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### 100 Stirring Years of Santa Fe Trail

New York Times

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# 100 STIRRING YEARS OF SANTA FE TRAIL

## CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARY

### Part Route Played in Development of Southwest

#### EARLY TRADE EXPEDITIONS.

#### White Man's Clashes With Indian in the Long Struggle to Keep Highway Open.

By TRUMAN H. TALLEY.

ROMANCE, adventure and the course of empire are interwoven in strands of bright and dark in the one hundred years of the Santa Fé Trail now being celebrated by the towns of Central and Western Kansas. It, indeed, would be more fitting if the entire nation paid its respects to that highway and the memory of those who traversed it, for over it coursed the pioneers that found the great West, and by means of it as much as by any other agency there came into being the vast expanse of these United States. The trail has an even greater historical significance in that for centuries before 1822, when it was definitely opened and used as a trade route to what then was Mexican territory, it was the pathway of conquest and migration.

There are two great historic highways of the West, the Santa Fé Trail and the Oregon Trail. The former was essentially a trade route to establish the sale of merchandise. Its point of similarity with the Oregon Trail was its plenitude of adventure, but its distinctive phase was commerce. The more northern trail was the path of empire in which business was subordinated to conquest and what might be termed patriotic adventure. Both, however, blazed the way for the flag and were the principal factors in shaping the meteoric destiny of this country.

A writer on Western development has said that the Santa Fé Trail "was laid out by the engineer who planned the universe" in that "trade routes are determined and located by nature rather

Moscoso's band traveled for six months and got far enough West to see the mountains, but he never found Coronado, who at that time, it appears, was encamped at a spot near where Wichita, Kan., is today. Incidentally, it was here that many of Coronado's followers left him and returned to Mexico, he continuing eastward.

It was during Moscoso's retreat eastward down the Arkansas River that the Hot Springs of Arkansas were discovered. The expedition was jubilant, thinking they had at last found the "fountain of youth." The death of ten soldiers who indulged too freely in the water of the springs quickly disillusioned the others.

It is from de Vaca's and Coronado's chronicles that the first recorded description of the buffalos is to be found. The vagaries of the vast herds, especially when stampeded, formed the theme of many a sixteenth century thriller for those who formed the reading public back in Spain.

More than a century lapses before the recorded thread of the trail's history is again to be found. About 1718, a French chronicler has written, a Spanish expedition set out from the West with the intention of establishing a military post in the upper Mississippi Valley to block French encroachment. It was a disastrous journey, typical of those hazardous days. The Spaniards hoped to make league with the Osages against the Missourians as the first step in their campaign for a foothold. But the expedition came upon the Missourians first and, as Indians are not unlike, the Spanish leaders mistook them for the Osages. With a frankness scarcely to be understood in quick-witted pioneers, the Spaniards carefully explained their plan and, thinking their hearers were Osages, proposed that together they annihilate the Missourians. The sly Indians readily assented and as the first step toward consummation suggested that arms be supplied the entire tribe. This was done. At a time deemed opportune by the savages during the supposed march against the Missourians, the guileless Spaniards were set upon and exterminated, except for the priests, who were subjected to every indignity short of death and then driven into the wilderness.

Santa Fe as Rival to St. Augustine. Inman holds Santa Fé, the western end of the trail, to be the oldest settled town in the United States, rather than St. Augustine. When the Spaniards entered it in 1542 they found a large pueblo town that apparently had existed for centuries. The first Spanish occupation was so harsh that the Indians rebelled and massacred the in-

counts of the journey led many others to try, and soon there was inaugurated the recognized "commerce of the prairies." It was the longest and most dangerous trade route the American people had ever set out upon, yet the treeless and waterless stretches had no terrors for them once the prospect of a market in Santa Fé became known.

Becknell's trip, which the centennial celebrations are commemorating, also marked another distinct phase of trail history. Previously goods had been carried on mules. Becknell succeeded in getting three-wheeled vehicles over the trail, though others did not survive the journey. The trade of this first year amounted to about \$15,000; it was quadrupled in three or four years, reached a half million dollars in the '40s and ran into many millions before the railroad came into being.

