

PASSWORD



The Eugene O. Porter Special Edition

107th Annual Meeting of the
TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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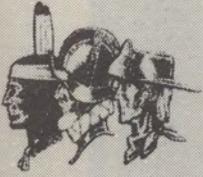
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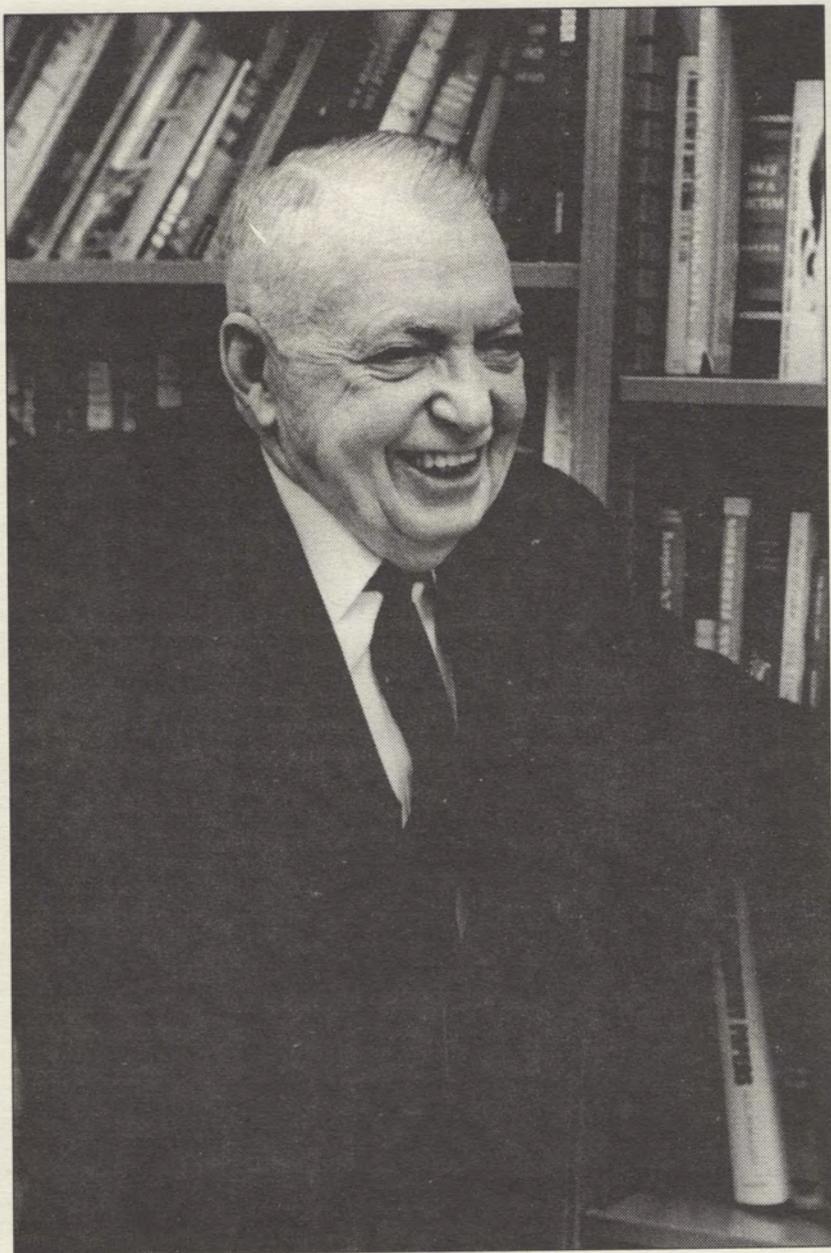
The Eugene O. Porter Special Edition

to commemorate the 107th Annual Meeting in El Paso of the
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The articles included in this issue are reproduced as they were originally published in order that the original flavor of the articles not be diluted. The facilities available for printing are now much more sophisticated and the style of documentation has changed over the years. Additions have been made only in the article "Rails to the Pass of the North" in which the names of some of the railroads have been inserted in order to facilitate the reading.



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An Introduction to Missions of the Paso del Norte Area

By Rex Gerald

This article appeared in *Password*, Volume XX, Number 2, Summer 1975, and received the Eugene O. Porter award for the year 1975.



Missions have long received the attention of travelers and scholars in the Southwest but in our concern with modern problems we sometimes fail to realize that the missionaries were often the first non-aboriginal settlers in many areas. Spanish missionaries were among the first Europeans to set foot on soil of the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez region when, in the summer of 1581, the Rodriguez-Chamuscado expedition passed through on their way to convert the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. The Paso del Norte area held no attraction for them, however, because there were no Indian settlements of any type within many leagues (Hammond and Rey 1966:80). A year and a half later, in the winter of 1582-3, Antonio de Espejo led an expedition through the Pass of the North to rescue Father Rodriguez and the other priests who were reported to be in danger. The party camped at La Barranca de Los Vuelos (the Canyon of the Oxbows)—probably the Pass—after having bypassed the swamps below the Pass without encountering any natives. The last village visited was 20 leagues (approximately 73 miles) downstream from the Pass below the present location of El Porvenir, Chihuahua, and no Indians were encountered above the Pass for many leagues although recently abandoned rancherías (camps) were noted within the first 14 leagues (ca. 51 miles) (Hammond and Rey 1966:169-70).

Other expeditions, including that of Captain Juan de Morlete with the imprisoned Gaspar de Sosa and his colonists (Schroeder and Matson 1965), traversed the area during the next decade and a half but it was not until the time of Don Juan de Oñate with his colonists bound for the Pueblo region that additional descriptions of the people and the terrain are available. Instead of following the Rio Conchos east to the present Ojinaga, Chihuahua, area and then traveling up the Rio Grande to the Pass and on north, as had earlier expeditions, Oñate's party of 400 men and 130 families, together with 83 wagons and carts containing their possessions, and a herd of over 7000 head of livestock, marched due north through the present Ciudad Chihuahua area and reached the Rio Grande some 31 miles below the Pass in the vicinity of the modern town of Guadalupe Bravo.

Captain Gaspar Perez de Villagra recounted in his epic poem of the expedition that his advanced party reached the river on 20 April 1598 after having suffered great thirst while crossing the sand dune areas of interior Chihuahua. They found the river so swollen that two thirst-driven horses were swept away when they rushed into the river to drink. Oxen were driven overnight to the river for water and back through the sand dunes again to pull out the wagons (Perez de Villagra 1967). His description of their satisfaction upon finally reaching the haven afforded by the river's banks is portrayed as follows:

Joyfully we tarried 'neath the pleasant shade of the wide spreading trees which grew along the river banks. It seemed to us that these were, indeed, the Elysian fields of happiness, where, forgetting all our past misfortunes could lie beneath the sandy bowers and rest our tired aching bodies, enjoying those comforts so long denied us. It was with happiness that we saw our gaunt horses browsing in the grassy meadows, enjoying a well deserved and needed rest. Happy, indeed, were we, as happy as the buzzing bees which flitted from flower to flower, gathering the sweet nectar for their winter's store; as happy as the countless birds of every size and hue which hopped from branch to branch among the leafy bowers, singing their sweetest peans of praise to our good Lord, the Father of us all. (Perez de Villagra 1967:127)

On 30 April 1598, Ascension Day, Don Juan de Oñate took possession of New Mexico at a point on the west side of the Rio Grande some three leagues (ca.11 miles) upstream from the place at which the expedition struck the river and some 5.5 leagues

(ca. 20 miles) below the Pass and ford. This locality was known henceforth as "La Toma," the place of taking possession. After fording the river just below the pass but before reaching the Pass Oñate saw the ruts cut by the carts of Castaño de Sosa's colonists on their way back to Mexico City guarded by Morlete. This would have been in the present downtown El Paso area. Some 20 miles above the Pass Oñate stopped at the campsite at which Captain Morlete was said to have hanged four Indians for stealing horses—the law of the west was already in effect (Hammond and Rey 1953).

Between 1598 and the time of the establishment of the mission, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in 1657 or 58, Paso del Norte was visited only by the drovers and travelers on the supply caravans making the round trip from Mexico City to Santa Fe every three to six years. Mission supplies were transported to New Mexico and cotton and woolen blankets, hides, pinon nuts, and salt were taken to the markets in the south (Scholes 1937:188).

The Indians usually encountered near the Pass, according to the Franciscan priest, Father Alonso de Benavides, who came through the area in 1625 on his way to assume duties as Custodian of the New Mexico missions, were called Mansos or Gorretas. Gorretas because they cut and fashioned their hair in such a way that it resembled a small club-like cap standing on the head and colored red with paint or blood, and Mansos because they had apparently had unfortunate experiences with the Spaniards' dogs and had learned, even before the passage of the Oñate colonists, that they were called off by the imperious command, "Sal ai!"—"get out!", and the proclamation that they come quietly and in peace—"Manso!"—to the undoubted amusement of the Europeans (Ayer 1965:13-16; Hammond and Rey 1953:315).

The Manso are described as a people that had no houses, only huts of branches. They did not sew and the men did not wear any clothing. The women only covered themselves from the waist down with two deer skins, one in front and the other behind. They, like others in the region, are said to have tried to do all the evil they could to the travelers whenever they found the opportunity; otherwise, they came into camp to beg for food. An entire cow was said to have readily been consumed raw by a few of them without anything being left over. In spite of their barbarity Benavides made a strong plea for priests to convert the Manso (Ayer 1965:13-14).

It was not until 1656 that missionary activities were finally initiated among the Manso, however. In that year Fathers Francisco Perez and Juan Cabal congregated some of the Manso in a mission settlement at the Pass and built a little church. Father Cabal had also started missionary work among the Suma, another nomadic group living down river from the Pass (Scholes 1930:194).

Circumstantial evidence suggests that the success in obtaining funds and supplies needed for the establishment of the mission among the Indians at the Pass was due to providence, or else that Fathers Perez and Cabal were opportunistic enough to take advantage of the egoism of a political figure and were wise enough to see the potential of the synonymous names of an Indian group and ecclesiastical authority.

On their way to New Mexico in 1652 the two priests noted the possibilities of the Manso conversion and actually baptized an infant, and of course, they were aware of the name of the Franciscan supply officer, Procurator-General Father Tomas Manso, who was conducting them and the supplies north. During the preceding 20 years he had occupied every important Franciscan post in New Mexican religious circles and was well known and trusted by representatives of the crown in Mexico City (Scholes 1930:191). When, on their second trip to New Mexico in 1656, Fathers Perez and Cabal found themselves in the company of the newly appointed governor of New Mexico, Don Juan Manso de Contreras, the younger brother of Father Tomas, on a wagon train controlled by their old supporter Father Tomas Manso, recently appointed Bishop of Nicaragua, the script of the allegory must have been completed. Alms were solicited in New Mexico by Governor Manso, support from the crown was arranged by Bishop Manso in Mexico City (Scholes 1930:194-5), and the success of the mission seemed assured.

There is no doubt that work was actually begun because on All Souls' Day (November 2) 1656 former governor of New Mexico Don Juan de Samaniego spent the day at the Manso mission where he was confessed and received communion along with others. The mission building must have been a flimsy temporary structure to have been erected in the six months or so since Fathers Perez and Cabal had returned to Paso del Norte in the spring. Unfortunately, no name is mentioned and there is no indication that the mission had been formally dedicated (Scholes 1930: 194-5), and Fathers Perez and Cabal appear to have returned to Mexico when the

*Don Juan de Oñate
took possession of
New Mexico on
April 30, 1589.*



caravan continued on its way in the fall of 1656. At least there is no further mention of Father Cabal and a priest named Francisco Perez Barba is listed as having abandoned the supply caravan bound for New Mexico in 1658 along with nine other priests (Scholes 1930:208-10). This flight of priests was precipitated by a quarrel that broke out in Mexico and continued on the caravan between the newly named governor of New Mexico, Don Bernardo Lopez de Mendizabal, and the newly elected procurator-general and custodio of New Mexico missions, Father Juan Ramirez (Scholes 1930:197-8). As a result of the flight of the priests there were not enough for the proposed new mission at Paso del Norte and the unattended Manso mission apparently fell into ruin.

The traditional date for the founding or refounding, of Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Mansos del Paso del Norte is 8 December 1659, when Father Garcia de San Francisco recorded an *Auto de Fundacion*, now known only from a copy of a certified copy in the mission made by Adolph Bandelier in the 1880's. It has been suggested, however, that Father Garcia could not have been in Paso del Norte on Guadalupe day in 1659 and that a clerical error had probably altered the original date of 1657 or 1658 (Walz 1951:16). Father Garcia described his 1657 or 1658 structure as a small church of mud and palings with a friar residence of thatch in the midst of congregated Manso rancherías or camp groups (Hughes 1914:306). On 2 April 1662 the cornerstone of a permanent building was blessed and some six years later the completed structure was dedicated, on 15 January 1668 (Hughes 1914:308).

A description of the mission complex, penned a few days later by Father Salvador de Guerra, maintains that the temple was the most beautiful in the entire Custodia of New Mexico and that the convento had seven roomy cells for the priests; the Mission church and convent were surrounded by vineyards and orchards. Four or five priests participated in the dedication ceremony which was attended by 400 persons, heathen and Christian Indians, and the event was enlivened by native dances and fireworks (Walz 1951:18).

The location of this original permanent Mission Guadalupe has generally been assumed to be identical to that of the present mission on the plaza beside the Cathedral in downtown Ciudad Juarez (Kubler 1940:97), but it is only within the last few years that actual tests of this assumption have been possible.

In 1968-69 the Mexican government and the Catholic church cooperated in the restoration of Mission N. S. de Guadalupe to its pre-1850 condition insofar as that condition could be ascertained by arquitecto Felipe Lacouture, then director of the Museo de Arte e Historia, of Ciudad Juarez. Reinforced concrete pillars and steel I-beams were incorporated behind the wall plaster and above the original roof beams, and indirect lighting and air conditioning were installed. During this restoration I had the privilege of examining the structure from below the floor to above the ceiling, and, in the process, collected samples from ceiling and wall beams and from the bell tower. These wood specimens have been dated by Mr. Tommy Naylor, formerly of El Paso and now of the Tree-Ring Laboratory of the University of Arizona, to three distinct

periods. Beams from the church proper indicate that most construction took place over a relatively brief period of time but that some beams in the roof and choir loft were added or replaced a few years later. The outer rings were removed from these beams during the process of reducing them to uniform diameters so that the exact cutting dates cannot be determined but all were alive during the middle or early part of the 17th century, making a 1662-68 construction period possible. The third series of dates come from the bell tower and indicated that it was probably built around 1800. A map of the mission made in 1766 (Urrutia n.d.) does not show the bell tower while a stone engraving made about 1850 and published in a boundary survey report does show it (Emory 1857: Plate opposite p. 92).

