

THE PRICE THEY PAID

Trail Blazers

It was near the middle of the 19th century before a caravan crossed the Big Bend, converting the old Indian Trail from Chihuahua City, Mexico, to the Pecos River into a road. The mines of Chihuahua were flourishing, and it required the efforts of great wagon trains to keep the shelves of the merchants filled. The Santa Fe Trail from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Chihuahua crossed three deserts, and the American merchants desired to establish a more desirable and shorter route to markets in the United States.

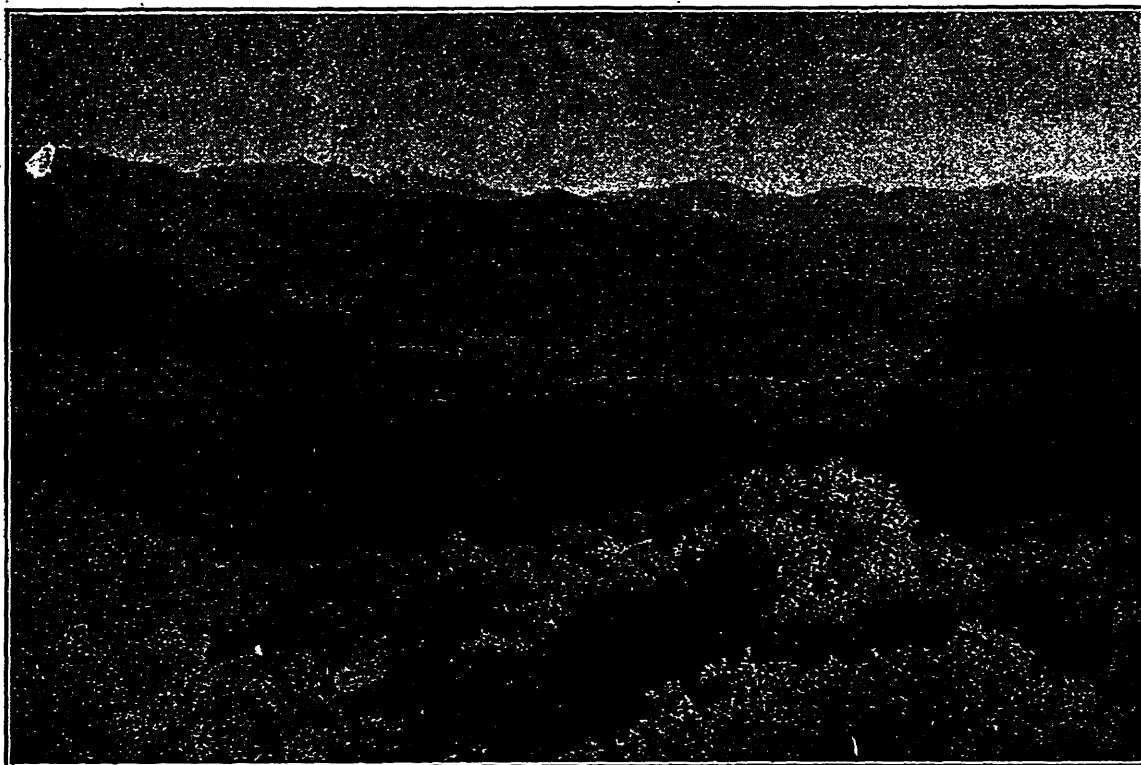
Doctor James Connelly, a pioneer merchant in Chihuahua, Mexico, outfitted a wagon train to go from that place to north Texas to Fort Towson, on Red River. The expedition left Chihuahua April 3, 1839. In this party were one hundred men, accompanied by fifty dragoons, and seven wagons, which carried \$300,000 in specie and bullion. Dr. Connelly and party followed the trail of the Spanish conquistadores along the Conchos River to its junction with the Rio Grande. From La Junta (Ojinaga) the Connelly party followed the old Jumano or Mendoza trail to the Pecos, then across Texas to Fort Towson.

The Indians had lost the name Jumano by

this time, and were referred to as Comanches and Apaches. The Chihuahua Trail had many parents, beginning with the primitives, who first made trails across the Big Bend from watering place to watering place, and to the Salt Lakes and the Buffalo country. Then came the conquistadores. Dr. Connelly was the American father of the Chihuahua Trail from the Mexican City of that name to the Pecos River.

Indians were too plentiful in the Big Bend section at the time of Connelly's expedition for small parties to venture along the trail. It was not a great artery of commerce until the United States established military posts on the frontier.

Along came the war between the United States and Mexico. The United States army swept across Mexico. Chapultepec was stormed and captured September 14, 1847. This ended the war and on February 2, 1848, the Peace Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. In this Treaty the lower Rio Grande, from its mouth to El Paso, was designated as the boundary between Texas and Mexico. Both countries appointed Boundary Commissions



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