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# EASTWARD HO!

## The Mexican Freighting and Commerce Experience Along the Santa Fe Trail

by Sterling Evans

**T**he eight hundred miles between the Kansas City, Missouri, area and Santa Fe, New Mexico, were bridged in the early part of the nineteenth century by what has become known as the Santa Fe Trail. The length of the trail varies according to different accounts—indeed in its early history the “trail” was more a sense of direction as teams and wagons from Missouri pointed southwest and ones from New Mexico northeast as they ambled along over the Plains.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the later Oregon and Mormon Trails that serviced a population seeking to settle, the Santa Fe Trail reached to an area that had been settled by Europeans since 1598. Thus, the Santa Fe Trail became a conduit for commerce, not settlement, from 1821 until 1880 when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad abrogated this role.

Many volumes of books and articles have been generated by the fascinating development of the Santa Fe Trail. New Mexican historian Ralph Twitchell once wrote that “a subject of more enduring interest than the story of the . . . great highway



*The Santa Fe Trail was a two-way road of commerce: not only did Americans travel south to Santa Fe but Mexican merchants journeyed to Missouri to buy and sell goods.*

1. Max L. Moorhead, in his authoritative work *New Mexico's Royal Road: Trade and Travel on the Chihuahua Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 96, states that “the Santa Fe Trail was not a road, not even a trace, but rather a series of tracks meandering over the plains in only the most general single course.” By contemporary accounts (and by rut preservation evidence today) historians know that wagons often traveled two to four abreast and in places traveled miles apart, unlike the linear trail experiences of the Oregon or Mormon pioneers. And length depended on route: travelers could choose the longer but safer Mountain Branch following the Arkansas River through Colorado, or the shorter but more dangerous Cimarron Cutoff across the Oklahoma panhandle.

over which was carried the commerce of the prairies is not to be found in the history of the great Southwest.<sup>2</sup> The importance of the Santa Fe Trail, however, is hardly limited to the southwestern corner of the country. What at the time was the western frontier of the United States and later would become the heart of the American Midwest (Missouri and Kansas) experienced profound changes due to the impact of the trail. Some historians have taken this concept a step further to suggest that the trail was a leading factor in America's conquering of the West—a "conquest by merchants," an "advance guard for America's Manifest Destiny," and "the great path of the youth of the West."<sup>3</sup>

These statements, however, unabashedly continue to promote the philosophy that the history of the Santa Fe Trail is a study of Americans conquering other peoples and places. This thinking advances an east-west linear paradigm and ignores the contributions from the other end of the trail. It could be argued that these writers are interpreting the trail through lenses of nationalism while choosing to ignore economies and cultures that thrived for centuries independent of outside influence. At best the writing is left over from turn-of-the-century stereotypical historiography, and at worst, as historian David Sandoval surmises, is "a legacy of misunderstanding."<sup>4</sup>

The need is great to examine the Mexican freighting and commerce experience along the Santa Fe Trail. Research based on archival economic data reveals that the people of Santa Fe and northern New

Mexico, who had been living in the same place for more than two hundred years before the dawn of the trade with Missouri, played a significant role in the history of the trail. The fact that these people represented far more than a mere market for American goods is seen in their level of commerce, which by the 1840s outpaced their American counterparts. Max L. Moorhead pointed out that "less is known" of the New Mexican merchants who were sponsoring wagon trains to the East, "but their importance was fully as great." And David Sandoval explained that while by 1843 the Mexican merchants "dominated" the Santa Fe trading system, the literature "has relegated [them] to a subordinate position."

Contemporary accounts and observations . . . are tainted with nativism, ethnocentrism, expansionism, personalism, naturalism, and racism. . . . In most instances New Mexicans are slighted or ignored. One has to wonder if writers will ever afford them a burro to ride, a wagon to guide or a mosquito to swat along the Santa Fe Trail.<sup>5</sup>

Recent additions to the scholarly literature on the Santa Fe Trail are beginning to include this Mexican dimension.<sup>6</sup> Absent from those studies, however, is analysis of the Hispanic contribution to the eastward expansion of ideas and innovations. By focusing on several long-neglected or ignored themes, this article, which centers on the Mexican period (1821-1846), seeks to enhance

2. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, vol. 2 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1912), 91.

3. Howard Roberts Lamar, *The Far Southwest, 1846-1912: A Territorial History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 56; David J. Weber, ed., *The Extranjeros: Selected Documents from the Mexican Side of the Santa Fe Trail* (Santa Fe: Stagecoach Press, 1967), 9; Jack D. Rittenhouse, "Trail of Commerce and Conquest," in *The Santa Fe Trail: A Historical Bibliography* (Albuquerque: 1986), 4, 28.

4. David A. Sandoval, "Who is Riding the Burro Now? A Bibliographic Critique of Scholarship on the New Mexican Trader," in *The Santa Fe Trail: New Perspectives* (1987; reprint, Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1992), 84; E.D. Smith, "Jedediah S. Smith and the Settlement of Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1911-1912 12 (1912): 252-53, offers a particularly egregious case in point: "Beginning with the dawn of history and continuing to the present, the Teutonic races have been immigrant races. Neither French nor Spanish had the true western instinct as did the Anglo-Saxon. . . . The lure of the West. . . became an American habit."

5. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 194; Sandoval, "Who is Riding the Burro Now," 76, 87. As specific evidence Sandoval lists "poor and ignorant," "want of enterprise and industry," "a barbarous people," "heathen idolaters," "Montezumians," and "body lice came from the Spaniards." Even after living there for almost a decade, Josiah Gregg in 1844 referred to New Mexico as "that unfortunate land." See Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. Max L. Moorhead (1844; reprint, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 341.

6. See, for example, David A. Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers: Mexican Merchants on the Santa Fe Trail," *Journal of the West* 28 (April 1989): 22-31; Sandoval, "Montezuma's Merchants: Mexican Traders on the Santa Fe Trail" in *Adventure on the Santa Fe Trail*, ed. Leo E. Oliva (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1988), 37-60; Sandoval, "Who is Riding the Burro Now," 75-92; Weber, *The Extranjeros*, 7-40; Susan Calafate Boyle, "Commerciantes, Fiadores, Arrieros, y Peones: The Hispanos on the Santa Fe Trail," history file 71, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe. Specifically for the role of New Mexican trail merchants on the economic history of Las Vegas, New Mexico, see Maurilio E. Vigil, "New Mexicans, Las Vegas, and the Santa Fe Trail," *Wagon Tracks: Santa Fe Trail Association Quarterly* 10 (February 1996): 17-22.

*Santa Fe, as an outpost on the far northern Mexican frontier, was dependent on trade with Chihuahua (right) for most of its consumer goods.*



and revise our understanding of the history of the Santa Fe Trail (or perhaps the Missouri Trail)—to view it as a two-way corridor with important ethnic contributions along the way.

That Mexico became independent (the same year that Missouri became a state, 1821) is an important development in the history of the Santa Fe Trail. Santa Fe, as an outpost on the far northern frontier, was dependent on trade with Chihuahua for most of its consumer goods. During the region's Spanish colonial period until 1821 goods were shipped via the Camino Real (the Royal Road), which stretched from the port of Veracruz (where goods from Europe arrived) to Mexico City to Chihuahua and by 1607 to Santa Fe—a total length of sixteen hundred miles. Max Moorhead has called this "the oldest major highway in what is now the United States" and stated that it became a "lifeline" for missions, forts, ranches, and towns in colonial New Mexico. The problem was that trade was sporadic—supplies came but once every six or seven years. A triennial system was established in the late 1600s, but a yearly caravan was not inaugurated until the mid-1700s.<sup>7</sup> And by the time the New Mexicans could help ease their sense of isolation by dealing with Anglo traders from the North in the early nineteenth centu-

ry, the Spanish colonial government enacted rigid protectionist policies to aid interior Mexican business interests by restricting merchants from trading with their U.S. neighbors.

