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THE NEW MEXICO-CALIFORNIA CARAVAN OF 1847-1848

By JOHN ADAM HUSSEY

FOR AT least eighteen years—from 1830 to 1848—New Mexico and California were linked together by an organized caravan trade conducted chiefly by the New Mexican merchants of Santa Fé. This commerce was a natural extension of the already long-established New Mexican trading operations among the Indians of Utah.¹ It appears to have been tales of the fine horses and mules found in California by trappers who visited that territory in the wake of Jedediah Smith which drew attention to the new field of commercial enterprise. As early as 1827 Richard Campbell seems to have reached California from Santa Fé and returned with mounts destined for Louisiana.² Others were soon following in his footsteps.

So far as is known, the regular caravan trade with California began early in 1830 with the arrival at San Bernardino of a party of New Mexicans who had come by authority of Don José Antonio Chavez, governor of New Mexico, to secure mules in exchange for products of their own country.³

1. See Joseph J. Hill, "Spanish and Mexican Exploration and Trade Northwest from New Mexico into the Great Basin, 1765-1853," in *Utah Historical Quarterly*, III (January, 1930), [3]-23.

2. For the latest evaluation of the evidence regarding Campbell, see Alice Bay Maloney, "The Richard Campbell Party of 1827," in *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XVIII (December, 1939), 347-354.

3. The diary of this expedition is printed in English, with some interesting speculations on the origin of the trade, in Archer Butler Hulbert, ed., *Southwest on the Turquoise Trail: the First Diaries on the Road to Santa Fé* ([Colorado Springs], The Stewart Commission of Colorado College; [Denver] The Denver Public Library [1933]), pp. 281-289.

Thereafter, parties of traders appear to have made the long and exhausting journey to the Pacific almost every year until 1848, when conditions resulting from the Mexican War and the Gold Rush seem to have ended the traffic.⁴

On the outward trip from Santa Fé, the pack saddles of the caravan carried mainly woolen goods—*serapes*, *fresadas*, and coverlets. Homeward bound, the traders brought horses and mules, with a few Chinese silk goods and other cloths. Almost invariably the herds of the returning caravans included numbers of illegally acquired animals. As a result, the trade was put under strict supervision by the authorities of both provinces as early as 1833, and this control was maintained throughout the entire life of the commerce. During the same period in which the organization and activities of the caravans were being regulated, their route of travel was being explored and becoming fixed. Within a very few years after 1830 the mule track through Utah and southern Nevada known as the "Old Spanish Trail" had become the habitual path of the traders.⁵

The story of this commerce has been written.⁶ The main features of the trade—the manner in which caravans were organized, the regulations to which they were subject, the types and amounts of goods they carried, how they looked on the trail—all these aspects are known in a more or less detailed manner. There exist, however, many gaps in the picture. For instance, there are years for which information on the caravans is non-existent or of the most

4. Travel and commerce between New Mexico and California, even by the "Old Spanish Trail," by no means ended in 1848. Emigration to the California mines and a brisk trade in cattle and sheep strengthened the link between the two regions, but there seems to be no record of caravans of the old type after that date.

5. See Joseph J. Hill, "The Old Spanish Trail," in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, IV (August, 1921), 444-473.

6. Eleanor Frances Lawrence, *The Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fé to California* (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1930). A part of this valuable thesis has been published under the title of "Mexican Trade between Santa Fé and Los Angeles, 1830-1848." in *California Historical Society Quarterly*, X (March, 1931), 27-39. See also the same writer's article, "Horse Thieves on the Spanish Trail," in *Touring Topics*, vol. XXIII, no. 1 (January, 1931), p. 22; and Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History* (2 vols., Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1912), II, 142-144.

fragmentary character. There is no complete account of the appearance, number, goods, and activities of the caravan for any one year. In particular, certain aspects of the operations of the traders of 1847-1848 have been misunderstood because sufficient information upon which to base proper conclusions has been lacking.

With the transfer of the bulk of the older War Department records to the National Archives, documents have been made available which help to fill these gaps. Among the correspondence of the United States Army officers in California for the years 1847 and 1848 have been found letters and orders which throw new light upon the composition and activities of the last New Mexican trading caravan known to have made the long trip from Santa Fé to the Pacific. From these manuscripts and other sources can be constructed what is probably the most complete account of the trade for any single year. It seems worthwhile, therefore, in the light of this new evidence, to re-tell the story of the caravan which reached California during the last month of 1847.