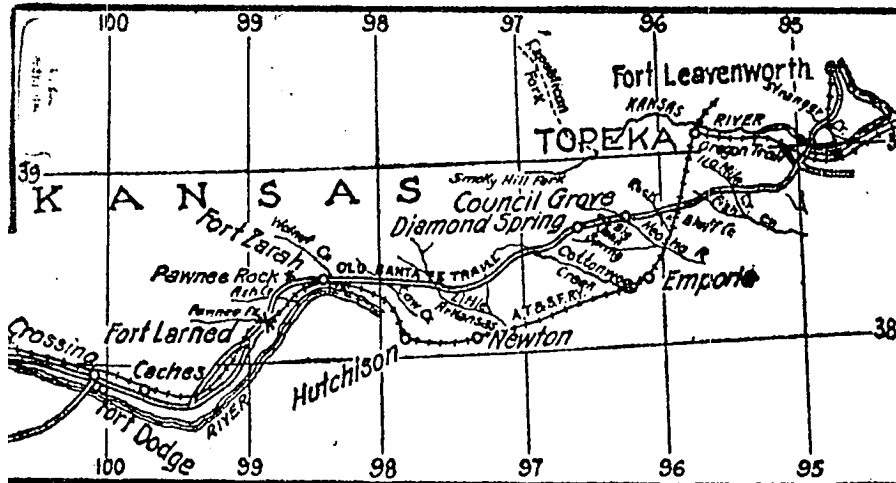
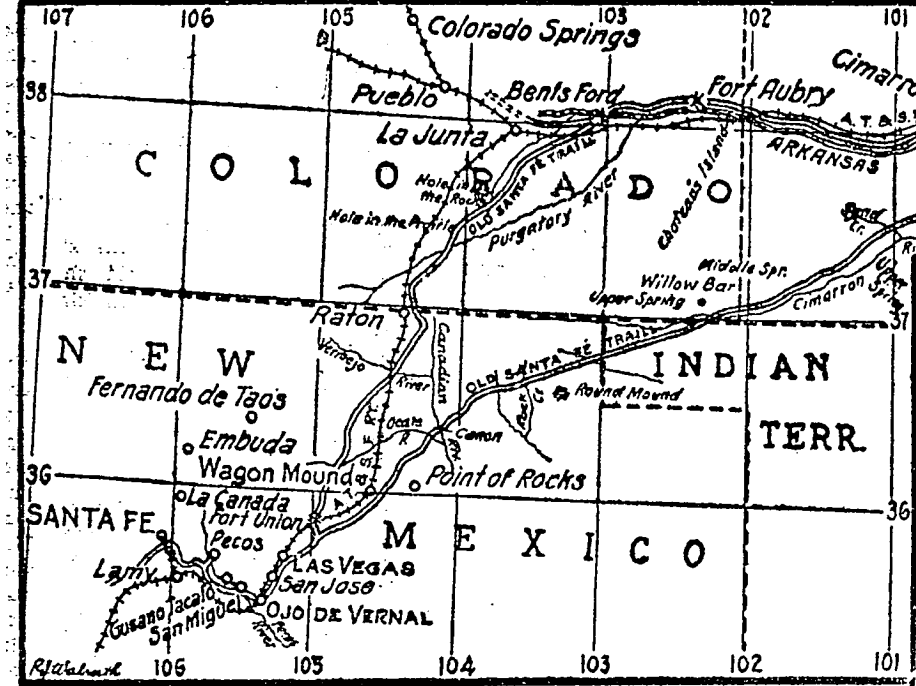
It is recorded that when in 1824 a caravan of twenty-five wagons, with a long train of pack mules, made a successful trip to Santa Fé, the trail as a trade route ceased to be an experiment. Colonel Marmaduke of Missouri was the leader. With about eighty traders he put his motley array of vehicles on the road, some road wagons, some carts and some Dearborn carriages.

The commerce was scarcely well established when Indian depredations began. The killing of Dap Munro and Samuel McNeer by the Pawnees was one of the earliest of such outrages, and when the arming of all the men of the caravans failed to keep the Indians distanced the Government began furnishing armed escorts. The Indians, too, became better armed, with the result that for forty years and more life in the West was a thrilling and dangerous existence.