Nationhood in 1821, however, signalled greater autonomy, a relaxation of barriers with the nearby Anglo Americans, and a reduction in some of the slow colonial bureaucracy. One sure result was that Americans soon realized the profit to be made by selling merchandise to the people of northern New Mexico. A Missouri farmer, William Becknell, discouraged in farming due to a stale Missouri economy that paid prices lower than the cost of production, ventured west in the fall of 1821 with a number of hired hands and pack animals loaded with goods to trade. Becknell wasted no time in taking advantage of an attractive economic environment. He quickly sold all of his goods in Santa Fe, returned to Missouri, and reported the news of the riches to be made in the trade with Mexico's far northern province.<sup>8</sup>

7. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 29, vi, 7; Moorhead, "Spanish Transportation in the Southwest, 1540–1846," *New Mexico Historical Review* 32 (April 1957): 111.

8. It is not clear whether Becknell set off to trade with Comanche Indians in southwest Kansas and southeast Colorado territories and fortuitously stumbled onto the Mexican border where Mexican soldiers told him his goods would have a market in Santa Fe (as he claimed), or if he planned to trade with New Mexicans upon learning of their indepen-



With Mexican independence came an accelerated pace of caravans along the Santa Fe Trail to meet the New Mexicans' consumer needs.

Another result of Mexican independence was an accelerated pace of caravans up and down the Camino Real to meet the New Mexicans' consumer needs. The Camino Real trade is important to the study of the Santa Fe Trail because its transportation methods served as a model for the trail, its overpriced goods served as an incentive for opening trade with the United States, and its economy served as a base for Mexican merchants to branch off of and as an extension for U.S. merchants to tap into.

First, the transportation technology to bring freight to Santa Fe from the south was later emulated on the route to Missouri. Traders first used pack trains of burros in the early years of the colonial period but later implemented ox carts, which could haul more freight. By the time of the yearly caravans from Chihuahua, four-wheeled wagons pulled by a team of eight mules hauled the loads of goods to Santa Fe. In addition, traders used pack trains of mules. Merchants discovered that mules were sure-footed in the rough, craggy desert terrain and could travel on the hard, dry surfaces without being shod, could pack up

to four hundred pounds, could travel twelve to fifteen miles per day—considerably faster than oxen, and generally lived longer than other livestock. The pack trains were “a model of efficiency” when managed by the experienced Mexican muleteers who

could handle fifty mules at a time.<sup>9</sup>

Second, the shipping of goods from Veracruz to Santa Fe brought outrageous prices to the residents of New Mexico because of the colonial government's bureaucratic system of taxing goods and issuing permits. The Spanish government required *guías* (permits for interstate trade), *tornaguías* (merchandise arrival certificates), *facturas* (trade invoices), *fiadores* (government agents who accompanied the caravans to enforce these Mexican policies), and various customs and fees (and often bribes). While the records of the bureaucracy may today represent a benefit to historians, to the New Mexican customers of the time they meant increased prices for goods so that, as one historian suggested, “it was a blessing [when the Anglos] succeeded in opening the commercial gates of the province.” In addition, twelve to fifteen influential families who virtually enjoyed “a commercial tyranny” controlled the majority of trade from Chihuahua. A letter from José de Urguidi, the state governor of Chihuahua, to his minister of financial relations expressed deep concern that prices on merchandise

dence and relaxed trade barriers. For more detailed discussions, see Rittenhouse, “Trail of Commerce and Conquest,” 9–10; “The Journals of Capt. Thomas Becknell,” *Missouri Historical Review* 4 (January 1910): 65–84.

9. See W. Thetford LeViness, “Carts and Wagons on the *Jornada del Muerto*, 1610–12 to 1810,” 2, WPA file 85, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives; Moorhead, “Spanish Transportation in the Southwest,” 108; Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 86, 87; Marc Simmons, “A Problem with Mule-Packing Terminology,” *Wagon Tracks: Santa Fe Trail Association Quarterly* 10 (May 1996): 7.

from Missouri were one-third the cost of the same goods shipped to Santa Fe from Chihuahua.<sup>10</sup> Thus, there was a ready-made market for the Missouri trade business that New Mexican merchants aptly exploited.

Third, as commerce expanded many merchants accustomed to doing business on the Camino Real extended their network to the northeast by entering the road to Missouri. Conversely, Anglo American traders branched off of Santa Fe by using the Camino Real to tap into other Mexican markets. Although Santa Fe was a thriving community of forty-two hundred people in the 1820s, capital for purchases was limited and the market became saturated. The population of the entire province of New Mexico, however, was around forty-three thousand, and farther south the city of Chihuahua (with its ten thousand people and bustling silver mining industry) made an attractive destination for enterprising traders. By 1831, 32 percent of the profits on the Santa Fe Trail were made from trade extended to Chihuahua and interior markets, and by 1846 the figure had risen to a remarkable 86 percent. The Santa Fe trade, as Moorhead suggests, had "undermined the Chihuahua monopoly over New Mexico . . . the real significance of the Santa Fe Trail was its connection with Mexico's . . . Camino Real." And David Sandoval concludes that Santa Fe became "not a terminus, but a hub of international traffic."<sup>11</sup> If these analyses are to be accepted, the relevance here is that the Anglo traders merely tapped into a resource that had been developed for more than two hundred years by their Mexican counterparts.

With this background in mind, one can appreciate more easily how New Mexicans became involved with trade to Missouri. Although William Becknell frequently is credited with "discovering" the way to

Santa Fe, the fact is that colonial Mexicans and others had already blazed a trail between settlements in New Mexico and the Missouri River basin. In 1719–1720 the Spanish viceroyalty commissioned two expeditions to track a route from Santa Fe to French trading posts on the Missouri and Platte Rivers. By the 1740s the French regularly were using the routes for trading furs that the mountains of northern New Mexico yielded in great abundance. One such trader, Pedro Vial, discovered a route from Louisiana to Santa Fe and in 1792 was commissioned by Spain to establish a route from Santa Fe to St. Louis. Zebulon Pike, Jacques Clamorgan (a St. Louis trader of mixed Creole and Welsh descent), and other Anglo American adventurers trekked overland to Santa Fe in the early 1800s but were arrested by Spanish authorities, sent to Chihuahua, and incarcerated for violating colonial trade laws. Becknell happened along at the right moment in 1821 when Mexico had severed her chains with Spain and the New Mexicans were eager to engage in trade without the colonial restrictions of the past. Territorial governor Facundo Melgares welcomed Becknell and invited him to return. Other Anglo travelers arrived in Santa Fe independently of Becknell, but it was on his second trip there in 1822 (this time with wagons and three thousand dollars worth of goods) that Becknell "discovered" a shorter route via the Cimarron Cutoff. The trip netted him a 2,000 percent profit, which naturally stimulated others to join in the trade.<sup>12</sup> Thus began an international commercial network that lasted sixty years and spanned an area from New York to Mexico City.

Meanwhile, prominent New Mexican merchants wasted no time in entering the now open Santa Fe Trail market. Enterprising merchants started their own trade practices in bringing merchandise to Santa Fe customers. Some had been in the trade business for many years and had maintained strong trading relations with local Indian

10. Weber, *The Extranjeros*, 8; Boyle, "Commercantes, Fiadores, Arrieros, y Peones," 2; David A. Sandoval, "Trade and *Manito* Society in New Mexico, 1821–1848" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1978), 40. The letter is cited in Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 66.

11. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 55–74; New Mexico territorial governor Antonio Narbona, census records, 1827, in Daniel Tyler, "New Mexico in the 1820s: The First Administration of Manuel Armijo" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1970), 86; Sandoval, "Trade and *Manito* Society in New Mexico," 267.

12. For an early account of the Spaniards' expedition east, see Amos Stoddard, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana* (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1812), 46. For further details on Melgares's invitation and on profits, see "The Journals of Capt. Thomas Becknell," 77.

populations. One account mentions that these businessmen often traded tobacco, sheep, and dry goods for Indian agricultural produce and furs. Another refers to the high quality Indian blankets that later became popular trade items for the Anglo Americans on return trips east. In July or August of each year a huge trade fair was held in Taos that was attended by Pueblos, Zuñis, Comanches, Apaches, Kiowas, and other Indian peoples on which the New Mexican merchants depended for a major source of their trade. They dealt in metal, manufactured goods, and cloth from the Mexican interior. Records, for instance, document the business between Apaches and the Chacón family from 1797 who, like many New Mexican traders, primarily used the barter system with the Indians but regularly traded for gold and silver with the Mexican interior markets.<sup>13</sup> A developing merchant class thus emerged in northern New Mexico that otherwise was steeped in an agricultural subsistence economy.

Due to distance from the Mexican interior and the repressive economic constraints imposed by the colonial government, the merchant class viewed Mexican independence with optimism for the economic growth of the region. For revenue the territorial government quickly established tariffs and *ad valorem* taxes on incoming merchandise. Cargo inspections, manifests, passports, safe-conduct passes, merchandise evaluations, and per diem taxes for setting up shops in Santa Fe's plaza (often with kickbacks for corrupt officials) all were "vexations of Mexican law" for the Missouri traders but became the base for New Mexico's capital development.<sup>14</sup>

New Mexican merchants also paid duties on goods brought into their province, but they usually were half or less what the Americans were levied. In an 1842 letter from the U.S. consul in Santa Fe, Manuel Alvarez (a Castilian who later became a naturalized U.S. citizen), to Secretary of State Daniel Webster, Alvarez decried that it was "some of the wealthiest citizens of New Mexico" who had pressed to impose "double the amount of duties" that was being charged the American versus the Mexican caravans.<sup>15</sup>

The Mexican government periodically imposed other taxes and restrictions. In 1829 it established a list of more than fifty trade items that were prohibited to be imported because they would compete with interior Mexican industries. In 1843 President Antonio López de Santa Anna increased the protectionist policy to include hundreds of manufactured products, from furniture to dog collars. In 1839 the City of Santa Fe levied a municipal retail tax on traders that went specifically for financing the war against the Navajo Indians of the same year. Still, profits were high for the Anglo traders. As early as 1824 \$190,000 worth of gold, silver bullion, and coin had been netted, what Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton called "a considerable sum in itself. . . deserving a statesman's notice as an earnest of what might be expected from a regulated and protected trade."<sup>16</sup>

Taking note of such profits, New Mexicans learned that taxes and surcharges on foreign traders were not the only ways to increase the flow of money into the Santa Fe area. Local merchants started preparing for their own trade with Anglo Americans by 1824. In that year Governor Bartolomé Baca sent

13. Antonio Barreiro, "Ojeada sobre Nuevo México: A Report on New Mexico Prepared for the Justice Minister and Vice President of the United States of Mexico, 1832," in *Three New Mexico Chronicles*, ed. H. Bailey Carroll and J. Villasana Haggard (Albuquerque: Quivira Society, 1942), 109–10; José Agustín de Escudero, "Noticias históricas y estadísticas de la Antigua Provincia del Nuevo México: A Report Prepared for the National Military Commission of the Mexican Republic, 1849," in *ibid.*, 120; see also Pedro Nava to Lieutenant Colonel don Fernando Chacón, February 21, 1797, microfilm roll 14, Spanish Archives of New Mexico II, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives.

14. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 123; see also Daniel Tyler, "Anglo-American Penetration of the Southwest: The View from Mexico," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 75 (January 1972): 325–38.

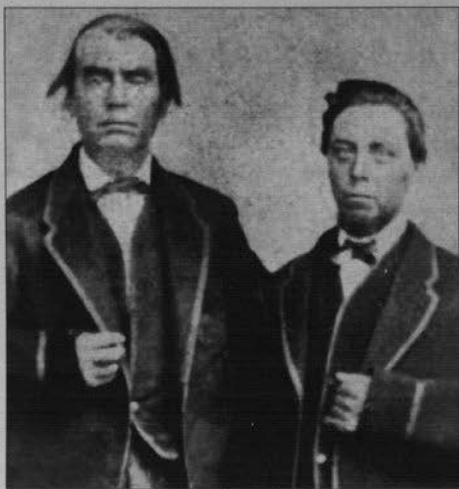
15. Manuel Alvarez to Daniel Webster, February 2, 1842, Consular Despatches, Santa Fe, New Mexico, General Records Department, National Archives, Washington, D.C. The Alvarez letter is reprinted in Harold H. Dunham, "Sidelights on Santa Fe Traders, 1839–1846," *Westerner's Brand Book*, 6 (1950): 268. For a comprehensive discussion of Alvarez, see Thomas E. Chávez, *Manuel Alvarez, 1794–1856: A Southwestern Biography* (Niwot: University of Colorado Press, 1990).

16. See Sandoval, "Trade and *Manito* Society in New Mexico," appendices C, D; Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 128; Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri speaking on the "Inland Trade Between Missouri and Mexico," *Register of Debates in Congress*, 18th Cong., 2d sess., vol. 1, (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1825), 110.

twenty-six merchants and a large entourage of escorts to Council Bluffs (Iowa Territory) to strike a deal with the Pawnee Indians and the U.S. Indian agents.<sup>17</sup> A more important journey was that of Manuel Simón de Escudero, a Chihuahuan merchant and legislator, and two other Mexican businessmen who accompanied a caravan returning to Missouri in 1825. Representing the government and the merchants wanting to trade with the United States, they went on to St. Louis to meet with a regional official of Indian Affairs and then to Washington to parley with the Mexican ambassador to seek help in attaining protection for Mexican merchants using the route to Missouri. Escudero returned via Franklin, Missouri, in 1826 with several wagons of merchandise that formally began Mexican involvement on the Santa Fe Trail.<sup>18</sup>

While Escudero was from Chihuahua, prominent merchant families from Santa Fe and Taos (descendants of early Spanish colonials) became active in the trade on the trail. *Guías*, tax forms, inventories, and other customs papers reflect the operations of such family businesses as the Chávez, Baca, Otero, Flores, Salazar, Ortiz, and Abreu families who expanded their businesses and joined the trail. North of there, in Taos and the Río Arriba country, old aristocratic families (Perea, Pino, Peralta, Archuleta, Montoya, and Cabeza de Vaca) dominated the trade. And in Albuquerque the large Armijo family became influential and wealthy traders.

The Mexican presence on the Santa Fe Trail increased in the late 1820s and 1830s. In 1828 twenty-six New Mexicans traveled to Independence, sold various goods (*serapes*, *sombreros*, a locally produced textile called *gerga*, mules, and furs), made excellent profits, and returned to Santa Fe with U.S. manufactured goods and cloth. The following year a caravan of ninety-six traders, thirty wagons,



Prominent Mexican families such as the Archuletas (above) dominated the trade along the trail and became influential and wealthy merchants.

