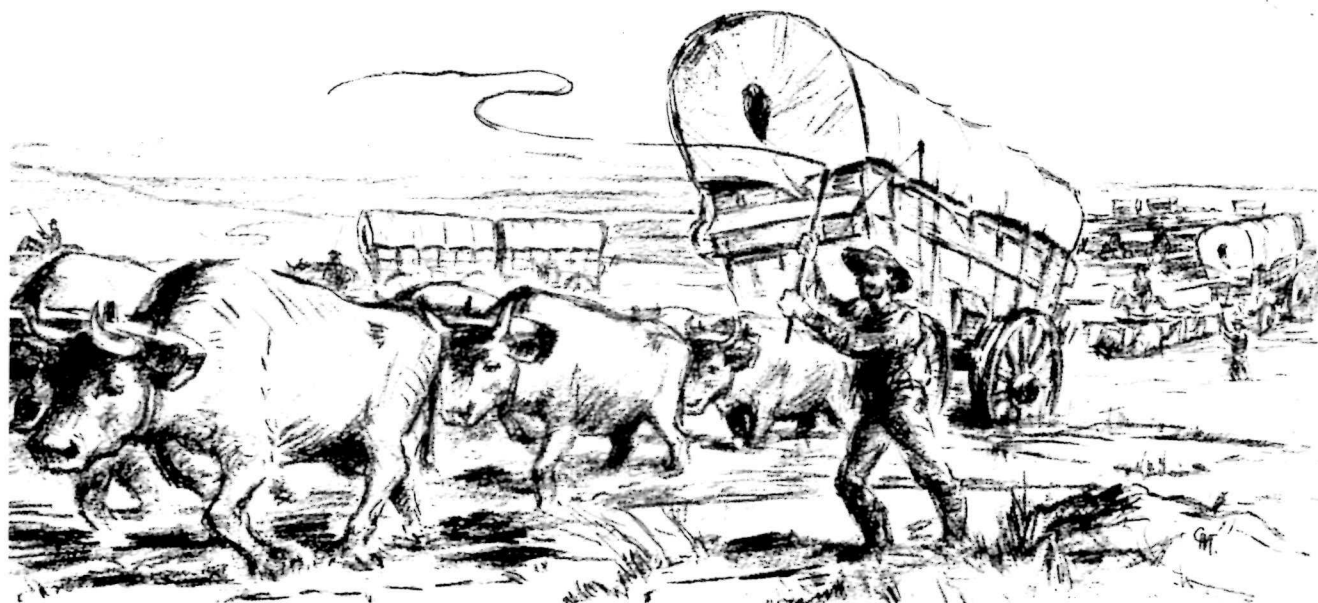


The National Survey of
Historic Sites and Buildings

THE SANTA FE TRAIL



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



To die anywhere seems hard, but to heave the last breath on the burning, desolate prairie seems hard indeed.

--Lewis Garrard

THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

Theme XV
Westward Expansion and Extension of the National Boundaries
1830-1898

* * * * *

THE SANTA FE TRAIL
(subtheme)

1963

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Stewart L. Udall, Secretary

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Conrad L. Wirth, Director

The distance from Independence to Santa Fe may be divided into three stages. The first, from the starting point to Council Grove is about a hundred and fifty miles, and passes through the country of the Shawnees, Caws, and other friendly Indians, and by the roadside is seen the occasional cabin of a frontier settler. The second stage is from Council Grove to Fort Union, some six hundred miles, which lies across the immense plains of the interior of the continent, and is roamed over by the Comanches, Apaches, Arapahoes, Cheyennes, Pawnees, Kiowahs, and other Indian tribes, and is the home of immense herds of buffaloes and antelopes. The country is generally level, with an occasional roll, and bare of wood, except the few cottonwood trees found along the streams. Throughout all this region water is scarce. The third stage brings us to Santa Fe through a mountainous and partially settled country, covered with a growth of inferior pine timber, and tolerably well watered.

W. W. H. Davis,
El Gringo, or New Mexico
and Her People.

Danger, privation, heat, and cold are equally ineffectual in checking their career of enterprise and adventure.

Augustus Storrs,
November 1824.

And the blue soldier-mountains walk with
you as you go

Down the sand-gray roads of New Mexico.

