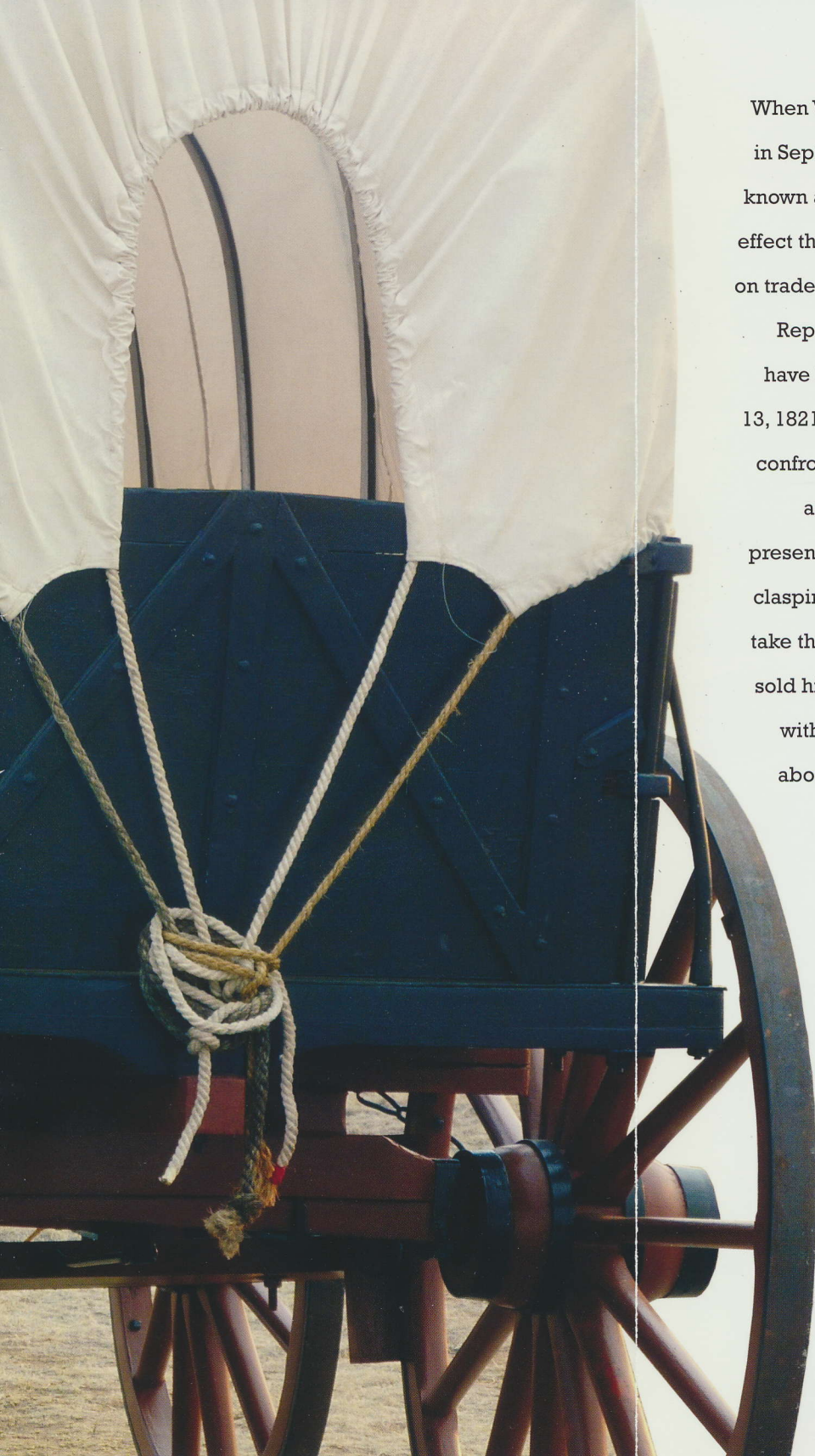

EXPLORE THE **SANTA FE TRAIL**

THE FIRST TRAIL WEST





When William Becknell left Franklin, Missouri, in September of 1821 he may or may not have known about recent events in Mexico and what effect the overthrow of Spanish rule would have on trade between the United States and the new Republic of Mexico. What questions he may have harbored were answered on November 13, 1821, when he and his six companions were confronted by Captain Pedro Ignacio Gallego and a troop of 400 Dragoons just south of present day Las Vegas, New Mexico. Instead of clasp ing them in irons, Gallego urged them to take their trade goods on to Santa Fe. Becknell sold his wares and returned to Missouri laden with goods and silver. Word spread quickly about the lucrative trade in this new market