The next day we drove to Fray Cristobal, sixteen miles, to breakfast, passing on the way the ruins of Valverde. Some years ago this place was a flourishing settlement, but the inhabitants were driven away by the Indians and have never returned. All the way down from Socorro the country is mostly barren, and we saw but one house. Fray Cristobal is a simple camping ground, and not, as the young traveler would most likely imagine before he arrived there, a respectable-sized village, where he could find entertainment forman and beast....

Fray Cristobal is the northern terminus of the Jornada del Muerto, or the Journey of Death, a barren stretch of country, which extends nearly a hundred miles to the south. It is almost a dead level, and without water except the little found in holes after a rain, and is bounded on each side by a range of montains, that on the west shutting off all approach to the river. The only vegetation is a short, dry grass and a few weeds. [Davis, W.W.H.]

Overview: Fray Cristobál

Named for a member of the Oñate entrada, the Paraje de Fray Cristóbal remained important throughout the period in which the Camino Real was in use. Oñate's men facetiously remarked that the outline of the ridge of the mountain near present Elephant Butte Reservoir looked like the profile of Fray Cristóbal, saying he was "feisimo" (politely, not very good looking). It was described as a general area rather than a particular point but can be defined by its proximity to both the Río Grande and the Jornada del Muerto. In the nineteenth century, Fray Cristóbal became Fra Cristobal, as a modern local spelling and pronunciation without a y in Fray and without an accent in Cristóbal. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]
Quote: Six or eight miles below Dona Ana, on the opposite side of the river, is the town of Mesilla, containing between six and seven hundred inhabitants, a place which owes its origin to circumstances growing out of the late war with Mexico. These circumstances it may be proper to relate, as well as the origin of its name. Mesilla is the diminutive of the Spanish word mesa, i.e., table, also table-land, or plateau, and is applied to a lesser plateau in the valley of the Rio Grande, beneath that of the great mesa or table-land, which extends for several hundred miles in all directions from the Rio Grande. It is situated on the western side of the Rio Grande, about fifty miles above El Paso, in latitude about 32 degrees 18 minutes north, and until the year 1850 it was without an inhabitant.

Immediately preceding, and after the war with Mexico, the Mexican population occupying the eastern bank of the Rio Grande in Texas and New Mexico were greatly annoyed by the encroachments of the Americans, and by their determined efforts to despoil them of their landed property. This was done by the latter either settling among them, or in some instances forcibly occupying their dwellings and cultivated spots. In most cases, however, it was done by putting "Texas head-rights" on their property. These head-rights were grants issued by the State of Texas, generally embracing 640 acres, or a mile square, though they sometimes covered very large tracts. They were issued to persons who had served in her wars, like our military land warrants, and also to original settlers. Such certificates are still bought and sold in Texas. The owner of them may locate his land where he pleases, unless previously occupied, or in lawful possession of another.

With these land certificates, or "head-rights," many Americans flocked to the valley of the Rio Grande, and in repeated instances, located them on property which for a century had been in the quiet possession of the descendants of the old Spanish colonists. The latter, to avoid litigation, and sometimes in fear for their lives, abandoned their homes, and sought a refuge on the Mexican side of the river.

Dona Ana, a modern town on the eastern bank of the Rio Grande, being a desirable place, and moreover selected by the United States for one of its military posts, became an attractive point for speculators, and in consequence pounced upon by them, and covered by the Texan land warrants. Whether the Mexican occupants of the town and lands adjacent were the lawful owners or not it is needless to investigate; it is sufficient to say that they were the first settlers, and had long been in undisturbed possession. They now became alarmed.

Litigations commenced, some applying to the authorities of New Mexico, Texas, or the United States, for protection. Failing to obtain it, several hundred abandoned their property and homes in despair, and sought an asylum in Mexican territory, preferring the very uncertain protection they could obtain there to remaining as citizens of the United States.

With this resolution, a spot was selected on the opposite or western side of the river, six or eight miles below Dona Ana, which, it was believed, would be within the limits of Mexico. On the 1st March, 1850, sixty Mexicans, with Don Rafael Ruelas at their head, most of whom had been domiciled at Dona Ana, abandoned their homes on account of their many grievances, and moved to the lands known as the Mesilla, where they established themselves. To increase the colony, the government of Mexico offered to give lands to other actual settlers, which offer induced large numbers of dissatisfied Mexicans living in New Mexico and in the small settlements along the Rio Grande, in Texas, to remove there. More than half the population of Dona Ana removed to Mesilla within a year.
When the boundary line was established in April, 1851, and it became certain that La Mesilla was south of the boundary line, according to the treaty map, their fears were removed, and a day was set apart for public rejoicing. For the whole population had determined to abandon the place if the boundary line had run south of the village, and thus placed them under the jurisdiction of New Mexico. The day came, and the event was celebrated by firing of cannon and a grand ball, which many from El Paso attended. After this, the population continued to increase; in October, 1852, the Prefect of El Paso estimated it at 1,900 souls.

Very few Americans ever settled there; in fact, none but traders, and it is probable that there never were twenty altogether.

The lands at La Mesilla are of precisely the same character as other bottom lands, on the opposite bank of the river, near Doña Ana and Cruces; and in fact, as far as the mountain pass above the town of El Paso. [Bartlett, John Russell]

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**Overview: Mesilla**

In 1848 the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established the area west of the Río Grande occupied by present-day Mesilla as part of Mexico. (In local usage, it is more often called Mesilla or Old Mesilla.) Las Cruces and Doña Ana, on the east bank of the river, were in American territory. Anglo-Americans arrived to claim land in such force that many native Mexicans moved away.

Those who preferred to remain in the area but on Mexican soil crossed the river and settled on a small rise in the river valley. The settlement, known as Mesilla (little table), included about half the population of Doña Ana.