It may also be of interest to note that the compass rose pattern carved into the original beams in the ceiling was also repeated as a wainscot painted in red and yellow over a black outline on the lower five feet of the original interior plaster. A portion of this original painted plaster along with fragments of three later designs was recovered and preserved during the reconstruction. A carved corbel of cottonwood noted in the clerestory area bore an inscription burned into it that read, "Hizo por Fran.o Pico," i.e., "made by Francisco Pico." This name, hidden away for over 300 years in an inaccessible portion of the church, has not yet been located on any of the preserved lists of priests, lay brothers, Indians, or citizens from this time period so that the man thus immortalized is still really unknown.

The Suma Indians living in the general area south of the Pass were not neglected during the 1650's and 60's. Fray Juan Cabal is said to have been about to begin missionary work among them in 1656 (Scholes 1930:194-5) but it remained for the founder of the permanent Manso mission, Father Garcia de San Francisco, to get the mission work going again among the Suma and in 1665 at a site 12 leagues (ca. 31 miles) from Mission N.S. de Guadalupe that was named Las Llagas de Nuestro Serafico Padre San Francisco (the Wounds of our Angelic Father Saint Francis). This site is said to have been located at the place where the road from the south strikes the river, and near the Sierra de la Toma—the mountain range named in memory of Oñate's taking possession of New Mexico in 1598 (Vetancurt in Hughes 1914:310; Map of Miera y Pacheco in Adams and Chavez 1956:268-9). This mission has not been located on the ground but is presumably some 10 miles

below Guadalupe Bravo, on the Chihuahua side of the Rio Grande. Several additional Suma missions were founded and existed for short periods of time in the Paso del Norte area but only those located near the Rio Grande will be mentioned specifically since they are the ones that may have been placed on the American side of the river by channel changes.

At the beginning of 1680 there seem to have been only two permanent settlements on the Rio Grande below the Pass, Mission N.S. de Guadalupe for the Mansos just below the Pass and Mission San Francisco for the Sumas some 12 leagues (31 miles) below that. Before the end of the year all of the surviving Spaniards and friendly Indians in New Mexico—almost 2000 souls—would be in the area, refugees from revolting Pueblo Indians. The Pueblo Revolt began on San Lorenzo day (10 August 1680) and by 18 September 1680 the refugees had reached the area of the Pass but were prevented from crossing to Mission N.S. Guadalupe by political jurisdictional technicalities and the flooding river. They remained on the Texas side at a place named La Salineta some four or five leagues (ca. 10 or 13 miles) above the Mission for three weeks before crossing to settle at the Mission and at three camps located at two league (5.2 mile) intervals down river. The camps were named, in sequence down river, El Santisimo Sacramento, San Pedro de Alcantara, and San Lorenzo. All were relatively short-lived, although some sites may have been reoccupied later (Walz 1951:36).

In preparation for an attempt at the reconquest of New Mexico, in September and October of 1681 Governor Otermin ordered a census of men capable of bearing arms and their equipment. There were five localities in which Spanish men at arms were residing thus suggesting in itself that the various households had moved to advantageous locations during the winter and spring of 1680-81. San Lorenzo was then called "San Lorenzo de la Toma" and was probably located near the point at which the Camino Real left the river for the interior some 12 leagues or 31 miles south of the Pass. San Pedro de Alcantara was listed and was presumably in the original location. La Punta de Jimenez was located three leagues (ca. 8 miles) from San Lorenzo and La Punta del Ancon de Jimenez was two leagues (ca. 5 miles) from La Punta de Jimenez. "El Paso," the fifth location listed is N.S. de Guadalupe del Paso (Walz 1951:51-3). The following year San Lorenzo de la Toma is described as a district of more than four leagues along the river in which fifty-five different households

had sowed some 45 acres of grain (Walz 1951:89).

As a result of an unsuccessful attempt to reconquer New Mexico over the winter of 1681-82 Governor Otermin captured and brought to the Paso del Norte area 385 more Tigua Indians from Isleta, New Mexico, and settled them with other Tiguas in the pueblo of Corpus Christi de la Ysleta del Sur. Piros and Tompiros brought with the initial refugees were settled in Mission San Antonio de Senecu and more Piros and some Tanos were settled at the Mission of N.S. de Socorro. Socorro was apparently directly across the river from San Lorenzo but the location of Ysleta and Senecu at this time is unknown. The old Suma mission of San Francisco was located 1.5 leagues from San Lorenzo de la Toma.

The site of San Lorenzo de la Toma was located in the vicinity of the place at which Oñate took possession of New Mexico in 1598. His journal records only 8.5 leagues from the point where the colonists first reached the river, and presumably where New Mexico began, to the Pass rather than the 12 leagues from the Pass at which San Lorenzo was located. This discrepancy in distance from the Pass is not yet completely resolved but it seems probable that the Spanish geometric league of about 3.65 miles may have been used by Oñate while a hundred years later the Mexican league of about 2.6 miles may have been in use (Haggard 1941: 8-9). Eight and one-half Spanish geometric leagues and 12 Mexican leagues are each almost exactly 31 miles and this distance below the Pass brings one to the mouth of the Arroyo de San Marcos de Cantarrecio which is also known as the Puerto de Guadalupe. This Arroyo provides an easy route into and out of the Rio Grande Valley and leads directly south. The mountain range immediately south-east of the Puerto is named Sierra de la Toma on Miera y Pacheco's map made in the 1770's (Adams and Chavez 1956:268-9).

Don Domingo Jironza Petriz de Cruzate became governor of New Mexico in August 1683, replacing Governor Otermin. One of his first acts was to establish a garrison or presidio, named Nuestra Señora del Pilar y Gloriosa San Jose, in a location midway between Mission N.S. de Guadalupe and San Lorenzo and believed by some modern students to be quite near the present site of San Elizario, Texas, which site was then on the west side of the Rio Grande. Although timber was cut and adobe prescribed for the construction it is doubtful that the presidio was actually constructed because of the opposition of the soldiers and citizens to its location and because of the Indian revolts and threatened revolts (Hughes 1914:364).

As a result of threatening revolts in 1683 among the Indians settled at Socorro, that pueblo and mission was moved to a site near the present location of the church of Socorro and the following year the presidio, the pueblos and missions of Ysleta and Senecu, and the provisional capital, San Lorenzo, were all moved to the immediate vicinity of Mission N.S. de Guadalupe so that the Spaniards and Indians could be better protected from the revolting Manso and Suma Indians and so that the Christianized Indians could be prevented from joining in the revolt (Hughes 1914:366). The present churches of Ysleta and Senecu are presumably on or near the sites to which they were removed in 1683.

The presidio was probably located near Mission N.S. de Guadalupe where it was shown on the map drawn by Urrutia in 1766 (Urrutia n.d.) and where it was still located in 1852 as shown in an engraving published in the U.S. Boundary Survey Report (Emory 1857: Plate opposite p. 92). Until recently that site was occupied by the governmental offices of the Municipality of Ciudad Juarez. San Lorenzo was apparently moved to a site close to or identical to that now occupied by the church of San Lorenzo some four miles east of Mission N.S. de Guadalupe where traditional Indian dances are still held each San Lorenzo day.

Revolt, real and threatened, continued to plague the Spaniards in the Paso del Norte area until the reconquest of New Mexico in 1692 when most of the Spanish families were forced to resettle in the northern province thus relieving the population stress locally. The pueblo of San Lorenzo was apparently completely abandoned because it was later repeatedly settled by missionized Suma bands who just as often revolted and fled because of real or imagined mistreatment by local Spanish authorities. The Indian pueblos were not returned to New Mexico and the missions of the Paso del Norte area remained relatively stable during the next century except for the periodic settlement and flight of the numerous Suma bands in missions with names such as Santa Gertrudis, San Diego, and Guadalupe (this is not the Manso mission at the Pass).

Shortly before the reconquest of New Mexico in 1692 Governor Diego de Vargas gave formal title of mission buildings, furnishings, and lands to Missions Guadalupe, San Lorenzo, Ysleta, Socorro, and Senecu but refused to give the church officials title to the lands of the pueblo surrounding these missions (Records in El Paso County Clerks Office Book 287:298-305;2 Walz 1951:301-4).

In 1751 the Pueblo of San Antonio de Ysleta, and by inference the other mission towns of the area, was given title to its land with a grant extending one league in the cardinal directions from the church. This title was recognized by the State of Texas in a relinquishment act of 1 February 1852 which is recorded in Gammel's Laws (1898:4:53). The landmarks designating the corners of this grant are still known by the older Tigua of Ysleta—Loma Tigua (Tigua Hill), on the east side of Interstate 10 near the Lomaland exit; Palo Clavado (Nailed Stick or Cross), near Interstate 10 and the Avenue of the Americas exit; Loma Colorada (Red Hill), a high red hill on the terrace edge and visible on a clear day behind Ciudad Juarez near highway Mexico 45; and El Sausal (Willow Thicket), a barren place now on the edge of the flood plain in the eastern Ciudad Juarez (personal interview notes). Some 11 square miles of the present City of El Paso is included in this grant which may still be valid.

In 1766 a Spanish nobleman, the Marquis de Rubi, was traveling through northern New Spain under orders from Charles III to inspect the garrisons on the frontier and make recommendations to increase their efficiency at keeping the marauding Apaches out of the settled areas. The cartographer of the expedition was Nicolas Lafora, Captain of Royal Engineers, to whom we are indebted for a short but enlightening description

On the 19th we traveled five leagues north over rolling hills with several small ravines and gorges along the road and much mesquite but little pasture. We arrived at the presidio of Nuestra Señora del Pilar del Paso del Rio del Norte, where there is a cavalry company composed of forty-six men, one sergeant, and three officers.

The map I drew shows the arrangement of what they call a presidio and part of Guadalupe pueblo. Following the river to the east along its right bank one comes to the pueblos of San Lorenzo del Real, San Antonio de Senecu, San Antonio de la Isleta, La Purisima Concepcion del Socorro, and the hacienda Los Tiburcios. These places constitute a continuous settlement seven leagues long. The inhabitants of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe are Spaniards, mestizos, mulattoes, and Indians of the Tigua and Piro nations, and some Genizaros. At San Lorenzo are the Sumas Indians; at Senecu the Piros; at La Isleta the Tiguas; at Socorro more Piros. In each one there are a few civilized people. Those who live in Los Tiburcios hacienda belong to this class. The total is 5,000 souls.

All this stretch of land is very well cultivated, producing everything that is planted, particularly very good grapes which are in no way inferior to those of Spain. There are many European fruits which are produced in such abundance that they are allowed to rot on the trees. The inhabitants make passable wine and better brandy, but at times they do not harvest enough maize for their support, because the ground is devoted to vines and other crops (Kinnaird 1958:82-3).

A map of the Paso del Norte valley made in the mid-1770's shows the relative location of the settlements in the order named by Lafora. In addition, across the river from Tiburcios, on the east side, are the ruins of the Suma Mission of Las Caldas and the abandoned hacienda of San Antonio. Still farther down river on the west side is the former Suma mission of Guadalupe (not the Manso mission at the Pass), and still further down, the Presidio of San Elceario, in the original location suggested by the Marquis de Rubi as a result of his inspection tour. Rubi was also instrumental in having the presidio removed from Paso del Norte in 1773 to the site of Carrizal some 100 miles to the south. The San Elceario garrison was moved to the Tiburcios location in 1780 and thereby transferred the name of San Elceario, now spelled and pronounced Elizario, to that locality, since shifted by a channel change to the east side of the river, where it is retained today.

These towns of Spaniards and Indians, all of whom were to become Mexicans after 1821, continued with relatively little change throughout the succeeding decades, planting their crops, combating the river to prevent its washing away their fields, rebuilding irrigation ditches and dams after each flood, and fighting Apaches constantly.

Floods had, from time to time, brought about changes as a result of their destruction of fields and structures. The church of Socorro is now on a site selected after the earlier church was destroyed by the overflowing Rio Grande in 1829 (Calleros 1951:32 or in 1838 (Conklin 1947:11:53). The new structure was in the present location by 1842, if not earlier, to judge from a beam over the stairway to the choirloft that bears that date together with the names of the constructors—this inscription has recently been removed or covered over. The pre-1829 or -1838 site is said to have been less than a mile to the south southeast of the present location (Conklin 1947: 11: 53). Another flood a few years later,

possibly on 12 January 1849 (Sonnichsen 1968:132), brought a major alteration in the course of the river and placed the lower river settlements of Ysleta, Socorro, and San Elizario on the east side of the main channel although for decades they were actually on an island in the river. When the boundary was surveyed in the 1850's the line was drawn between Mexico and the United States along the main channel west of these villages.

At the turn of the 20th century several of the Indian communities in the Paso del Norte area were still functioning as Pueblos. Adolph Bandelier, the famous archeologist-ethnographer-historian, visited Guadalupe, Senecu, Ysleta, and other pueblos in 1883 and interviewed Manso, Piro, and Tigua Indians. He also learned that the last Suma had recently died and that his son lived nearby (Bandelier 1890:230-1, 248ff.; Lange and Riley 1970:164).

In 1901 Dr. Jesse Walter Fewkes, an anthropologist with the Smithsonian Institution, visited Ysleta and discovered that that Pueblo still had a functioning tribal government with a Cacique or chief, a Governor, a Lieutenant Governor, a Captain, and lesser officials, and that a number of ceremonial dances were still performed annually. That tribal government is still functioning today under rules set down in writing in 1895 (Fewkes 1902:62-4), and many of the men holding offices have genealogies leading back to the original refugees from Isleta, New Mexico. The Ysleta tribal drum is believed to be the shell of the same one brought down from Isleta, New Mexico, in 1682.

A few years ago I was taken by Nicholas Hauser, who was studying the Paso del Norte Indian communities, to a house in San Lorenzo and was shown a pole-and-brush structure that had been occupied until his death years ago by a Manso Indian. Many of the imperishable artifacts were still in the house.

In view of the slight knowledge available on the Piro Indians who once lived just above Elephant Butte reservoir and were settled in Senecu and other Paso del Norte area missions in 1682, it is of interest to know that there are still a few Piros living in the Senecu-Socorro-Ysleta communities and that a retired tribal officer at Ysleta pueblo, who is half Piro and half Tigua, owns and still plays a drum he inherited from his Piro father.

