sides moved quickly to reinforce their troops within the Pass, and the twenty-seventh passed without further combat. The morning of March 28, 1862, brought the decisive battle of the Civil War in the Southwest, the Battle of Glorieta--the Gettysburg of the West.[70] The combat lasted the entire day, and was a desperate struggle between grimly determined men. In some ways the course of the contest paralleled that of Valverde; a see-saw action with both sides exhibiting great gallantry in offense and tenacious stubbornness in defense. Just as one appeared to have gained the advantage, the other would reverse the circumstances and the fighting would continue. Finally, however, the Union troops left the field to the Confederates, and the battle technically was awarded to the Rebels. They had "won" again, but the cost was more than they could afford. While they had been engaged in the Pass, Colonel Chivington and his Coloradans had circled behind them and destroyed their supply train in the rear. Thus, in addition to losing irreplaceable men in battle, they had lost the means of sustaining those who survived. After Glorieta there was no option other than retreat, for the Confederate conquest of New Mexico was a failure.[71]

Colonel Canby now decided to make his move. The time had come for him to leave Fort Craig, unite with his forces at Fort Union, and move

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[69]Chivington to Canby, March 26, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 530-531; Scurry to Jackson, March 31, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 542-543.

[70]So termed by Ray Colton in his Civil War in Western Territories, p. 49.

[71]Scurry to Jackson, March 31, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 543-544; Slough to Adjutant-General U.S. Army, March 30, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 534-535; Chivington to Canby, March 28, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 538-539.

against Sibley in strength. To accomplish this with minimal danger to his troops while they were in the process of affecting a junction, Canby decided to make a demonstration against Albuquerque and thus force the Confederates to concentrate at that point rather than at Santa Fe. This he did, and Sibley responded exactly as the Union commander had hoped he would. When Sibley arrived at Albuquerque, he found that Canby had slipped away during the night of April 9, and once again, the Confederate general was forced to choose between the lesser of two evils.[72]

Unlike the situation after Valverde, Sibley now had only two choices before him: he could attack the strong Union fortification at Fort Union or he could retreat. The possibility of subsisting off the land no longer existed. A council of war decided to begin the retreat, for it was obvious to all that the Army of New Mexico was so decimated it more properly should have been renamed the New Mexican Regiment. On April 12, 1862, the Confederate forces began their withdrawal down the Río Grande.[73]

They were not to leave unmolested, however. As soon as Canby saw that they were retreating, he began his pursuit.[74] On April 15, he encountered the Rebel rear guard and began the brief action which would mark the end of combat activities between Confederate and Union forces in New Mexico. The Battle of Peralta was in fact little more than an artillery duel, for the preliminaries of a full-scale battle had only begun when the contestants were enveloped in a blinding sand storm.

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[72]Canby to Adjutant General of the Army, March 31, and April 11, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 658, 550.

[73]Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 510.

[74]Connelly to Seward, April 20, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 665.

Neither side could function under such conditions, and so Canby withdrew from the field. As a result of the Union commander's action, the Confederates later claimed the encounter as a victory. A realistic assessment of the situation would hardly justify that claim.[75]

After Peralta, Canby was content to allow the Confederates to continue their retreat down the Rio Grande and back to Texas. He followed along giving every encouragement to their hasty departure, but thought that further battle would be a needless wastage of life. Obviously Sibley's men were in no condition to give battle, as the trail of equipment and debris which they left after them confirmed. It was a defeated and demoralized army which left such signposts of its disintegration.[76]

The Texans on their retreat found a trail of torture. They suffered not only from heat, thirst, fatigue, and hunger, but from the continued ravages of the dreaded smallpox. Finally, however, they crossed the border, and by the first week of May they were again within the line of northernmost Texan defenses along the Rio Grande. The adventure for most of them was ended, permanently for some. Of the 2,600 men who had marched into New Mexico only a few short months before, slightly more than 1,250 returned. The Campaign must be labeled as nothing short of disastrous.[77]

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[75]Canby to Adjutant-General of the Army, April 23, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 510; Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 510.

[76]Sibley to Cooper, May 4, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 511; Canby to Adjutant-General of the Army, April 23, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 551; Graydon to Paul, May 14, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 672.

[77]Canby to Adjutant-General of the Army, June 21, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 678.

Sibley received news of the remainder of his forces with the arrival of Captain Sherod Hunter, whom he had sent with a company to garrison Tucson and secure the western end of the Gila Trail. Hunter had followed his instructions, arriving at Tucson on February 28. Hunter thereupon dispatched a diplomatic mission to the governor of Sonora, while he personally led an expedition north to the Pima villages to establish friendly relations with them. There the Captain first learned of the approach of a large Union force from Califronia under the command of Brigadier-General James H. Carleton. At the villages, Hunter arrested a Union commisary agent, A. M. White, who was purchasing stores of grain and foodstuffs for the anticipated arrival of the California Column.[78]

Hunter and his small force were spared temporarily, for Carleton was making careful preparations before beginning the long march over the Trail. On April 4, however, Hunter's pickets reported the column on the march eighty miles east of Fort Yuma.[79] Carleton was approaching at the head of 1,400 men who were well armed and well supplied, and his arrival in the territory marked the total collapse of Confederate hopes for occupying and dominating the region and its strategic line of communication, the Gila Trail.[80] Hunter chose to retreat.

By the first week of July, the California Column had traveled the length of the Trail and swept the remaining rebel outposts before them.

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[78]Hunter to Baylor, April 5, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, pp. 707-708.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Carleton to Canby, August 2, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 559.

They then combined with Colonel Canby's troops and moved south toward the Texas border. The Confederates hastily abandoned the occupation of the remaining federal forts along the river north of the border.[81] Although Southerners would continue to dream of re-conquering the Southwest, it was but a dream. The Confederacy's brief exercise of sovereignty over the Gila Trail was terminated almost as quickly as it had begun.

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[81]Steele to Cooper, July 12, 1862, in O.R., Vol. IX, p. 722.

