

APPENDIX D.

Additional Observations on the Early History of the Borderlands

An Annotated Summary of Spanish Offensive Campaigns in the Borderlands

The following information is derived from Naylor and Polzer (1986). Captain Juan Fernandez de la Fuente and Captain Don Domingo Teran led a small force of 70 soldiers and 60 Native American allies through the Guadalupe Mountains to San Bernardino in June 1695. A temporary base camp was established there while the Spanish pursued a group of Native Americans into the Chiricahua Mountains. The encounter was brief and ended in temporary peace. Fernandez and Teran detoured south to assist the Presidio of Cucurpe in subduing a Native American uprising but returned to the Chiricahua Mountains to continue their search for Apache rancherias. A large force of friendly Pimas accompanied Fernandez as far as the Dos Cabezas Mountains (then called the Animas Mountains and not to be confused with Las Animas). With sickness spreading through the ranks of the main Native American and Spanish forces, the expedition moved slowly. Finally, at the springs of San Simon, the campaign formally ended with the death of Captain Teran. The route taken back to Janos by the detachment carrying Teran and by the force led by Fernandez is unclear, but mention of the Alamo Hueco Mountains by Fernandez suggests that he may have passed north of the Animas range and through the Playas Valley.

A small detachment of this force was successful in locating and destroying one Apache rancheria in the vicinity of the Gila River and the Peloncillo Mountains during the last days of this campaign, but for the most part the event had little impact on slowing the regional conflict. If anything was gained, it was a better understanding of the

layout of the region and the locations of possible targets of future campaigns.

The remaining summary is compiled from Thomas (1932). By the mid- to late-18th century, frontier conditions were deteriorating and warfare between Spanish settlers and Native Americans had intensified. Apaches and other groups had by now acquired access to sizable horse and mule herds. With plundered military equipment, they conducted raids and vanished before presidio patrols could intercept them. In 1766, the Marques de Rubi was sent to inspect the condition of the northern presidios and to make recommendations to King Carlos III regarding how to correct the Spanish defensive posture. Rubi recommended a realignment of presidios, and in 1772 Viceroy Bucareli assigned Commander Inspector Don Hugo O'Connor the task. In addition to adjusting the line of defense, the Viceroy charged O'Connor with the protection of the region and, with this the Irish-born commander pursued a fierce campaign against the eastern Apache of the Rio Grande and against the Apaches in the region north of Janos and Fronteras.

Two of O'Connor's marches penetrated the Borderland. The first in 1774, was in response to the successful Apache attack on a Flying Company near Janos. Under O'Connor's direction, 259 men from Janos, Carrizal, and San Buenaventura, and several Native American allies pursued the Apaches throughout the sierra of Alamo Hueco, La Hacha, and Corral de Piedra.

The second offensive expedition was conducted between August and September 1775, when O'Connor attempted to muster 2,228 men in a major campaign against the Apaches. A portion of the force from New Mexico had to be withdrawn because of the short supply of horses, but "...it was one of the largest bodies ever brought together

to war on the Apaches in the Southwest” (Thomas 1932: 10). The final number of participants cannot be determined from secondary source materials, but O’Conor did manage to gather three large regional forces. In the east, governors and presidial captains from the Rio Grande regions scoured the Pecos and Rio Grande. Governor Francisco Antonio Crespo moved north from Sonora to the Chiricahua Mountains and then to the Gila River and the Rio del Norte, where his detachment met the Carrizal detachment lead by O’Conor. Together they searched the Mimbres, Mogollon, and Gila Mountains. O’Conor sent a detachment to explore the Sierra of Las Animas, Alamo Hueco, and other ranges in the Borderlands. This campaign had little impact on the Apache and no lasting relief from Apache raids.