Indigenous buildings, Spanish Colonial Missions, and Mexican haciendas still survive in the Paso del Norte area, as do the descendants of the people responsible for them. The preservation of

these bits of the regional heritage is of great importance to both native and newcomer to the area, if one is to gain an appreciation of one's cultural environment and if one is to realize the satisfaction that comes with an understanding and pride in one's heritage.

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1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Missions Seminar: A Regional Conference on the Preservation of Indigenous Mexican Colonial Architecture in the El Paso area and Rio Grande Valley, Cosponsored by the Texas Historical Commission and the El Paso County Historical Society, Ysleta Mission, El Paso, 1 March 1975.
2. This reference and many others were brought to the attention of the writer by Tom Diamond who generously made available his extensive chronology of events affecting the Paso del Norte area.



The Merchants and the Military, 1849-1854

By W. H. Timmons

This article appeared in *Password*, Volume XXVII, Number 2, Summer 1982 and received the Eugene O. Porter Award for the year 1982.

Dr. W. H. Timmons, emeritus professor of history at the University of Texas at El Paso, is a frequent contributor to *Password*. He offers here for the first time an important letter by local pioneer B. F. Coons.



In accordance with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of February 2, 1848, which officially ended the war between the United States and Mexico, the Rio Grande became an international boundary between the two nations up to the point where the river struck the southern boundary of

New Mexico. All territory north of the river thus became a part of the United States, and El Paso del Norte, the largest of the settlements south of the river, became a border town. By the end of the year, the California gold rush had begun, overnight bringing in hordes of discharged soldiers, outlaws, wife deserters, debtors, and characters larger than life, transforming the quiet, sleepy little community of El Paso del Norte into a bustling, brawling frontier crossroads. To the California emigrants who braved hundreds of miles of the vast dry plain of western Texas, a region virtually without timber, grassland, or water, El Paso del Norte, with its cottonwood trees, gardens, vineyards, town plaza, adobe structures with thick walls and shaded entrances, must have seemed like a true oasis. Here was the last place to rest, purchase supplies, secure passports, and refresh dehydrated bodies with generous allotments of "Pass whiskey."¹

By late 1849 five Anglo-American settlements had been founded along the left bank of the Rio Grande. The first and northernmost was Frontera, established about eight miles above El Paso del Norte in 1848 by T. Frank White, who built a trading post there to reap profits from the old Chihuahua-Santa Fe Trade, coupled with the new traffic of gold seekers passing through on their way to California. White's hope that a military post would be established at Frontera never materialized, so when United States Boundary Commissioner John R. Bartlett arrived in the area in November, 1850, White offered him the option of buying Frontera for \$3,000, or two acres of land for one dollar and the buildings for \$65 a month on condition that an observatory be erected there. Bartlett accepted the second option and built an observatory which the boundary commission used during 1851. Some months later, Frontera was completely destroyed by Apaches.²

To the south of Frontera and across from El Paso del Norte, Mexican War veteran Simeon Hart late in 1849 established his flour mill known as "El Molino." Several years later he built his residence which is still standing, now La Hacienda Cafe. Commissioner Bartlett called Hart's mill "a fine establishment," and the house, built in the Mexican style, was "large and convenient, containing every luxury and comfort of home," a principal attraction being the private library. Here Hart and his wife, Jesusita, provided accommodations for weary travelers and entertained them in a charming and gracious manner.³

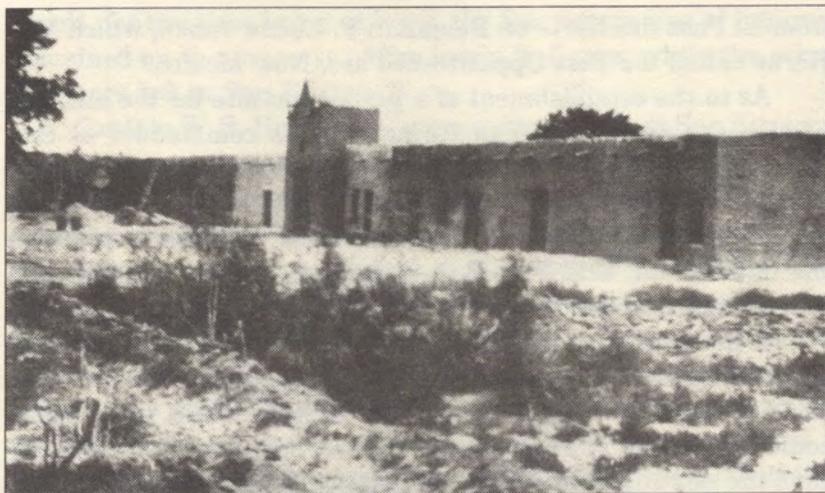
To the east of Hart's mill lay the property of Benjamin Franklin Coons, who purchased it from Juan Maria Ponce de León of El Paso del Norte for \$18,000, probably in the summer of 1849. Paseño aristocrat Ponce de León had spent many years developing his property, so that at the time he sold it to Coons, it contained an adobe ranch house, quarters for a hundred laborers, and facilities for flourishing livestock and agricultural activities. Major Jefferson Van Horne, commander of six companies of the Third Infantry which arrived on September 8, 1849, found the facilities on Coons' Ranch to be the most suitable in the area. Coons therefore leased the main buildings and six acres of land to the Army for a military post for \$4,200 a year. His contract also provided that he would be in charge of transporting supplies to the new post. Obviously, his speculative venture had paid off handsomely. Shortly after, he erected new buildings, including a tavern, warehouse, stables, and corrals just west of the Army post to house his growing

mercantile interests.⁴

To the east of Coons' Ranch, or Franklin as it came to be called, was Magoffinsville, established in 1849 by the veteran Chihuahua trader, James W. Magoffin. The settlement came to be known as "the American El Paso," and consisted of a group of large, well-built adobe structures erected around an open square. They were used as stores and warehouses and were stocked with merchandise. The property was situated about half a mile from the river and was watered by an acequia which ran through the square. Here Magoffin built a mansion of hacienda proportions where he frequently hosted army officers and government officials, entertaining them in the grand manner. "With delicacies prepared in New York and Paris for the foreign markets," he could serve "a cold collation that would have done credit to the caterer of a metropolitan hotel." John W. Bartlett, the boundary commissioner, stayed at Magoffinsville for a while, and on one occasion gave a party which lasted all night. It was a great success, even to four great "new-fashioned chandeliers improvised for the occasion" out of sardine tins fixed to a hoop off a pork barrel, wrapped with Apache calicoes and supplied with "a dozen burners each," that "shed such a ray of light upon the festal hall, as rendered the charms of the fair señoritas doubly captivating."⁵

Magoffin's merchandising and livestock activities, supplemented by income from a ranch known as Canutillo about fifteen miles to north, brought him a fortune, although his efforts to levy tolls on salt mines he controlled on the eastern slopes of the San Andreas Mountains met with little success. He furnished Bartlett's commission with food, clothing, and supplies for which he received a sum totaling more than \$5,500, which he deposited in his account with the firm of Wood, Bacon, and Co. of Philadelphia. Bartlett predicted that Magoffinsville would remain the center of American settlements in the El Paso area. Indeed, it was here that on August 17, 1850, Magoffin married Dolores Valdez, the younger sister of his deceased first wife.⁶

To the east of Magoffinsville was the property of Hugh Stephenson, of Chihuahua mining fame. He had married Juana Ascárate, who came from a prominent landowning family of El Paso del Norte, and the property was situated on that part of a family estate which the shifting Rio Grande had placed on the north side. Stephenson had extensive silver and copper mining and livestock interests, and was the first to prospect and develop systematical-



Ft. Bliss was under construction at Magoffinsville when this photo was made (Courtesy of National Archives and Password, #2, 1982).

ly the mineral resources of New Mexico, particularly in the Organ Mountains. On his property in El Paso area, which by 1852 had come to be known as Concordia, he erected a number of buildings, and his home was large and comfortable, though perhaps not as pretentious as Magoffin's or Hart's.⁷

Thus, by the end of 1849 five Anglo-American settlements had been established north of the river. In addition, there were the three Mexican settlements of Ysleta, Socorro, and San Elizario, which the shifting river had placed on the American side. San Elizario was the largest of these, and in 1850 became the seat of El Paso County, which the Texas legislature had organized early that year. It was evident that a bilingual, bicultural, binational complex was taking shape at the Pass of the North.⁸

Already there were a number of compelling reasons for establishing a military post on the Rio Grande—the defense of the new boundary, the protection of the new settlements against Apache attacks, and the maintenance of law and order which had become increasingly critical with the arrival of hordes of California emigrants. A recommendation of Secretary of War W. L. Marcy in July, 1848, that a post ought to be established on the north side of the Rio Grande opposite El Paso del Norte was at length implemented with the arrival of six companies of infantry from San Antonio on September 8, 1849, under the command of Major Jefferson Van Horne. Two companies were stationed at the old presidio of San Elizario, while the other four established quarters across the river

from El Paso del Norte on Benjamin F. Coons' ranch, which Van Horne called the Post Opposite El Paso, New Mexico.⁹

As to the establishment of a permanent site for the military post in the area, both Van Horne and his commander at San Elizario, Captain W. S. Henry, favored the old presidio there. Benjamin F. Coons, described by Van Horne as a "shrewd, enterprising man," was charging the Army \$350 per month, while on the other hand, said Van Horne, the rent for the hospital and officers' quarters at the presidio was much less. Moreover, Van Horne believed that the old presidio could be repaired partially and rebuilt at little expense. With a few adjacent buildings which could be rented or bought on moderate terms, he said, the presidio could be made to quarter four or even six companies much better than the existing facilities on Coons' property. Wood was plentiful, grazing was good around San Elizario, and the people there were orderly and well behaved. Finally, Van Horne pointed out that if the troops were stationed at the old presidio, they would be "removed from the wretched hordes of gamblers, drunkards, and desperadoes in El Paso del Norte."¹⁰

Van Horne's plan to locate the permanent post at San Elizario, however, encountered opposition from several quarters. Captain Thomas L. Brent of the quartermaster corps said that the site was low and subject to overflow water, and was at that time standing in numerous stagnant pools. Moreover, he said that the old barracks were in a most dilapidated state, and even if they were repaired, they would accommodate only two companies. Lastly, Captain Brent said he could see no military advantage in the San Elizario site.¹¹

Strong opposition to Van Horne's plan came also from the merchants of the area. Under the leadership of James W. Magoffin, they drew up a petition pointing out that any removal of troops would leave the major routes through the Pass of the North completely unprotected, expose United States citizens to Indian depredations, and endanger property valued at \$300,000. All law and order would break down, the merchants argued, and the area would soon become victimized by the large band of outlaws of all nations at that time infesting the town of El Paso del Norte. This point in particular was emphasized by Colonel Emilio Langberg, the commander of the El Paso del Norte garrison, who said that it would be impossible for the small number of troops under his command to protect the settlers from the Indians and the marauders. As a

result, for the time being at least, the four companies of infantry remained on the property of Benjamin F. Coons, while the other two were left in San Elizario.¹²

Captain W. S. Henry, the commanding officer at San Elizario, strongly urged that it be established as a permanent post, pointing out that the presence of troops there had given the residents a feeling of security and had served as a great impetus for increasing agricultural production and stockraising. "The inhabitants are nervously anxious to know whether this protection is to be continued," he said, adding that many were refusing to make any improvements owing to the uncertainty, while others were leaving and settling on the Mexican side of the river. The old presidio, he concluded, offered numerous advantages for the construction of a permanent garrison that could not be found elsewhere. But the authorization that Captain Henry sought never came.¹³

A few months after Van Horne stationed his troops at the Post Opposite El Paso, Simeon Hart established his first flour mill, and on March 28, 1850, signed his first contract with the Army. Although a quantity was not specified, it provided that he would furnish flour for one year to the posts of Doña Ana, the Post Opposite El Paso, and San Elizario for eleven cents a pound. Most of Hart's flour had to be imported from his father-in-law's mill at Santa Cruz de Rosales in Chihuahua, since the mill on the Rio Grande remained a comparatively small operation for some time. Hart tried to get his contract extended to three years and expanded to include all military posts in Texas as far east as Eagle Pass, pointing out that he had spent \$25,000 for machinery, a wheat crop, and the purchase of teams. Instead, in 1851 Hart accepted a contract to furnish flour to the same three posts plus the escort to the United States Boundary Commission for one year at twelve-and-a-half cents per pound. Here again Hart would have liked to have had more, even though he always managed to do better than his competitors.¹⁴

Naturally, Hart strongly protested the Army's decision in 1851 to move the troops from the Post Opposite El Paso and San Elizario to Fort Fillmore, some 40 miles to the north. Hart's opposition, however, elicited only a reply from an Army officer that it was "not unreasonable to suppose that the removal of troops interfered very much with his interests and expectations." But Hart's losses were probably not as great as he expected, as the Army honored its contract with him, and he continued to supply the newly estab-

lished post at Fort Fillmore.¹⁵

It will be recalled that Benjamin F. Coons' contract with the Army contained a provision whereby he would be in charge of transporting supplies to the new post. Early in 1850 Coons went to San Antonio where he immediately impressed the merchants there with the advantages of a trade route across Texas in comparison with the road from Missouri to Santa Fe and El Paso del Norte. The trip from Independence, Missouri, to El Paso del Norte, he pointed out, took 80 days, while the trip from San Antonio could be done in 50. The annual trade with Chihuahua, he emphasized, amounted to 625 tons of freight worth \$1,000 a ton. Coons then entered into partnership with Lewis and Groesbeeck, well known commission merchants, with the object of obtaining the larger share of the freight business between San Antonio and El Paso del Norte in the transportation of military supplies to the Post Opposite El Paso.¹⁶

Coons ran into all sorts of problems toward the end of the summer of 1850, resulting in tremendous financial losses. A train of 300 teams left San Antonio around the middle of April, but four months later it was still 250 miles short of its destination. As it entered the trans-Pecos region, water became scarce, the grass was parched, and the teamsters, many of whom were rogues, fugitives, and footloose ex-soldiers of the Mexican War, became extremely troublesome. Learning of these details, Major Van Horne on September 1 wrote his superior that while part of the train might reach its destination by September 10, "the remainder God knows when." "The oxen are perishing," he continued, "and Coons' train is in wretched condition, he himself doubtful whether it will ever reach here." One month later Van Horne wrote that the whole system of transporting supplies seemed very defective. Much of the merchandise had been damaged, and the teamsters had used government supplies for their own subsistence.¹⁷