CHAPTER IX

THE IRON TRAIL: THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD

In 1852, the United States Senate began consideration of a bill introduced by Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois which had a three-fold purpose: 1) the protection of the overland immigrant route to California, 2) the construction of a transcontinental telegraph line, and 3) the establishment of an overland mail between the West Coast and the Mississippi Valley. His thought was that the President should be authorized to raise three regiments of a thousand men who would be garrisoned along the route at points not farther than twenty miles apart, and who would provision themselves by farming lands surrounding the posts. To defray the cash expense of such a force, each man's pay would be supplemented by the cession of one section of land after three years' service. It was a measure apparently designed to meet some of the most pressing needs created by the great influx of population into California and the western territories during the gold rush.[1]

However, Douglas' remarks in support of the measure indicate that the bill was either a sop to compensate for his failure to get what he actually wanted, or a pilot fish for a shark which he planned to release at a later date. He asked his colleagues: "Is there a man in this body who does not know that this Union cannot exist unless we

[1]Cong. Globe, 32 Cong., I. Sess., 1161, 1683.

have some means, *either this road or a railroad*,[2] or some other means, of communication with the Pacific?"[3] Between *either* and *or*, his colleagues in the Senate chose *or*. Senator Gwin of California moved that the bill be recommitted to the Committee on Territories in a fashion that was tantamount to directing the committee to report back a bill for a Pacific railroad.[4]

The measure which the committee subsequently reported back was one which would have authorized the President to accept bids and award contracts on two railroads across the federal territories. Selection of the routes was to be at the discretion of the contractors with the proviso that one must begin at the western boundary of Arkansas no farther north than the latitude of Memphis; it was to run to the area near the confluence of the Gila and Colorado Rivers. The other was to start at the western border either of Missouri or Iowa on a latitude not farther south than St. Louis, and move thence to a suitable harbor site in Oregon. To assist the financing of the project, the contractors would be awarded generous grants of public lands, guaranteed contracts for carrying the mails and government supplies, and retention of all earnings on the operation of the railroad. Furthermore, the states of Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana would be given land grants for one connecting branch in each state.[5] The session ended before

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[2]Italics added.

[3]*Ibid.*, 1762.

[4]*Ibid.*, 1763, 1847.

[5]*Ibid.*, 1890, 2466.

consideration could be given the measure, and it was carried over to the second session in January, 1853.

The Douglas bill was scheduled for consideration by the Senate on January 10, and it appeared that the issue of a Pacific railroad might find a successful solution during the second session of the thirty-second Congress. When the measure came to the floor, however, its chances rapidly diminished. The first alteration came when Senator Gwin of California succeeded in replacing the Douglas bill with a different proposal that substituted a single main trunk line with several branches between Arkansas and California. This would commence near Fulton, Arkansas, run along the Red River toward Albuquerque, thence along the 35th parallel to the Lake Tulare Valley, and turn northwest up the San Jauquin Valley to San Francisco. One branch would angle off near Albuquerque and follow the Santa Fe Trail to Kansas City, Missouri; another would separate from this branch and continue on to Council Bluffs, Iowa; at the head of the Red River a line would turn south to Austin, Texas, then continue to the Gulf of Mexico; and on the western end a branch would link San Francisco and Puget Sound. As in Douglas' proposal, the contractors would be subsidized by large land grants, except in Texas where the federal government had no land; there a cash subsidy would be awarded in the amount of $12,000 for each mile of track laid.[6]

Gwin had opened a can of worms that now resisted all attempts at closure, and for several days the debate ranged back and forth over the merits of the bills of Douglas and Gwin. Senator Brooke of Mississippi

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[6] Ibid., II Sess., 280-284.

proposed still another substitute for the stalled measure, but further discussion revealed that it, too, would be unlikely to survive a vote. One fact did begin to emerge for those who cared to recognize it: the Senate was not going to accept any proposal which authorized the construction of more than one transcontinental line.[7] When Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan rose and pronounced Gwin's bill "entirely too magnificent," the opportunity which had appeared so near at hand suddenly passed beyond the horizon.[8] With much disappointment and not a little bitterness in his voice, Senator Henry Sheffie Geyer of Missouri later reminded the Senators that without a specific provision for branch lines, any state which wished to tie into the trunk line would be obliged first to get permission from the state in which the trunk originated. There was no answer to the question which he then put: "How I will ask, with the spirit that has prevailed in some of the States of the Union, is that to be obtained?"[9]

These debates were closely watched by a select committee which the President of the Senate had appointed to reconsider the Douglas bill while the Gwin bill was debated on the floor. This was a wise move on the part of several men who were well disposed toward a Pacific railroad, for this committee could read the mood of the Senate through the debates and shape a bill more likely to gain favorable consideration when it was reported to the floor. Several points of consensus were discernible through the course of the discussions. From its vantage

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[7]<u>Ibid</u>., 280-315.

[8]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 285.

[9]Ibid., 422.

point the committee could look down and chart these in a fashion much like an explorer on the highest mountain in a range can look down on the lesser peaks whose tops only are visible above the cloud line. The product of their deliberations perhaps was the most feasible and reasonable proposal for a transcontinental railroad which came before the Senate either before or after the Civil War.

The Senate's preference for a single line meant that the location of the termini of that line would be a matter practically impossible of solution by that body. The committee therefore proposed that designation of the terminal locations be left to the discretion of the President, who would be guided by information supplied by the best-informed civil and military engineers in the country. Strict propriety would be observed with regard to allowing the most complete freedom of competition, and the President would accept sealed bids on the project, with the contract being let to the lowest and best bidders. The general opinion of the Senate was that land grants alone would not suffice as a subsidy for the construction of a project of such magnitude; thus the committee recommended that, with proper safeguards against fraud, the contractors be granted twelve sections of land in the territories and six sections in the states per mile of track laid. As an added inducement, the contractors were also to be given United States bonds in the amount of $20,000,000 or less.[10]

These concessions were made with the provision that the railroad be completed within ten years, and with the stipulation that if the government so desired it had the option of purchasing the line thirty

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[10] Ibid., 469.

years after completion at the actual cost of construction plus ten percent. In return for the subsidies given to aid construction, the railroad was obligated to carry the mails, United States troops, and military supplies at no charge, and Congress could at its discretion authorize other railroad companies to tap the trunk line to establish connection with the Pacific Coast.[11]

The measure designed especially to quiet objections to the previous bills only succeeded in raising a host of new ones. There were complaints that the new bill gave too much power to the Chief Executive; it would place too great a burden on the incoming President by forcing him to select the termini and thus alienate every state in the Union save two as soon as he made his decision. Other Senators said that the grants to be awarded were far too generous. A number of old objections again were repeated: such a railroad could not be protected adequately against the numerous tribes of wild Indians whose domains it must necessarily cross; the federal government had no constitutional power to allocate funds for internal improvements within the states; and the Pacific Railway and Telegraph Company which it would create would be a Hydra impossible of management.[12]

Surprised though they were by the vehemence and the magnitude of the attack, the supporters of this measure were not routed. Yet they clearly were outnumbered and fighting a losing battle. The best they could hope for was a conditional surrender which would allow them

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[11]_Ibid_.