S. Omar Barker.

PREFACE

"The Santa Fe Trail" is a subtheme of Theme XV, "Westward Expansion and Extension of the National Boundaries, 1830-1898", of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. The National Survey is a resumption of the Historic Sites Survey, begun in 1937 under authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. During World War II and the Korean War, it was necessary to suspend these studies. The Survey has now been resumed as part of the National Park Service MISSION 66 program.

When completed the Survey will make recommendations to the Director of the National Park Service and the Secretary of the Interior as to the sites of exceptional value that commemorate and illustrate the history of the United States. This will assist the National Park Service in contributing to the Nationwide Recreation Plan, including sites which may be administered by the National Park Service to fill in gaps in historical and archeological interpretation within the National Park System. It will also recommend and encourage programs of historical and archeological preservation being carried out by state and local agencies.

The purpose of this study is to assemble data on historic sites believed to be of exceptional value in commemorating or illustrating the history of the Santa Fe Trail. It early became apparent that the historical theme of Westward Expansion was too vast to be adequately treated within a single study. The theme was therefore divided into a number of separate subthemes, of which "The Santa Fe Trail" is one.

Part I is a narrative treatment of the theme, designed not as a definitive study but as a brief summary from which the general reader may obtain

an over-all view of the subject. Part II evaluates sites believed to possess exceptional value in illustrating or commemorating the theme, together with brief descriptions of sites of importance but not of exceptional value.

The study was prepared by historians of the National Park Service, who in 1958 and 1962 visited each of the sites treated. William E. Brown, Southwestern Regional Office, Santa Fe, New Mexico, served as coordinating historian and wrote the historical narrative. Ray H. Mattison, Midwestern Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska, was contributing historian. It should be noted that Mr. Mattison prepared a preliminary report on the Santa Fe Trail based on his 1958 field survey. Both his report and field work were extremely helpful in the preparation of the present study. Two other contributing historians should be listed: Roy E. Appleman of the Service's Washington Office, who accompanied the writer throughout the 1962 field work, bringing his recognized authority to bear on the site work; and Robert M. Utley, whose exhaustive work on the historical and geographic relationships of Fort Union to the Santa Fe Trail, as well as his constant counsel, were of great assistance. Original artwork was prepared specifically for this study by Charles A. Morgenthaler of St. Louis. Cartographic draftsmen Mary B. Huey and Clyde Arquero, of the Southwestern Regional Office, prepared the cover design and special maps. Clerk Stenographer Ortencia Gonzales did exemplary work in preparing and proofing the stencils.

After completion, the study was presented to the Consulting Committee for the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. The Committee consists of Dr. Waldo G. Leland, Director of the American Council of

Learned Societies; Dr. S. K. Stevens, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; Dr. Louis B. Wright, Folger-Shakespearean Library; Mr. Earl H. Reed, American Institute of Architects; Dr. Richard H. Howland, Head Curator, Civil History, Smithsonian Institution; Mr. Eric Gugler, American Scenic and Historical Preservation Society; Dr. J. O. Brew, Committee for the Recovery of Archeological Remains; Mr. Frederick Johnson, Robert S. Peabody Foundation for American Archeology; Mr. Robert Garvey, Jr., Executive Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation; and Dr. Ralph H. Gabriel, Sterling Professor of History Emeritus, Yale University, and Professor of American Studies, American University.

The over-all Survey, as well as the theme study which follows, is under the general direction of John O. Littleton, Chief, National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, who works under the general supervision of Herbert E. Kahler, Chief, Division of History and Archeology, of the National Park Service.

Conrad L. Wirth
Director

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work of the National Survey profits from the experience and knowledge of many persons and organizations. Every effort is made to solicit the considered opinion of as many qualified people as possible in reaching final selection of the most significant sites. Assistance in the preparation of this study from the following is acknowledged:

Mrs. Kitty Shiskin and Miss Ruth Rambo of the Research Library of the Museum of New Mexico; Dr. Myra Ellen Jenkins, Archivist, New Mexico State Records Center; Dr. Bruce Ellis, Associate Director of History for the Museum of New Mexico; Dr. Don Danker, Archivist, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln; Dr. George R. Brooks, Director, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis; Mr. E. E. Newacheck, President, Fort Larned Historical Society, Fort Larned, Kansas; Dr. Frank Haucke, former President, Kansas State Historical Society, of Council Grove, Kansas; Mr. James Anderson, Native Sons of Kansas City, Missouri; Mr. W. Howard Adams, Jackson County Historical Society; Department of Agriculture, especially Area Conservationist Bill A. Bothwell of Las Vegas, New Mexico, who made the Soil Conservation Service aerial maps in northeast New Mexico available; New Mexico Department of Game and Fish; Mr. Nyle H. Miller, Secretary, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka; Mr. Reginald Strutz, Boonslick Historical Society, Boonville, Missouri; Dr. William J. Scarborough, President, Baker University, Baldwin, Kansas; State Historian Agnes Wright Spring of the State Historical Society of Colorado; Mr. J. D. Haley, Assistant Archivist, University of Oklahoma; Curator A. R. Mitchell, Baca House Museum, Trinidad, Colorado; Superintendent Homer Hastings, Fort Union National Monument; Staff of the Denver Public Library, Western History Department; Library of Congress; National Archives.