In 1853 the Mexican government issued the Mesilla Civil Colony Land Grant and the town was formed. In 1854 the Gadsden Purchase was negotiated, acquiring from Mexico a strip of land south of New Mexico and Arizona which stretched from Texas to California, which would later serve as the route for the Southern Pacific Railroad. The residents of Mesilla once again found themselves in the United States.

A few decades later, the town again changed hands briefly, when the Confederate Army came from Texas under the command of Lt. Col. John R. Baylor, who declared the town under the jurisdiction of the Confederacy, as part of the "Arizona Territory" and named himself governor. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]

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**3: Dona Ana**

1857

Although Emory indicated several sets of observations at Dona Ana, he does not discuss it. Bartlett however, seems to have spent quite a bit of time traveling back and forth to Dona Ana from El Paso.

He writes, "The distance, which is 56 miles, was made between 9 o'clock, A. M., and 6 o'clock, p. M., in my carriage, drawn by four mules."

**Quote:** Dona Ana is a small town of five or six hundred inhabitants, and stands upon a spur of the plateau, fifty or sixty feet above the bottom lands, thereby commanding a wide prospect of the adjacent country, important work upon which they are engaged may be completed without unnecessary interruption.

It has been settled but a few years, and was selected on account of the broad and rich valley near, and the facilities that existed for irrigating it. Its houses are mostly of a class called jacals, i.e. built of upright sticks, their interstices filled with mud, though a better class of adobe buildings have just been erected along the main street, for the occupation of the military, and for places of business. The central position of Dona Ana, and its fine lands, led to its selection for a military post. At the time of my visit there were two companies of United States troops here under the command of Major Shepard. [Bartlett, John Russell]

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**Overview: Doña Ana**

One of the noted parajes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the name also attached to a section of the Río Grande, to nearby mountains, and to a settlement that still exists.

The western boundary of the Doña Ana Grant was determined to be the bed of the Río Grande as it ran before the flood of 1864. The northeastern corner of the grant was the head of the old Doña Ana Acequia, about three miles above the pueblo of Doña Ana at a point where the Río Grande touches the hills on the East; the R.R. track is near the point. It is not entirely clear what the bed of the river was above that point but it evidently came from the west. In testimony related to determining that boundary, Ancón de Doña Ana was described in terms of how the river ran in 1852. At the head of the Doña Ana and Las Cruces Acequia, the Río Grande makes a bend leaving the foothills on the Eastern bank of said river and bearing Southwestwardly and nearing the foothills on the western bank of said river and continues near the western foot hills of said western bank until it reaches the barrancas del brazito? before mentioned, which place was formerly the head of the acequia of Don Juan Antonio Garcia? (or Bracito). [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]
4: El Paso

1857

The town of El Paso del Norte is situated on the western bank of the Rio Grande, otherwise known as the Rio Bravo del Norte, in the north-eastern corner of the State of Chihuahua. It is compactly built for the space of half a mile near the plaza; and from there it extends from five to ten miles along the rich bottom lands of the river, each house being surrounded by orchards, vineyards, and cultivated fields. The valley or bottom land is here from one to two miles in width. [Bartlett, John Russell]

Overview: El Paso

Although the Spanish did not settle the area until the Pueblo Revolt, Oñate noted it as he crossed the Rio Grande, and it gained significance on maps as an important landmark, where the river continues to be crossed to this day.

After fleeing the warring Puebloans, the Spanish built a settlement on the banks of the Rio Grande and waited eleven years for reinforcements. About two years in, Governor Otermín tried to retake the Rio Arriba to no avail.

During this period, the priests planted vineyards, which bore fruit that made eventually made El Paso del Norte famed in the region for its fine wines and brandies.

The Piro of the Rio Abajo retreated with the Spanish and together they established three mission churches, active to this day: Mission Ysleta del Sud, Mission Socorro, and San Elizario Mission.

Quote: In the name of the most Christian king, Don Philip.... I take and seize tenancy and possession, real and actual, civil and natural, one two, three times... and all the times that by right I can and should....without limitations

--Juan de Oñate at El Paso, April 1598

Images:

Church and plaza of El Paso

The Plaza and Church of El Paso

Mexican adobe house, Mt. Franklin in distance, El Paso, Texas. 1907

Links:

5: Fort Fillmore

1851

Fort Fillmore was brand new during the days of the first International Boundary Commissions. Emory mentions taking observations from there, but otherwise does not describe it. Bartlett chooses to describe the untapped possibilities of the surrounding land rather than the fort.

It is interesting to note that the fort was in operation on what was ostensibly Mexican territory for two years.

Quote: At Fort Fillmore, about forty miles above El Paso, is the next settlement. Between this and Frontera there is a broad alluvial bottom of great richness, unsurpassed by the Mesilla valley opposite, or any portion of the valley of the Rio Grande. [Bartlett, John Russell]
Overview: Fort Fillmore

Fort Fillmore was established in 1851 by the US Army to protect travel in the new territory. The fort's location allowed the military to protect travel on the Chihuahua Trail (the old Camino Real), and across Apache Pass, en route to the old presidio of Tucson.

In 1861, the Confederate Army under Lieutenant Colonel John Baylor seized the fort during the third Texian invasion of New Mexico. Baylor captured 400 Union soldiers. The fort was decommissioned the following year. The tale of the Confederate victory is told on the "Other Voices" tab.

Quote: In what he conceived to be a desperate situation, Lynde decided, in a moment of panic, to abandon Fort Fillmore and attempt to reach Fort Stanton, 154 miles to the northeast....