[12]_Ibid_., 697, 708-709.

time to regroup and recruit and renew the battle another day. Although no one had realized it at the time, during the course of the debates on the committee's compromise bill, Senator Richard Brodhead of Pennsylvania had proposed the terms under which a truce would be called. He contended that the combatants were arguing over the order of march before they even knew where they were going or if they could go; to propose measures which set subsidies and formulated regulations for a railroad before it was determined that the project either was possible or feasible was foolish. The sensible thing to do was to vote an appropriation of $100,000 to fund the exploration and charting of several probable routes by the United States Army's Corps of Topographical Engineers.[13]

Brodhead's motion to substitute his survey proposal for the railroad bill came to a vote on February 18, and was defeated by a vote of 34-22. Thereupon Senator Mason of Virginia moved to recommit the original bill, and this suggestion received an even stronger rebuff; it was rejected by 33-18.[14] Clearly, those opposed to the construction of a Pacific railway with federal aid were in command of the political heights, and were not likely to be dislodged. But the supporters of the measure were not ready immediately to concede defeat, and the debates, amendments, votes, and defeats continued for almost two weeks longer before the contestants had exhausted their will to continue with the matter.[15]

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[13]*Ibid.*, 471.

[14]*Ibid.*, 676, 680.

[15]*Ibid.*, 715, 740-745, 756, 766-775, 838-839.

Realizing that all hope of passage was lost for the Pacific railroad bill itself, Senator Gwin opted for half a loaf rather than none and resurrected Brodhead's survey bill. He raised the amount of the appropriation to $150,000 and moved the measure as an amendment to the Army Appropriation Act of 1853. Despite opposition of the diehards in the anti-railroad camp, the Senate approved the amendment by a comfortable margin of 31-16[16] and sent it to the House. It also approved the measure but did delete a provision which would have empowered the Secretary of War to accept construction proposals to be brought before the next session of Congress.[17]

As Secretary of War in Franklin Pierce's cabinet, Jefferson Davis had responsibility to see that the surveys were carried out as stipulated. The ten-month time limit which the Congressmen had stipulated was unrealistic, although Davis began work on the project as soon as possible, the information was not relayed back to Congress until two years after passage of the amendment funding the project.

The first of the six crews which eventually took the field was that of Colonel Isaac I. Stephens. He was assigned the task of surveying the northernmost route to start at St. Paul and move to Puget Sound. Stevens received his instructions on April 8, 1853, and was under way by June. To complete his project, he was awarded $40,000 of the $150,000 appropriation.[18]

To head the party which would check the potential of portions of

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[16]Ibid., 798-99, 814-23, 837-841.

[17]Ibid., 996-998.

[18]Davis' instructions to Stevens, SED 1, 33 Cong., I Sess., Part II.

the 38th-41st degree routes, Davis named Captain J. W. Gunnison of the Topographical Engineers. His party would depart Fort Leavenworth, cross the Rockies by such passes as they might discover in the region of the headwaters of the Arkansas, Rio Grande, and Green Rivers, and proceed west to the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. From this point he was to turn northeast to the Great Salt Lake and attempt to discover suitable passes through the Wasatch and Uintah Mountains toward Fort Bridger. He, too, was given $40,000 in funding.[19]

Lieutenant A. W. Whipple of the Topographical Engineers received a full $40,000 with which to reconnoiter the thirty-fifth parallel route from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to the Pacific Ocean near either San Pedro or San Diego. He was to proceed up the valleys of the Canadian and Pecos Rivers to the Rio Grande in the vicinity of Albuquerque, thence to the coast.[20]

To find the most practical extensions for the thirty-fifth and thirty-second degree routes from crossings on the Colorado River to San Francisco, San Pedro and San Diego, Lieutenant R. S. Williamson of the Topographical Engineers was given $30,000. His party was instructed to give close attention to the location of feasible passes in the Sierra Nevada and Coastal Ranges. Although the distance which he would have to traverse did not match those of the other overland surveys, it was about the same when measured up and down as well as across the land.[21]

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[19]*Ibid.*, 57.

[20]*Ibid.*, 58.

[21]*Ibid.*, 60.

The route along the Gila Trail could not be surveyed with as much dispatch as the more northerly lines, as this territory was still in 1853 part of the Mexican national domain, and the Mexican Government did not give its consent to the conduct of operations on its soil until November. When this came, Davis assigned Lieutenant J. G. Parke the task of glancing to his right and left as he rode over the trail from the Pima villages to Tucson and then to Dona Ana on the Rio Grande. Another Topographical Engineer, Parke was detached from duty as Williamson's chief assistant for this job, and on $5,000 he could hardly be expected to compile the definitive atlas of the Southwest.[22]

Finally the section of the 32nd parallel route from Dona Ana through Texas to Preston on the Red River was to be charted by Brevet Captain John Pope, also a member of the Corps of Topographical Engineers. He was given the additional responsibility of determining the military utility of the route. The added duty was more real on paper than in application, for the military would have learned what it wanted from the reports anyway; this was merely a means of seeking a supplement to the Congressional appropriation, which already had been exceeded by $5,000 when Lieutenant Parke received his assignment. By giving the mission an intelligence function, Davis was able to transfer $15,000 in unused funds appropriated for that purpose.[23]

All the surveys undertaken were organized along similar lines and were given adequate funding, considering the differences between the obstacles inherent in the conduct of operations along the various

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[22]Ibid., 61-64.

[23]Ibid., 64.

parallels. Although Southerners complained somewhat that little attention was given to the southern route along the Gila Trail, the simple fact was that very little remained to be discovered about this particular route by 1853. Not only had General Kearney's Army of the West and Colonel Cooke's Mormon Battalion marched over the route accompanied by trained engineers, but thousands of gold seekers had gone west over it, and the many who returned east had also added to general knowledge of this region.