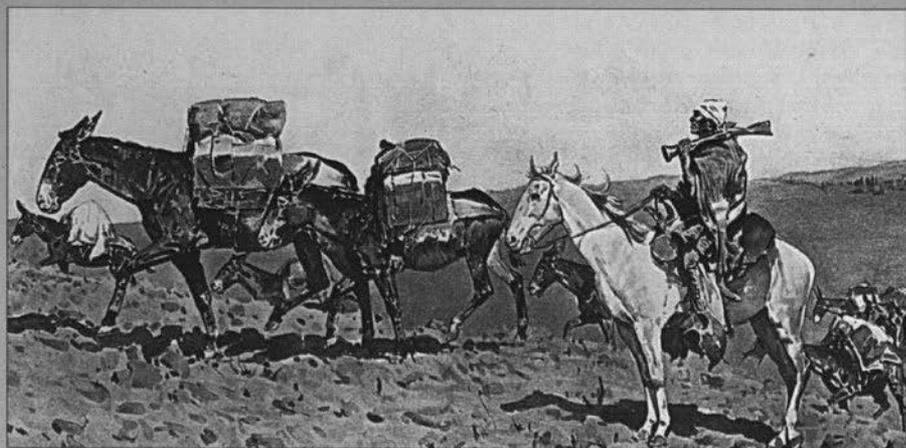
and two thousand head of livestock, plus a force of two hundred men for protection, left Santa Fe for Missouri, and by the 1830s the New Mexicans were increasing their business to the South by hauling goods from Missouri through Santa Fe and on to Chihuahua. By the end of the 1830s they pre-empted the Anglo American traders on this route by accounting for 75 percent of the trade between Missouri and Chihuahua. A caravan inventory checked at El Paso del Norte (present-day El Paso, Texas) in 1831 listed such items as cotton, muslin, silk, calico, blankets, coats, vests, shirts, ink pens, pocket knives, silverware, razor blades, reams of paper, bolts and screws, tools, hinges, and other hardware supplies that were brought from the United States to be sold in the Mexican interior.<sup>19</sup>

New Mexicans dominated the trade all through the 1840s and until the end of the Mexican period.

17. For more detailed accounts, see Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 48; Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 24.

18. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 66; Lansing Bartlett Bloom, "New Mexico Under Mexican Administration, 1821-1846," *Old Santa Fe: A Magazine of History, Archaeology, Genealogy and Biography* 1 (October 1913): 170-71.

19. See Sandoval, "Montezuma's Merchants," 38-40; Bloom, "New Mexico Under Mexican Administration," (January 1914): 251; "Caravan inventory of José de Jesus Branch, merchant, 1831," microfilm roll 14, Mexican Archives of New Mexico, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives.



*Mules were indispensable animals for the transport of goods along the Camino Real, and their breeding became an invaluable industry in northern Mexico and New Mexico.*

Traders like José Chávez, who in one caravan in 1840 hauled seventy-five thousand dollars worth of merchandise to Santa Fe, exemplified how this trade dominance occurred. The July caravan of 1843 had twenty-four American wagons compared with thirty-two Mexican, mainly of the Ortiz and Armijo companies. The 140 wagons of the September caravan of the same year were all of New Mexican proprietorship. Even contemporary accounts acknowledged that by 1843 the New Mexicans controlled half the trade of the trail equalling \$450,000.<sup>20</sup>

Such a statistic hardly went unnoticed by the Anglo American competitors, and many began to feel economically threatened. The Americans, feeling they were being double-taxed unfairly by paying tariffs on imported goods from Europe and high taxes at the Mexican customhouses, lobbied Congress for the Drawback Act of 1843 which reduced the amount they were required to pay on imported goods. It was difficult to compete against the Mexicans who had such significantly lower fees to pay to haul goods into their own country. José Chávez in 1842, for ex-

ample, paid less on eleven wagonloads of merchandise than an American paid on three, complained U.S. consul Alvarez.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the traders were able to store goods at their homes or on their land once they arrived in New Mexico, thus reducing even more the costs of doing business and the prices on the merchandise. (Instead of trying to beat this system, many Anglo traders joined it and became partners in New Mexican firms.) This competitive edge, the astute acumen of the merchants, and the hard work performed skillfully by their employees are why the New Mexicans remained "masters of the mercantile trade" until the Mexican War.<sup>22</sup>

The New Mexican merchants differed from their Anglo American counterparts in other ways. New Mexicans traded directly with U.S. firms and sponsored their own wagon trains—eliminating the middleman freighter expenses. Merchants like Armijo, Otero, and Chávez traveled to Philadelphia, New York, and sometimes even to London to secure goods from manufacturers and wholesale suppliers. Upon the return west it was not uncommon to sell loads of

20. Sandoval, "Montezuma's Merchants," 43, 47, pre-dates Mexican economic dominance on the trail to 1838; see also Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, 134; David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846; The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 130.

21. Manuel Alvarez to Daniel Webster, February 2, 1842.

22. Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 22; see also Henry Pickering Walker, *The Wagonmasters: High Plains Freighting from the Earliest Days of the Santa Fe Trail to 1880* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 136, 144.

merchandise to Chihuahuans who traveled north of Santa Fe to intercept caravans in order to have first picks at goods to sell farther south in Mexico. A final difference, according to historian David Sandoval, is that families of the Mexican traders often accompanied them on their journeys "towards an eastern frontier." "American families were late in traveling the trail," Sandoval asserts, "compared to Mexican families, who took children to eastern schools."<sup>23</sup> The Oteros, for example, wanted their children in Kansas City area schools to help them become skilled bilinguals, which would continue the New Mexican family's ability to compete strongly in U.S. markets well into the future.

The trail as a conduit for eastward cultural and economic expansion merits attention here. The significance of products from New Mexico that were hauled east by outgoing Mexicans or returning Anglos is that they filled wagons that otherwise would return empty or be sold, and they augmented a retail economy in Missouri. The impact of this west-to-east paradigm, however, is best exemplified by three factors that influenced the development of Missouri: mules, money, and the market in Westport.

Because mules were indispensable animals for the transport of goods up and down the Camino Real, their breeding became an invaluable industry in northern Mexico and New Mexico. A record of mule breeder Ignacio Sotelo in 1805 lists three (albeit rather amusing) livestock categories: "useful, useless, and missing." Anglo Americans on the trail were notably impressed by the skill with which Mexicans handled and worked the mules. In his *Hand-book for Overland Expeditions*, Randolph Marcy wrote: "No people . . . are more familiar with the art of packing than the Mexicans. . . . [They] will get more work out of him [the mule] than any other men I have ever seen." Josiah Gregg wrote that "the animal is in fact to the Mexican what the camel is to the Arab—invaluable for

the transportation of freight over sandy deserts and mountainous roads." An American youth who worked at Bent's Fort concurred: "The maneuvers of the Mexicans at our company are really astonishing in lassoing unruly mules."<sup>24</sup> Wagonmasters also were frequently of New Mexican stock.