and the **SANTA FE TRAIL** burst to life. The New Mexico Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway invites you to visit sites important to the history of the Trail and of communities in Northeast New Mexico. At each of the sites highlighted here you'll find more Trail history and information on other sites of interest, so follow along and create your own excursion into history.

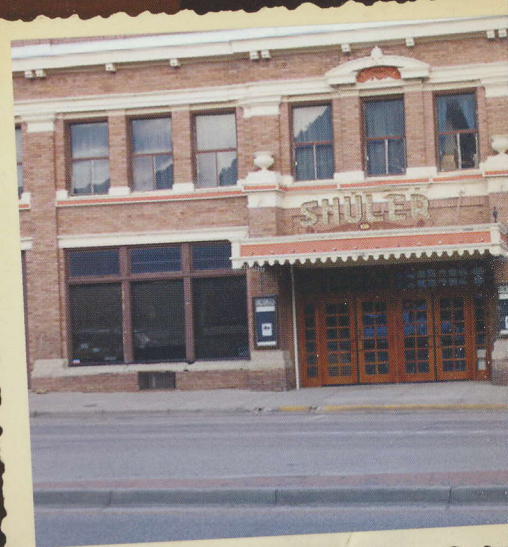
SAN MIGUEL DEL VADO CHURCH was present throughout the Trail period and is still active today.



FORT UNION
Mechanics corral at
Fort Union National
Monument.



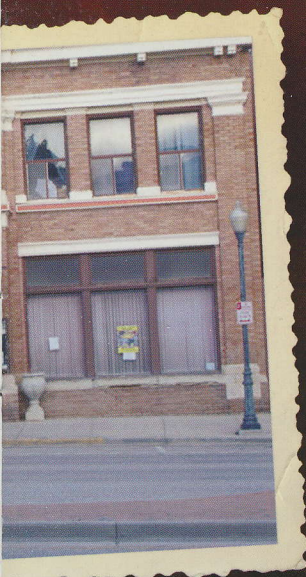
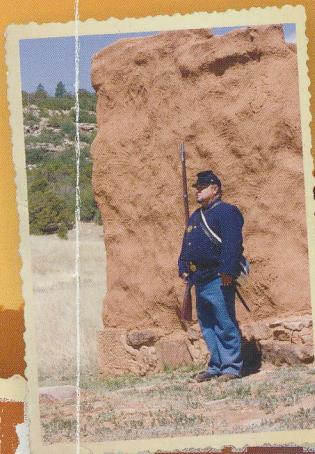
SCHULER THEATER, RATON



POINT OF ROCKS MESA was a traditional hunting ground for Plains Indian tribes as well as Mexican buffalo hunters.