Actually, these scouting parties in force should not be referred to as surveys, as their equipment and the time alloted to them prohibited any in-depth analysis of the terrain. They simply charted their main route in considerable detail, seeking passages which would permit railroad construction with a reasonable amount of expense and effort, and noting as many alternatives along the way as time and circumstances permitted. The crews accomplished their assigned missions in a little time in excess of the Congressional limitation of twelve months, rushed back to Washington, worked frantically over their reports for a few weeks, and then forwarded them to Secretary Davis. He, in turn, combined the information from the latest surveys with that already compiled by previous expeditions and presented the entire massive compilation to Congress on February 27, 1855--only fourteen months longer than that august body had allowed for completion of this monumental task of geodetic enterprise.[24]

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[24]"Report . . . on the Several Railroad Explorations," in HED 129, 33 Cong., I Sess., 18.

It probably should have been expected, but each party commander came to view his route as having been the most suitable route for the proposed transcontinental railroad.[25] The result was that the surveys tossed the problem of locating the termini and the route of the railroad right back in the lap of a sectionally divided Congress. In fact, the United States possessed not one but four feasible and practical routes, any one of which could be taken for the first construction project. Naturally enough, each section or each special interest group found in the reports conclusive proof of the superiority of its choice.[26]

The acceptance of the survey compromise effectively ended further consideration of a Pacific railroad until such time as the Topographical Engineers could complete the surveys provided for therein. Thus politicians on both sides could take some comfort in the thought that although they might have given up more than they had wished, the issue was shelved for at least one or two years. Yet the respite from complaint and demand came primarily from their peers in Congress, not from their constituents; people throughout the country continued to demand a solution to the problem of communication with the West Coast. Thus was

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[25]The reports of the various parties can also be found in the _Cong. Globe_, 33 Cong., II Sess., 217-281.

[26]And they continued to be supplied with tomes of information, for publication of the completed version of the surveys ran to twelve volumes at a cost of $890,000. _Reports of Explorations and Surveys. . . for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. . ._ (12 Vols.; Washington, 1855-1861). For the cost estimate see _Cong. Globe_, 35 Cong., II Sess., 239.

born another stop-gap measure: the Overland Mail.

Congressional opponents of the southern route for the railroad seethed in impotent fury as Postmaster-General Brown proceeded to twist their compromise measure in favor of Southern interests. His action in defining precisely the route of the Overland Mail was obviously in violation of Congressional intent on the matter, and opponents screamed, spat, and sputtered at him; yet there was little else they could do so long as the Butterfield Company performed its contract. Nevertheless, it was clearly evident that whenever the opportunity presented itself, they would give the axe to the Postmaster-General's pet.[27]

That time did come, for with the election of Abraham Lincoln in the fall of 1860 the road to disunion suddenly turned downhill. One by one the Southern states voted articles of secession, and those members of Congress who had fought the various plans for a Southern wagon road, a Southern telegraph, and a Southern railroad suddenly found that they were free to work their will--their opponents had departed. Advocates of the Northern route wasted no time in taking action to rectify the situation. Even before the outbreak of hostilities in April, 1861, Congress voted to end service on the Overland mail route and transfer the line northward to the thirty-fifth parallel route.[28]

The war, the Confederacy's failure to seize and hold the Southwestern territories from which they might have threatened California,

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[27] Cong., Globe, 35 Cong., II Sess., 262-263, 305, 360.

[28] Hafen, Overland Mail, pp. 139-141.

and the successful counter-offensive launched by Colonel Canby and General Carleton left the United States Congress totally free to do as it pleased with the railroad route, and that is exactly what they did. Representative Thaddeus Stevens summed up the issue of the past ten years in a lesser number of sentences:

> But there is another consideration which, above all others, sways my judgment to immediate action. When in process of time (Southern representatives should return) we shall find them, with the same arrogant, insolent dictation which we have cringed to for twenty years, forbidding the construction of any road that does not run along our southern border. The result will be no road, or, by necessary compromise, three roads the whole way. This would be too heavy to bear. I am, therefore, for passing this law (the Union-Central Pacific Bill of 1862), and making it so irrevocable as to require all the branches of the Legislature to undo it before those halcyon days shall arrive.[29]

That the great majority of Congressmen agreed with Stevens is evinced by the scant time invested in debate over the need for the transcontinental railroad; this was so insignificant as to be purely perfunctory. Apparently no one felt the need to justify the project any longer, for as Representative Owen Lovejoy of Illinois remarked: "This road is not a military necessity. It is simply a commerical and social necessity to the people of the country."[30]

However, the victors fell to fighting over the spoils for a short while, and when the select committee reported the railroad bill to the House it brought forth a few whimpers of discontent from those elements who would preferred a northern route to a central one, yet these were

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[29]Cong., Globe, 37 Cong., I Sess., 1590.

[30]Ibid., 1593.

whimpers, not roars of indignation.[31] Among other things, the measure provided for incorporation of the Union Pacific Railroad Company to build westward from Leavenworth, Kansas, and granted permission to the Central Pacific to build eastward from the Pacific Coast to connect with the Union Pacific at some point near the Utah-Nevada border along the thirty-fifth parallel. No mention was made of a northern or southern Pacific line in the committee's proposal.[32]

A few minor amendments were made to the measure. The Senate then passed its Pacific Railroad Act by a margin of 35-5, and the House quickly added its endorsement to the bill, concurring by a vote of 104-21 with all changes made by the Senate.[33] On July 1, 1862, President Lincoln affixed his signature to the document, and the long sought transcontinental railroad became a legal reality.

The terms of the bill were generous indeed. These provided a right-of-way four hundred feet wide through the public lands; for each mile of track laid the contractors were to receive ten sections of land on alternating sides of the road; and loans were to be made available in the form of thirty-year, six per cent United States bonds at the rate of $16,000 for each mile laid in plains regions, $32,000 for each mile built through foothills, and $48,000 when the terrain could be classified as mountainous. Furthermore, these bonds could be repaid in service to the government by transporting the mails,

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[31] _Ibid._, 1577-1580.

[32] _Ibid._

[33] _Cong. Globe_, 37 Cong., II Sess., 2840-2905.

troops, and materials at the same rate charged private persons. Above these reparations the bill only required the application of five per cent of net annual earnings to the retirement of bonds and interest.[34] To spark competition, the law allowed either of the two lines which might complete its allotted construction before the other had reached the specified junction to continue building until the two lines should meet.

