

and thus were the roads west of the Pecos officially opened.

Major W. H. Emory, First U. S. Cavalry, member of the United State Boundary Commission, arrived in the Big Bend section in the early fifties. In a letter to Washington he states, "I opened a road from the Presidio del Norte to Leon Springs, through the pass in the mountains that we called Puerto de Paisano. This is a valley on the northern slope of the principal range of the Limpia mountains, watered by a limpid stream. This road was opened for the double purpose of communication with my parties on the lower Rio Grande, and of shortening the distance from San Antonio to Chihuahua. The route followed by the merchant trains is by way of El Paso, a distance greater by three hundred miles. Fort Davis has been established since our survey. There is now a constantly travelled road connecting Fort Davis and Chihuahua, Mexico, via Presidio del Norte (Ojinaga)."

This trail developed into two equally used routes, one from Chihuahua crossing the Rio Grande at Presidio along the already described Mendoza trail to the Pecos River; here the trail divided, one branch turning south to San Antonio, while the other led through central Texas to Red River.

From the time Major Emory formally opened the road between Presidio and the Pecos until the outbreak of the Civil War, great caravans passed along the Chihuahua trail.

SAN ANTONIO-SAN DIEGO MAIL

There was much travel across the country west of the Pecos from 1849 to 1853. The travelers were emigrants, some going to California, some surveying parties, and others adventurers.

According to the unpublished memoirs of General Bliss, Captain Henry Skillman carried mail from San Antonio to El Paso once a month on horse or mule back in 1850.

In the latter part of 1853, a year before Fort Davis was established, J. M. Hunter and others in San Antonio inaugurated a stage line between San Antonio and El Paso. Only one coach was used and it required thirty days or more to make the round trip. This route followed the south branch of the Chihuahua trail from San Antonio to Comanche Springs. The road passed through Castroville, Fort Inge, to San Felipe (Del Rio), to Devils River, and up said river almost to its source, where it turned west across the divide between Devil's and Pecos Rivers.

The road wound down the Pecos Barracade, near where Live Oak Creek empties in-



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to the Pecos. From that point it ran along the East bank of the Pecos until a ford was found crossing to the west bank. The road meandered up its west bank for a good distance, then turning due west until Comanche Springs (Fort Stockton) was reached. At this place the Overland trail left the Chihuahua Trail and passed up Limpia Canyon to Skillman Grove, El Muerto, Van Horn Wells, Eagle Springs, Quitman Canyon, San Elizario into Franklin (El Paso). This line used the light Concord Coach, pulled by five mules, and capable of carrying seven passengers, besides mail bags. After leaving Fort Inge, no change of animals was made between there and El Paso, because there were not any stage stands.

Fort Davis on Limpia Creek was formally established in 1854; Fort Lancaster, August 20, 1855; and Camp Hudson, 1857. In 1851 a group of soldiers camped near Comanche Springs and called it Camp Stockton. It was made a post March 23, 1859.

This line was kept up in an uncertain way until summer, 1857, when it was taken over and established as a regular route by the Birch interests. June that year the Post office Department at Washington awarded a contract to Birch to carry the mail from Indianola, Texas, to San Diego, California. The terms of the contract called for two trips each way per month in a four horse stage, and Birch was to receive \$149,000.00 a year for his service. Birch died before the line could be put in operation, but his able superintendent, J. C. Woods, accompanied the first stage going through, and gathered data for the schedule.

The second stage leaving San Antonio, July, 1857, did not fare so well. The party was under charge of Captain Big Foot Wallace, and, when they arrived at the upper crossing of Devils River, a party of a hundred Apache Indians attacked them. The mail party consisted of the Captain and five men, one six mule coach, and twenty two head of