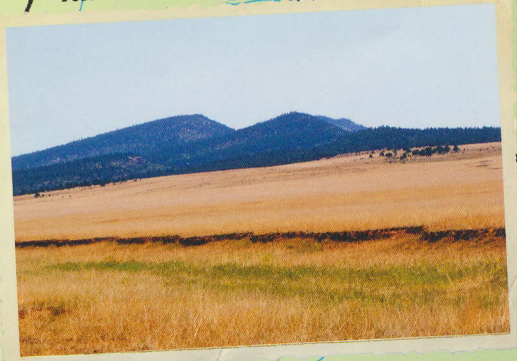
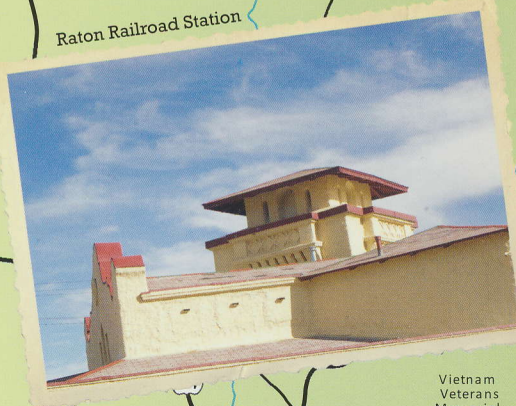


“Today travelers young and old can still visit remnants of the Trail amid the cattle ranches of northeast New Mexico and along the Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway.”



(BACKGROUND PHOTO) RUINS AT FORT UNION.
Founded primarily to protect the Trail, Fort Union included a traditional post, a regional quartermaster depot and an arsenal.

COLORADO NEW MEXICO



EXPLORE THE SANTA FE TRAIL

NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

1. SANTA FE

The Oldest
Capital City in
North America

By the time the Pilgrims landed in 1620, New Mexico had been part of the Spanish Empire in the New World for 80 years, and Santa Fe had been its capital since 1610. Start your visit on the Plaza where you'll find the Palace of the Governors, the 17th

century seat of the Spanish and later Mexican governments. Under its ancient portal you'll find Native American artists selling jewelry and other handcrafted items. Around the corner to the west is the New Mexico History Museum. One block east of the Plaza is the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi. Built in the Romanesque Revival style, it dates to 1869. The first church on this site was built in 1626 but was destroyed in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Traveler information is available at the Visitor Center in the Lamy Building located on Old Santa Fe Trail across from the State Capitol. Also on Old Santa Fe Trail is Museum Hill, home to the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, the Museum of International Folk Art and the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art.

Your trip on the Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway departs via Old Santa Fe Trail and generally follows secondary and frontage roads. As you head east watch for Pecos National Historical Park. Francisco Vázquez de Coronado visited Pecos Pueblo in 1541. Today you can tour the ancient ruins, learn about the Battle of Glorieta and its role in the Civil War, and see the Forked Lightning Ranch.

2. SAN MIGUEL DEL VADO

Spanish Outpost Provided Border Protection

The first European residents here were a small garrison of Spanish soldiers sent to guard the frontier but with the issuance of the San Miguel del Vado Land Grant in 1794 families moved to the area. Construction of the church began in 1806 and was completed by 1811. The Santa Fe Trail crossed the Pecos River here and for a time the site was a port of entry where Missouri merchants had first contact