Adding to Coons' problems was a transaction he made with a notorious adventurer named Parker H. French. On August 18 Coons sold eighteen wagons, mules, and horses to French for the tidy sum of \$17,720.95, but the bills of credit drawn on Aspinwall and Howland of New York which Coons received turned out to be forgeries. The last segments of Coons' train finally arrived late in November, but Van Horne reported that it was of very inferior quality, and that the hard bread, bacon, and port were unfit for use. So much had been consumed by the command escort,

combined with the demands likely to be made by starving Indians, Van Horne added, that the supply was very short and would not last long.¹⁸

Realizing that the whole enterprise had been a complete failure, Coons sold twelve wagons to George Wentworth for \$3,000 in October to stave off his creditors, and then left for California. Here he was able to repair his fortunes somewhat, possibly with the help of a loan from his brother, and in early 1851 he returned to the El Paso area. By this time Coons' Ranch was occasionally called Franklin, presumably after his middle name, and so it was usually called for another decade or so, even though a post office was established in 1852 naming the settlement El Paso, Texas.¹⁹

Coons had been back in the El Paso area only a short time before he began to run into more hard luck. On July 12, 1851, Major E. Backus recommended the removal of troops from the Coons' Ranch site, which he had found objectionable for a number of reasons. He wrote:

The unusual expenditures to which the government has been subjected at this post have induced me to inquire into some of the most prominent causes which have produced them and to search for an appropriate remedy. A brief examination has satisfied me that the position occupied by the troops tends greatly to augment these expenditures, and that by removing them up or down the river a few miles only, you will add to the safety, health, and comfort of the troops, and seriously diminish the unnecessary outlay of funds.²⁰

The major then proceeded to list his objections: 1. It was not defensible even against musketry; 2. It afforded no appropriate accommodations for troops, and the annual rent which had been increased to \$4,900 he called "an exorbitant charge" 3. It afforded neither fuel nor grazing, and the Army was paying \$6,160 a year for wood and \$7,000 for hay; 4. It afforded no timber; and 5. It afforded no opportunities for farming. The major concluded by saying that adequate protection of officials and settlers in the area could be accomplished by one officer, fifteen men, a good guard-house, an acre or two of land, and some fast horses.²¹

Word of the possible withdrawal of troops spread rapidly around the area, causing conditions bordering on panic. Initiated by Charles W. Ogden and Simeon Hart, a petition, signed by 21 of the local citizenry, strongly protested the move. It emphasized

the strategic importance of the Pass—the inevitable renewal of Indian depredations which would result in incalculable losses of lives and property. Furthermore, Ben F. Coons, in an interesting document dated August 26, 1851, published here for the first time, submitted the following proposal to the Army:

Paso del Norte
Aug. 26, 1851

Col. —

I have the honor to submit to you the following proposition, and ask from you a consideration of the same, upon its merits.

I propose to furnish the quarters and grounds which are now occupied by the troops at this place free of rent for one year.

And further I propose to give a lot of ground suitable for the erection of barracks, storehouses, etc. and adjoining the same a lot of farming land to the extent of two hundred and fifty acres, the same to be selected by the commanding officer, to be occupied by the United States for the period of twenty years free of all charges and rents, and at the expiration of said term the property and premises as they may then exist shall revert to me, my heirs or assigns, the U. States having the privilege of purchasing the same at a valuation to be then made, or by agreement of the parties concerned.

I remain very respectfully
Your Ob't Sv't

Ben F. Coons [Signature]

Bvt. Col. E. V. Sumner
1st U. S. Drag. Comdg.
9th Mil. Dept.
Fort Union, N.M.

Although the local commander, Major Gouverneur Morris, recommended that the proposal be accepted, his superior in Santa Fe rejected it, and the troops were moved in September, 1851, to Fort Fillmore, some 40 miles to the north.²² As a result of this loss of income, Coons was unable to make the payments on his property and it was then repossessed by its former owner, Juan Maria Ponce de León. On his death in 1852 the property passed to his wife and daughter, who sold it two years later to William T. Smith for \$10,000. Coons left for California and never again returned to the El Paso area. The only thing he left was his middle name.²³

As the merchants had predicted, the withdrawal of troops and lifting of the military protection left the El Paso frontier defenseless and exposed. "We are in a sad and dreadful state," wrote one shortly after the troops had left, "as the Indians murder and rob almost at our very doors." County officials hastily organized a local Citizens' Committee on Indian Depredations, and petitions were drafted and addressed to state and national authorities urging immediate relief and protection. Otherwise, it was pointed out, the constituents were doomed to destruction. One petition, written from San Elizario, the county seat, to Governor P. H. Bell of Texas, and containing about 100 signatures (most of which were Mexican names, almost all of which were written in the same hand), stated that the Mexican population of San Elizario would have to return to Mexico unless the protection of United State laws and military forces was forthcoming. Another petition, addressed to President Millard Fillmore and bearing eleven signatures, emphasized the thriving agriculture and commerce which had brought prosperity to the area amounting to not less than a million dollars. Since the withdrawal of the troops, it added, trade had become paralyzed, and many merchants had moved to Mexico for their safety.²⁴

On August 5, 1852, the local citizens' committee addressed another letter to Governor Bell, stating that conditions had become even more deplorable since the previous petition was sent. A treaty signed with the Indians at Fort Webster near the Santa Rita copper mines, said the committee, had done more harm than good. The policy, the group contended, was to effect peaceful relations with one settlement merely to have the facilities of a market open to them for the disposition of property stolen from adjacent settlements such as those in the El Paso area. The committee enclosed letters signed by James Magoffin, Henry Jacobs, and Hugh Stephenson citing the losses they had sustained in recent months. Magoffin said the Indians had raided his corrals at Magoffinsville a number of times, and on one occasion took 60 mules within 150 yards of his house. Moreover, they had raided his ranch at Canutillo twice and had taken all his cattle and farm animals. Jacobs cited livestock losses suffered by the boundary commission, and Stephenson said his livestock losses totaled more than \$3,000. Immediate action was necessary, said the committee; but it would be more than a year before anything would be done.²⁵

Finally, in October, 1853, Joel L. Ankrum, district judge of the Eleventh judicial District, addressed a letter directly to the mili-

tary authorities. He listed the losses suffered in the El Paso area during the past two years, pointing out that there had been 23 attacks from Indians—about one a month on the average—resulting in the loss of lives and property, the disruption of business, and a general feeling of insecurity. His letter was then forwarded to Colonel Joseph K. F. Mansfield, who subsequently incorporated it into his report of an inspection he made of western military posts. Mansfield recommended that a post be established opposite the town of El Paso del Norte either at Magoffinsville or Smith's Ranch, the first being the preferable location.²⁶

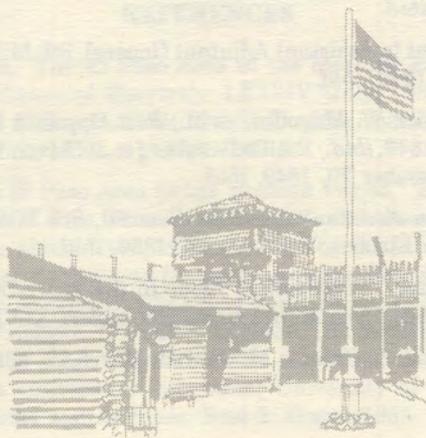
Ankrim's report and Mansfield's recommendation produced results. In January, 1854, a post was established at Magoffinsville, and four companies of the Eighth Infantry under the command of Major E. B. Alexander were quartered in buildings owned by James Magoffin. In March the name of the post was officially changed to Fort Bliss in honor of Major William W. S. Bliss, Zachary Taylor's chief of staff during the Mexican War who later became his son-in-law. This first Fort Bliss, memorialized by its replica on the grounds of the present Fort Bliss, ushered in a new era which featured a reduction in the losses of lives and property from Indian depredations, improved merchant-military relations, and assured a greater degree of safety and security for the local citizenry than it had known for some time.²⁷

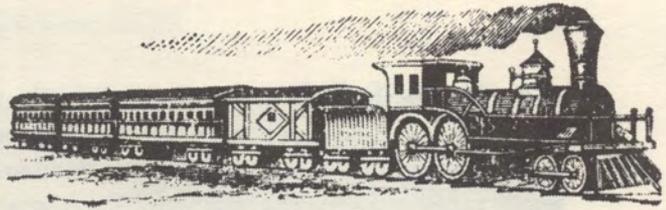
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11. Thomas L. Brent to Assistant Adjutant General, 9th Military Department, November (?), 1849, *ibid.*
12. Petition of James W. Magoffin, et al., Post Opposite El Paso del Norte, November 20, 1849, *ibid.*; Emilio Langberg to Jefferson Van Horne, El Paso del Norte, November 20, 1849, *ibid.*
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15. Edwin V. Sumner to Charles M. Conrad, March 27, 1852, quoted in *ibid.*, 221, 235.

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19. *Ibid.*, 8, 17.
20. E. Backus to L. McLaws, El Paso del Norte, July 12, 1851, Office of the Commissary General and Office of the Quartermaster General (micro-film; State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, Reel 1).
21. *Idem to idem, ibid.*
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23. J. J. Bowden, *The Ponce de León Land Grant*, 7.
24. Simeon Hart and Charles A. Hoppin to Governor P. H. Bell, El Paso, Texas, December 20, 1851, Governor's Papers: P. H. Bell, 1849-1853, Folder 3 (Texas State Archives); Hugh Stephenson, *et al.* to President Millard Fillmore, El Paso, December 20, 1851, *ibid.*; A. C. Hyde, *et al.* to Governor P. H. Bell, San Elizario, September 5, 1851, *ibid.*
25. Committee on Indian Depredations to Governor P. H. Bell, El Paso, Texas, August 5, 1852, *ibid.*, Folder 4; enclosures of James W. Magoffin, Henry Jacobs, and Hugh Stephenson to the Committee, August 5, 1852, *ibid.*
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Rails to the Pass of the North

By Edward A. Leonard

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he coming of the railroads to El Paso generally is considered the most important event in the city's history. In the 1870's, El Paso had been a sleepy adobe village of a few hundred people. With the railroads' arrival, it became an important, and rapidly growing, center of trade and commerce.

The story of this great event has been recounted by a number of scholars, and undoubtedly will be re-told often during the next few years, as we approach the observance of its centennial. What generally has been overlooked, however, is the question of why the railroads came here when they did. In April of 1881, eleven years after the completion of the first transcontinental route, El Paso had no railroad, yet by the end of that year it had four lines, radiating out to each point of the compass.

There is a long-standing myth that there was a conscious railroad "race" to the Pass of the North, similar to the races of that era's railroads to Cajon Pass in California, the Royal Gorge in Colorado, and Raton Pass on the Colorado-New Mexico border.¹ The facts, however, do not support this myth. In each of the other instances there was, or seemed to be, room for only one railroad to be constructed through the narrower portions of the pass. By contrast, the Pass of the North is a broad one, and even with the crude earthmoving techniques of that era, it was quite evident that several railroads could go through without any great difficulty. In addition, there were alternate routes available through the

area.² While the Pass of the North did offer the best single route, its use was a convenience, rather than a necessity.

What, then, accounted for the sudden, and rather frantic, appearance of four railroads in El Paso in a period of less than a year? In reality, two largely-independent rivalries were involved. One was the rather straightforward race between the Southern Pacific and the Texas & Pacific railroads to build America's second transcontinental line. (As we will see, neither wholly succeeded.) The second was the highly complex rivalry between the Santa Fe and the Denver & Rio Grande lines, which included the above-mentioned races for Raton Pass and the Royal Gorge, and which was complicated by the indecision of each line's management as to where their road should terminate. The two lines which entered El Paso in the spring of 1881 were the winners, in a fashion, of independent contests, and were not directly competing, let alone racing, with one another. In order to sort out the facts, it would be well to look separately at the background of each rivalry.

Texas & Pacific *versus* Southern Pacific

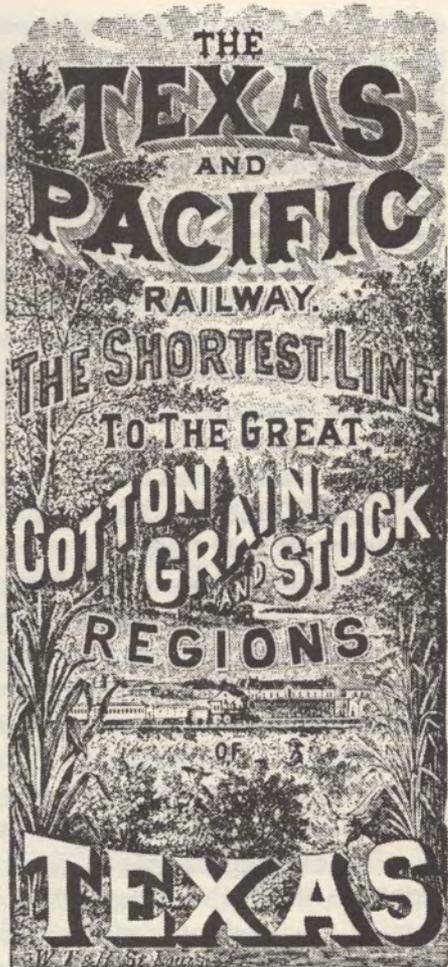
In the 1840's and early 1850's, when serious consideration first was being given to the construction of a transcontinental railroad, a highly favored route was along the thirty-second parallel, through the vicinity of El Paso. For a time, it appeared that this was the route most likely to be taken; indeed, the Gadsden Purchase was made primarily to afford a favorable location for such a line.³ In 1852 and 1853, two separate railroads were chartered by the Texas Legislature to build along different routes close to the thirty-second parallel from northeast Texas to El Paso. However, neither line began construction until the late 1850's, and neither had laid any significant amount of track when the Civil War caused further construction to be halted.⁴

The Union victory in the Civil War made it a political necessity that the first transcontinental route be a northern one, and the two Texas projects lay dormant while the Union Pacific-Central Pacific line to California was constructed. In 1871, two years after the first transcontinental was completed, Congress chartered the Texas and Pacific Railway company, which became the successor to the two pre-war lines.⁵ In 1873, the Texas Legislature awarded the Texas and Pacific a generous land grant of twenty sections for each mile of road completed, and the line began construction toward El Paso. Its ultimate destination was to be San Diego, a long-

established California port which was more than five hundred miles from the terminus of the Central Pacific, and which apparently was not included in that line's plans for future expansion.⁶

Construction of the Texas and Pacific went very slowly for almost a decade. Then Jay Gould, the notorious New York financier and stock manipulator bought control of the road, and in 1880, extremely rapid construction toward the west began from Ft. Worth, at that time the end of the track. Weatherford was reached on June 4, Baird on December 4, Sweetwater on March 12, 1881, Big Spring on April 28, Toyah on September 12, and Carrizo Pass, only 130 miles from El Paso, on November 14.⁷

To the west, however, events were occurring which would frustrate Gould's dream of making the Texas and Pacific a transcontinental line. Back in 1868, as the Central Pacific had moved toward completion of its portion of the northern transcontinental route, its owners had set out to obtain a railroad monopoly in California. One of their first steps had been to buy the Southern Pacific Railroad, a company which was planning to build a road south from San Francisco. By 1872, a line had been constructed well into Southern California by the C. P. / S. P. [Central Pacific/Southern Pacific] interests.⁸ In that year, the owners of the California lines learned that the president of the Texas and Pacific had been in San Diego drumming up support for his Texas-based transcontinental project. In order to forestall the construction of a rival road into the state, the Southern Pacific turned its line



eastward toward the Arizona border at Yuma, where the Texas and Pacific would have to enter the state. By 1877, the S. P. [Southern Pacific] had reached the banks of the Colorado River across from Yuma, and had formulated plans to build on across Arizona and New Mexico,⁹ on what was to have been the route of the T. & P. [Texas and Pacific].