Mule sales to U.S. merchants can be traced to the very beginnings of the Santa Fe Trail. An 1822 letter from the provisional junta government in Durango, Mexico, to a José Pascual García in New Mexico outlines the new republic's agreement as of December 31, 1821, "permitting the free commerce of mules to the United States." As Americans came to understand the utility of such beasts on the Santa Fe Trail, they became one of the first trade items in Mexico for hardware and dry goods. Mules were worth far more in Missouri than they were in Mexico making them a high profit-margin commodity for eastbound caravans. Jacks in Chihuahua that were purchased for seven to ten dollars could be sold in Missouri for sixty dollars. The Mexican jacks were then bred with American mares to produce a strong, hardworking mule. American stallions bred with Mexican jennies likewise produced a superior mule. Thus, a mule breeding industry in Missouri was stimulated by a resource from Mexico. The statistics speak for themselves: in 1823 four hundred jacks, jennies, and mules were imported to Missouri; 1825 six hundred; 1827 eight hundred; and in 1832 thirteen hundred.<sup>25</sup>

For Missourians, mule breeding became a profitable business. The U.S. Army became one of the most important customers—buying the beasts of burden to pull supply wagons, for pack trains, and

23. Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 23. For an autobiographical account of one wealthy merchant family's story, albeit after U.S. annexation, see Miguel Antonio Otero, *My Life on the Frontier, 1864-1882* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1939).

24. "Horse and Mule Records," January 5, 1805, microfilm roll 15, Spanish Archives of New Mexico II; Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Trader: A Hand-Book for Overland Expeditions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1859), 100; Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies: or the Journal of a Santa Fé Trader, During Eight Expeditions Across the Great Western Prairies, and a Residence of Nearly Nine Years in Northern Mexico, in Early Western Travels 1748-1846*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, vol. 20 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1905), 313; Lewis H. Gerrard, *Wah-to-Yah and the Taos Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 15.

25. "Provisional Junta Agreement," March 6, 1822, microfilm roll 20, Spanish Archives of New Mexico II; Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 88, 189; F.F. Stephens, "Missouri and the Santa Fe Trade," *Missouri Historical Review* 9 (July 1917): 304.

for cavalry units on frontier posts. They also were popular as work animals for Midwest farmers. More profitable, however, was the market to the south where mules became a favorite draught animal on plantations. Historian Frederic Culmer relates how one Fayette, Missouri, raiser would travel with his family throughout Alabama and Georgia marketing his mules to plantation owners and foremen. Indeed it was in Missouri where mule raising "reached a celebrated preeminence."<sup>26</sup> "Missouri—the mule state," "stubborn as a Missouri mule," and even the nickname for Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, the "Mules," are monikers reflecting the history and importance of this industry that came to Missouri via the Santa Fe Trail.

The single most important trade item flowing east, however, was not blankets, mules, or wool, but rather something of far greater value and significance to the economic development of Missouri: Mexican silver and gold. From the start of the trade on the Santa Fe Trail, and especially with trade in Chihuahua, gold bullion and specie (coins) were payment for goods received. William Becknell's second journey to Santa Fe with three thousand dollars worth of goods was soon dwarfed by larger caravans as early as 1824 carrying thirty-five thousand dollars of merchandise. In a report to Congress, Secretary of War Lewis Cass expounded the benefits of such trade and why the trail should be protected. He reported Becknell's 2,000 percent profit of 1822 and a 300 percent profit on the caravan of 1824. Some years netted more than \$200,000 in gold and silver that flowed into the Missouri economy. Accounts are many of traders such as David Waldo who in 1840 was paid \$5,433.75 in "premium gold *monedas de oro* [coins], gold dust, and silver" in Santa Fe for his goods. This "hard cash" of gold and silver bars and coins was transported on the backs of mules in "taut rawhide packs."<sup>27</sup> In terms

of what it meant economically for Missouri, it might as well have been manna dropping from heaven.

Cash was in short supply on America's western frontier in the early part of the nineteenth century. Missouri had a constant shortage of hard cash, a general depreciation of bank notes, and a wide circulation of counterfeit money. Big operators such as Augustus Storrs and Charles Bent were hauling quantities of more than \$200,000 and \$100,000 in bullion and specie respectively by 1829. Despite their questionable legal tender status in this country, Mexican coins (*pesos*) began circulating freely all over Missouri, were accepted as payments in land offices, and by 1828 were more common than U.S. dollars in the western half of the state. By 1831 *pesos* were the preferred monetary medium (they contained 2.75 more grains of fine silver than a U.S. dollar) and became the principal money used in all of Missouri. The currency flow stimulated land sales at the Franklin, Missouri, land office, which made it within the top four or five land offices in the country at the time.

Until 1837 Missouri was the only state in the union without a bank. When the Bank of Missouri opened that year, however, it was recognized as one of the soundest banks in the region, became a bank of federal deposit within one month, and remained fiscally healthy even during the Panic of 1837 and the six-year depression that followed. The bank faced disaster in 1839 during a "run" on savings but was saved by a deposit of forty-five thousand dollars in silver from returning overland merchants.<sup>28</sup> Senator Thomas Hart Benton's reputation for strongly endorsing a "hard cash"-based currency for the United States can be attributed to his home state's experience with gold and silver from Mexico. For these reasons, in addition to its fame for mules, Missouri became known as "the hard money state" and the "state of sound banks." This time Missouri was showing the way.

26. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 190; Stephens, "Missouri and the Santa Fe Trade," 304; Frederic Culmer, "Selling Missouri Mules Down South in 1835," *Missouri Historical Review* 24 (July 1930): 537-49.

27. *Message from the President of the United States*, 22d Cong., 1st sess., 1832, S. Doc. 90, serial 213, 9; "Gold Sale—David Waldo," 1840, folder 12, Manuel Alvarez Papers, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives;

Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 129. A Missouri merchant at the time noted that the money "was sewed up in the bags while the hides were green, so when the skins were dry the money was firmly secured." See William R. Bernard, "Westport and the Santa Fe Trade," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1905-1906 9 (1906): 557.

28. See Stephens, "Missouri and the Santa Fe Trade," 311; Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 189.

*Independence and Westport both were centers of trade in Missouri. By 1857 three hundred merchants were engaged in trade with New Mexico. In this sketch wagons are unloaded at their final destination.*



Finally, frontier Missouri continued to develop with the move of the eastern portal of the Santa Fe Trail from Franklin to Independence to Westport. The final move was not a quirk in commerce but rather a planned strategy by enterprising merchants there. The plan succeeded, however, only with the jump start of a prominent New Mexican trading firm.<sup>29</sup>

Westport began as a location for warehouses in 1844. While merchandise was stored there for a variety of proprietors, it was not a center for wholesale or retail activity. Some businessmen aimed to change this scenario by tapping into the lucrative trade of the Santa Fe Trail. In 1848 A.G. Boone (a grandson of Daniel Boone) and William Bernard launched a campaign to lure Mexican traders away from Independence. Boone and Bernard advertised Westport's closer proximity to the Kansas Territory line, and thus its generally safer location for Mexicans during the Mexican War (farther from potentially dangerous population centers). Trail scout Francis X. Aubrey knew many of the traders and encouraged Mariano Chávez to begin trading at Westport. He took advantage of the offer and transacted \$100,000 in silver for Boone and Bernard to make purchases in St. Louis.<sup>30</sup>

This one business deal stimulated other merchants to follow suit and hastened the trade to move from Independence to Westport. After 1850 Westport became the center for the westward routes and a huge outfitting station for Santa Fe caravans. By 1857 three hundred merchants were engaged in trade with New Mexico, and many manufacturers, wholesalers, and service industries sprang up in Westport to accommodate the caravans.<sup>31</sup>

A study of the social aspects and daily life of the New Mexicans headed for Westport provides a glimpse worth viewing of this important trade route. While hundreds of trail hands made the journey in the Mexican period, no personal accounts are known to exist. One account from the period after U.S. annexation, however, casts light on the daily life of a typical New Mexican trail hand. The story of José Liberado Gurulé, a drover for the Perea family merchants in the 1860s, was recorded as part of a WPA Federal Writers Project.<sup>32</sup> Because few technological changes occurred in the Santa Fe trade by the time of the U.S. territorial period, it can be extrapolated here

29. For further analysis, see Ray E. Jenkins, "The Santa Fe Trail: Road of Commerce and Adventure," *The Denver Westerners Roundup* 48 (July/August 1992): 4.