The generous terms of this law notwithstanding, the sale of stock in the Union Pacific proceeded at a disappointingly slow pace. Finally the promoters of the project appealed to Congress for an extension of aid. The problem, as they saw it, was that the first mortgage provision which Congress had attached to the loans was encumbering the sale of stock, as it prevented the Union Pacific from issuing its own first mortgage stock. Furthermore, the land grants of ten sections per mile of track were thought to be insufficient as the land thus obtained was and would continue for years to be worthless and practically unsalable. Simply put, the organizers did not believe the road could be or would be built under the provisions of the original bill.[35]

Thaddeus Stevens said these were "pure men" who came again for assistance to the Congress.[36] Apparently the Congress was willing to believe that and lent a sympathetic ear and a helping hand. In such uncertain times as the Union found itself struggling through in 1864,

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[34] _Ibid._

[35] Robert E. Riegel, _The Story of the Western Railroads_ (Lincoln, Neb., 1926), pp. 74-75.

who could be certain that the original terms were sufficient to allow the successful completion of an undertaking of such magnitude? A lengthy discussion followed, the major problem being that of deciding exactly how much more generous the government should be.[37]

Congress responded to these demands with a supplementary act on July 2, 1864. By its terms it radically changed the situation. The request that the government relinquish first mortgage on the construction was granted; the United States bonds awarded as loan-subsidies could constitute a second mortgage. The roads thus were freed to issue their own first mortgage bonds. To allow widespread subscription of stock among the great masses of Americans, the denominations were lowered to one hundred dollars per share with one million shares thus authorized; at the same time the restrictions which had existed on the number of shares any one person could hold were lifted. Finally, if ten sections of land per mile was not enough to attract investors, then perhaps double that amount would be better. Giving away public land was a painless process. It would be hard to imagine more favorable terms.[38] Indeed, Congressman Elihu Washburne of Illinois remarked with sarcasm:

> "I confess to a sort of admiration of the sublime audacity which parties must have to come here and ask Congress to enact such a provision into a law."[39]

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[37] Ibid., 2351-2358, 2395-2404, 2417-2424, 3021-3024, 3148-3156, 3180-3182.

[38] Ibid., 3151-3152.

[39] Ibid.

Thaddeus Stevens thereupon rose to defend the financial integrity of these "pure men," and Congress followed his lead.

Independent of the supplementary aid to the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific, Congress also authorized the organization of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. The measure was first defeated because many Congressmen disliked Josiah Perham, the president of the People's Pacific Railroad Company of Maine,[40] but again Thad Stevens had the solution; he read off a long list of names of prominent personages who would emulate the procedure followed in organizing the Union Pacific Company and act as a board of commissioners to oversee the formation of the Northern Pacific. The House then swallowed the scheme, while the Senate stood waiting its turn. One member raised the grave question as to whether American iron would build the line; Stevens shot back a "Yes!", and the House tittered its amusement.[41]

As a matter of fact, Congress was complacent, for the aid thus provided the railroad contractors was too generous. It became profitable to build railroads, no matter whether they would return a future profit; fortunes could be amassed in a few years rather than over a lifetime. Yet even with such opportunity before them, investors could not or would not move during the period of the war, for both capital and labor were in short supply, and during 1864 and 1865, only forty miles of track were built on the Union-Central Pacific. The end of the war brought relief from these problems, but until that time stagecoaching continued to be the primary means of transportation and

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[40] Cong. Globe, 38 Cong., I Sess., 2291-2297.

[41] Ibid., 2611-2612.

communication for the West.

Stagecoaching during the war was a different type operation than had been conducted over the Southern route by the Butterfield organization, for after Congress ordered the change from the thirty-second to the thirty-fifth degree route on March 12, 1861, the stagecoaching days of John Butterfield were numbered. Service over the new line was innaugurated on July 1, 1861,[42] but circumstances and ownership had changed significantly, and Butterfield's personal association with the new operation was short-lived. Actually, the old concern controlled only a short portion of the new service route, a section of 550 miles length between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Virginia City, Nevada. The line to the east was leased to the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company, and service to the west was handled by a California firm, the Pioneer Stage Company.[43]

Although Indian depredations were anticipated, the first summer's operations presented no unusual problems and service continued on a fairly normal basis, but the arrival of winter along the western ends of the route brought travel and the mails to a standstill.[44] These conditions quickly put the Central Overland Company into financial difficulty, and their contract subsequently was transferred to Ben Holladay on March 21, 1862. Holladay was a wealthy financier who had large holdings in stagecoaching, steamships, and mining, and he was a

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[42]Conkling and Conkling, Butterfield Overland Mail, Vol. II, p. 338.

[43]Ibid., pp. 337-338.

[44]Hafen, Overland Mail, pp. 223-225.

dynamic individual who did nothing by halves. By 1866, he had gained control of the balance of the Overland Mail routes, and in November he sold the combined interests to Wells, Fargo and Company.[45]

Holladay was wise to sell when he did, for the profitable phase of stagecoaching was nearing an end. The chartering of the transcontinental railroads transformed the stagecoaches into second-class conveyances which served only as connections between railheads where truly modern transportation could be obtained. The construction of the thirty-fifth degree railroad was surpassing all expectations, and by the end of 1867, the Union Pacific had laid rails to Hays City, Kansas, 571 miles west of Saint Louis, and the Central Pacific had reached Cisco, California, eighty miles east of Sacramento.[46] Wells, Fargo and Company had anticipated another six years before completion of the road, but their worst fears were surpassed on May 10, 1869, when the silver spike secured the rail which joined the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific railroads at Promontory Point, Utah.

While the Central Overland Company continued to run stages over the ever diminishing distance between the railheads during the 1860s, the Southwest had no service. The last east-bound mail passed over the Southern route in February, 1861, and it was not until 1867 that transcontinental service again ran along the old Butterfield route when the Postmaster-General expanded the existing route between Tucson and Mesilla to Los Angeles and made it tri-weekly. The Southwest was again

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[45]Conkling and Conkling, Butterfield Overland Mail, Vol. II, pp. 343-344.

[46]Hafen, Overland Mail, p. 323.

linked directly to the rest of the nation.[47]

With the establishment of this service communication and transportation facilities in the Southwest entered a period of marked improvement, and by 1874, the Texas and California Stage Company had been organized to operate between Fort Worth and San Diego, and by 1875 it was offering daily service.[48] At first, the route very closely paralleled the old San Antonio-San Diego line, having 1,700 miles of road, but the same process of decline which had already beset its northern neighbor soon afflicted the southern stagecoaching enterprise. The headquarters of the company originally were at San Diego, but when the rails of the Southern Pacific reached Yuma, the offices of the stage line followed. Soon another move put the western terminal of the line at Tucson, and when the final link between the Southern Pacific and the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio railroads was established, the Texas and California Stage Company abandoned operations.[49] An obscure advertisement in a San Antonio newspaper on March 11, 1882, very much resembled an epitaph for the stagecoaching era. It simply announced: "Stages for Sale."[50]

Thus, as with stagecoaching along the Central route, the "swift wagons" ceased rolling along the Gila Trail with the completion of the

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[47] Ibid., p. 321.