In December of that year, California was under the control of the armed forces of the United States. With Monterey as his capital, Colonel Richard B. Mason occupied the position of governor and commander-in-chief of the troops in the territory. In charge of the Southern District of California, with headquarters at Los Angeles, was Colonel Jonathan D. Stevenson of the New York Volunteers. Although all serious resistance to the American conquest of California had been stamped out in January, the military authorities had been kept continually uneasy throughout the year by rumors of threatened outbreaks on the part of the conquered populace. During December there was a flurry of these alarms, most of them being connected with the presence in the territory of a number of visitors from the Mexican state of Sonora. How seriously these rumors were taken by the government is revealed by the fact that on December 27, Colonel Mason issued a proclamation re-

quiring all Sonoreños in California to appear before the military authorities within a specified period or to be treated as enemies.⁷

Under these circumstances, Colonel Stevenson was somewhat disconcerted when, early in December, a New Mexican arrived in Los Angeles and announced that he had come in advance of the rest of his party, some 225 of his countrymen, well armed, who were approaching California to trade as had been their custom for long past. The prospect of having such a large body of Mexicans roaming about the territory with weapons in their hands was not one which the military authorities could view with equanimity. Furthermore, Colonel Stevenson was perplexed as to whether or not duties should be collected on the goods brought in by the New Mexicans. As a war measure, the United States had placed heavy imposts upon imports into the occupied areas of Mexico and upon goods transferred by sea from one occupied port to another.⁸ However, in these regulations and in the modifications of them issued by the military and naval commanders for California, the status of overland commerce was not made clear.⁹ Thus Stevenson found himself without definite instructions to cover the case at hand. In his dilemma, he decided to refer the matter to Governor Mason.¹⁰

Meanwhile, to intercept the caravan before its members should have scattered to commence their barter, Stevenson

7. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (7 vols., San Francisco, 1884-1890), V, 583-585.

8. U. S., 30th Cong., 1st Sess., House Ex. Doc. no. 8, pp. 552-589.

9. As a matter of fact, internal duties on the transfer of goods from one occupied department to another had been abolished by the United States in March, 1847, but this fact evidently was not understood by the authorities in California. *Ibid.*, p. 587. For further details regarding customs duties see U. S., 31st Cong., 1st Sess., House Ex. Doc. no. 17, pp. 406-407, 422-425; and the authorities cited in Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 571-574.

10. Jonathan D. Stevenson to John Wynn Davidson, Los Angeles, December 7, 1847; Stevenson to Richard Barnes Mason, Los Angeles, December 14, 1847, in U. S. War Department, Adjutant General's Office, 10th Military Department, Miscellaneous Letters and Orders File (MSS in Division of War Department Archives, the National Archives, Washington, D. C.; and hereinafter cited as A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File).

dispatched Lieutenant John W. Davidson,¹¹ of the First United States Dragoons, with Stephen C. Foster¹² as interpreter and sixteen dragoons as escort, to meet the traders at the Cajon Pass, the chief natural gateway through the mountains which separate the Mojave Desert from the coastal region of Southern California. Davidson was ordered to inform the New Mexicans that they were to proceed directly to the military post at Los Angeles and there deposit their arms. In addition, the merchants were to place their goods in "some safe and convenient place at this Post where a sentinel can be placed over them," until Mason's decision regarding the duties should be known. Upon hearing from the governor, the members of the caravan were to be free to trade "under the customary regulations of the country." If the New Mexicans required a more prompt communication with Mason than was afforded by the ordinary mail, they were to be at liberty to send an express to Monterey. In case of a refusal on the part of the chief men of the caravan to comply with these conditions, Davidson was told, "you will notify them that they will be regarded as enemies and their goods confiscated wherever found."¹³

Lieutenant Davidson reached his assigned post on December 10.¹⁴ His first contact with the approaching New Mexicans is described by the following communication which he directed to Colonel Stevenson from the "Pass of the Cahoon" on Sunday, December 12, 1847:

11. John Wynn Davidson, a native of Virginia, graduate of the United States Military Academy, and at this time a second lieutenant, 1st U. S. Dragoons. For further details see Francis Bernard Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army from its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903* (2 vols., Washington, D. C., 1903), I, 355-356.

12. Stephen Clark Foster, a native of Maine, born in 1820, a graduate of Yale, a physician in Missouri, and a trader in New Mexico and Sonora. He came to California as interpreter with the Mormon Battalion. He was appointed first alcalde and juez de paz of Los Angeles on December 10, 1847, by Governor Mason. Although mentioned only as "Dr. Foster" or "Forster" in the documents upon which this article is based, there can be no doubt but that Stephen Foster was the man who accompanied Lieut. Davidson to the Cajon. For more biographical details see Bancroft, *op. cit.*, III, 745.

13. Stevenson to Davidson, Los Angeles, December 7, 1847, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File.

14. Davidson to Stevenson, Los Angeles, December 15, 1847, *ibid.*

Sir.