30. Walker D. Wyman, "Freighting: A Big Business on the Santa Fe Trail," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (November 1931): 21; Wyman, "Kansas City, Mo., a Famous Freighter Capital," *ibid.* 6 (February 1937): 4; Bernard, "Westport and the Santa Fe Trade," 557.

31. Bernard, "Westport and the Santa Fe Trade," 557; Wyman, "Kansas City, Mo.," 5.

32. The WPA project was written by Mrs. Lou Sage Batchen. See Marc Simmons, ed., *On the Santa Fe Trail* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 120-33.

that this account gives an accurate picture of Mexican-period life on the trail.

Gurulé reminisced that when a caravan was preparing to leave Santa Fe for the East, villagers "swarmed around" the travelers to bid them adieu, lit candles in their homes, and prayed to their "favorite saints." Small replicas of these saints often would be hidden or buried until the safe return of the loved ones. Merchants "drafted" males in their late teens (Gurulé was seventeen on his first trip) and paid them six to eight dollars a month. A work day on the trail was eighteen hours long with only one full meal (tortillas, beans, black-eyed peas, and dried mutton or goat meat) and two small snacks (a tortilla and onion slice). But while "tortillas by the hundreds" were packed for the trip, the "army of hirelings was travelling more on its feet with very little assistance from its stomach." For some enjoyment on the trip most men smoked *punche*, a locally grown tobacco. Trail apparel consisted of clothing "which could stay on their backs for three months" and one pair of shoes or *tevas*. Gurulé summed up the trip by remembering that it was "too much awake, too little water to drink, [and] too little frijoles."<sup>33</sup>

Gurulé's account of trail life is probably more realistic than many of the misleading perceptions propagated by other contemporary accounts and historians. In a speech before Congress in 1825, for example, Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton described the story of American trail merchant Augustus Storrs:

His account was full of interest and novelty. It sounded like romance to hear of caravans of men, horses, and wagons traversing with their merchandise the vast plain which lies between the Mississippi and the Rio del Norte. The story seemed better adapted to Asia than to North America.<sup>34</sup>

Likewise, Lewis Atherton once wrote that "the Santa Fe trade was among the safest occupations followed by residents of the West."<sup>35</sup>

33. *Ibid.*, 124-28.

34. Benton, "Inland Trade Between Missouri and Mexico," 109.

35. Lewis E. Atherton, "Disorganizing Effects of the Mexican War on the Santa Fé Trade," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 6 (May 1937): 115.

Despite these rosy scenarios, life on the trail was one of many hardships, and the moving was slow and rough with caravans averaging only twelve to fifteen miles per day. Gurulé complained of the harsh heat of the Plains—hard on the freighters who were used to the cool climate of northern New Mexico's high elevation. The Mexicans suffered greatly from outbreaks of cholera and other diseases periodically along the trail. Stiff prairie winds, swarms of gnats and mosquitoes, and Great Plains blizzards were typical of the obstacles facing the Mexican caravans.<sup>36</sup> Also, Indian raids posed an "abiding and terrifying" danger. In his report to the Mexican government, Antonio Barreiro wrote that the caravans traveled with precaution in order not to be surprised by any of the "great number of wild and warlike Indian tribes that inhabit the horrible wilderness . . . between New Mexico and Missouri."<sup>37</sup>

By the 1840s New Mexicans had to contend with a further threat: raiding bands of Texans. When Texas declared its independence in 1836 some, for political and economic reasons, wanted to annex New Mexico. Lone Star Republic president Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar was one. With grandiose dreams of establishing a Cuba-Texas-Santa Fe-Chihuahua trade system, Lamar ordered eighty-thousand dollars to be drawn from the Texas treasury (without legislative approval) to advance a military expedition to New Mexico. He had received misleading accounts from his military staff on the frontier suggesting that New Mexicans were anxious to join Texas.<sup>38</sup>

36. Rittenhouse, "Trail of Commerce and Conquest," 16; Simmons, *On the Santa Fe Trail*, 131-32. Simmons states that he does not know if the families of trail hands who died along the way received their loved ones' wages. See also Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 26; Simmons, *On the Santa Fe Trail*, 4.

37. Barreiro, "Ojeada sobre Nuevo México," 107.

38. A communication from William Jefferson Jones to M.B. Lamar, August 2, 1839, reads: "They are prepared to unite with us, and this is the favorable moment to cement the friendship. . . . The revolutionary spirit is warm in New Mexico and the people are determined to throw off the despotic yoke of the present government." See William Campbell Binkley, "New Mexico and the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 27 (October 1923): 89; see also Thomas Maitland Marshall, "Commercial Aspect of the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition," *ibid.* 20 (January 1917): 249, 257.

While this was of course untrue and Lamar's military expedition fell far short of succeeding, the idea of controlling such a lucrative trade system fueled an expansionistic mentality among Texans. In the early 1840s some Texans became marauders on the Santa Fe Trail and harassed New Mexican traders. These hostilities caused Mexican President Santa Anna to suspend trade on the trail from September 1843 to April 1844 when the U.S. government promised better protection.<sup>39</sup> The perils of trail life hardly made it seem like a "safe occupation."

Arrival in Missouri (Franklin, Independence, or Westport) did not signal an end to the hard work. Unloading freight and reconditioning wagons and livestock for the return trip consumed much of the hired hands' time. Gurulé spoke of the temptations of "music and dance halls" but how he worked not "to squander" his money. Instead he bought a "worsted suit" to wear proudly back in Santa Fe where *fiestas* and *fandangos* would greet them on their return.<sup>40</sup>

As previously mentioned, blankets, *serapes*, and especially furs were the goods the Santa Fe merchants sold in Missouri. Later, however, wool became the bulk of the trade items that freighters hauled. Gurulé complained of "the thousands of pounds of wool" that were to be loaded and unloaded on an eastbound caravan. Wool produced in New Mexico (a coarse type of wool used to make blankets, rugs, and carpets) was cheaper than that of the eastern United States and therefore commanded a robust market. It also became the principal west-to-east product for returning Anglo American caravans. Because wool was not charged an export duty by the Mexican government, it was a logical cargo for avoiding empty-handed return trips.<sup>41</sup>

39. For more information on Texan violence on the trail, see Marc Simmons, *Murder on the Santa Fe Trail: An International Incident, 1843* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1987); Marshall, "Commercial Aspect of the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition"; Harry C. Myers, "Banditti on the Santa Fe Trail: The Texan Raid of 1843," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 19 (Winter 1996-1997): 282-92.

40. Simmons, *On the Santa Fe Trail*, 129.

41. *Ibid.*, 122. For more information on the wool trade, see Barreiro, "Ojeada sobre Nuevo México," 287; Walker, *Wagonmasters*, 149; Lewis Atherton, "Business Techniques in the Santa Fe Trade," *Missouri Historical Review* 34 (April 1940): 335; Wyman, "Freighting: A Big Business on the Santa Fe Trail," 21; Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, 133.