After the traders had made their route fairly safe from Comanches, Arapahoes, Apaches and others, there appeared on the scene the white renegade, or road agent. The first such hold-ups occurred in 1849 and continued on through the stage coach days into the era of railroads.

Indian and white raiders made "caching" the only alternative for the wagon trains, with the result that even today there come to light collections of stores and supplies buried by the traders in great juglike holes in the hope of later recovery. Many of these caches are to be seen today.

In 1844 President Santa Anna closed Mexican cities to American traders because he saw that war was coming. Two years later General Kearny led the Army of the West over the trail in his march on Santa Fé, and on Aug. 16, after his 2,000 men had safely made the trip and the visions of Mexican resistance before the city had vanished, he proclaimed New Mexico to be United States territory. The next notable event



Map Showing Santa Fe Trail.

In the busy years of assimilation of the new territory was the gold rush of '49, in which many of those going to California utilized the Southern route.

It was not until General Sheridan's "Winter campaign" of 1868-9 that the trail and the territory it fed were fairly free of raids, outrages and pillaging.

When the railroad entered the region the wagon traders retreated. The steel line reached Wichita in 1872, was halted, then resumed and extended to Las Vegas in 1879 and finally reached Santa Fé in 1880. Then followed a spell of quietude over the historic old route until more modern times, when various organizations—commercial, historical and social—took up the work of preserving and modernizing the trail. Today it is a motor highway.

The old trail, beginning at Westport or Kansas City, and at Independence, followed the Kaw River to Lawrence, thence over the hills to Burlingame and Council Grove and reached the Arkansas Valley at Fort Zarah, now Great Bend. Up this valley is Bent's Fort, now Las Animas, past which the route went to and through the mountains at Raton Pass. Then the trail divides. The northern and longer way is now followed by the railroad. The southern or "dry route" was found by Becknell back in 1822 through the Cimarron Desert. This was a short cut, but the more dangerous of the two.

Fort Leavenworth, Kan., was created seventy-five years ago to give military protection to the Santa Fé trade, and thereafter it became the neck of the bottle for the western exodus. Along the trail there is Leecompton, the early territorial capital of Kansas. Newton and Burrton are homes of Mennonites who fled from the Czar and found peace along this highway. Lawrence was the scene of the Quantrell raid. Dodge City is best known in cowboy annals. Pawnee Rock, a great sandstone promontory jutting out of the Arkansas River bottomland, was the scene of many sanguinary battles with the Indians and where among others General Hancock, General Lee and Kit Carson are remembered.

After the prairies are left behind, the trail goes through the Raton Range. Pike's Peak is visible, 100 miles away. Near the summit of the Raton heights is the abandoned tollhouse where Dick Wooten for years gathered toll for the use of the wagon road.

From Independence to Santa Fé the trail was 735 miles long by the Cimarron Desert and 100 miles longer by way of Bent's Fort. Despite the fact that the route varied a little from time to time, John L. Cowan, writing in the Overland Magazine, has recorded the fact that in many places the ruts worn by the wagon wheels a third of a century ago are still traceable on Kansas and Colorado plains.

When the stage coach came in the fare to Santa Fé was \$250 in gold. Trips were made monthly. Each stage coach had an escort of eight men armed with a Hawkins rifle and two revolvers.

Bent's Fort was the most important stopping place in the old days. The Bent brothers were the largest individual fur-trade operators early in the last century, and in 1826 they built their first fort and trading center between the present sites of Pueblo and Canyon City, and in 1829 built a bigger one on the ground where La Junta is today. The most interesting spots in Santa Fé, the end of the trail, are the Fonda and the Palace, the former the rendezvous of all the pioneers and the latter the seat of Spanish, Mexican and American Governments through the centuries of traffic over the old trail.

than by the arbitrary caprice of man." This was the highway, it seems, that nature prepared to connect the great plateau and great plains.