The next major campaign into the Borderlands was prompted by the need to find a route from Sonora to Santa Fe. In the year 1780, Don Juan Bautista de Anza was charged with this responsibility. Anza’s expedition consisted of 151 soldiers, Native Americans, and settlers who caravanned south from Santa Fe to Fray Cristoval on the Rio Grande River where Anza departed the caravan with an unspecified number of men to find a short road to Sonora. Anza crossed the Rio de las Mimbres and then because of the lack of water went south through the eastern edge of the study area, where he camped at the eastern springs of the Sierra de la Hacha. From here he went on to the Camino Real and then east to the San Bernardino Valley. In 1777, Don Teodoro de Croix had taken over the Command of the Interior Provinces from O’Conor. Croix sent two detachments north to assist Anza and to protect the expedition by seeking out and destroying Apache rancherias.

On November 8, 1780 Captain Don Joseph Antonio Vildosola left Las Nutrias in Sonora with 116 solders and 80 Opata and marched north to intercept Anza. Vildosola’s detachment was unable to find Anza, but during his trek he dispatched several parties into the Chiricahua Mountains, scoured the vicinity of the San Simon Valley, moved northeast to the Burro Mountains and then south into the Animas Valley. The second detachment of 474 troops and 120 Opata allies marched under Don Franco Martinez from Carrizal, New Vizcaya, to explore as far as the San Francisco Mountains, but remained east and north of the study area. Martinez did not find Anza either. In the end both detachments had encounters with Apache and retrieved stolen property from them.

Conditions on the frontier had not improved by 1783. From this year until his death in July 1884, Felipe de Neve was the Commander General of the Interior Province. He immediately set in motion a new campaign to seek out and

destroy the Apaches in their own land. Neve’s strategy was to dislodge the widely separated Apache rancherias from the mountains close to the frontier, thereby forcing the Apache to flee north to the Gila where detachments would follow and attack them. During the year 1784, a considerable number of men entered the Borderlands. Patrols searched the mountains near the frontier with such success that in March 1784, Neve sent two detachments under the direction of Adjutant Inspector Don Rogue de Medina. The General of the Opata Nation, Don Francisco Medrano, also set forth with over 100 men from the Presidio of Fronteras and surrounding communities into the Borderlands and the Gila country.

From April 15 to the middle of May 1784, five Divisions with over 300 Spanish troops, volunteers, and Pima and Opata allies again entered the Borderlands in a major move against the Apache. Two divisions from Fronteras and one division each from the Presidios of Janos, Tucson, and Velarde descended upon the Borderlands. Included in their search was the region of Animas Valley, Santo Domingo Playa, Mimbres Valley, Hachett Mountains, Burro Mountains, San Francisco Mountains, the San Simon, the Chiricahua Mountains, and the banks of the Gila River.

After Neve’s death, Joseph Antonio Rengel was appointed interim Commander General and under his command in 1786, Lieutenant Colonel Don Francisco Martinez and Captain Don Antonio Cordero scoured the Borderlands with 354 men divided among three divisions from Carrizal, Janos, San Eleceario, and other outposts. The diaries of Martinez and Cordero indicate they carried out reconnaissance into all of the valleys and ranges in the Borderlands.

Early Observations Regarding Fire, Smoke, and Accidental and Natural Fires in the Borderlands

In the diary of General Juan Fernandez de la Fuente in June 1695 (Naylor and Polzer 1986: 592), he notes:

After traveling about one league, we found a spring in a mesquite grove. Below it we found more than forty separate ash mounds with beds of grass around each one. Since the tracts and the hot ashes were very fresh, we asked the Indian captive when the enemy had been there and how long they had stayed at this place. He answered that they had spent the night there on their way to the frontier.

The entry for September 16, 1695 (Naylor and Polzer 1986: 640–641) recounts:

The sentinel that we had posted reported seeing a smoke signal in the middle of the Mountains. When we saw heavy smoke rising from the canyon at the head of this arroyo, we knew that the thirty-six troops under the command of Lieutenant Antonio de Solis who had left the night before were in combat, because they had been told to send us a smoke signal.

Don Juan Bautista de Anza, Governor of the Province of New Mexico, also notes smoke rising from the surrounding sierras on his expedition to open a road from Santa Fe to Sonora. Along the road 51 leagues south of Santa Fe on the Camino Real of the Rio del Norte, Anza surmises the following (Thomas 1932:198):

From ten in the morning until the end of the afternoon, a cloud of smoke was observed at five leagues distance along the way we were traveling. It was inferred from the smoke that the fire was made by our common enemies to advise each other, as they are always accustomed, that we were along this road.