[48] Henry G. Alsberg, ed., Arizona (New York, 1956), p. 107.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Robert H. Thonhoff, San Antonio Stage Lines, 1847-1881 (El Paso, 1971), p. 34.

railroad, but the construction of the Southern Pacific was not undertaken in anticipation of tremendous profits from revenues generated over the southwestern route. It was built because of the corrupt practices which had driven the construction costs of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads to such dizzying heights that the financiers who drained off the construction profits were unable either to sell the completed road or operate it at a profit under normal competitive circumstances. To sustain themselves once the building boom ended, they needed the assistance of monopolistic control to maximize profits and thus sustain the railroad until such time as they could safely grab their tainted fortunes and get clear of the impending disaster.[51]

To continue construction and collection of the federal subsidies which it entailed, the "Big Four" of the Central Pacific--Collis P. Huntington, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, and Mark Hopkins--chartered the Southern Pacific in California to build down the coast from San Francisco, through Los Angeles, to San Diego, then to the California-Nevada-Arizona line near Needles and Yuma. This would allow them to collect subsidies from the municipalities and counties along the route in return for their guarantee to build a spur of track through the contributing body. This also allowed the owners of the grossly over-capitalized Central Pacific to deter possible competition from potential competitors who might try to enter the state either

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[51]N. C. Wilson and F. J. Taylor, Southern Pacific: The Roaring Story of a Fighting Railroad (New York, 1952), p. 74.

by the thirty-second or thirty-fifth parallel routes.[52] That a competitor would be coming was almost a certainty; it was simply a question of time, for Congress on June 27, 1866, had chartered the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad to build westward from Springfield, Missouri, to Albuquerque, New Mexico, thence along the thirty-fifth parallel to the West Coast. The threat from this particular company, the Atlantic and Pacific, subsided after the Panic of 1873, for the crisis forced the line into bankruptcy after it had laid track from near Saint Louis, Missouri, to Vinita, Indian Territory, a distance of only 371 miles; it was purchased by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad.[53] That forestalled expansion along that line for a few years until the management of the Santa Fe was able to revitalize the merged line and resume the march to the sea.[54]

The challenge from along the Gila Trail came from the Texas and Pacific Railroad, which Congress had chartered on March 3, 1871; it was invested with authorization to build from Marshall, Texas, westward to San Diego. This push from the East also failed to materialize

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[52]For a detailed study of the activities of the Big Four, see Stuart Daggett, Chapters on the History of the Southern Pacific (New York, 1922), Chapter IV, pp. 65-82. Through the dummy corporation the Contract and Finance Company, Daggett estimates they were able to realize a profit of from five to six hundred percent on an investment which did not exceed $1,000,000 over a period of six years, that before the large land grants and local subsidies were added in. See Ibid., p. 81.

[53]L. L. Waters, Steel Rails to Santa Fe (Lawrence, Kan., 1950), p. 66.

[54]Ibid., pp. 66-71.

before the Southern Pacific could build its lines to intercept and block it at the Yuma Crossing into California. As a matter of fact, the Southern Pacific laid track into Yuma on May 20, 1877, six years after the organization of its eastern Texas competitor, and at that time their railheads were 1,200 miles apart.[55]

Collis Potter Huntington was not a man to await developments, for as one writer described him, "He was cool, calculating, unscrupulous, a tireless worker, . . . he gained his success through the keenness of his mind and the energy and persistence of his character, . . . which also were not absent from his business plans."[56] To bring matters to a head, Huntington went to Washington to lobby Congress for a transfer of the Texas and Pacific charter to a company that could complete the project. As it happened, the president of the Texas and Pacific, Colonel Thomas A. Scott also was there petitioning for federal aid to his line. Both Huntington and Scott were refused their requests by a Congress now grown tough on careless railroad expansion.[57]

Scott was demoralized by the defeat, but for Huntington it was a studied exercise in cold strategy. While the debate on extension of aid to the Southern Pacific was going on, he was doing all in his considerable power to block aid for Scott, regardless of whether the Southern Pacific received favorable action. To Huntington the most important thing was to prevent the incursion of another line into

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[55]Cerinda W. Evans, Collis Potter Huntington (2 Vols.; NewPort News, Va., 1954) I, p. 252.

[56]Daggett, Chapters, p. 11.

[57]Evans, Huntington, pp. 256-257.

California. Huntington wrote Hopkins that if Scott had pushed the Texas and Pacific through, "I have no doubt our road would have lost at least $1,000,000 per year."[58] Statements such as this emphasized the role which the maintenance of a monopoly for the Central Pacific played in its decision to charter and construct the Southern Pacific.

Nothing was going to stop the Southern Pacific, not even the United States Army, and it was the army that confronted Huntington and associates at Yuma, for the path of the railroad ran directly through the United States military reservation there. At one point, both the Texas and Pacific and the Southern Pacific had been granted easements across the reservation, but those had been revoked by the commander of the Division of the Pacific after the T & P had protested the extension of the privilege to the Southern Pacific as well. The problem was one of considerable importance, as the reservation was located at the exact point most suited for bridging the Colorado River, and the Secretary of War finally refused entrance to both until Congress could consider the dispute. He modified this decision a week afterward, and on September 6, 1877, he granted limited access to the quarreling companies to allow them to protect their property.[59]

The Southern Pacific took advantage of the situation, however, and by September 30 had completed a bridge, laid track across the river, and was operating trains into Arizona. One story has it that the

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[58] Ibid., p. 254.

[59] Ibid., pp. 261-262.