Today the trail is the line of one of our greatest railway systems, also it is the highway of overland motor car travel. Fifty years ago it was a dusty line of caravans of unwieldy wagons and prairie schooners carrying on a precious traffic that seems trivial in the money terms of today. A hundred years ago it was just emerging from the period of mule pack transport, tortuously achieved only by the most intrepid of the courageous pioneers and so surrounded with ill fortune that only a few survived. Three and a half centuries ago Spanish explorers followed the same line, to be followed in later years by the French. And, as one author has put it, "If we could dissipate the mists that shroud the ancient history of aboriginal America we might behold the armies of plumed and painted warriors and tribes of savage nomads of plain and desert moving on to conquest or fleeing in wild retreat over this highway of the ages."

Popular recollection of the earliest known use of the line of the Santa Fé Trail centres around Coronado, who with his party of Spanish explorers came from Mexico to the Missouri Valley in the sixteenth century in search of Quivira, the fabled city of gold. But Colonel Henry Inman, who lived along the trail in the stirring days of the last half of the nineteenth century and who wrote one of the fullest and most graphic histories to be found on the subject ("The Old Santa Fé Trail," Macmillan Company), recites how Alvar Nufiez Cabeza de Vaca deserves all the laurels bestowed not only upon Coronado, but upon de Soto, La Salle and others. Inman says de Vaca's march into New Mexico antedates Coronado's expedition in the middle of the sixteenth century by at least five years.

At all events, there were many Spanish expeditions sent over to find what there was in the interior of what then was termed Florida, which comprised the central part of the continent as well as the territory around the Gulf. There was de Allyn, de Narvaez, de Soto and his successor, de Moscoso. The failure of each did not discourage the next. In 1542 remnants of Moscoso's army, de Soto having died, were camped on the Arkansas River in what now is Kansas. The expedition's chronicler wrote that it "was a trail of fire and blood" and the savages "were of a gigantic stature and fought with heavy, strong clubs and with the desperation of demons." One Indian, he commented, was more than a match for a Spaniard encased in armor and astride a fairly well protected horse. Moscoso was searching for Coronado, unable to reach the Gulf, he struck out westward hoping to emulate de Vaca and go overland to Mexico.

truders, but in 1693 the Spaniards again took control.

The modern history of the trail is said to have begun in 1804 when William Morrison of Kaskaskia, Ill., sent Baptiste Lalonde to Santa Fé with a small stock of goods. It is said that French traders from the Mississippi Valley established a trading post near the present site of Pueblo, Col., in 1703, but the first record of a through trade trip is in 1804. Lalonde reached Santa Fé safely and not only sold the goods but pocketed his employer's money and stayed there.

In 1800 Captain Zebulon M. Pike set out to explore the Red and Arkansas Rivers and eventually wandered into Spanish territory, where he was arrested, taken to Santa Fé and later returned to United States soil. His adventure enabled him in 1810 to give the first comprehensive idea of that great area, publishing a full description with maps and dilating upon the possibilities of trade.

One of the finest stories of the early days of the West comes from Pike's experiences. Inman in his book quotes it from an article in The Magazine of American History. When Pike was in Mexico in 1807 he met a carpenter named Pursley, from Kentucky, working at his trade. Pursley told Pike that a year previous he had found gold near the mountain now known as Pike's Peak. When the Mexicans in Santa Fé learned of the discovery they tried every means to get Pursley to reveal the source. He told Pike that the reason he would not tell was because he did not know whether it was American or Spanish territory, though he thought it was American. But he did not want the Spaniards or the Mexicans to find the spot. The writer continues: "If Pursley had been less patriotic and had guided the Mexicans to the treasure, the whole history and condition of the western part of our continent might have been different. The region would still be part of Mexico, or Spain might still possess it, owning California. And with the gold . . . Spain would have been the leading nation of Europe today. We can easily see how European and American history in the nineteenth century might have been changed if that adventurer from Kentucky had not been a true lover of his country."

Successful trade over the trail began in 1822, coinciding with the first beneficial results of Iturbide's Mexican revolution against Spain the year previous. American trade efforts met with success, because the Mexicans were anxious for the Americans' goods, while the Spaniards through jealousy had stopped at nothing to block and ruin any such interchange.

"Commerce of the Prairies."

It was Captain William Becknell who, with thirty men and about \$5,000 worth of goods, made the first really successful trip. His good fortune and his ac-