In and about the loading of supplies it was all too evident that some of the supplies were to be left at the fort. Word was whispered about the barracks that boxes of hospital brandy, and kegs of medicinal whiskey, in goodly number, were to be abandoned.

As the soldiers appraised the situation, abandonment of a military post under orders was one thing, but abandonment of high class liquor was a much more serious matter, one that required consideration and reflections. The soldiers met the situation sensibly, and in the beginning, with discretion.

First one trooper, then another, and then many, took a moderate swig of the soon-to-be-abandoned liquor, then each helped himself to a drink that seemed more appropriate to the occasion. One sergeant of the "old army" decided that a drop of brandy, or perhaps two or more, on the road to Fort Stanton might be eminently fitting under the circumstances. Pouring the water our of his canteen, he replaced it with liquor. Others, recognizing the soldier's commendable conduct, substituted liquor for water in their canteens.

But on the cross country march from Fort Fillmore to San Augustine Springs, soldiers with liquor in their canteens instead of water suffered severely from thirst. Long stretches of rough, sandy road, without a drop of water to touch hot lips and burning throat, proved the undoing of many a good fighting man. Soldier after soldier collapsed and fell by the wayside, begging for water.

--- [Keleher, William A.]

Quote: There are few reliable details on record respecting this disgraceful surrender. It appears that Lynde sent a party toward Mesilla, which had a slight skirmish with the Texans and retired to the fort. Then orders were received to march the garrison to Ft Craig or Alburquerque, and soon after starting, when, as is stated, the men had been given all the whiskey they wanted, and were mostly drunk, they met a Texan force, to which the major, after a council of officers, surrendered. It is said that the more sober of the officers and men protested and wished to fight. The paroled prisoners were allowed to go to Alburquerque, suffering intensely on the march. For this act Maj. Lynde was dismissed from the army; and Capt. A. H. Flummer, the commissary, who turned over to the enemy $17,000 in drafts, was merely reprimanded and suspended for six months. [Kendall, George Wilkins]

6: Fort Thorn

1853

Fort Thorn was commissioned during the time of the surveys, but neither Emory nor Bartlett mention visiting this malarial hotbed.

Quote: On the west bank of the river, between Socorro and the lower point of the Jornada, there are two military outposts, Forts Craig and Thorn, one village, Santa Barbara, and an occasional rancho. [Davis, W.W.H.]

Overview: Fort Thorn

The short-lived Fort Thorn was commissioned to protect the Jornada del Muerto, and travel along the Rio Grande. It was quickly decommissioned, in part because its swampy location gave rise to a malaria epidemic among the soldiers stationed there.

Quote: Fort Thorn is located on the immediate edge of an extensive marsh, the river making a considerable bend at this point, leaves exposed to the right, a crescentric flat, intersected by numerous sluices, an at times completely inundated. The buildings constituting the flat are placed within a stone's throw of the swampiest portion of this flat or bottom, and in the most admirable manner, if the object be that the garrison shall inhale, for an average period of five months, the pestilential effluvia arising therefrom.

The bottom referred to, presents during the hottest months, a surface of oozy mud, covered with green slime, and interspersed with pools of stagnating water, which surface is during these months slowly drying up.

During the same time, a rank vegetation of weeds and grasses undergoes the process of germination, advancement to maturity, and decay. As might be expected, fevers of a malarious character, have greatly afflicted the command during this quarter. These diseases have prevailed to even a greater extent than in former seasons, which may possibly be due to an unusually continued elevation of temperature, and the
absence of rain, which serves to prevent the fall of the river and stagnation of water in the neighboring
sluices.

Fevers began to manifest themselves about the middle of July, and have continued with much virulence until
the present time. The command then consisted of two companies, and the sick report numbered seventy
cases. The garrison was reduced on the 1 September, to one company of infantry, half of which has since
been removed to Fort Fillmore on detached service. Scarcely a man of this command can be considered fit for
the performance of ordinary garrison duty, so debilitated are they by disease.

--Post Surgeon Dr. P.A. Quinan, Statistical Report on Sickness and Mortality in the Army of the United States
Compiled from Records in the Surgeon General's office...1855-1860 36th Congress, 1st session, 1860 Sen E.
Dox S2. Serial 1035 Washington DC

Images:

Fort Thorn, looking southeast

7: Copper Mines

1846

Quote: (19 October 1847) Turning the north end of Ben Moore bluff, we began to drop into the valley of what
is supposed an arm of the Mimbres, where there are some deserted copper mines. They are said to be very
rich, both in copper and gold, and the specimens obtained sustain this assertion. We learned that those who
worked them made their fortunes; but the Apaches did not like their proximity, and one day turned out and
destroyed the mining town, driving off the inhabitants.

There are the remains of some twenty or thirty adobe houses, and ten or fifteen shafts sinking into the earth.
The entire surface of the hill into which they are sunk is covered with iron pyrites and the red oxide of copper.

Mr. McKnight, one of the earliest adventurers in New Mexico, was the principal operator in these mines, and is
said to have amassed an immense fortune. On his arrival in the country we was suspected to be an agent of
the United States, and thrown into prison in Sonora, where he was kept in chains for eleven years. [Emory,
William H]

Quote: (27 June 1851) On the 27th June an incident occurred, which will long be remembered by every one
connected with the Boundary Commission. It was such as to awaken the finest sympathies of our nature; and
by its happy result afforded a full recompense for the trials and hardships attending our sojourn in this
inhospitable wilderness.

On the evening of the day alluded to, a party of New Mexicans came in for the purpose of procuring provisions,
&c., having with them a young female and a number of horses and mules. By what dropped from them in the
course of conversation, it was ascertained that the female and animals had been obtained from the Indians;
and that they were taking the girl to some part of New Mexico, to sell or make such disposition of her as
would realize the most money....