Southern Pacific pulled a fast one on soldiers who had to keep one eye on the Indians and the other on the railroad crew:

> But eyes can close, or they can grow bleary. The railroad men crossed over in a boat, suggested that they had unlimited provisions, including liquor; sighed at the thought of all those men of Uncle Sam dragging out their lives so far from home and pleasure and proposed a party.
>
> The party lasted for four or five days and it got better every day. When it was over, the officers rubbed their eyes, saw a wooden cantilever bridge over the river, closed their eyes again at such a nonsensical mirage, and opened them once more. Yes, a bridge. And that tattoo of sledges on iron spikes wasn't just a morning-after ringing the skull, though there was plenty of that too.[60]

However, the Secretary of War ordered all trains stopped by the Army until such time as Congress ruled on the case. This raised an outcry from the citizens of southern California and Arizona about delays of mail, upsetting of business schedules, lost time, and aggravation at any impediment to travel in general; thus when Huntington paid a well-timed visit to President Rutherford B. Hayes, the President the following day gave instructions authorizing the Southern Pacific to open its bridge to traffic and also approved the building of the Southern Pacific eastward through Arizona.[61]

Huntington already had anticipated this development. He not only had made preparations for the push through Arizona, but also had set the stage for the grant of a charter to the Southern Pacific Railroad Company of New Mexico.[62] On November 19, 1878, work crews started

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[60] Wilson and Taylor, Southern Pacific, p. 65.

[61] Evans, Huntington, p. 262.

[62] Ibid.

slapping down steel across Arizona at a dizzying pace, racing along the Gila River to Adonde Wells and over the Mohawk Mountains to Maricopa. There the tracks turned slowly southward through the longest piece of curved track in the world, stretching some five miles before straightening out, then running without a curve directly toward Tucson. There, on March 20, 1880, the construction crews were hailed by the assembled citizens, a thirty-eight gun salute, and a fabulous _fiesta_. Telegrams announcing the accomplishment were sent far and wide. When there was no one left to tell, someone remembered the Pope. A hasty check for address revealed that His Holiness could be telegraphed at Rome, Italy. It was done:

> The Mayor of Tucson begs the honor of reminding his Holiness that this ancient and honorable pueblo was founded more than three hundred years ago and to inform Your Holiness that a railroad from San Francisco, California, now connects us with the Christian world. Asking your benediction.[63]

The celebrants had returned to their cups and all but forgotten the dispatch of the long-distance cable. A while later, however, a telegram was brought to the scene of the festivities from the railroad station. It read:

> "Am glad railroad has reached Tucson, but where in hell is Tucson? The Pope."[64]

Tucson, for the information of His Holiness, was a little town of two thousand people through which a ramshackle, reckless collection of humanity passed on its way to build a railroad across 1,250 miles of

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[63]Quoted in Wilson and Taylor, _Southern Pacific_, p. 76.

[64]_Ibid._

deserts and mountains. Benson, Arizona, now stands at the point where the rails had reached by June, 1880, and the future site of Willcox faded in the west as Lordsburg, New Mexico, came into sight to the east in mid-October; by December 15, Deming, New Mexico, was a railhead town. Finally the hard working rail-slappers made it to the comfort of abundant supplies, warm beer, and all the other amenities which the little adobe village of El Paso could afford its hard-working, tired guests.[65]

After Huntington had acquired concessions to build across Arizona and New Mexico, he had run into unexpected difficulties in the form of the notorious Jay Gould. Gould had happened upon Colonel Scott soon after the disappointing reverse delivered him by the unfavorable Congress. Gould found the Colonel very willing to dispose of his interest in the Texas and Pacific. Although not primarily interested in railroads, Gould quickly jumped at the opportunity, for his long experience in the stock market and Wall Street had given him a nose for profit, and he believed that there was money in Western railroading. The nature of his reputation can be surmised from a remark made by Huntington when that ruthless gentleman was informed that Gould wished a meeting with him and Scott. Replied Huntington, "They are two of the worst men in the country and I do not like to meet them together."[66]

Gould assumed control of the Texas and Pacific and immediately instituted a fight in the United States District Court at Santa Fe to gain control of the lines which Huntington's Southern Pacific had laid

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[65]Ibid., p. 77.

[66]Ibid., 74.

in violation of what Gould claimed was the exclusive right of the Texas and Pacific by virtue of its Congressional charter. That was early in 1881. By November, Santa Fe was inhabited by little other than T & P and SP lawyers, all armed to the teeth with briefs and cases. The contestants finally compromised on the matter: the T & P gained the right to joint use of the tracks west of El Paso.[67]

That calmed the storm--until the Southern Pacific laid into El Paso. Then Huntington surprised Gould; the Southern Pacific had purchased an interest in the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railroad which ran between Galveston on the Texas Coast and San Antonio.[68] Suddenly the little line began laying track out of San Antonio; no one seemed certain where the line was headed, but it soon became obvious when the Southern Pacific began supplying men and material to the GH & SA as it raced frantically to beat Gould's line to the strategic pass at Sierra Blanca, ninety miles from El Paso. The Southern Pacific and the GH & SA were going to link at El Paso; the Southern Pacific thereby would be established from coast to coast. Frantically, Gould's crews worked to beat the combined efforts of the SP and the GH & SA, but to no avail; both Coolie and Irishman were working to the soothing rhythm of the chant of "A cash bonus for every man who sticks with the job!" The bridge across the Pecos and Rio Grande was constructed at the confluence of the two rivers in 1882, and there just east of the second tunnel which the severity of the grade required to give the trains sufficient take-off to make the climb, the rails of the Southern

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[67]Evans, Huntington, p. 263.

[68]Ibid.

Pacific and the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio met and united on January 12, 1883.

The first through passengers to travel the famous Southern Pacific Sunset Route rolled out of San Francisco and New Orleans, respectively, on February 5, 1883. They whisked down that long silver trail at a speed of forty miles per hour, over the Rio Grande whose waters had refreshed the thirst-maddened herd and the lonely cowboy alike, through the arroyos and canyons where the lordly Apaches had defied all comers except the great "Iron Horse," past the villages of Pimas and the Maricopas, who marveled less at the passing monster with the breath of steam and the nostrils of fire than would have some of the solitary mountain men whose moccasins first left a white man's imprint on the sands of the burning desert of Southern California. Finally, after a journey that took less than one-third the time in hours than the march of the Mormon Battalion consumed in days, the passenger stepped from the car and stood at the new brick terminal in Los Angeles or San Francisco, where such a few short years before had roamed the numberless herds of the ranchero's cattle. It is possible that some people immediately began to dream of the time they would be able to traverse the distance in forty minutes rather than forty hours.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Three primary and two secondary problems confronted Americans from the time they first entered the Southwest; three were of natural origin--distance, heat, and aridity--and two were political--the Mexicans and the Indians. Of the five, the first three were by far the most difficult to overcome as they nearly always were encountered together, and thus their effect was magnified severalfold. By merely noting the fact that it took more than a half-century for an effective means of communication and transportation to be established across the Southwest, some appreciation of the magnitude of the problem can be had, but its complexity defies such simple description, for at the same time as Americans worked to breach nature's defenses, they also attempted to establish political authority over first the Mexicans, then the Indians in those areas which would soon be brought within the territorial United States. In this process, several distinct stages can be discerned, and in each came some noteworthy contribution to the eventual conquest of both sets of problems.