A U.S. Cavalry regiment stationed at Yuma halted further construction, however, as Federal permission to cross the river had not been obtained. Rather than fight the Washington bureaucracy, the Southern Pacific put on a party for the Cavalry troops, with ample refreshments brought in over its new line. The party lasted for four or five days. At its conclusion, as the troops slept off the effects of the liquid refreshments, the S. P. under cover of night, put a temporary bridge across the Colorado. A few months later, official sanction was given for the *fait accompli*, and construction eastward was resumed.¹⁰

By the 1880's, then, a full-fledged railroad race was underway, not for the Pass of the North in any special sense, but rather for the completion of the long-awaited Southern Transcontinental. The Southern Pacific reached Tucson on March 20, 1880, Benson on June 22 of that year, and what is now Lordsburg, New Mexico, on October 18. On December 15, as the westbound Texas and Pacific tracklayers were moving across the mesquite-covered hills between Baird and Sweetwater, the eastbound Southern Pacific crews reached a point less than one hundred miles from El Paso,¹¹ which the railroad's management named Deming, after Mary Anne Deming, who had married one of the line's founders.¹²

From Deming, the crews pressed on toward El Paso. By mid-March, 1881, grading of a right-of-way into the city was completed,¹³ and by the first week of April the S. P. was running passenger trains to within five or six miles of El Paso.¹⁴ Finally on May 19, as the Texas and Pacific workers struggled onto what we now know as the Permian Basin area, the S. P. ran its first regular train into El Paso.¹⁵ At last, the long-isolated border town was linked by rail to the outside world, though, oddly, to the largely undeveloped West Coast, rather than to the farms and cities of the East.

The tracklayers did not pause long in El Paso, but instead built on eastward toward a proposed junction with the S. P. [Southern Pacific]—controlled Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio Railroad, which was laying track westward from Houston.¹⁶ However, as the S. P. approached Sierra Blanca Pass, some eighty miles

east of El Paso, it became obvious that its crews would meet those of the Texas and Pacific long before they met their own westbound counterparts. At the same time, it became increasingly evident to Jay Gould that he had lost the race to build the first southern transcontinental, and so a truce seemed very much in order. Accordingly, an agreement was worked out which called for the Texas and Pacific to stop construction at what is now the town of Sierra Blanca, a few miles east of the pass, and for its trains to use the tracks of the S. P. as far as El Paso, but no further toward California. (The S. P. was allowed to continue building eastward, however, and did so.) On December 16, the rails of the two rival lines joined, and El Paso gained its first rail connection with Dallas and eastern Texas.¹⁷

Santa Fe versus Denver & Rio Grande

It seems odd, in a sense, that the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway and the Denver and Rio Grande Railway should have become not only strong rivals, but bitter enemies. The Santa Fe was (and is) primarily an east-west line, which in the 1870's was building a road westward from Kansas toward Santa Fe and eventually California. The Rio Grande was a north-south line which was originally projected to build a narrow-gauge (three feet between the rails, as opposed to the normal 4'8½") railway from Denver, Colorado, to El Paso.¹⁸ While the lines, if built as planned, would have intersected at Santa Fe, and thus have competed with one another in terms of opening up that city and its environs to the outside world, one would have thought that their relationship might well have been a cooperative one. Such an assessment, however, would not have taken into account either the temper of the times, or the rapid changes which were occurring in the Rocky Mountain West during the period.

The A. T. & St. F. [Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe] had been chartered in 1859, primarily for the purpose of giving the new town of Topeka, Kansas, a rail link with the established cities along the Missouri River to the east. However, the line's principal founder, Cyrus K. Holliday, had been fascinated by tales of the far-away city of Santa Fe, and by the increasing trade along the Santa Fe Trail, and therefore audaciously included in the new road's charter authority to build westward to the New Mexico capital.¹⁹ Work did not actually begin on the line until 1868, and then, oddly, construction started southward from Topeka, rather

than eastward as originally contemplated. By the mid-1870's the line had turned westward and was building at a rapid rate across Kansas and into Colorado.²⁰

As far as La Junta, Colorado, construction proceeded as directly as possible toward Santa Fe. At that point, however, the line veered off on a more northerly course toward the booming little city of Pueblo. The year was 1875, and the shift in plans apparently was the result of stories then circulating about vast mineral riches within the Rocky Mountains, beyond Pueblo. These stories also were changing the plans of the Rio Grande Road, which had built southward from Denver to Pueblo in 1871-1872, and subsequently had built a branch to coal mines some miles west of Pueblo, at the very foot of the Rockies.²¹

It seems that the managements of the two companies became aware at about the same time that a line into the heart of the Rockies to capture this potentially lucrative mineral traffic would be a highly worthwhile project, worth postponing or even giving up the completion of their main lines. Although the Rio Grande explored an alternate route,²² by 1877 it was obvious to both companies that the only truly practical route through the front ranges of the great mountains into the mineral country was through the canyon of the Arkansas River, west of Pueblo. Preliminary surveys indicated beyond doubt that in the canyon's narrowest portions, the area now known as the Royal Gorge, there was barely room for one railroad, let alone two. Thus, in 1877, a bitter struggle for control of the gorge began, a struggle which took place both in the courts and between armed men in the gorge itself. The conflict, which included at least one full-fledged military-style battle, has become an important part of Western history and folklore, and has been the subject of numerous written pieces and at least one feature motion picture.²³ There is no need to re-tell the details of that struggle here; what is important is that for two-and-one-half years, while the conflict continued, both lines were blocked in their efforts to build westward, and with the ultimate victory of the Rio Grande road, the Santa Fe came to be excluded forever from the mineral-rich valleys of the Colorado Rockies.

Consequently, it became necessary, if the Santa Fe was to be anything more than a dead-end road handling mostly local traffic, for the line to begin building again toward New Mexico, as originally had been planned. There was a serious problem, however. In order to get from La Junta to the Santa Fe area, it was necessary

to cross a spur of the Rockies which juts out more than fifty miles into the Great Plains. Although not nearly so high as the ranges to the west, this spur forms an almost impenetrable barrier, with only one pass (which came to be called Raton Pass, after the field mice inhabiting its slopes) which conceivably could accommodate a rail line. And the Rio Grande, continuing south from Pueblo, had built a line to within five miles of the base of this pass, while the Santa Fe, at La Junta, was some eighty miles away.

The Rio Grande's initial plans had been to build to Santa Fe by a wholly different route, many miles to the west.²⁴ However, its presence near the foot of Raton Pass, and its increasingly bitter rivalry with the A. T. & St. F. [Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe], insured that it would try to head off any attempt of that road to use the pass, by pre-empting its route. (Indeed, there is some indication that the Rio Grande already had reconsidered its plans, and might well have tried to build over Raton Pass even in the absence of Santa Fe.)²⁵

On February 26, 1878, while the stalemate continued in the Royal Gorge, A. A. Robinson and Ray Morley, two Santa Fe construction engineers, received authorization to begin grading in Raton Pass, despite its great distance from the company's tracks at La Junta. Catching a D. & R. G. [Denver & Rio Grande] train at Pueblo to travel to the base of the pass, they recognized on the train their Rio Grande counterparts. Apparently, the narrow-gauge road had intercepted the Santa Fe's telegraph message authorizing the grading, and had set out to beat the larger road to the punch. Fortunately for the Santa Fe's plans, the Rio Grande's engineers did not see Robinson or Morley.

When the train pulled into El Moro, a town being developed by the Rio Grande at the end of its track, the narrow-gauge line's construction engineers checked into a hotel to get a night's rest. Robinson and Morley, however, rented a buggy and proceeded directly to the pass, not stopping until they reached an inn high in the mountains which was operated by "Uncle Dick" Wooten, who also owned the toll road over the pass. While their rivals rested far below in El Moro, the two Santa Fe men concluded a deal with Wooten for the use of his right-of-way, and then hired a gang of workers from among some local teenagers who were attending a dance at Wooten's inn.

At 2:00 AM the next morning, the Santa Fe party left the inn to climb to the higher reaches of the pass. At 5:00 AM, in the dark,

freezing cold of a Rocky Mountain winter morning, the gang began grading a roadbed. A few hours later, the well-rested Rio Grande crew reached the pass, having no idea that they already had lost the race. Some of the men were armed, and there was an angry confrontation. Contrary to myth, however, no shots were fired, and the Rio Grande men withdrew from the scene. A brief attempt was made by the narrow-gauge road to grade another route across the mountains, but in a few weeks the Rio Grande simply gave up and turned its attention back to its other endeavors.²⁶

Prior to 1878, the Santa Fe had no plans whatever to build to El Paso. With the Colorado mineral country blocked off by the Rio Grande, however, it was decided by the larger road to build on past the town of Santa Fe to Albuquerque and El Paso, and thus to beat the narrow gauge line to its original goal.²⁷ With Raton Pass firmly under control, construction toward the southwest began in earnest. Rails reached the Colorado-New Mexico border, atop the pass, in December 1878. On July 4, 1879, trains began operating into Las Vegas, New Mexico, and the following April Albuquerque was reached. The town of Santa Fe, the line's initial goal, was bypassed by the main line of its namesake railroad, though it was (and is today) served by a branch.²⁸

The Second Transcontinental

With Albuquerque reached, and the largest part of New Mexico under Santa Fe control there seemed to be no particular reason to rush to the Pass of the North. It is true that the railroad long had contemplated plans of building into Mexico.²⁹ However, the Southern Pacific already was on the border, and a "race" there would have been largely meaningless. Besides, the Santa Fe now was more interested in building to Mexico's west coast, through Nogales, than in constructing a line through Paso del Norte into the interior.³⁰

What started the Santa Fe on its dash southward from Albuquerque was something quite different—the line's management had caught a bad case of "transcontinental fever." While it planned to build its own line west from Albuquerque, it realized that it could more quickly obtain a transcontinental route by making a connection at some point with the eastward-building Southern Pacific. Clearly, cooperation with the S. P., rather than competition, seemed in the Santa Fe's best interest at this point. El Paso was still a goal, but what was of the highest priority was to make

an S. P. connection as rapidly as possible for the interchange of transcontinental freight and passengers.

Building southward from Albuquerque, the Santa Fe reached San Marcial, near the present head of Elephant Butte Lake, in October 1880. From San Marcial, the line continued through the *Jornada del Muerto* in the general direction of El Paso. At Rincon, however, about seventy miles north of the city, it veered sharply westward toward Deming, which had just been established as a town by the Southern Pacific. The 54-mile line from Rincon to Deming, in recent years only a lightly-used branch, became, in 1881, the final link in America's second transcontinental rail route.

The Deming line was opened for traffic on March 1,³¹ and a connection with the Southern Pacific was completed on March 8. Nine days later, on St. Patrick's Day, 1881, the Santa Fe's first transcontinental express left Kansas City for the West.³² Although the route was a circuitous one, and it was necessary for passengers to change cars in Deming, the service was rapid by the standards of the day. One could leave Kansas City at 10:00 PM, and arrive in San Francisco at 3:30 PM on the fifth day.³³

With the transcontinental connection complete, construction toward El Paso resumed. By now, the Santa Fe and the S. P. [Southern Pacific] were, at least on the border, moderately friendly connecting lines, rather than avid rivals. It is interesting to note that, had there been an actual race to the Pass of the North, the Santa Fe very likely could have won, simply by postponing the construction of its Deming line until after the line to El Paso had been completed. As it was in fact, there was enough of a spirit of cooperation between the two companies for there to be serious consideration of a joint line through the pass into El Paso.³⁴ Although the joint construction project fell through,³⁵ the Santa Fe built through the pass with no resistance or obstruction from the Southern Pacific. On June 11, only 23 days after the arrival of the S. P., a Santa Fe construction train reached the El Paso depot, and on July 1, the line was officially opened for business.³⁶

By Independence Day of 1881, then, El Paso was a budding railroad center, with service to Los Angeles and San Francisco by one line, and to Albuquerque and Kansas City by another. The following November, construction began across the border on the Mexican Central, which was to reach Chihuahua City in September of the following year.³⁷ The inauguration of Texas and Pacific service in December, 1881, made possible travel to Ft. Worth and

Dallas, and the completion of the S. P. transcontinental route on January 12, 1883, gave the town through rail service to San Antonio, Houston, and New Orleans.³⁸

In a period of less than two years, El Paso went from being an isolated border village to being one of America's major rail centers. Since that time, the story of El Paso and that of its railroads have been inseparable. The city's early growth was due almost wholly to its railroads, and even today they are among its major employers and taxpayers. Despite the recent decline in passenger service, total rail traffic in El Paso is now at an all-time high, and the railroad's second century in El Paso holds promise of being a busy and exciting one.