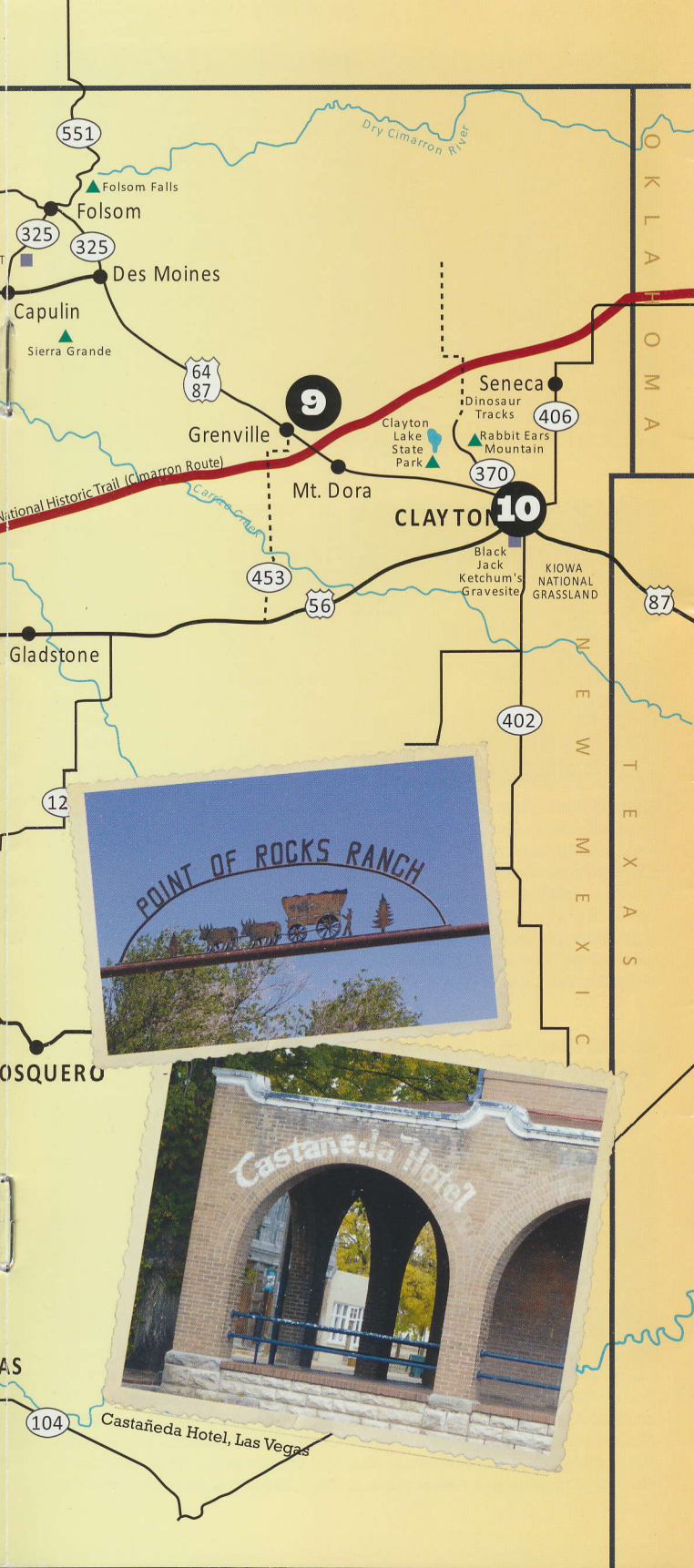
with Mexican customs officials. The success of the San Miguel del Vado settlement encouraged others to move farther onto the plains and to the issuance of the Las Vegas Grant in 1835.



San Miguel del Vado Church



Palace of the Governor's



3. KEARNY'S GAP

A Fateful Meeting

It could be said that the Santa Fe Trail was born here when, on November 13, 1821, the soldiers of Captain Pedro Ignacio Gallego came upon the trading party of William Becknell and welcomed them to the new Republic of Mexico marking the first legal commerce between Mexico and the United States. In 1846 the Army of the West under General Stephan Watts Kearny passed through here on its westward trek to claim the territory for the United States. For weary travelers on the Trail, the Gap signaled the final mountainous leg of the journey into Santa Fe. In nearby Las Vegas, today's traveler will find numerous sites offering more information about the Santa Fe Trail.



Kearny's Gap

4. LAS VEGAS

Nuestra Senora de los Dolores de Las Vegas Grandes

The "Meadow City" grew from an 1835 Land Grant to become the premier city in the Southwest, at least for a time. The town thrived as a major stop on the Santa Fe Trail, a hub for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, and a trade center for several large commercial firms. Its importance waned in the early 20th century. Today Las Vegas boasts of more than 900 registered historic structures. The Santa Fe Trail Interpretive Center at 116 Bridge Street, just east of the historic Plaza, features Trail, as well as local history.



Nuestra Senora de los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows) carving by Margarito Mondragon, Plaza Park.