General Garcia Condé, the Mexican Commissioner, being encamped about twenty-six miles off, I dispatched a
messenger to him requesting his presence, to advise and co-operate with me in this matter. He accordingly
visited me, and, upon inquiring, found that he was acquainted with the released captives's father, a
respectable citizen of Santa Cruz. He approved warmly of my course [to prevent her sale according to the
terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo], evincing, as it would, to his government a determination on the
part of the United States to solemnly and faithfully fulfil its treaty stipulations. He also particularly solicited
that the young woman should be kept under my protection until such time as she could be restored in safety to
her home.

The fair captive was of course taken care of by the Commission. She was well clad with such materials as the
sutler of the escort and the commissary of the Commission could furnish; and besides the more substantial
articles of clothing provided for her, she received many presents from the gentlemen of the Commission, all of
whom manifested a deep interest in her welfare, and seemed desirous to make her comfortable and
happy. [Bartlett, John Russell]
Quote: During this time the members of the Commission went about freely in small parties or alone, for twenty or thirty miles around our camp, and were on no occasion molested. They also visited the Apache camps, where they were well received. Our wagons with stores, went unprotected to and from the Surveyors, and their attendants, who were scattered in small parties for fifty miles along the line, where the escort could afford them but little protection. Hence the great importance to the success of the Commission in maintaining friendly relations with these Indians.

My experience established the truth of the opinion I had always entertained, that kind treatment, a rigid adherence to what is right, and a prompt and invariable fulfilment of all promises, would secure the friendship of the Apaches, a tribe of Indians which has the reputation of being the most hostile and treacherous to the whites of any between the Rio Grande and the Pacific.

It is the conduct of unprincipled traders and emigrants, who sow the seeds of intemperance and vice among them, which has created most of the difficulties before experienced. These men defraud them of their property, and, on the slightest pretence, take their lives. That the Indians feel the deepest hatred towards the Mexicans is true, and they certainly have reason for entertaining a strong antipathy to that people. Acts of treachery of the grossest and cruellest description have been practised by the Mexicans towards them; and, though years have passed away since these events occurred, they are not forgotten by the Apaches. The desire of revenge, or as we should term it in our own case, of retributive justice, seems, instead of diminishing, to acquire increased intensity, with the lapse of time. [Bartlett, John Russell]

Overview: Santa Rita del Cobre Mines

This mineral-rich area was known to native inhabitants long before Europeans "discovered" it. In precontact times, it was a source for low-grade turquoise, and later, the Warm Springs Apache collected copper from the surface.

The Spanish began mining in earnest in 1799, after being given a sample of the pure, malleable copper by friendly Apaches. Within a few years, they had established a presidio and were working the mines with convict labor. Work on the mines continued through Mexican independence, and most of Mexico's copper money from those years was made of the Santa Rita copper, packed out on burros to Mexico City.

After the Americans claimed New Mexico, activity ended for some decades, due to Apache hostilities. The mine was sold to American investors in the 1870s, and today is operated by Phelps Dodge.

The Santa Rita Observation Point is located on the east side of NM Highway 152 just south of milepost 6.

Images:

Valley of the Copper Mines
Spanish presidio protecting the Santa Rita del Cobre copper mines

Links:

8: San Elecario

1853

Quote: (03 December 1850) On the 9th of December, the main body of the Commission, which I left at San Antonio, reached San Eleazario, and went into quarters at that place and at Socorro, a town six miles north of it. It was impossible to find quarters for all at either place. My official duties required me at El Paso, where about a dozen officers and laborers were quartered. Quarter-master Myer, with the mules, wagons, etc., and Mr. George F. Bartlett, Commissary, with the subsistence stores, were established at Socorro, while Lieutenant A. W. Whipple, who (by order of the Secretary of the Interior) had been appointed Chief Astronomer, ad interim, had set up his Astronomical Observatory at San Eleazario. The officers, mechanics, laborers, etc.,
were divided between the two places where their services were most required. ... 

Other trains which had preceded us, and some that arrived about the same time that we did from New-Mexico, including emigrant trains bound for California, were disbanded here, leaving numbers of the outcasts of society referred to, with little means of support. But means or money were not of much consequence to these people: for their habits of gambling were such, that those who had money soon got rid of it.

The discharging of so many worthless and vagabond men at Socorro, where the trains usually made it their rendezvous, threw upon the peaceful inhabitants of that place a set of ruffians, who, by daily increase of numbers, had become so formidable, that the life of no one was considered safe beyond the walls of his own house. And even within them, there was no security; for several of these men had actually forced themselves upon the occupants, and compelled them to give them a home. Unused to such interlopers, and unable to obtain redress, several Mexican families abandoned their dwellings, and sought refuge on the opposite side of the river, or removed to other settlements.

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The first check given to this band of gamblers, horse thieves, and murderers, was the arrival of the United States Boundary Commission at Socorro. The presence of a body of well armed, well disposed, and spirited young men, tended to make these ruffians more circumspect for a time; but as the former were gradually drafted off, to enter upon the duties connected with the Survey, the latter became more overbearing and insolent in their conduct. Houses were opened for the indulgence of every wicked passion; and each midnight hour heralded new violent and often bloody scenes for the fast filling record of crime. The peaceable Mexicans hastened to pack their little store of worldly wealth, and, with their wives and children, fled from the rapidly depopulating village. Every new outrage escaping the notice of those in authority gave additional boldness to the desperate gang surrounding us.

None dared stir from home without being doubly armed, and prepared to use their weapons at a moment’s warning; for the turning of a corner might bring one to the muzzles of a dozen pistols. After several murders had been committed, and horror and dismay filled the breasts of the orderly part of the community, it was resolved to ask for assistance from the military post at San Eleazario, six miles distant. A note was written by the Quartermaster and the engineers, giving a history of what had occurred, and representing the alarming condition of things at the time. The messenger returned with an answer from the commanding officer, declining to furnish any assistance, on the ground that the application should first be made to the civil authorities.