From April 15, until May, 1784, Adjutant-Inspector, Don Rogue de Medina searched through the Borderland study area for rancherias of the Apache. His search was frustrating because, as he notes (Thomas 1932: 248), the:

...enemies situated on the top of the sierras which dominate the country had observed the camp, avoiding it carefully and communicated prompt advice of the troop movements from one rancheria to another now by smoke and again by messenger.

In the campaign of November and December 1785, Lieutenant Colonel Don Francisco Martinez (Thomas 1932: 283) indicates:

During the morning I continued keeping near the slopes of this sierra on the route to El Cobre. I discovered on arriving at one of the canyons a considerable number of Indians discharging muskets from above. Having already without doubt learned of the other detachment from the many smokes and trails that had come from those directions they had entered this sierra with horse herds and stock.

The second detachment of the November and December campaign of 1785 was led by the Captain of the Royal Presidio of San Buenaventura, Don Antonio Cordero. This detachment searched the Animas Valley, Las Playas de Santo Domingo, and north to the Las Burras Mountains. Cordero's diary indicates he too saw many smoke signals in the Las Burras and elsewhere. He relates that a scouting party led by Lieutenant Don Manuel Casanova reported "...large smoke having been sent up on El Picacho of Las Mimbres [Cooke's Peak], those of Las Burras were communicating with others, the ones I had seen..." (Thomas 1932: 288). Cordero also describes a possible range fire near Las Burras

started from excessive heat on November 26, 1785. Oddly enough Cordero's detachment lost 30 horses or mules 8 days later in Las Animas from lack of pasture and heavy snows covering the ground.

In 1795, Zuniga found a burned area around a spring on his way to Zuni (Hammond 1931). This spring was between Zuni and the San Francisco River.

Dobyns (1981) provides insight into the intentional burning of the landscape by Apaches. He cites from the 1830 diary of Captain Don Antonio Comaduran who observed Apaches setting fires to the range north of Aravaipa Canyon. Although Comaduran does not state a reason for this act, Dobyns refers to it as a hunting tactic based on an earlier 1796 account by Colonial Don Antonio Cordero. Cordero "...described a large-scale circular fire-and-noise game drive as a major Apache hunting custom" (Dobyns 1981: 27). Such an account by Cordero was not encountered in the research for this paper.

Boundary Commissioner John Russell Bartlett journeyed from the copper mines of New Mexico to Arispe, Sonora, in May 1851. He and his party passed through the Borderlands on their way. On their return trip to the copper mines in June 1851, concerning Guadalupe Mountain he observed (Bartlett 1854: 295-296):

A fire has passed over it, destroying all the grass and shrubbery, and turning the green leaves of the sycamores into brown and yellow. The surface of the earth was covered with black ash, and we scarcely recognized it as the enchanting place of our former visit. At first we feared that this devastation had been caused by our own neglect; but on reaching the spot where we had encamped, which was separated from the surrounding hills by the rocky bed of the stream, we found the dry grass still around the place, which alone had escaped the fire. A little further on we came to a camp of two hundred Mexican soldiers, a portion of the brigade of General Carrasco [from Fronteras]...It was evident now how the fire which I have mentioned originated. A portion of the brigade had passed the canyon a few days after us [June 1851]; and their twenty or thirty camp fires had, no doubt, communicated the flames to the grass, which had afterwards extended over the whole mountain.

Roads and Trails Through and Adjacent to the Borderlands

Native American Trails

Undoubtedly, prior to the Hispanic period extensive Native American trails lead north to south and east to west over the Borderlands. According Charles Di Peso (1974), Fray Marcos de Niza followed the old Bavispe-Acoma trail passing through the San Bernardino Valley.

Spanish Trails 1742 to 1800

In 1712, Juan Ignacio Flores Mogollon lead an expedition into unexplored land southwest of the Rio de Norte. He gave his name to the Mogollon Mountains of southwestern New Mexico, but it is unlikely he entered the Borderlands.