The City of Las Vegas Museum and Rough Rider Memorial Collection on Grand Avenue has a wealth of information on local topics and features artifacts and archives on Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders. The renovated 19th century Train Depot on Railroad Avenue serves as the City of Las Vegas Visitor Center with a full range of local and regional information.



Las Vegas Plaza Hotel



Ruins at Fort Union

5. WATROUS & FORT UNION NATIONAL MONUMENT

La Junta de los Rios Mora y Sapello

Originally known as *La Junta*, or "the junction," for its location at the confluence of the Mora and Sapello rivers, Watrous was also the junction for the Mountain and Cimarron Routes of the



Santa Fe Trail. From this point westward travelers followed a single route into Santa Fe. The Samuel B. Watrous Store and nearby Tiptonville and Barclay's Fort offered produce and other merchandise to travelers. Eight miles to the northwest are the ruins of Fort Union, the largest military installation in the Southwest during the Trail's heyday and home to the Fort Union Quartermaster Depot, which supplied other military posts throughout the region. The National Monument offers tours of the adobe fort and arsenal as well as exhibits and information at the Visitor Center.

6. WAGON MOUND

Landmark Since Time out of Mind

One of the most recognizable and welcome landmarks for travelers on the Cimarron Route of the Santa Fe Trail was the large butte dubbed the Wagon Mound for its resemblance to a Conestoga wagon.

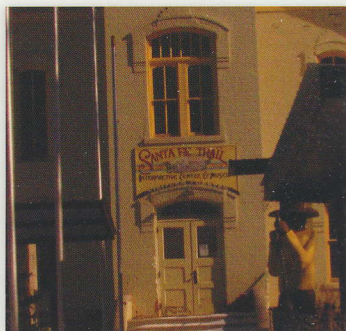
Native Americans and early Spanish explorers knew and used the landmark and the nearby *Ojo de Santa Clara*, Santa Clara Spring, which offered a year-round water supply. Numerous trail ruts can be found in the vicinity of the butte but the lands are private property so visitors are urged to seek permission before exploring on their own.



Wagon Mound

7. SPRINGER

Named for Frank Springer, attorney for the Dutch East Indies Company, successors to the Maxwell Land Grant, the town of Springer post-dated the heyday of the Santa Fe Trail but served as an important trade and shipping point for a number of years following the arrival of the railroad. Built in 1882, the Old Colfax County Courthouse is now a Santa Fe Trail Museum with both Trail and local artifacts and exhibits. Nearby are the Dry Cimarron Scenic Byway and Maxwell National Wildlife Refuge. Farther west is access to the Enchanted Circle, an 85-mile Scenic Byway connecting the resort communities of Taos, Red River, Eagle Nest and Angel Fire.

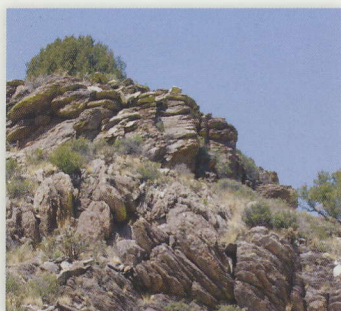


Santa Fe Trail Interpretive Center & Museum

8. POINT OF ROCKS

The First View of the Mountains

For westbound travelers on the Cimarron Route, the Point of Rocks offered the first view of the distant Rocky Mountains and a sense that the end of their journey was near. With good water nearby, the site was a popular camping spot and had long been used by Plains



Point of Rocks

Indians and *ciboleros*, Mexican buffalo hunters. Today, the site is located on the Point of Rocks Ranch, which is privately owned but access and primitive facilities are provided. Head east from Springer on Highway 56, approximately 23.5 miles to County Road C-52. At the intersection is a small park with informational signage. Then turn north for 7 miles, east for 2 miles, and north again for about a mile to the site. Point of Rocks is recognized as a National Historic District.