Owners of sites visited were uniformly cooperative, and the following private parties with interest in the Santa Fe Trail were especially helpful: Mrs. Margaret Ward, Cimarron, New Mexico; State Senator W. C. Wheatley of Clayton, New Mexico, President of the Santa Fe Trail Highway Association; Mr. John Wheatley of Clayton, brother of the Senator; Mr. Fred Lambert, Ute Park, New Mexico; Mrs. Grace Collier, Hays, Kansas, Executive Secretary, Santa Fe Trail Highway Association; Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Joyce, Ulysses, Kansas; Mr. Robert Frizell, owner of Fort Larned; Mr. Don A. McNeal, Chairman of the Council Grove Historic Sites Committee; Mr. Warren Gilman, Council Grove Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Roe Groom of Council Grove, local authority on the trail; and Mr. E. V. Wood and Mayor Roger Martin of Baldwin City, Kansas.

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PART I

A SUMMARY OF THE THEME

On January 29, 1822, four trail-worn men rode into Franklin, Missouri. Forty-eight days before, they had left San Miguel--50 miles southeast of Santa Fe.¹ In their packs were the fruits of their journey to New Mexico. As townspeople gathered to welcome Captain William Becknell and his companions, the packs were opened. Not the furs of an Indian trader spilled out, but heavy rawhide sacks. One of the traders held high a sack and slashed its thongs. Silver pesos tumbled to the ground and rolled into the gutter, and the eyes of onlookers widened.²

Before those coins were gathered up, news of the first successful Missouri-to-Santa Fe trading expedition was already on its way to the adventuring, enterprising men who would soon throng the trail to the City of Holy Faith. Romance and profit would keynote the Santa Fe Trail throughout its existence. No ordinary man, unused to dreams, would have slashed those thongs. The one who did knew well the drama of the moment. In that act is summed up much that lent and still lends to the Santa Fe Trail and its namesake city an air of El Dorado. It was partly this that lured the early traders to gamble their lives and their investments against distance, terrain, weather, hostile Indians, and the caprice of Mexican customs officials.

But the trail was more than an escape valve for high-spirited men,

1. "Journals of Captain Thomas Becknell," Missouri Historical Review, IV (Jan. 1910), 78, 79; R. L. Duffus, The Santa Fe Trail (New York, 1930), 76.

2. Duffus, The Santa Fe Trail, 68, 69.

or the route by which the mule came to Missouri. More even than a commercial and cultural link between the borderlands of the United States and Mexico. Manifest Destiny would travel this trail. For at its end was an empire of mesa and mountain, of canyon and river, of desert and vast distance. An empire ripe for picking. Thus did the trail become a military highway clogged with the freight and the banners of war.

After the Army of the West had done its bloodless duty, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had sealed the conquest, this empire had to be administered and protected and provisioned. The men and the material for this gigantic task came over the Santa Fe Trail. For two decades after the Mexican War the Santa Fe Trail held undisputed position as trunkline to the Southwest. It was the road and the tie by which civilization and sovereignty filtered into this wild expanse, tamed it, and fused it to the Nation. All that followed the Mexican War on this trail--gold rush, Civil War, Indian war, stagecoach, emigrant train, and the constant plod of oxen hauling tandem freighters--was part of this task of consolidating the conquest of 1846-48.

The railroad came, pushing the eastern terminus of the trail ever westward, until finally by 1880 there was no more trail. Then faded into legend the bearded trader and all that fabulous crew that had followed him across desert and mountain and plain to Spanish Santa Fe. Something grand was lost thereby, days of adventure and great accomplishment gone forever. But the product of those days is with us yet, a booming subcontinent--the modern Southwest. And this is the true significance of the Santa Fe Trail, the first great trail of the West.