

1-1-1935

Dedication of the Kearny Monument

H. C. Gossard

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr>

Recommended Citation

Gossard, H. C.. "Dedication of the Kearny Monument." *New Mexico Historical Review* 10, 1 ().
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol10/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Mexico Historical Review by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu, lsloane@salud.unm.edu, sarahrk@unm.edu.

DEDICATION OF THE KEARNY MONUMENT

LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO, AUGUST 15, 1934

*Address by DR. H. C. GOSSARD, President of the
Normal University*

WE ARE gathered today on a historic spot. Nearly four centuries ago Coronado and his soldiers presumably encamped near here and marched by this site. Many of the great figures of United States history have been in this plaza. Here passed the old Santa Fé Trail and over it went that long stream of traders and pioneers. For many years this town was a cattle capitol of the southwest.

We are not only gathered on a historic spot but we have also met to commemorate a great historical event through the recognition of a great historical character. This man was Stephen W. Kearny, soldier and statesman. The event was his issuing of the proclamation that declared this land to be a part of the republic of the United States.

Let us picture the scene eighty-eight years ago today. It is eight o'clock in the morning. The plaza is filled with the soldiers coming from the army of seventeen hundred men camped last night on the Gallinas north of town. The house tops and windows about the plaza are filled with the citizens of the community. General Kearny has taken his place on the roof of a nearby building. He reads this proclamation and follows it by giving the oath of allegiance to the alcalde, Don Juan de Dios Maes. The column of soldiers forms and is led by General Kearny along the Santa Fé Trail to repeat this proclamation at Tecolote, San Miguel, Pecos, and Santa Fé. Today we are recognizing this man and this event by the dedication of this monument.

This dedication is significant and worthy as seen by a personal analysis of the character of the man, his acts, and their significance to us as citizens of this community, this

state and the nation. The personal life of General Kearny is largely the history of a soldier-statesman from 1812 to 1848. Time does not permit our covering the history of that period.

The proclamation issued on this spot in 1846 revealed both the character of General Kearny and his breadth as a statesman. Briefly, it informed the citizens of the southwest that they were citizens of the United States of America and that he and his soldiers had come as friends to protect their persons and property, that they would not be asked to take up arms against their own people and that they should continue in the paths of peace and their crops, herds and homes would not be disturbed. If any damage should be done by his army it would be paid for by the United States. They would be protected from the roving Indians. They were to have fullest religious freedom.

Another statesmanlike act of General Kearny was his issuance of the Kearny Code, September 22, 1846. General Kearny gave the credit for this code to Colonel A. W. Doniphan and to Willard P. Hall who was later to be governor of Missouri. This material was derived from the laws of Mexico, modified in part to conform to the constitution and laws of the United States. It also was derived in part from the laws of Missouri, Texas and Coahuila. It was copied on an old press in Spanish and English by Captain David Waldo, uncle of Henry Waldo of Las Vegas. The significance of this code lies in the fact that it has continued basic to the laws of New Mexico even to this day. The code preserved the mode of thought, the legal practice, and the customs of the people of this area.

Through the Kearny Proclamation and the Kearny Code and the entire conduct of General Kearny we see his breadth of thought and statesmanlike mind. He was an honorable gentleman, chivalrous, generous, just. He was a faithful officer, loyal to his duty and devoted to his country. He was a soldier, gentleman, and statesman. We would,

through this monument, hold him up as an example to ourselves and to our children.

Here today we establish our recognition and appreciation of something more than General Stephen W. Kearny. We recognize the significance, to the Southwest and to the United States, of this soil becoming a part of our Republic. To the citizens of the Southwest this change of sovereignty brought relief from the severe strife that had so long cursed Mexico. It led to the early development of a safer life under the control of the peoples of the Southwest. Also, it brought the fruits of peace, and freedom from the curse of war and from the attacks of the Indians. To the United States this act brought potential wealth. The gold of California, the rich copper ores of Arizona, and the vast agricultural and horticultural resources of Arizona and New Mexico were added to the potential wealth of our nation. Through the control of the Pacific ports, the United States was put in command of the Pacific Ocean. It brought to our country natural boundaries, but it also brought something far greater and more significant than all this. It brought to our people the cultures of the Spanish folks and the Pueblo Indians. These cultures are increasingly influencing American life through their color, their literature, their music, paintings, folk lore, and folk customs.

Today, most fittingly, we dedicate this monument that preserves in imperishable stone the life and growth of what was once a living tree. May it be an imperishable symbol of the life it recognizes. We dedicate this appropriate monument to you, Brigadier-General Stephen Watts Kearny, in recognition of your exemplary life and to commemorate the significance of the events of eighty-eight years ago which were enacted in this historic plaza.