9. NEAR GRENVILLE

Guideposts on the Trail

Crossing into what is now New Mexico, Santa Fe Trail travelers used a series of natural landmarks to steer by. The Rabbit Ear Mountains, northwest of Clayton, were the first encountered, followed by Round Mound, Point of Rocks and Wagon Mound. Round Mound, about 4 miles south of the intersection of US Highway 64/87 and New Mexico Highway 120 was popular for the spectacular views from its summit. An illustration in Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies* (1844) shows a wagon train as seen from the mound. The Herzstein Memorial Museum in nearby Clayton has information on Santa Fe Trail sites and other points of interest in the area.



Rabbit Ears in the Distance

10. CLAYTON

The High Plains and Beyond

The Santa Fe Trail passed north of Clayton and reports indicate caravans passed both north and south of the Rabbit Ear Mountains, the first landmark after the endless landscape of the high plains.

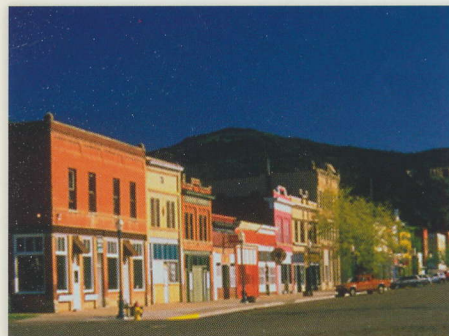
There are a couple of Trail sites of interest in the area. Head east from Clayton to New Mexico Highway 406 and go north 12 miles to County Road AO55. Proceed west 3 miles and north 1 mile to the Santa Fe Trail Interpretive Site on the Kiowa National Grassland. Here you'll find interpretive markers and a short walking trail to a section of trail ruins. Return to Highway 406 and proceed north another 6 miles to the marker for McNees Crossing. Here, in August of 1828, a young trader named Robert McNees was ambushed and buried while en route eastbound on the Trail. Head north on Highway 406 about 1.5 miles and New Mexico Highway 410 will branch off to the east. Follow this east about 2 miles to the Oklahoma State line and another Santa Fe Trail Marker.



Herzstein Memorial Museum

11. RATON

Over the Sangre de Cristos



Raton, First Street

The Mountain Route of the Santa Fe Trail was by many standards safer. It offered more dependable water sources, better grazing, and less chance of attack, but the trek over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains was a daunting task until "Uncle Dick" Wooten blasted, cleared and bridged

a road over Raton Pass in 1865. He erected a gate and charged \$1.00 to \$1.50 per wheeled vehicle and a nickel a head for livestock. Wooten collected the toll until 1879 when the railroad put him out of business. Today downtown Raton is a National Register Historic District with a walking tour guide available at the New Mexico Visitor Center, 100 Clayton Road. The Santa Fe Trail Overlook (Goat Hill) offers a sweeping vista of the Trail and Raton Pass. Raton is also the gateway to numerous nearby attractions. Sugarite Canyon State Park, 12 miles to the north-east, offers camping, hiking and exhibits on the mining history of the area. Thirty three miles to the east is Capulin Volcano National Monument. To the south via US Highway 64 is the NRA Whittington Center and the historic Town of Cimarron. Visit the Santa Fe Trail Byway exhibit in the heart of downtown Cimarron and pick up information on the area's many attractions including the St. James Hotel, the Aztec Mill Museum, Philmont Scout Ranch, Villa Philmonte and the Kit Carson Museum at Rayado.



Las Vegas Citizens' Committee for Historic Preservation
Santa Fe Trail Interpretive Center, 116 Bridge St., Las Vegas, NM
87701 505.425.8803, historic@cybermesa.com, www.lvcchp.org

Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway: www.santafetrailnm.org

Santa Fe Trail Association: www.santafetrail.org

National Park Service Santa Fe Trail: www.nps.gov/safe/index.htm

Village of Cimarron: www.cimarronnm.com

Town of Clayton: www.claytonnewmexico.org

City of Las Vegas: www.lasvegasnewmexico.com

Village of Pecos: www.pecosnewmexico.com

City of Santa Fe: www.santafe.org

City of Raton: www.raton.info