In the evening, a dancing party was given in the place, an almost nightly amusement in all Mexican and frontier towns, which, as usual, was attended by quite a mixed company. As these dancing parties, called “fandangos,” are open to all, the vagabonds prowling about at the time were numerous; and made themselves conspicuous by their conduct. Pistols were fired over the heads of the females, who, in their alarm, attempted to escape from the room; but this was prevented by ruffians stationed at the door. By this time there was a great excitement within, and several desperadoes commenced using their bowie-knives. Mr. Edward C. Clarke, the Assistant Quarter-master of the Commission, who was present on the occasion, was the first person upon whom the ruffians attempted to sate their thirst for blood. Four attacked him with their knives, and he fell near the door dreadfully wounded. He was immediately taken to the quarters of Dr. Bigelow, the surgeon of the Commission, who, on examination, found he had received nine or ten deep wounds, inflicted with bowie-knives, in his breast and abdomen.

Another man named Gates was also wounded by a pistol-shot in the leg. Dr. Bigelow at once pronounced the wounds of Mr. Clarke mortal, and he died the following morning. [Bartlett, John Russell]

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Overview: San Elizario

San Elizario was built first as a military presidio to protect the citizens of the river settlements from Apache attacks in 1789. The structure as it stands today has interior pillars, detailed in gilt, and an extraordinary painted tin ceiling.

The missions of El Paso have a tremendous history spanning three centuries. They are considered the longest, continuously occupied religious structures within the United States and as far as we know, the churches have never missed one day of services. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]

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Images:
9: International Boundary Marker No. 1

1855

The states of Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua meet here, at a marker originally established by Lieutenant William H. Emory, the American Commissioner of the second International Boundary Commission, and José Salazar y Larregua, the Mexican Commissioner. The monument was later rebuilt, and can today be seen in Keystone Park, in the city of El Paso.

Quote: (31 January 1855) RIO GRANDE, LATITUDE 31° 47', January 10, 1855.

On the 9th of January, both commissioners having finished the observations necessary to determine the initial point of the boundary on the Rio Grande, met this day to compare results. The necessary measurements being made to connect the two observatories, and also the observatory established at Frontera in 1851-'52, it was ascertained that the difference between the determinations of the parallel of 31° 4'7", made by the two commissions, was eighty-four hundredths of one second. It was then mutually agreed to take the mean between the two results; and the point thus ascertained was marked on the ground in presence of both commissioners, as the point where the parallel of 31° 47' strikes the river; that is to say, the point where the boundary under the treaty of December 30, 1853, leaves the river to run westward.

The commission adjourned, to meet to-morrow at 10 o'clock a. m.

JOSE SALAZAR Y LARREGUI

W. H. EMORY

... 

PASO DEL NORTE, January 12, 1855.

The commission met agreeably to adjournment, and agreed to place one monument as near the river as the nature of the ground will admit, to be of dressed stone, having on the north face: U. S. BOUNDARY, Under the treaty of December 30, 1853.

On the south face: R. M. Limite conforme al tratado de 30 de Diciembre de 1853.

On the west: JOSE SALAZAR Y LARREGUI, Comisionado Mexicano.

On the east: W. H. EMORY, U. S. Commissioner.

The commission further agreed:

1st. To erect a pyramid of rough stone, cemented with mortar, where the line strikes the crest of the first range of hills, and one of the same description in sight of the road leading from El Paso to the north.

2nd. To put up a monument at the extremity of the line of 31° 47' of the same kind, and with the same inscription, as that first named; to put up pyramids along the line wherever the facilities of water and stone will admit.

3d. To lay the foundation of the monument nearest the river on the 24th January. There being no further business before the commission, it adjourned, to meet at 12 m [noon] on the 24th instant.

W. H. EMORY.

JOSE SALAZAR Y LARREGUI.

... 

INITIAL POINT ON THE RIO GRANDE, LAT, 31° 47',
January 31, 1855.

The commission met, according to agreement, at meridian. The chief officers of the vicinity, military and civil, from both sides of the line, being present, the foundation of the monument was laid. The following paper—one copy in English, the other in Spanish—was signed by the two commissioners

and by the persons aforesaid, placed in a glass bottle, and deposited, at the depth of five feet, under the centre of the monument:

COPY OF THE PAPER.

We, the undersigned, have this day assembled to witness the laying of the foundation of the monument which is to mark the initial point of the boundary between the United States and the Republic of Mexico, agreed upon, under the treaty of Mexico, on the part of the United States by William Hemsley Emory, and on the part of the Republic of Mexico by Jose Salazar y Larregui, latitude 31° 47'.

W. H. EMORY, U. S. Commissioner.
JOSE SALAZAR Y LARREGUI. [Emory, William H.]

Images:

10: Rio Grande Near Fronteras

1855

The American team on the boundary commission had established an observatory at Fronteras.

Quote: North of the town, after leaving Mr. Hart's mill and rancho, which are near the dam, the first building is White's Rancho or Frontera, eight miles above. There is no valley or bottom land in all this distance, as the mountain chain here crosses the river. Frontera was used as an astronomical observatory by the Commission during its operations in this district. Soon after we gave it up it was destroyed by the Apaches. It has nothing as a position to recommend it. [Bartlett, John Russell]

Images:
The stretch across the southern Rockies was left indefinite on this map, as the directions are slightly vague. This area was surveyed in 1868 and 1878. Today, New Mexico’s northern border goes straight across at the 37th North Parallel.