FOOTNOTES

1. There are numerous published accounts of the races to Raton Pass and the Royal Gorge, and the warfare which accompanied the contests. One rather detailed account of both conflicts is to be found in James Marshall, *Santa Fe: The Railroad that Built an Empire* (New York: Random House, 1945), pp. 114-58. (See also this article, below.) A brief account of the Cajon Pass race is in Neill C. Wilson and Frank J. Taylor, *Southern Pacific: The Roaring Story of a Fighting Railroad* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), pp. 61-62.
2. For example, the original 1854 military survey of a transcontinental railroad route crossed the mountains some thirty miles north of El Paso without encountering especially difficult grades. See Mildred L. Jordan, *Railroads in the El Paso Area* (unpublished M. A. thesis, Texas Western College, 1957), pp. 43, 48.
3. S. G. Reed, *A History of the Texas Railroads* (Houston: St. Clair, 1941), pp. 96-97.
4. Texas and Pacific Railroad, *From Ox-Teams to Eagles: A History of the Texas and Pacific Railroad* (no publisher or date specified; likely published in 1946), p.p. 5-9.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 12, 16.
6. Reed, p. 360.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
8. Wilson and Taylor, pp. 48-49.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.
12. H. L. James, *Southwestern New Mexico, Scenic Trips to the Geologic Past* No. 10 (N. M. State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 1971), p. 16.

13. *Las Cruces Newman's Semi-Weekly*, March 23, 1881.
14. *Las Cruces Newman's Semi-Weekly*, April 6, 1881.
15. For detailed accounts of the arrival of the first train into El Paso, see Joseph Leach, "Farewell to Horse-back, Mule-back, 'Foot-back' and Prairie Schooner: The Railroad Comes to Town," *Password I*, No. 2 (May, 1956), pp. 34-44; and C. L. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North: Four Centuries on the Rio Grande* (El Paso: Texas Western, 1968), pp. 227-30.
16. Wilson and Taylor, pp. 73, 77.
17. Reed, p. 365.
18. Robert G. Athearn, *Rebel of the Rockies: A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1962), p. 15.
19. L. L. Waters, *Steel Trails To Santa Fe* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas, 1950), p.p. 19-20, 25-26.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-51, and Marshall, 396.
21. Athearn, pp. 23-26.
22. George L. Anderson, *Kansas West* (San Marino, Cal.: Golden West, 1963), pp. 144-43.
23. There is a great deal of disagreement as to the real facts of the Royal Gorge "War." For two accounts from the perspective of the Santa Fe, see Marshall, pp. 144-48, and Waters, pp. 100-27. For the Rio Grande side of the story, see Anderson, pp. 137-79, and Athearn, pp. 70-90.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
25. Waters, pp. 98-99.
26. Athearn, p. 35; Marshall, pp. 132-43; and Waters, pp. 97-100.
27. Marshall, p. 134.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 398.
29. As early as 1868, Colonel Holliday had spoken of plans to build to Mexico. See Waters, p. 40.
30. See Marshall, p.p. 172-75, and Waters, p. 61.
31. Marshall, p. 400.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
33. *Las Cruces Newman's Semi-Weekly*, March 26, 1881.
34. *Las Cruces Newman's Semi-Weekly*, March 12, 1881 and March 23, 1881.
35. *Las Cruces Newman's Semi-Weekly*, April 2, 1881.
36. Jordan, p. 102.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 166, 174.
38. Wilson and Taylor, p. 78.



Chihuahuita: A Neglected Corner of El Paso

By Fred M. Morales

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Impoverished Chihuahuita—the southwestern part of El Paso's Southside, is tucked away between the Rio Grande levee, the Franklin Canal, and the water-treatment plant. Physically separated from the rest of the city by the Santa Fe Railroad tracks, Chihuahuita has lived out its own history unnoticed. It has been known by such names as the "First Ward" in the late 1890s, "La Mancha Roja" in the 1920s, and the "City Levee" in the 1930s. Today it is officially designated as part of the "Santa Fe and Campbell Additions" and "Census Tract 18." But for 150 years or so it has been popularly called "Chihuahuita."

Where did the name "Chihuahuita" come from? The question is easily answered. From its earliest existence, in the middle 1800s, the neighborhood began to be called "Little Chihuahua" because so many of its residents were immigrants from the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. The first significant wave of immigration occurred in the 1880s, when the Apaches forced large numbers of Mexicans to flee to El Paso from northern Chihuahua and to settle in makeshift homes along the east bank of the Rio Grande. Later, the barrio became enormously overpopulated by refugees of the 1910 revolution, and "presidios" or tenements were thrown up to house the new arrivals. Even today, many illegal aliens who find shelter in Chihuahuita are from Chihuahua. Clearly, this community

derived its popular name from the fact that many of its now some four hundred residents have their roots in Chihuahua.

Chihuahuita is very likely the oldest residential neighborhood in what is now El Paso. It began to form shortly after Juan María Ponce de León was given a land grant on the east side of the Rio Bravo del Norte in 1827. The first settlers in this section of the swampy, mesquite-covered, snake-infested area were probably Ponce de León's employees or hangers-on who wearied from daily crossing the river by swimming, wading, or rowboat. These new arrivals brought their Chihuahua culture, evident in material forms—the adobe house, the *acequias* (ditches) which carried water to the fields, techniques such as viticulture—and in less tangible forms—their customs, beliefs, and societal patterns. In those years the Bold River of the North seasonally justified its name, sweeping away the adobe houses in furious floods and leaving the people stranded on one bank or the other after it found a new channel. Then suddenly in 1848 the residents on the east bank became American citizens—politically. Culturally, they remained Chihuahuan, this identity continually reinforced as immigrants from Chihuahua moved into the neighborhood.

The Anglo-American village—informally called Franklin—was centered a short distance northeast of Chihuahuita; and later in the century, when the village had become the town of El Paso, several important industries and business facilities were established in this little pocket of Chihuahuan culture. The railroads came to the neighborhood's west side in 1881, the offices of the Santa Fe Railroad occupying a two-story frame building at Fifth and Santa Fe Streets. This structure also served the Mexican Central Railway. In 1882, a plant to supply the town's first streetlights (of gas) was built on South Chihuahua and Third Streets. The Franklin Canal was constructed on Chihuahuita's west side in 1889, cutting through the heart of the neighborhood. The area also saw El Paso's first water-treatment plant, built there in 1892 at the river's edge. Until very recently, Chihuahuita boasted an 1880-vintage round cypress water tank with a conical roof that served the steam locomotives on nearby spur tracks. The Santa Fe Bridge was built in 1892, replacing the hand-hauled ferry that for many years had been operated by the Acosta family of Paso del Norte. Then came the mule-driven trolleys, making their way through Chihuahuita as they plodded to and fro between the centuries-old Mexican town and the brand-new, thriving American town.

"Montestruc Settlement," located at the corner of West Seventh and Leon Streets, was Chihuahuita's oldest structure until it was razed in 1981. (Photo courtesy Fred M. Morales)



Chihuahuita, however, was not thriving. The neighborhood had no school, for example, until 1890, when Franklin School was built. El Paso's first public school had been established in 1883 with an enrollment of 94 pupils, and "not a Spanish surname in the list" (as Conrey Bryson pointed out in "A Man Named Aoy," which appeared in the Summer 1990 *Password*.) As another example, the residents of Chihuahuita suffered severely from the periodic rages of the Rio Grande. The worst of these floods occurred in the late spring of 1897. It produced a disaster of such magnitude that the mayors of the two border towns arranged for the digging of a new river channel, designed to prevent catastrophic flooding in the future. This flood prompted some of the Chihuahuaitans to resettle at a place they called "La Mesa," which became a miserable "colonia" of shacks and hovels known as Stormsville and which was later demolished to make way for a prestigious El Paso neighborhood: Rim Road. The only structure in Chihuahuita to survive the 1897 flood was the main building of a little settlement that had been founded in 1867 by Antonio Montestruc, a traveling salesman of French origin and a friend of James Magoffin and Simeon Hart, themselves the founders of two other early-day settlements on the east bank of the Rio Grande: Magoffinsville and Hart's Mill respectively. The "Montestruc Settlement," as the adobe building continued to be called, existed until 1981, when it was razed to provide space for a park.

Throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century, El Paso was a bustle of modernization. But the little community of Little Chihuahua was receiving very little attention—except as a place either convenient or necessary for the location of certain

industrial facilities. It is worth noting that name signs for the streets were not installed in Chihuahuita until 1915 and that the streets remained unpaved until after World War II.

During the Mexican Revolution, Chihuahuita sheltered dozens of organizers, agents, undercover workers, and exiles from Mexico. The local residents were largely in sympathy with the insurrectionists, gave them refuge, and otherwise encouraged them. In 1916 some of Villa's troops camped along the levee area of Chihuahuita on its west side. On the east side of the neighborhood, American soldiers kept close watch. It was a tense time for the residents. Nor was there any peace in the neighborhood's southern section. "La Heradura Bar" on the corner of Eighth and Chihuahua Streets was the main headquarters of prostitution for all of El Paso. In and around that corner the Mafia conducted its operations, and killings became commonplace. So many illegal activities were occurring there that the area began to be called "La Zona de Tolerancia." Many National Guardsmen at Fort Bliss spent their monthly pay in "La Zona," increasing its dubious prosperity and its notorious reputation.

The next decade was no better. Night after night throughout the '20s and early '30s the crack of bullets whipped through the neighborhood as Border Patrol and Customs agents attempted to block the flow of illegal booze across the border and the smugglers fought back. These smugglers may have been emboldened by the fact that Fausto Priego, reputed to be one of the nation's most successful bootleggers, lived in Chihuahuita, at 466 Charles. Constant fighting filled the nights with terror, and the residents stayed in their homes huddled close to the floor. Oldtimers remember being told as children that the alleyways of Charles and Chihuahua Streets served as "drops" for the smuggled booze, to be picked up later for delivery at the downtown "night spots." Year after year the tiny neighborhood dripped with blood, and the community began calling itself "La Mancha Roja" (the blood-stained barrio).

Greatly as the people suffered from the presence of continuous violence, they suffered perhaps even more from disease. Chihuahuita's housing conditions were deplorable, the majority of its dwellers living in primitive tenements, crude shacks, decaying adobe houses and in a stench of filth and squalor. In 1917 and 1918, the Spanish influenza epidemic swept through Chihuahuita

like a fire through a dry cornfield. The ambulance came to the area three, four, or five times a day to pick up the severely ill, taking the patients to Santa Fe Street tenement buildings that had been converted into makeshift hospitals. And the bells of Sacred Heart Church tolled unremittingly.

During the 1920s, but especially in the '30s, Chihuahuita fell victim to a number of health problems. Some of these stemmed from seepage and inadequate river controls conditions which provided excellent breeding grounds for flies and mosquitoes. The community also had a high death rate from diarrhea and enteritis. The City records show that Chihuahuita had the highest infant mortality rate in El Paso and indeed, it was said, the highest in the nation. Finally, in the early '30s, the city launched a major cleanup and spraying program for control of flies and mosquitoes. The low spots were filled up, drainage ditches were cleared, and oil was sprayed. Immunization of Chihuahuita children against scarlet fever and diphtheria was started in 1934.

The 1940s saw Chihuahuita being run by savage pachuco gangs, considered to be the meanest and cruelest in all the city. Called "boogies" or "zoot-suiters" because their members wore baggy pants with pegged ankles, they roamed the streets armed with chains that hung from the belt to the pocket in a long loop. The police would seldom enter the area, especially after dark. Brutal fights occurred between Chihuahuita pachucos and Fort Bliss soldiers, and tourists were frequently robbed and raped on South Santa Fe Street. The situation became so dangerous that by the early 1950s many Chihuahuaitans had begun moving outside the city, settling in shacks on the cactus-covered rocky slopes to the west. Those who remained in Chihuahuita were instrumental in organizing the "Blue and White Club," designed to curb juvenile delinquency, get the kids out of detention halls, and offer rehabilitation programs.

In the 1960s, a new set of developments made for additional social problems in Chihuahuita. The 1963 Chamizal Treaty between the United States and Mexico necessitated the re-alignment of railroad tracks from other sections of the Southside into Chihuahuita. This re-alignment caused displacement of some of the neighborhood's residents. Also, a relocation of approximately twenty families in its northwestern sector (known as "Las Pompas" because it had been the location of the city's first water-pumping facilities) was enforced when the El Paso Water Treatment Plant

at Chihuahuita expanded. These relocations ignited a vicious street warfare between two gangs, each gang fiercely defending into newly-imposed "territory." Once again, the good people of Chihuahuita stayed in their homes and huddled on the floor.

In the 1970s, the Border Patrol-Illegal Alien problem profoundly affected the lives of the Chihuahuaitans. Over the years the notorious "Puente Negro" (Black Bridge) had become a popular means of illegal access into the United States, Chihuahuita serving as the "port of entry." The flow of undocumented workers became so alarmingly large that the Border Patrol intensified its efforts to control the tide. One of its tactics was to stop people on the streets of Chihuahuita and frisk them or ask for papers. Not unreasonably, tempers flared and resentment swelled when Chihuahuaitans, some of them third- or fourth-generation El Pasoans, were inconvenienced in this way.

And this wasn't the only inconvenience. As the illegal aliens made their way through Chihuahuita toward downtown, the men wearing hard hats and the women dressed as though for a day of shopping, they often climbed over residents' fences, crawled through backyards, peered around corners, hid in tenement restrooms and trash cans. The bold ones sometimes bombarded the patrol cars with stones in an effort to escape arrest and not be late for work. Once in a while these stones broke the windows of a home in Chihuahuita—or worse, injured a child or some innocent bystander.

Further, Chihuahuita became the setting again of violence and brutality as the aliens, in their determination, resorted to desperate measures and the Border Patrolmen gave relentless chase. In 1974 Border Patrol agent Oscar Torres was shot to death on the bridge during a clash with aliens. In May of 1976, one alien was killed and two others injured when they hopped a train at the Santa Fe Railroad yard near the water-treatment plant on Canal Street. The three men had climbed into an open-top boxcar that was filled with railroad axles, each one weighing about a ton. The man who was killed had climbed in between the stacked axles. When the train started, the axles shifted, crushing the man. On another occasion, a twenty-year-old Juárez man, Manuel Soto Flores, died after falling from the bridge while being chased by Border Patrol agents.

In March of 1977, an international demonstration was held at the Black Bridge to protest the brutality of Border Patrol agents against Mexican nationals. Chihuahuita was full of protestors and

illegal aliens. A mini-riot occurred, the protestors throwing rocks and bottles at the cars of Border Patrol agents. In May of that year, the Immigration and Naturalization Service began to impose fines on the owner of the Black Bridge (the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company) for its failure to secure the bridge against easy access by aliens. The INS demonstrated that anyone at anytime could simply walk across the bridge from Mexico to the United States. The deaths of Border Patrol agent Oscar Torres in 1974 and Mexican national Manuel Soto Flores in 1977 were cited as examples by the INS to show how the notorious bridge had become virtually a "killer"—an open invitation to illegal entry and the consequences thereof.