Most caravans left Santa Fe in the spring, sold and bought in Missouri in the summer, and returned to New Mexico in the fall. Goods returned to New Mexico included most manufactured products and fabrics. Jewelry (especially Roman Catholic articles), toiletries, hair accessories, sewing notions, cooking utensils, clocks and watches, stationary, hardware, construction supplies, and gunworks were in high demand in Santa Fe. Bottled spirits were especially profitable and empty bottles were returned to Missouri on future trips. Mexican women created a strong market for fabrics such as prints, calico, linen, flannel, nankeen, taffeta, and silk.<sup>42</sup>

Women were extremely important in the development of the Santa Fe trade. Most, if not all, of the traders' inventories on record contain lists of materials and fabrics that were in high demand in provincial New Mexico. However, the role of Mexican women on the Santa Fe Trail is one aspect of the social history of this region and time period that is infrequently mentioned in the literature.<sup>43</sup> While no personal accounts of New Mexican women on the trail have been found to date, historians can glean pertinent information from the writings of others. The diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, the eighteen-year-old bride of a prominent Missouri trader who accompanied her husband's caravan to Santa Fe and Chihuahua in the 1840s, mentions that the women she met on the trail in New Mexico were "decidedly polite, easy in their manners, perfectly free, . . . and are better cooks."<sup>44</sup> One Hispanic woman in particular, Señora Felipa Baca who ran a stage station in Trinidad, Colorado, on the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail, was well known for her hospitality, great cooking, and clean wayside station.<sup>45</sup>

42. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 80, 81.

43. Historian Sandra Myres writes that "of all women associated with the road to Santa Fe, we know least about the Indian, Mexican-American, and black women who travelled along the trail or lived in close proximity to it." See Sandra Myres, "Women on the Santa Fe Trail," *The Santa Fe Trail: New Perspectives*, 30.

44. Susan Shelby Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail and Into Mexico: The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846-1847*, ed. Stella M. Drumm (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 98.

45. See Myres, "Women on the Santa Fe Trail," 42, 33.

Other women in northern New Mexico who lived close to the trail played similarly important roles. Women's domestic duties such as cooking, gardening, drying meat, and washing clothes obviously were necessary assists to merchants and drovers. Some New Mexican women married influential Anglo American merchants, traders, and trappers they met along the trail. George and Charles Bent (of Bent's Fort near La Junta, Colorado), and trapper/traders Kit Carson, Ceran St. Vrain, George Simpson, and Lucien Maxwell all had Mexican wives or mistresses. Research is scant on women merchants but there is evidence that they existed. An 1840 letter relates that Manuela Jaramillo, a Santa Fe merchant who dealt with trail merchandise, ordered a substantial amount of fabrics from Santa Fe businessman (and U.S. consul) Manuel Alvarez.<sup>46</sup>

The economic significance of the Santa Fe Trail also is seen in the number of spin-off businesses and professions the trail engendered for the people of northern New Mexico. Hospitality and lodging already have been mentioned. From the beginning, New Mexicans were hospitable to Americans. William Becknell wrote of the "hospitable disposition" and "friendly feelings" of the soldiers he met at the Mexican border. Lieutenant James Abert, whom the U.S. Army commissioned to map New Mexico during the U.S. invasion, wrote in his diary of 1846 that he "was struck" by the politeness and manners of the "Spaniards."<sup>47</sup> Inns and *cantinas*, especially ones with good food, did brisk business servicing the needs of the trail travelers.

Hundreds of Mexicans were employed as guards and escorts for both Mexican and American caravans.

Showing a vested interest in the goods that would be coming or going, New Mexicans were "eager to assist in protecting" the flow of commerce on the Santa Fe Trail. One such escort was a Señor Hinojos, who worked for an Anglo caravan for ninety-five pesos a trip in 1831. And the Mexican Army hired many locals to defend the wagon trains against Indians, Texas marauders, and bandits.<sup>48</sup>

Bilingual New Mexicans could enter the trail as interpreters and were hired by Mexican and Anglo American firms. José González and Francisco Similiano were translators who worked for American traders such as James Magoffin. Some entrepreneurs, for example Antonio Chávez, spoke English and French besides their native Spanish and relied on their language skills. But most merchants (especially Americans) hired others to interpret business deals and transactions.<sup>49</sup>

A wide variety of other trades developed around the Santa Fe Trail. The ledgers of Manuel Alvarez and his partner Dámaso López note business interests in Santa Fe for silversmiths, candlemakers, tailors, wood carriers, and even a "snakelady." Cart makers were in demand for trade on the Camino Real and during the early years of the Santa Fe Trail. The carts were worked with cottonwood and greased with buffalo tallow that, while effective for their purpose, were said to squeak terribly with a horrible "piercing noise . . . that wakened the dead for miles around."<sup>50</sup>

The Mexicans worked every possible job within the Santa Fe trade as business expanded in the 1830s and 1840s. Professions included packers, proprietors, translators, muleteers, buffalo hunters, guides, bookkeepers, and government fiscal agents. And as bu-

46. Manuela Jaramillo to Manuel Alvarez, March 3, 1820, Alvarez Papers.

47. "The Journals of Capt. Thomas Becknell," 77; J.W. Abert, *Western America in 1846-1847: The Original Travel Diary of Lt. J.W. Abert Who Mapped New Mexico for the U.S. Army*, ed. John Galvin (San Francisco: Howell Books, 1966), 71, 34. It should be noted that this graciousness also was extended away from Santa Fe. Accounts from Bent's Fort in Colorado indicate that Mexican freighters stopping there were polite and well mannered. See Gerrard, *Wah-to-Yah and the Taos Trail*, 70. Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, 142, recounts another such story. When an American trading party was raided by Cheyennes, Miguel Otero and his bullwhackers saved the men and nursed them back to health.

48. "Hinojos, Escort for White Traders," 1831, microfilm roll 13, Mexican Archives of New Mexico; see also Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, 18; Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 24.

49. Interpreters are listed in Weber, *The Extranjeros*, 21; see also Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 158.

50. Lansing Bloom, "Ledgers of a Santa Fe Trader," *New Mexico Historical Review* 21 (April 1946): 135-39. Quotation is from Marc Simmons, *Coronado's Land: Essays on Daily Life in Colonial New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 78, 81. Simmons also tells how one American observer claimed that the idea for a steam whistle must have come from this noise.

reaucratic regulations increased so did the number of office jobs in the Santa Fe area. Examples of such are provisional interventors, customs officials, general assessors, commissioners, border inspectors, and other policy officials. Interestingly, the names of persons associated with these jobs often are the names of big merchant families of northern New Mexico. For example, Antonio Barreiro, Agustín Durán, and Ramón and Santiago Abreu all were employed in these government positions, and Antonio Chávez was the chief city administrator. As can be imagined, the wealthy, powerful aristocratic class became wealthier and more politically involved in the local government. Gurulé called José Leandro Perea "the richest man in New Mexico," the Armijos were commonly described as "the wealthiest men in the territory," and Felipe Chávez, the son of José Chávez, was worth two million dollars by the 1860s.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, mention should be made of the burgeoning contraband industry that developed along with the trail. Because of President Santa Anna's 1829 prohibition of certain imports, demands rose, especially for textiles and fabrics. Americans started to undersell merchants from the Mexican interior (whose merchandise arrived sporadically and was of inferior quality) with the kinds of contraband goods that could be smuggled into New Mexico. Locals also entered the illegal trade. A record of "true and legitimate contraband" sold to New Mexican merchants by Miguel Sena is on record for March 20, 1831. "Effects apprehended by the constitutional official" included articles of silk, rolls of cotton material, men's slippers, women's shoes—"regular size," sheepskin vests, wool items, hats, and other miscellaneous dry goods.<sup>52</sup>

51. See Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 24; Sandoval, "Trade and Manito Society in New Mexico," 74; William Albert Bork, "Nuevos aspectos del comercio entre Nuevo México y Misuri, 1822-1846" (Ph.D. diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1944), 73; Simmons, *On the Santa Fe Trail*, 120; Simmons, *Murder on the Santa Fe Trail*, 4.