Quote: ...[from 38º North latitude); thence west with said parallel to the summit of the Sierra Madre; thence south with the crest of said mountains to the thirty-seventh parallel of north latitude; thence west with said parallel to its intersection with the boundary line of the state of California; thence with said boundary line to the place of beginning-be, and the same is hereby, erected into a temporary government, by the name of the territory of New Mexico. [Statutes at Large, vol. 9 (1851), pp. 446-458, 462-465, 467-68.]

International Border with Mexico

1853-1857

The Boundary Commission headed by Emory and Salazar completed an epically-heroic task in surveying nearly 2000 miles of the Mexican-American border from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean.

They were hampered by bureaucratic inefficiency and difficulties in communicating with Washington, rough terrain, extreme weather, depredations by hostile tribes, and defective instruments (in the case of the Mexican survey team).

Emory clearly takes pride in the precision of his observations, and draws stark contrasts between the Commission he heads, and the original commission headed by John Bartlett, who purportedly spent a half a million dollars and still picked the wrong starting place on the Rio Grande, but whose widely-read tale of adventures in the southwest influenced popular opinion favorably towards him.

Quote: (15 August 1854) On the 15th August, 1854; I received from the President of the United States, through the Hon. Eobt. McClelland, Secretary of the Interior, the appointment of commissioner " to survey and mark out upon the land the dividing line between the United States and the republic of Mexico, concluded on the 30th of December, 1853, the ratifications of which were exchanged in the city of Washington on the 30th day of June, 1854." At the same time I received special instructions from the Secretary of the Interior, and a copy of the treaty... [Emory, William H]

Quote: On arriving at the cañon about seventy miles below El Paso, I left my escort and train, with directions to proceed slowly up the river, while I went to make such arrangements with the Mexican commissioner as would enable me to move the parties directly on the new line, and commence operations.

I accomplished this with the Mexican commissioner satisfactorily; although winter had now set in with severity, and the small-pox showed itself in our camp, and we had just accomplished a journey of sixteen hundred miles [on foot and mule], every assistant and man took the field as cheerfully as if he had just left his barracks.

Each one of the principal assistants was selected upon the estimate of his professional abilities, derived from personal knowledge, and I had no reason to make any changes of importance from the beginning to the end of the work. My own expectations, and I hope those of the government, were entirely fulfilled in the manner in which the work was accomplished.

Under all circumstances-- during the cold winter exposed upon the bare ground of the bleak plains, and in the summer to the hot sun blazing over the arid desert-- every order was executed with fidelity, and the work was completed within the time, and largely within the amount appropriated by Congress.

We passed the entire width of the continent and returned with the loss only of two men, and without losing a single animal, (except those worn out by service), or suffering a stampede by the Indians ; at the same time that our co-operators on the Mexican commission were twice robbed of every hoof by the Apaches, and extensive losses were sustained by other detachments of United States troops, and by our citizens traversing this region. [Emory, William H]

Images:
Emory's camp in the mountainous region near Fort Davis, Texas

First map of a series of 52, made by Emory to show the border.

One of the rough stone monuments Emory built, on the boundary of the bootheel

Links:
National Archives: Monuments, Manifest Destiny, and Mexico --

**Line Agreed on by Condé and Bartlett**

1850

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo stipulated that the boundary described in the treaty be surveyed, but the map on which the treaty was based (Disturnell, 1847) proved to be inaccurate, and resulted in another two laws; one, the Boundary Compromise of 1850, specified the starting point, which Commissioners Conde and Bartlett tried to identify. But surveys done for the purpose of finding a southern transcontinental railroad route showed that the U.S. needed land just a bit farther south, which the nation eventually purchased from Mexico in 1853, in what is called the Gadsden Purchase.

The first boundary commission, for which Emory served as the American astronomer, was tasked with setting that line at 36º30'. As Emory points out, Condé and Bartlett actually set the line 36º22', which required later correction (marked as treaty line on the map).

Quote: Under the date of December 3d, 1850, I spoke of the meetings of the Joint Commission, and of the difficulties that lay in the way of a speedy agreement as to the boundary between the Rio Grande and the Gila, in consequence of two gross errors in the map [by Disturnell] to which the Commissioners were confined by the treaty. It was discovered that the Rio Grande was laid down on this map, more than two degrees too far to the eastward -- the river, where it is intersected by the southern boundary of New Mexico, being really in 106º 40' west longitude, instead of 104º40'. The other error was in the position of the town of El Paso, which appears on this [Disturnell's] map to be but seven or eight minutes below the 32nd parallel, while its actual distance is thirty minutes further south. After several meetings, involving much discussion, the Joint Commission agreed to fix the Initial Point on the Rio Grande at the latitude given by the map, without any reference to its distance from El Paso; and to extend it westward from that point three degrees, without reference to where the line so prolonged should terminate.

This being agreed upon, the acting Chief Astronomer, Lieutenant A. W. Whipple, on the part of the United States, and Don Jose Salazar, the Chief Astronomer on the part of Mexico, were directed to "measure, according to Disturnell's Map, edition of 1847, the distance between latitude 32º and the point where the Rio Grande strikes the Southern Boundary of New Mexico ; and also the length of the Southern Boundary line of New Mexico from that point to its extreme western termination," and to report the result of their examinations to the Commissioners at the earliest period practicable. [Bartlett, John Russell ]

Quote: Mr. Bartlett's principal achievement on the boundary was the agreement with General Conde, the Mexican commissioner, fixing the initial point on the Rio Bravo, in the parallel of 32º 22', instead of a point as laid down on the treaty map about eight miles above El Paso, which would have brought it to the parallel of 31º 52'. That agreement is no less remarkable than the adroitness and success with which Mr. Bartlett convinced the authorities at Washington of its correctness. ...