The "Puente Negro" was closed in July of 1977, the Santa Fe Railroad having agreed finally to cooperate with the INS. The bridge now has sixteen-foot-high gates reinforced with pipes welded across the top to prevent anyone getting a grip to pull himself over. Locks are accessible only on the United States side. A railroad special agent opens and closes the gates for the two trains that daily cross the bridge.

One other feature of Chihuahuita needs to be mentioned. The South Santa Fe Street area throughout the neighborhood's history had always been the business district. It featured several "mom and pop" stores, bakeries, "casas de cambio," "molinos," "segundos" (second-hand goods), curio shops, laundries, hotels, and even a "mercado." The first boxing arena in El Paso was located there and also the first administrative center of the Catholic Conference (headed by Cleofas Calleros, a distinguished local historian and a native of Chihuahuita). All this began to change a couple of decades ago for two main reasons: (1) the construction of the new Paso del Norte Bridge (still called the Santa Fe Bridge), which altered the conformation of the streets in that area, and (2) the growing number of tourists en route to Juárez.

The Paso del Norte Bridge is designated "One Way" for vehicles: Juárez to El Paso. This means that the tourists wishing to cross into Juárez by that bridge must walk or take a taxi via the Stanton Street Bridge. As the tourist traffic increased, more parking spaces were needed. Gradually, then, the shopping district of Chihuahuita disappeared and was replaced by a long line of parking lots and taxi stands.

Now, it's all hustle on South Santa Fe Street. The name of the game is "bandereando"—flag-waving: flag-wave the cars into your parking lot; flag-wave the tourists into your taxi. The red flag has become the basic tool of work in that section of Chihuahuita. And the men who wave the flags, mostly Chihuahuaitans, have carried the art of flag-waving to a high degree of performance. Styles vary from man to man. One uses the "feverpitched" approach, waving his flag so frantically and so energetically that the tourists virtually see a Juárez floor show before they have even left the United States. Another sits casually on a converted milk case and waves his flag absentmindedly while he reads his favorite "novela." Still another doesn't move a muscle until the potential customers are in sight; then he springs to attention, flourishes a salute, and snaps his flag smartly to indicate that his is the best of all possible parking lots. Even the taxi drivers have taken up flag-waving—partly to help out the guys on the parking lots, partly to relieve boredom, and partly in the hope that their particular taxi will be hired for a sightseeing tour of Juárez.

Some Chihuahuaitans miss the old shopping district—the street vendors shrilling their wares, the women gossiping over the cabbages, the children playing on the sunlit sidewalks, the old people out for a stroll. But they'll adjust. They're wonderfully resilient, the Chihuahuita folks. They have weathered floods and pestilence, bootleggers and pachucos, dislocations, gang warfare, aliens hiding in the washroom. And all manner of "inconvenience."

They're so resilient, in fact, that they are determined to improve the quality of life in their beloved neighborhood. In 1976 they organized the Chihuahuita Improvement Association, which is directed by a volunteer staff on a non-profit basis. Its main objectives are to preserve and improve the residential character of the barrio, to promote community and economic development projects, and to introduce needed social, recreational, and spiritual services. Another main goal has been to build a sense of pride in the people and have the area designated an Historic District. The Association operates in a legal, legislative, and diplomatic manner, remaining neutral in anything political or ideological. It is the sole and legitimate voice of the people of Chihuahuita.

The Association has accomplished much in its short fifteen years of existence. It has inspired beautification projects—tree-planting, gardens, landscaping, murals to replace graffiti. It has instigated several social and recreational necessities—for example,

the formation of the Chihuahuita Youth Service Club in 1979; the dedication in 1981 of a Community Center and, adjacent, a park located on the site of what had recently been the community's oldest building, the "Montestruc Settlement"; and, in 1990, the Senior Citizens Nutrition Program and the Food Co-op. It has prompted better housing conditions—the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's oldest tenement building (on the corner of Canal and Seventh Streets) by "Los Exes de la Bowie" in 1981 and the renovation of South Chihuahua Street tenements in 1984 by Kent Halla.

At the present time, the citizens of Chihuahuita worry about how their homes and their lives will be affected by commercial and industrial expansion in the area and by the prospect of the Border Highway extension, which would take a considerable slice of land from their western sector. But they are cheered by the knowledge that their voices on behalf of Historic District status are being heard. They are enormously pleased that the City of El Paso has recognized their little community as a genuine part of the region's rich and varied history.

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Scenic Drive: A Road With a View

By Clinton P. Hartmann

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scenic drive, that short stretch of winding road that hugs the southern tip of the Franklin Mountains, connecting east and west El Paso, was started in March, 1920, and was completed by the end of the year. A scenic drive following the rim of the mesa, just north of town, was the object of early proposals, but for reasons to be explained later, the present Scenic Drive was completed first.

There had long been talk about ways to exploit the mesa and the mountain for scenic attractions, especially by the real estate owners. After the railroads came in 1881, land sales became a prosperous business and were advertised in newspapers throughout the country. In 1884, landowner J. Fisher Satterthwaite drew two maps of El Paso, advertising land north and west of the frontier town. He mapped in a road along the high mesa north of town and named it "Mesa Drive," noting that it was a "Two Mile Road to Mount Organ."¹ How or why he confused Mount Franklin with Mount Organ is not known. A. P. Coles and his two brothers, who had migrated to El Paso before 1900, were also real estate dealers and owned a large portion of the mountain. In 1901, Coles was named in the *El Paso Herald* as "the authority for the statement that a move is on foot to build a pavilion on the summit of Mt. Franklin and a cable railway to haul pleasure-seekers to the top."²

Judge Frank E. Hunter recalled in 1915 that "the town was too small [in the early 1900s] to think of building a scenic route," but he remembered that a "newspaper reporter by the name of

W. A. Hawkins talked of building a steam-operated cable line to the top of Mount Franklin." A suggestion was also made that platforms for adventurous riders could be attached to the lines.³

Hughes D. Slater, who arrived in El Paso in 1899 and was later the editor and owner of the *El Paso Herald*,⁴ also became a promoter of scenic drive, as did his wife, Elsie P. M. Slater, an enthusiastic collector of native flora.⁵ Both he and Elsie maintained that a road along the mesa, appropriately landscaped, would add beauty to El Paso and would serve as a tourist attraction. Slater worked with a civic group, the "Committee of Fifteen," to promote the drive. In later life, Slater reminisced about the many evenings he spent relaxing and enjoying the view from the mesa.⁶ As chairman of the City Planning Commission, organized in 1923, Slater praised George E. Kessler, landscape architect, engineer, and author of the City Plan for El Paso,⁷ for his role in promoting and making Scenic Drive a reality.

In 1913, Mayor C. E. Kelly and the city council recommended the appropriation of \$10,000 to be set aside to build a mesa drive, further recommending that future administrations set aside \$5,000 annually until \$50,000 had been accumulated to pay for the road. However, none of these recommendations materialized. Kelly later appointed W. S. Clayton as chairman of a committee to help secure the right-of-way from the property owners who might wish to "dedicate the property to the city as an act of civic betterment."⁸

During the summer of 1914, Peter E. Kern, pioneer resident and developer of Kern Place, drew a map of the proposed route. The drive would begin at Currie Street (now Rim Road) and continue along the rim of the mesa on to the mountain.⁹

Kern served as head of all the arrangements and was assisted by executive committees made up of prominent citizens. The committees organized a free barbecue, described by a local reporter as a "big feed ... to advertise proposed scenic drive," for the evening of October 9, 1914.¹⁰

Six thousand loaves of bread, 4,000 pounds of meat for barbecue, and four barrels of pickles were ordered. Various businesses donated materials and labor for stands and benches. A 75-foot trench was dug to barbecue the meat. People were asked to leave on all the lights in their homes and businesses that evening, and "pull up the shades to convey the full possibilities of a metropolis." Activities began at five o'clock with a volley of 25 shots, and two Fort Bliss bands played concert music. Four adding machines

counted noses as crowds arrived at the picnic grounds. Grown-ups ate barbecue sandwiches and drank beer; school children spent their "special" tickets for free candy, ice cream, and "soda-pop." Electric lights were strung along the first section of the proposed drive, and red lanterns outlined the remainder. Prominent El Pasoans made appropriate speeches, among them Mayor Kelly, who credited H. D. Slater with "the idea of a scenic drive around the rim of the mesa."¹¹ Peter Kern and W. T. Hixson presented the mayor and city council a silver loving cup inscribed, "in commemoration of their Inauguration of the Scenic Highway and Park on the Mesa for the Use and Pleasure of the People of El Paso for All Time."¹²

But the scenic drive celebration turned out to be somewhat premature. Securing the right-of-way presented more of a problem than anticipated. Peter Kern, one of the property owners, did not grant the easement until the next year,¹³ and D. Storms, a lawyer who owned considerable land along the rim, evidently never did. Storms had founded a settlement along the rim known as Stormsville. He had built some adobe homes on the property, and when the raging flood of 1897 destroyed many homes of residents in south El Paso, he invited the homeless people to move to Stormsville. The area became less than desirable to many El Pasoans, and eventually it was declared a public health nuisance. It was said that Storms refused to sell the land until the 1920s, when he suffered financial losses.¹⁴

Between 1915 and 1917, efforts to complete the development of the mesa drive were minimal. R. M. Dudley, a contractor who later became mayor, purchased most of the land now comprising Tom Lea Park for \$10,000 and sold it to the city for the same amount. Smaller pockets of land within the park area were eventually obtained by the City.¹⁵

During this time, the Rotary Club continued its efforts to get a scenic drive built.¹⁶ However, much of El Paso's attention was focused on the activities of the Mexican revolutionary Francisco Villa. In January, 1916, Villa was responsible for the San Ysabel massacre which killed sixteen Americans. Infuriated El Pasoans started to take revenge on residents in south El Paso, making it necessary to call out Fort Bliss troops to quell the riot. In March, Villa crossed the border and raided Columbus, New Mexico, where additional American lives were lost. President Woodrow Wilson shortly thereafter sent General Pershing from Fort Bliss on a

punitive expedition into Mexico to give chase to Villa.¹⁷ These affairs were just beginning to settle down when the United States declared war on Germany in April, 1917. Almost immediately, the young men of El Paso began leaving for "over there," among them Hughes Slater, who had been the scenic drive's most ardent supporter. He did not return to El Paso until the work on the Franklin Mountain scenic drive was just beginning.¹⁸

After the Armistice was signed in November of 1918, El Pasoans celebrated with banners and parades, began welcoming home their heroes, debated vigorously the pros and cons of prohibition,¹⁹ and then could turn their attention to domestic concerns.

Streets were paved at a rapid rate, including the one to the School of Mines. This widespread civic project was directly related to the phenomenal growth of the automobile industry. One motor car dealer reported that his sales quadrupled in the six months following the Armistice. A 28-page special section of *The El Paso Morning Times* was devoted to advertisements and articles about the motor car industry. A huge auto show displayed the variety of makes and models.²⁰ Soon there would be over 10,000 motor cars and eighty miles of paved streets in El Paso. People were anxious to go "joy riding," and their resistance to paying taxes for good roads vanished: no longer were roads regarded as "speed-ways" for the aristocracy; now, good roads were for everyone.

Newspapers began to emphasize El Paso's picturesque and historic places and to point out that good city planning should include "parks and lagoons and drives" that would add to a city's attractiveness. So many tourists were arriving in El Paso by train and auto that the mayor asked the city council to make "provisions at once for tourists to camp at Washington Park," requesting such facilities as "gas meters, small stoves, garbage cans, water and light."²¹

As tourism boomed, interest in building a scenic drive began to revive. The city fathers, the Chamber of Commerce, and other civic groups had become aware that cities in other parts of the country were building a variety of drives in and near their cities to provide attractions for tourists. Finally, the mayor and city council decided to take action. On May 17, 1919, an article in the morning newspaper announced that R. E. Hardaway, a civil engineer, formerly with the Southern Pacific, had been employed by the city as the consulting and locating engineer for a mountain drive.

Hardaway, who had specialized in reducing grades over steep mountains for railroads, made his initial survey. He told the city council that he had become inspired by the views which the drive could offer. He compared the proposed drive to the one along the coast in Monterey, California. He also directed attention to the fact that the "real scenic point of the drive" was not located on the "little projection above the high school, known as scenic point," but rather at the southern tip of Mount Franklin, where "you will be able to see a hundred miles into old Mexico, . . . far westward into New Mexico, and far to the eastward into Texas."²²

The final surveys of Scenic Drive were made between August and October, 1919. W. E. Stockwell, chairman of the City Plan Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, walked over the entire route with Hardaway when only stakes marked the site.²³

On August 28, the city council adopted seven ordinances authorizing the issuance of "coupon bonds . . . for the purpose of borrowing money upon the credit of the city." Known as the El Paso Park and Scenic Drive Bonds of 1919, they were approved by an election on October 4 by a vote of 378 to 156.²⁴

Securing the right-of-way for Scenic Drive did not seem to pose a problem. On November 1, 1919, A. P. Coles and his brothers, O. C. and J. F., deeded a 100-foot easement to the city for the sum of one dollar. On the same day, C. M. Newman, president of the Highlands Realty Company, did the same, granting an easement "over and through his property for a scenic highway to be built." In March, 1920, Edward A. Caples and James L. Marr, executors of the Margaret Ann Caples estate, and John P. O'Conner donated the right-of-way over their respective properties.²⁵ For some unknown reason, the right-of-way for one hundred square feet of the Dudley quarry was never obtained.

On February 11, 1920, the city council adopted the following resolution:

Be It Ordained by the City Council of the City of El Paso, Texas: That the Scenic Drive be constructed according to plans and specifications on file in the office of the City Engineer.

(s) R. C. Semple
Mayor Pro Tem

Since no graded road ran over the mesa to the mountain, the city awarded J. C. Wright a contract to grade one from a point on Stanton Street to what is now the west entrance to Scenic Drive.