In a quest for a short route from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Sonora, the Spanish made several attempts to traverse the country north of the Borderlands. Some of these detachments may have entered the study area. Fray Silvestre Velez de Escalante's letter to Reverend Father Provincial Minister, Fray Ysido Murillo in 1776 relates two reports of potential routes between Zuni and Sonora (Thomas 1932). First, in 1747, Don Bernardo de Miera followed a route between Zuni and the San Francisco and Gila Rivers by proceeding from El Paso, Santa Fe, Janos, and Corodeguachi. This may be similar to a 1754 route that Escalante believed to have intersected the San Francisco River. Escalante states that Don Marcial Barrera "...with two other Spaniards and one hundred Zuni Indians set out in pursuit of some Apaches from this pueblo of Zuni. Having marched three days to the south, he attacked the rancheria of Chief Chafalote, a Gila Apache..." (Thomas 1931: 156).

Hammond (1931) provides the following information from the translated diary of Captain Don Jose de Zuniga (1795) regarding an attempt to find Miera's route from Sonora to Zuni. In October and November 1788, Captain Don Marcial de Echeagaray set out to find the pass reported by Miera that led from the San Francisco River to Zuni Pueblo. He traveled north from San Marcial with nearly 300 troops to the San Francisco River and was successful in finding the pass only to be turned back by exhaustion. At the end of the 18th century, Don Jose de Zuniga left Tucson with instructions to locate the pass reported by Miera in 1747 and by Echeagaray in 1788. Zuniga, with provisions for 50 days, traveled to the abandoned Presidio of Santa Cruz where he gathered additional men from adjacent towns (some from Fronteras). From Santa Cruz he marched north in a direct route with over 100 men to the San Francisco River where he found the pass and entered the Pueblo of Zuni on May 1, 1795. His exact route between Santa Cruz and the river is not known but he might have passed through the Borderlands. Zuniga followed portions of well-used Native American trails through the mountains and onto the upland north of the river.

As indicated in descriptions of military campaigns, Don Juan Bautista de Anza also attempted to find a short

route from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Arispe, Sonora. From Fray Cristoval on the Rio del Norte, Anza turned west, passing over the Mimbres, but out of desperation for water turned south to known sources in the vicinity of the Sierra de la Hacha. Anza then joined the Camino Real between Janos and Fronteras and followed it to San Bernardino.

Roads of 1800 to 1856

By 1804, ore bodies were being explored north of the study area at Santa Rita del Cobre east of present-day Silver City. Supply roads were established south into Chihuahua, and a minor trail went southwest to Janos. On November 13, 1846, the Mormon Battalion began its march west from the Rio Grande River to California. From the Rio Grande the party traveled to the mouth of the Mimbres River and then southwest crossing into the Borderlands on November 23, 1846, at Las Playas. For 10 days the battalion traveled southwest, passing to the right of the Animas Range. They cleared a road near the pass of Guadalupe and made their way to the old rancho of San Bernardino.

At the copper mine of Santa Rita in the vicinity of present day Silver City, the Boundary Commission established temporary headquarters while mapping the new boundary between Mexico and the United States. From this place on May 16, 1851, John Russell Bartlett set out with a party of 10 associates and a small support group to examine Cooke's wagon road to the Gila. Bartlett was eager to establish a transportation and supply route for the mapping parties that would be working on the Gila River survey. Bartlett also was eager to renew communication and trade with the Mexican frontier towns in Sonora to acquire flour, cattle, sheep, fruits, and vegetables for the Santa Rita headquarters and for survey parties working west of the Rio Grande.

Bartlett and his companions entered the study area on May 18, 1851, traveling through Las Playas, over the pass known as the Sierra de los Animas. The party made its way through the Animas Valley and with extreme difficulty crossed the pass of Guadalupe and reached the ruins of San Bernardino on May 21, 1851. Bartlett's party continued south and visited Fronteras on May 24 and Arispe on May 31, 1851. Bartlett returned to the copper mines in June of that year by the same route through the Borderlands. U.S. Boundary Commissioner Bartlett followed Mexican Commissioner Conde in September 1851, north of the Borderlands, and this trip set the stage for later use of this route west by others.