I refused to recognise the act as that of the joint commission, and signed the map as the order directed, carefully and studiously attaching a certificate that it was the initial point of the two commissioners; and to prevent the possibility of misconstruction, an agreement in writing was entered into with Mr. Salazar, and our signatures attested by witnesses, showing that the map was only that of the boundary agreed upon by the two commissioners, and nothing else. This course, while it permitted me to obey a specific order in writing from a superior, left the government free to act, and repudiate the agreement by the two commissioners, as it subsequently did.

It is evident that any other course would have resulted in committing the government, irretrievably, to an erroneous determination of our southern boundary. It is but just, however, to Mr. Bartlett, to state, that so far as the facility for a route for a railway to the Pacific was considered, the line agreed to by him was no worse
than that claimed by his adversaries. My own reports, based upon previous explorations, had presented the whole case very clearly to view.

Yet these reports were overlooked, and it was ignorantly represented that while Mr. Bartlett’s line lost the route for the railway, the other line secured it. I will not here fatigue the reader by a topographical description of the country, showing where the obstacles to a railway route exist; but he will see by a glance at the map, that the practicable route so adjudged by myself, and by other officers who retraced my steps and re-surveyed this country, is to the south of both these lines of boundary claimed under the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. [Emory, William H.]

Links:
Texas Archives: Daniel Webster’s copy of 1850 Boundary Act -- http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/treasures/earlystate/boundary-01.html
The Handbook of Texas Online: Bartlett-García Condé Compromise -- http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/BB/nbb2.html

Texas Border

01 August 1850

In the Treaty of Velasco, signed after the decisive battle at San Jacinto but never ratified by Mexico, Texas had claimed the Rio Grande as its western and southern boundary. After long and angry debates, Congress passed the Boundary Compromise of 1850, which forgave Texian debt to the U.S. in exchange for dropping their claim to the lands between the 100th meridian and the Rio Grande.

Emory surveyed the starting point of this line but not the rest of the border.

Quote: (01 August 1850) The state of Texas will agree that her boundary on the north shall commence at the point at which the meridian of one hundred degrees west from Greenwich is intersected by the parallel of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes (36°30’) north latitude, and shall run from said point due west to the meridian of one hundred and three degrees west from Greenwich; thence her boundary shall run due south to the thirty-second degree of north latitude; thence on the said parallel of thirty-two degrees of north latitude to the Rio Bravo del Norte, and thence with the channel of said river to the Gulf of Mexico. [Statutes at Large, vol. 9 (1851), pp. 446-458, 462-465, 467-68.]

Treaty Line

1848

This is apparently the line that Emory believes to be the true line designated by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. By the time he had created this map, the treaty had already been superceded by the Gadsden Purchase, so the inclusion of this line on the map seems to be mostly about scoring points against former commissioner John Bartlett, who wrote unflattering things about Emory in his book, and who, in Emory’s view, failed to properly survey the line.

Quote: In reference to the importance of the point [at 36°22’, agreed on by Condé and Bartlett], I think it as well to state that the line agreed upon by the commission, April, 1851, is about 33’ north of the line contended for [in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo], as that laid down by Disturnell’s map, but it reaches about 16’ of arc further west; and as both lines run 3° of longitude west, the difference of territory is 3° of longitude multiplied by about 40’ of latitude, each having a middle latitude that may, for the purpose of computation, be assumed at 30°.

Neither line gives us the road to California, and the country embraced in the area of the difference, with the exception of a strip along the Rio Grande about nine miles long and from one to two wide, is barren, and will not produce wheat, corn, grapes, trees, or anything useful as food for man, or for clothing.

Neither line will give us a channel of communication for posts along the frontier, without which it is impracticable to comply with the XI the article of the treaty, which enjoins the United States to keep the Indians out of Mexico.

When originally on the work, before the point was determined, having a knowledge of the country from previous reconnaissance, I had the honor of asking the attention of your predecessor to this very subject, in a communication dated April, 1849, San Diego, California, which was subsequently printed by the Senate. I then pointed out what I believed to be the only view taken of the treaty, which would have given us the road, it being, in truth, the only important matter involved in the question. [Emory, William H.]
**About this Map**

**William H. Emory: Map of The United States and Their Territories Between The Mississippi & the Pacific Ocean And Part Of Mexico : 1857**

William H. Emory, Major, 1st Cavalry, and then United States Commissioner for the Boundary Survey directed preparation of this Map of the United States and Their Territories Between The Mississippi and the Pacific Ocean And Part of Mexico Compiled From the Surveys Made Under The Order of W.H. Emory...And from the Maps of the Pacific Rail Road, General Land Office, and the Coast Survey.

Emory's map was included with his Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey submitted to the House of Representatives 34th Congress, Ex. Dox 135.

**Atlas Citation:** [Eidenbach, Peter]

**Map Credits:** Rumsey Collection Image Number 0263001

**TIMELINE: AGE OF TECHNOLOGY**

1846

President Polk declares war with Mexico; US forces led by General Stephen Kearny seize New Mexico, which surrenders without a shot being fired. Colonel Doniphan writes code for governing the Territory of New Mexico. New Mexico designated Ninth Military Department.

1847

Philip St. George Cooke blazed the first wagon road from New Mexico to the West Coast.

New Mexico formally annexed; slavery issues had prevented formal annexation until this point.

1848

Mexico signs the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which cedes lands in California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico to the United States (Statute 922 App I). The international boundary designated as the intersection of 32° N and the Rio Grande to intersection of Choctaw Creek with Red River.