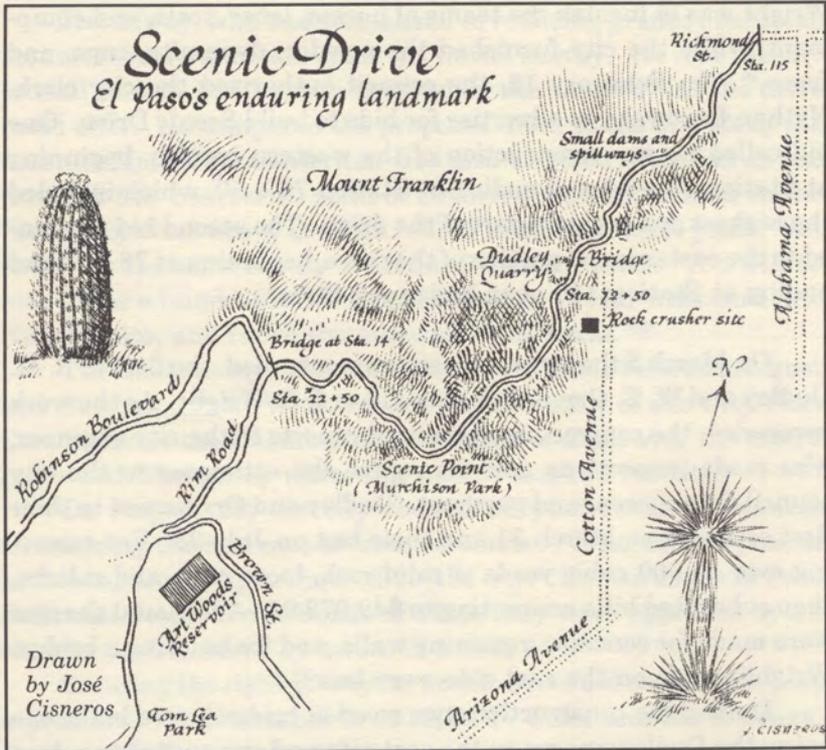
Wright was to furnish the teams of horses, labor, tools, and equipment, while the city furnished the powder, dynamite, caps, and fuses.²⁶ On February 12, the council authorized the city clerk, Nathan Lapowski, to advertise for bids to build Scenic Drive. One bid called for the construction of the western portion, beginning at Station 22 + 50 and ending at Station 76 + 50, which included the highest and rockiest part of the drive. The second bid pertained to the easternmost portion of the drive, beginning at 76 + 50 and ending at Station 115 near Richmond Street.

On March 5 the two contracts were awarded, the first to R. M. Dudley and W. E. Orr, and the second to J. C. Wright. As the work proceeded, the contractors submitted reports to the city engineer, who made inspections and then gave the estimates to the city council for approval and payment. Dudley and Orr turned in their first estimate on March 31 and their last on July 23. For removing over 25,000 cubic yards of solid rock, loose rock, and caliche, they submitted bills amounting to \$48,072.95. Additional charges were made for concrete, retaining walls, and for building a bridge. Wright's costs on the east side were less.²⁷

During the construction, two wooden bridges were built, one below the Dudley quarry on the east side and one spanning a deep arroyo on the west side. The one below the quarry was necessary to allow small ore cars on tracks from the quarry to pass under the bridge and proceed to a rock crusher below. Both bridges were later removed and replaced with fill and drainage pipes. The rock quarry was closed and eventually became the location for the El Paso Police Academy.

When the roadbed was almost finished, a third contract was made with J. C. Wright to grade and surface the road. Wright hauled over 4,000 tons of gravel, screenings, and rocks to smooth over the roadbed. He finished the work about September 23, 1920.²⁸

Realizing that the drive could be dangerous, the council hired P. F. Brick to build rock guard walls along the most hazardous sections. Between late August and November 12, Brick raised over 4,000 feet of walls at a cost of one dollar per linear foot.²⁹ He was then given a contract to extend Scenic Point by building a high rock wall around its perimeter and then filling in the space with rocks and earth borrow to provide a parking area. On December 30, he completed this job at a cost of \$7,122.³⁰



Although not totally completed, Scenic Drive was formally opened on October 6, 1920. As part of an International Exposition and Military Carnival being held during the week, an automobile caravan, carrying visiting dignitaries, left Hotel Paso del Norte, crossed Scenic Drive, and ended at Fort Bliss. Among the dignitaries were Mayor Charles Davis, Jr., President-elect Alvaro Obregón of Mexico, the governors of Chihuahua and Sonora, and Governors O. A. Larrazola and W. P. Hobby of New Mexico and Texas respectively. Although there is no record of a “summit” ceremony, it can be safely assumed that no champagne christened the event. Prohibition was in effect.³¹

On October 7, a newspaper editorial recognized the opening: “[Scenic Drive] . . . provides El Paso with another notable attraction for tourists and a constant source of pleasure to its residents. . . . Few cities are so fortunately situated as El Paso, few have a mountain in their vicinity, much less right in town.”

Earlier that year, in July, five adventurous motorists boarded a Maxwell touring car, and with Roy A. Lester and J. B. Rickerson taking turns at the wheel made the first “run” over Scenic Drive.

When they reached the quarry bridge and found that the approaches had not yet been completed, they laid two planks across the gap and then proceeded. For a split second, the planks sagged dangerously low, but "expert driving" took the auto and its passengers safely across. A few days later the city council warned all motorists to stay off Scenic Drive until it was completed.³² On October 3, signs designating the speed limit at 10 m.p.h. and prohibiting all heavy traffic were posted.

El Paso now had its Scenic Drive built as a tourist attraction and intended as a "constant source of pleasure" to the city's residents. From the beginning, it served its purposes well, although in 1922 the Drive became the setting of a quite unpleasurable incident. On March 10 of that year, over one thousand Klansmen gathered near Kern Place to hold an initiation ceremony. Afterwards, six Klansmen drove to Scenic Point, where they erected and burned a wooden cross in the parking area. They were frightened away by an armed man who was parked in an automobile nearby. A few days later, the Klan lit red lanterns in the form of a cross on the mountain,³³ reminiscent of the lanterns that had lined the mesa for the inaugural celebration in 1914. Needless to say, the purposes were far different.

By 1932 Scenic Drive had not yet been paved. The rough, graveled road was difficult to negotiate and even hazardous at those places which did not have guard rails. In October, 1932, in the depth of the Great Depression and in the final months of the Hoover administration, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation [RFC] decided to release funds for relief projects.³⁴ These funds were loaned to county governments and could only be used to pay for labor costs, the local governments being required to furnish materials and equipment for the projects.

The administrator for the El Paso County RFC committee was Robert L. Holliday, a respected lawyer and member of the Board of Regents of the University of Texas.³⁵ A special projects subcommittee, headed by L. E. Saunders, made recommendations to the county commissioners. This committee along with local civic groups and both local newspapers supported paving Scenic Drive as one of the projects. Some of the county commissioners opposed the project on the grounds that projects in their own precincts should have preference. One commissioner, C. J. Milner, voted against the project because he thought there was not enough traffic

over the drive to warrant paving it.³⁶ In the end, the court approved the paving, and the city passed a resolution permitting the county to do the work. The commissioners court raised the needed funds by issuing time warrants;³⁷ and it placed J. W. Carter, the county engineer, in charge of the entire project. The RFC granted a loan of \$110,000 to El Paso County to cover projects to be completed between October 1 and November 16. Before the funds actually reached El Paso, the county had already put men to work on the Mountain, grading and preparing the road for paving. The West Texas Construction Company of Fort Worth, locally managed by Jack C. Vowell (Sr.) of El Paso, received the contract to supply the concrete; and Hugh McMillan was contracted to furnish the trucks to haul the concrete to the drive.³⁸

With the funds from that RFC grant, the east end of Scenic Drive, from Richmond Street to Scenic Point, was paved.³⁹ Toward the middle of November, as funds began to dry up, men were laid off and it became doubtful whether more RFC funds would become available. Finally, on November 21, the county received the second grant of \$110,000. Again, the West Texas Construction Company was awarded the contract, and the RFC hired the workers to lay the concrete. The final construction report was filed by County Engineer Carter in December, 1932.⁴⁰ The paving had cost around \$87,000, making the total cost of building and paving the drive less than \$200,000.⁴¹

On Sunday, February 19, 1933, Scenic Drive was again opened to the public. Streams of cars clogged the newly-paved road, and at "Inspiration Point," now Scenic Point, motorists honked their horns impatiently as they tried to move through the traffic jam. In the words of a *Times* editor, "The journey this time [however] was a wholly different experience than the trips formerly negotiated over a rough and unsatisfactory dirt thoroughfare."⁴²

In 1934 three small dams and spillways on the east side of the drive were built by Company 855, Camp FE 69T, of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In 1948 the wooden bridge at Dudley quarry was removed and replaced with earth fill and drain pipes, this part of the drive being slightly relocated and paved.⁴³ In 1963, under the sponsorship of the Special Projects Committee of the Women's Chamber of Commerce, rock gateways were constructed at both the east and the west entrances to the drive.⁴⁴

Scenic Drive has several markers and monuments at Scenic Point which identify historical and geographical points of interest. One bronze marker, embedded in solid rock, lists the names of the city officials responsible for building the drive in 1920; another one names the county officials responsible for paving it in 1932. Twelve bronze tablets, donated by the State National Bank in 1962-63, are placed on the rock wall parapet surrounding the parking area. Each of eleven of these tablets provides information about places that can be seen from the vantage point, while the twelfth marker lists the members of the city council and the commissioners court who were in office at the time. Across from the parking area, a red granite marker designates the spot as Scenic Point and gives its elevation as 4,222 feet. (Above the Rio Grande Valley it reaches a height of about 500 feet.) Just south of the parking area is Murchison Park, developed by the Women's Department of the Chamber of Commerce in 1963. Within the park, an American flag flies day and night, commemorating First Lieutenant Chris P. Fox, Jr., who was killed in France in World War II.

For 67 years, Scenic Drive has afforded enjoyment to El Paso residents and out-of-town visitors by enabling them to view the valley terrain, the extensive sweep of desert, and the ever-expanding twin cities of El Paso and Juarez. On Christmas Eve, luminarias often grace the retaining walls that skirt the two-mile drive and cast a soft, warm glow along its winding path. If the pioneers who were responsible for Scenic Drive could stand at its apex on a clear evening, when millions of city lights shimmer in the distance, their hearts would skip a beat or two at the marvel spread before them.

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NOTES

1. *El Paso Herald*, August 13, 1915; a copy of the map was in the library files of *The El Paso Times* in 1951; see also Eugene O. Porter, "Map Number Two of Satterthwaite's Addition to El Paso," *Password* 1, 2 (May, 1956), 68-69.
2. *El Paso Herald*, January 11, 1901, as quoted in "Forty Years Ago," *El Paso Herald-Post*, January 10, 1941.
3. *El Paso Herald*, August 13, 1915.
4. John Middagh, *Frontier Newspaper—The El Paso Times* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1958), 223-224.
5. John M. Slater, "E. P. M. S., A Biographical Note of Elsie Pomeroy McElroy Slater," *Password* XXIII, 3 (Fall, 1978), 96
6. Interview, H. D. Slater, December 26, 1950.
7. City of El Paso, *The City Plan for El Paso, Texas* (El Paso Texas: 1925), Foreword.
8. *El Paso Herald*, December 30, 1913. Property owners along the rim at this time included D. Storms, Kerbey estate, J. J. Mundy, El Paso Commercial Co., Loomis estate, Ullman estate, George Sauer, J. C. Rous, C. J. Maheny, P. E. Kern, Caples estate, Powers and O'Connor, and C. M. Newman.
9. *Ibid.*, June 3 and 4, 1914.
10. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1914.
11. *Ibid.*, October 2, 7, 9, 10, 1914. Details of the celebration are reported in these issues.
12. The loving cup was in the collection of the International Museum (now the El Paso Museum of Art) in 1951.
13. *El Paso Herald*, August 28 and 29, 1915.
14. C. L. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North, II* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1980), 15; Interview, Otis C. Coles, Sr., January 6, 1951.
15. *El Paso Herald*, July 8, 1916; December 2, 1916; July 25, 1918.
16. *Ibid.*, July 29, 1915.
17. Shawn Lay, *War, Revolution, and the Ku Klux Klan* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1985), Chapter II. Mexican revolutionary activities affecting El Paso are covered in detail.
18. *The El Paso Morning Times*, March 3 and 11, 1920.
19. *Ibid.*, April 14, May 1, 4, 6, 1919.
20. *Ibid.*, May 25, 1919.
21. *Ibid.*, May 20, 1919.
22. *Ibid.*, May 17, 1919.

23. Interviews, W. E. Stockwell, November and December, 1950. Mr. Stockwell also authored an article entitled "Unusual Scenic Drive Built Near El Paso, Texas," published in the August, 1921, issue of *The Highway Magazine*. Later he became the City Planning Commissioner.
24. *El Paso Herald*, August 27, 1919; *The El Paso Morning Times*, August 29, October 3 and 5, 1919.
25. County of El Paso, Deed Records, Book 350, 323-326. Deed Nos. 22295, 22296, 22297, 22298. El Paso County Court House.
26. City of El Paso, *Minutes of the Council of the City of El Paso*, Book K-2, 142, 452. El Paso City Hall.
27. *Ibid.*, Book K-2, 501, 583, 649, 722, 756, 828.
28. *Ibid.*, Book K-2 775, 801, 815, 828; Book L-2, 3, 25, 46, 53, 57, 65, 81, 89.
29. *Ibid.*, Book L-2, 57, 65, 81, 89, 107, 133, 202.
30. *Ibid.*, Book L-2, 202, 237, 257, 269, 305.
31. *The El Paso Morning Times*, October 4-11, 1920. Lengthy articles covering the exposition appeared daily in the newspapers.
32. *El Paso Herald*, July 17 and 18, 1920. Besides the drivers, J. C. McNamara, "Tex" Griffin, and G. G. Bradley made the trip. Accompanied by six photographers, rare for the times, the trip was probably a publicity stunt.
33. Lay, 106-107.
34. *Encyclopedia Americana*, XIV (New York: Americana Corporation, 1965), 370.
35. Interview, Robert L. Holliday, November, 1950.
36. *The El Paso Times*, October 28, 1932.
37. County of El Paso, *Minutes of the Commissioners Court*, Book 15, 626, 630, 633-634 El Paso County Court House.
38. *Ibid.*, Book 16, 9-16, 27-28, 35, 37-41, 52-53, 73-79.
39. *El Paso Herald-Post*, November 21, 1932.
40. *Minutes of the Commissioners Court*, Book 16, 35-37, 73-79.
41. *The Audit Reports of the City of El Paso* for 1921 record that the entire cost of Scenic Drive up to 1921 was \$97,463.81. Adding the \$87,000 estimated by the county for paving it, the cost was well under \$200,000.
42. *The El Paso Times*, February 20, 1933.
43. *El Paso Herald-Post*, January 28, 1948.
44. *Ibid.*, November 21, 1963.



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