52. "Contraband Goods Sold to Merchants," microfilm roll 13, Mexican Archives of New Mexico. For further contraband discussions, see Tyler, "New Mexico in the 1820s"; F.F. Stephens, "Missouri and the Santa Fe Trade," *Missouri Historical Review* 10 (July 1916): 259; Sandoval, "Trade and Manito Society in New Mexico," 92; Bork, "Nuevos aspectos del comercio entre Nuevo México y Misuri," 73.



Merchant Samuel Magoffin was employed by the U.S. government to convince New Mexico governor Manuel Armijo of the "uselessness of putting up a front against the American army."

The impact of Mexican merchants during the late 1830s and early 1840s can be seen beyond the tracks of the Santa Fe Trail; the Armijos of Albuquerque, for example, forged a trade route to California, and enterprising New Mexicans took advantage of a lucrative west coast trade.<sup>53</sup> But the economic climate changed drastically after May 13, 1846, when U.S. President James Polk proclaimed a state of war against Mexico. The Santa Fe Trail played a key role in the military strategy of the United States. Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny's invasion of New Mexico was predicated on his knowledge of the trail and what it was worth from his history of commanding a force charged with protecting caravans.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, veteran

53. Boyle, "Commerciantes, Fiadores, Arrieros, y Peones," 39; Sandoval, "Montezuma's Merchants," 44.

54. Although the Mexican War is commonly recognized as one of the more dramatic examples of U.S. westward expansion and manifest destiny, evidence suggests that, as Mexican historian Angela Moyano Pahissa asserts, "New Mexico's enriched nature due to the Santa Fe trade is why the United States wanted to annex it." Archives researched by Moyano Pahissa demonstrate that Senator Thomas Hart Benton, whose state and constituents had much to lose from continued Mexican pre-

merchant Samuel Magoffin was in the employ of the U.S. government to spy out conditions and to use his influence to convince New Mexico Governor Manuel Armijo, as Daniel Tyler put it, of the "uselessness of putting up a front against the American army." Armijo colluded with the United States government and ordered his forces to retreat in the face of Kearny's advancing forces. Some historians have interpreted this incident to mean that the invasion of Santa Fe was a bloodless conquest with New Mexicans eager to join the United States.<sup>55</sup> Many New Mexicans, however, considered Armijo a traitor, were unhappy about the U.S. occupation, and resented the interim administration of General Sterling Price. Resistance proved that it was hardly a passive acceptance.

New Mexican merchants played an important role in the resistance to U.S. annexation and proved their loyalty to Mexico. Chihuahua military commander Mauricio Ugarte used information from Mexican merchants in Independence regarding the size and strength of U.S. troops. Some traders became involved in organized attempts to combat the invasion. Records indicate that New Mexican merchants purchased large quantities of gunpowder to haul home to assist the resistance. Many merchants were endangered by traveling when the war broke out; some chose to hole up at Bent's Fort during the early stages of the invasion. Others like Manuel Pino, Diego Archuleta, and Tomás Ortiz were doing business in the Mexican interior when Colonel Alexander Doniphan's troops marched on Chihuahua.<sup>56</sup>

dominance of the Santa Fe trade and much to gain from U.S. annexation of the region, strongly influenced President Polk's decision to invade. See Angela Moyano Pahissa, *México y los Estados Unidos: Orígenes de una relación, 1819-1861* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1985), 94, 25.

55. Tyler, "Anglo-American Penetration of the Southwest," 2. On the bloodless conquest version, see Bloom, "New Mexico Under Mexican Administration" (October 1913): 176.

56. For further information, see Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 29; Moyano Pahissa, *México y los Estados Unidos*, 129; Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road*, 157.



New Mexico governor Manuel Armijo

Anglo American reaction to the Mexican War was mixed. Lieutenant Abert believed that the United States was liberating local merchants with the "banner of freedom . . . over the poor and once oppressed Mexicans." Historian Lewis Atherton complained that the war had a "disorganizing effect" and was an "obstacle . . . [that] increased the possibilities of trouble for those engaged in the Santa Fe trade." Some Americans, however, worked to protect the Mexican traders and merchandise to avoid losing potential business.<sup>57</sup>

The annexation of New Mexico signals an end to the story of Mexican commercial predominance on

57. Abert, *Western America in 1846-1847*, 34; Atherton, "Disorganizing Effects of the Mexican War," 115; Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 29.

the Santa Fe Trail. Trade with Mexico decreased significantly with higher import duties placed on goods at El Paso, Mexico's new northern border and port of entry. Likewise, Americans capitalized on their military successes and expanded their interests in the trail. Sandoval notes that "New Mexicans were less numerous or successful on the trail after the war." He suggests that "the guests became the owners" and that "political, economic and cultural relations were distinctively different after the conquest."<sup>58</sup> The war effected this change on the economic landscape of the trail for two basic reasons: the influx of Anglos who now translocated to New Mexico and the disappearance of import fees and taxes with the shift to U.S. sovereignty. It was this more attractive economic climate that gradually hastened the advent of Anglo trade predominance.

Mexican freighting by mule and wagon waned but never disappeared, however, until the arrival of the railroad—and even then families such as the Oteros switched to freighting by rail. New Mexicans continued to maintain trade caravans from Missouri to New Mexico up to and during the Civil War when Anglo trade lessened. In April 1856 New Mexican caravans were the only ones departing for Santa Fe due to an extremely wet and muddy spring and to political tension caused by border ruffians and free stagers in Kansas. Overland stage and mail service were inaugurated in 1849. Starting as once-a-month stages, by the 1860s service accelerated to daily de-

partures between Independence and Santa Fe. New Mexicans played an important role in this development, especially on the western end of the trail, by supplying lodging, services, and most importantly, a destination worthy of travel.<sup>59</sup>

The value of studying the Mexican experience on the Santa Fe (or Missouri) Trail is that it serves as a cogent reminder of the ethnically integrated nature of the history of the American West. That Mexican impact on the trail, the Missouri economy, and the development of a mutually advantageous commerce was significant has been the focus of this article. Mexicans competed favorably with Anglo American traders, and their successes improved the standard of living for those on the western end. A surprising result was its significance to the economic and cultural development of the American Midwest. For many years the trail was a pipeline for people, investment, and ideas moving in an eastward direction toward Kansas City. The people, their money, and their technologies were genuinely Mexican in origin and filled a frontier economic void in Missouri. It was all made possible, of course, not only by the important investment strategies of the enterprising New Mexican merchant families, but also by the hundreds of muleteers and trail hands who should not go unnoticed in the history of this event. Their efforts and results make the Santa Fe Trail a monument to eastward expansion.

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58. Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 24; Sandoval, "Montezuma's Merchants," 38, 51; see also Wyman, "Freighting: A Big Business on the Santa Fe Trail," 20.

59. Wyman, "Freighting: A Big Business on the Santa Fe Trail," 21; Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, 139; see also Otero, *My Life on the Frontier*. Fare for such a trip was \$250, which took thirteen days and six hours of constant travel except for one overnight stay "across the desert" in southwestern Kansas, with horse changes every fifteen to twenty-five miles.