1849

Simpson made a map previously shows town of Rito- Rito is a ruin by the time Whipple arrives because the upstream people took all the water. He traveled through Albuquerque to Pueblo de la Laguna and passed Covero (Cubero), Mount Taylor (named by Simpson in 1849 for Zachary Taylor), and Agua Fria, the last spring before the Continental Divide. Whipple used Sitgreaves' 1851 map as a reference also Walker's 1851 map.

1850

New territories admitted, including New Mexico (including modern Arizona), purchase of additional lands from Texas, boundaries adjusted. El Paso becomes part of Texas.

1851

Sitgreaves' official report, Report of an Expedition Down the Zuni and Colorado Rivers in 1851, was published in 1853. The report explored possibility of using this route for military transport.

1852 Survey
1st international boundary commission established in accordance with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Emory is the designated astronomer. The survey run into difficulties, which are resolved with the purchase of more land from Mexico.

Initial point on the Rio Grande (determined by Commissioners Condé and Bartlett according to the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo) proves to be in the wrong place. Surveyor AB Gray says 32º 22' is wrong, 31º 52' is right. Commissioners Emory and Salazar (astronomers from the first Boundary Commission) later determine the starting point of the line at 32º47'.

1852

New Mexico legislature passed a single act creating two new counties, redefining five of the original counties to extend across the limits of the territory, and eliminating all non-county area.

1853

Gadsden Purchase from Mexico resolves boundary issues, and give the U.S. the land necessary to build a southern transcontinental railroad. (GP Statute 1031 App II).

1855 Survey

US Commissioner: William H. Emory
Mexican Commissioner: José Salazar y Larregui

Emory and Salazar survey the entire Mexican-American border, including the new area included by the Gadsden Purchase.

The Americans made nearly a dozen monuments along the border to mark the sites, but many were destroyed by surrounding tribes, so the Mexicans rebuilt many and added some. Later surveys added over two hundred more, and rebuilt them as more permanent monuments.

1855 railroad surveys

The U.S. Government commissioned a number of surveys, spaced along parallels, to determine the best route for a transcontinental railroad.

Emory & Parke: 32nd parallel
Whipple & Ives: 35th parallel
Beckwith & Gunnison: 38th-39 parallel

1857 and 1858

Ives' Report upon the Colorado River of the West

1859

Marcy publishes The Prairie Traveler

1861

Colorado territory established; New Mexico's northern boundary reduced.

Residents of the Mesilla Valley declared their allegiance with the Confederacy and separated from the Union. They hoped the Confederacy would recognize them as the state of Arizona, which they imagined would reach to the Colorado River.

Civil War starts. Confederate troops gather at Fort Bliss and take Fort Fillmore. The plan is to seize New Mexico, and then march on to take the gold fields of Colorado or California. Indian raids on settlements step up as U.S. Army soldiers turn their attention to other matters.

1862

Homestead Act: free 160 acres offered after 5 years cultivation. Later modified to offer 320 acres, and the Desert Lands Act offered 640 acres.

Henry H. Sibley, commander of a brigade of mounted regiments from Texas, marched from Fort Bliss near El Paso up the Rio Grande: taking Fort Fillmore, defeating Union troops at Fort Craig, taking Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and finally defeating the Union troops at Glorieta Pass, near Pecos. By this time, the Confederate troops were starving and without clothes or ammunition, so they retreated back to Fort Bliss.

1862-1871

Railroad Land grants: the Federal government gives away 128 million acres of land to the railroad companies, as an incentive to build railway lines all over the country. The railroad companies sold many of these parcels to homesteaders.
1863
Arizona Territory created by the United States from the western portion of New Mexico Territory and a part of present Nevada. Present New Mexico-Arizona boundary established.

1864-1866
"Long Walk"- Navajo and Mescalero Apache forcibly relocated to Bosque Redondo reservation; The Apache escaped, and the Navajo signed a treaty of nonagression and returned to their homeland in 1868.

1864-1890
Indian Wars throughout the West. Destruction of the bison herds.

1867
Hayden, King, Wheeler, Powell Surveys map the west comprehensively, while cataloguing flora, fauna, and geology.

1868
Navajo chief Barboncito, along with numerous other leaders, sign a treaty with General William T. Sherman, agreeing to peace with the Americans in exchange for rights to return from Bosque Redondo to their new reservation: a small area within their traditional homeland.

1869
Fort Bliss renamed Fort Bliss.

1878
Cochise and Apache guerrillas active 1871-1879.

1879
The war to save the buffalo 1874-1880.

1878-1879
Fort Bliss permanently established in current location.

1878
The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) railroad crosses the Raton Pass into New Mexico, reaching Las Vegas, its first destination in New Mexico, in 1879.

1879
USGS established.

1880
The Southern transcontinental railroad traversed the region.

1884
Geronimo & Chiricahua Apaches active in southern New Mexico and northern Mexico, 1880-1886.

1886
New boundary treaty: the boundary, where marked by the Rio Grande, adheres to the center of original channel as surveyed in 1852 even if the course of the river changes. Boundaries on international bridges at center point.

1889
Geronimo surrenders to General Crook in southern New Mexico. The remaining members of the Chiricahua and Mimbres bands are removed first to Florida, and finally to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

1889
US/Texas/New Mexico/Mexico border resurveyed; discovered bancos or alluvial deposits changing land mass on either side of the border.

1891
Forest Reserve Law, designating forest preserves; forerunner of current National Forests.

1905
National Forest service created.

1906
Antiquities Act. Allows a president to protect areas of public land by executive order.

New treaty with Mexico on water rights for irrigation.
1912
New Mexico becomes the forty-seventh state of the Union.

1916
National Park Service created.

1924
Gila Wilderness established.

1925
U.S. Supreme Court decision in New Mexico v. Colorado dismisses New Mexico’s claims and establishes current boundaries between the states.