The mountain men had a limited impact upon the region, but because two or three of their number survived to impart valuable information to the army which came to seize the northern Mexican provinces in 1846, they cannot pass unnoticed. They suffered perhaps even more severely

than the foolhardy and ill-prepared immigrants who two decades later followed the trails which the trappers often had marked with their blood. But though they might first have traced the routes over which so many would travel in the future, they contributed little to the technology which would make that travel possible. For by his very hardiness and rugged constitution, the mountain man was able to survive where normal men would have perished, and he generally did so with little thought of improving anything other than his aim at the next Indian he chanced to encounter.

To Colonel Philip St. George Cooke and the Mormon Battalion must go the credit for having first traversed the length of the Gila Trail with wheeled vehicles, but theirs was not an unqualified success, for they suffered all the vicissitudes which the elements in confederation could inflict upon them. Abandoning broken wagons, jaded mules, and many other encumbrances, they pushed forward with little else than an indomitable spirit, and marked and made slight improvements on the route which would bear the colonel's name in honor of their achievement. For the first time, wagons and a large body of men had crossed the continent.

As the Mormon Battalion and the Army of the West crossed the mountains and deserts of New Mexico, Arizona, and California, they gathered much valuable information which guided many of the immigrants who followed them a few years later, and from the detailed observations made by the expedition's Topographical Engineers came guidance for the negotiation of the Gadsden Purchase. It was familiarity with this geodetic information which also encouraged proponents of a southern

transcontinental railroad to campaign energetically for their route at a time when those who favored more northerly lines could only postulate the existance of feasible routes on those parallels.

However, the engineers' reports had a more immediate and practical application, for the discovery of gold in California innundated the West Coast in a flood of humanity, and the Gila Trail was one of the principal streams feeding that flood. The Trail had become well known, and many forty-niners preferred the overland route to the long and dangerous voyage around the Horn, or the shorter but more deadly short-cut across the malaria-ridden Panamanian Isthmus. The Gila route was fraught with dangers of its own, but it was open to passage the year around, and the Indian menace could be minimized by traveling in caravan and skirting the edges of their domain.

The sudden population of California brought a demand for goods and services which the state's provincial economy could not satisfy, and many improvisations appeared to meet the moment's needs. But one item had no substitute--food. The miners worked hard, and they needed the strength which only the consumption of meat could give. Thus, the Gila Trail was worn even deeper as tens of thousands of Texas longhorns moved west. In the great overland drives of the gold rush period we see a very significant innovation, for the techniques developed by the drovers to take their herds across the great expanse of the Southwest enabled them to move their cattle to northern markets after the Civil War with much greater ease, and it exposed them to a region with a great potential for cattle ranching. The Spaniards long ago had recognized this, but their attempt to develop the industry was thwarted by

the Apaches' incessant raiding.

But with the subjugation of the Apache, many of the drovers who passed through Arizona and New Mexico on the Trail to California returned and founded the cattle industry which is now such an important part of those states' economies. Those who went west were not content to remain in isolation from the rest of the nation, and they soon demanded improvement of communication and transportation between the Mississippi Valley and the Pacific Coast. But their demands became entangled in the sectional strife which so handicapped the nation during the 1850s, and the solution which they preferred--a transcontinental railroad--became a political impossibility although it had been technically feasible for several years. The demands were too loud and the pressure too great to be totally ignored, and thus Congress did provide a stop-gap measure by authorizing the Overland Mail. The subsequent development of this project by Postmaster-General Aaron V. Brown made it very likely that had the Civil War not broken out the southern route might eventually have been the first to have a transcontinental railroad constructed upon it.

But the war did come, and although little attention has subsequently been given to the Southwestern aspects of the conflict, it would appear that the sectional strife of the period was just as intense there as in any other portion of the nation. When hostilities commenced, the South immediately attempted to conquer and occupy the Territory of New Mexico, for possession of the Gila Trail meant access to California's gold and sea ports. Although the North responded

rather slowly to this threat, it did manage to meet the challenge, and the West was saved for the Union.

With legislative control vested solidly in northern hands, the importance of the Gila Trail and the southern railroad route which it afforded faded during the war. Union men quickly chartered transcontinental railroads along the northern routes while the proponents of the southern route were in rebellion and therefore unable to oppose their actions. But though the Gila route's political star may have been in eclipse, it would rise again, for the overcapitalization of the railroad corporations promoted monopolistic tendencies during the 1870s and 1880s. It was this attempt to discourage competition and maximize profits which eventually led the owners of the Central Pacific Railroad to charter and construct the Southern Pacific across the route of the Gila Trail. And with this event came the final settlement of areas along the Trail, and the beginning of their modern period of development.

The completion of the railroad marked a turning point, for it made possible the final conquest of the three most formidible barriers to the settlement of the Southwest--distance, heat, and aridity. Distances which were prohibitive on foot or horseback shrank immensely as steam locomotives pulled travelers along at forty miles per hour, and the dangers of heat and the shortage of water were also considerably diminished by the availability of rail transport. The region was thereby opened at last to settlement, and along the line of the rails soon stood such towns as Lordsburg, Deming, Gila Bend; and towns which had been for centuries nothing more than a few adobe huts began to grow

and flourish--towns such as Fort Worth, which had a population of 1,600 in 1873, but which was teeming with 30,000 souls by 1888. No less astounding was the rapid growth of other older towns such as El Paso, Tucson, and Yuma.

Thus the old Trail died, and many things have changed in the one and one-half centuries since Americans first made their way along it. And as the tourist of today drives along Interstate 10 east of Casa Grande, Arizona, or Interstate 8 as it is known to the west of that town, it would take an act of conscious historical imagination to picture the country as it must have appeared then. Yet few people would concern themselves with such activity, for as they cruise along the long, wide highway at speeds of seventy miles per hour, their major concerns are finding a good restaurant, a comfortable motel, or a service station which will honor their particular credit card. It would be an interesting experiment to transport one of these modern travelers backward in time and exchange him for a mountain man. Undoubtedly both would be shocked by the scenes which would greet their eyes, and certainly neither would be happy to remain in the other's place.

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