I have the honor to report to you as follows. This morning arrived in my camp Juan Ignacio Martinez, one of the principal men of the N. M. Caravan, and empowered to act for the whole. The instructions you gave me were read and explained to him. His party will arrive here tomorrow afternoon. He objects to marching to Los Angeles with his merchandise, his animals are completely broken down, and the embargo upon his goods until the decision of the Governor be known deprives him of the means to procure fresh ones to move in. His reasons appear to me just. I have therefore given him permission to go in and see you personally, and make what arrangements may seem best to you as I have no discretion left me by your orders. In the mean time he leaves orders that no sales be made until your decision be known to me, and I shall await here your orders on the subject.¹⁵

Without delay, Martinez pushed on into Los Angeles to make his appeal to the commander of the Southern District.¹⁶ How he fared is told by the following extract from a letter written by Colonel Stevenson to Governor Mason on December 14:

The N. Mexican Juan Ignacio Martinez spoken of by Lieut. Davidson has come in and been recognized by Lieut Carson¹⁷ as a staunch and unwaver-

15. A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File.

16. On his visit to the authorities, Martinez was accompanied by his brother-in-law, John Rowland, well-known resident of the Los Angeles area and one of the leaders of the Rowland-Workman party of 1841. Before coming to California, Rowland for some eighteen years had resided in New Mexico, where he had married Encarnación Martinez. Stevenson to Davidson, Los Angeles, December 13, 1847, in Jonathan D. Stevenson, "Letter Book, to February, 1848" (MS in New York Historical Society, New York City), pp. 336-337; Bancroft, *op. cit.*, V, 705; Harris Newmark, *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913*, edited by Maurice H. and Marco R. Newmark (3rd ed., Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), p. 91, note a.

17. The famous frontiersman and resident of New Mexico, Christopher Carson, had been commissioned a second lieutenant, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, U. S. A., by President Polk on June 9, 1847. Edwin Legrand Sabin, *Kit Carson Days, 1809-1868* (Revised ed., 2 vols., New York: The Press of the Pioneers, Inc., 1935), II, 571. Carson arrived at Los Angeles, after a trip overland from Washington, in late October or early November, 1847. After taking his orders to Monterey, Carson was directed, in November, to return to Los Angeles and recruit his men and animals for mountain duty. On December 27, 1847, he was assigned to temporary duty with

ing friend of the American Authorities at Tows [sic] and at the time of the outbreak at that place,¹⁸ saved the lives of Americans at the peril of his own, and such I am advised is the character of all of the chief men of the Caravan, they have all Passports and a guarantee of safe conduct signed by Lt Col Alf. [sic] R. Easton Com'd'g at Santa Fé.¹⁹ The small quantity of goods they have has about 80 owners, many single mule loads having two, and in some cases three owners, and they were induced to come here under the promise of kind treatment and an assurance that their goods would be admitted free of duty, the caravan is composed generally of poor men who have purchased their goods and outfit upon credit to be paid for upon their return home. They regard themselves as American citizens and said they would rather leave the country than violate any laws or regulations of the American Authorities. Under these circumstances and the strong evidence I have of their friendly disposition towards the American Authorities I have authorized Lieut Davidson to make the following arrangements with them. "The goods to be valued at their cost in New Mexico, and a bond executed by the most responsible and chief men of the caravan to pay at Los Angeles on the 1st day of April 1848, a duty of 20 pr cent upon such valuation in case the Governor shall require it." If they should accept these terms I am assured by Carson

Company C, 1st Dragoons, stationed at Los Angeles. A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., "Letter Book, March-December, 1847," pp. 210-211; A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., "Order Book, February-December, 1847" (MSS in Division of War Department Archives, the National Archives), pp. 166-167.

18. The reference is to the rising of the Indians and Mexicans against the American authorities at Taos and the surrounding area in January, 1847. Governor Charles Bent and a number of Americans and loyal Mexicans were killed during the revolt. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1888* (San Francisco, 1889), pp. 432-434; and Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of the Territory of New Mexico from 1846 to 1851* (Denver, 1909), pp. 122-139.

19. Evidently Alton R. Easton, colonel of the 1st Missouri Volunteer Infantry which served at Matamoras during the summer of 1846 and lieutenant colonel and commander of the Battalion of Missouri Volunteer Infantry which formed a part of Sterling Price's forces in New Mexico and northern Mexico during parts of 1847 and 1848. V. G. Setser (Acting Chief, Division of Reference, the National Archives) to J. A. Hussey, Washington, D. C., March 29, 1940 (typewritten letter in possession of the writer).

that any bond they sign will be paid, as he recognizes a few names among the leaders who are responsible. I have fixed the 1st of April as the day of payment for the reason that they are to be assembled on that day at the Cajon Pass to take up their line of march for New Mexico.

I am advised by a reliable source, that since they came into the country, offers of aid and support have been held out to them to resist my authority, all of which they promptly rejected, and I shall have the assurance of all the leaders, that they will not only use all their influence to prevent any of their people being engaged in an insurrection, but will give me the earliest notice of any such scheme that may come to their knowledge.

From all I can learn of the history and character of these people I would respectfully suggest that their goods be admitted free of duty if you have the power to so order it.²⁰

Meanwhile, on December 13, the caravan had arrived at the Cajon Pass and gone into camp. Lieutenant Davidson found the traders to be an organized body under the command of Francisco Estevan Vigil.²¹ The organization, however, was only for the road. The entire company numbered 209, of whom fifty were boys under sixteen.²² Among them the New Mexicans had about sixty firearms, "mostly in bad condition." The bulk of the party was equipped with bows and arrows. Their goods, exclusively products of

20. A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File. Stevenson told Davidson that he had made the terms easy "under a full impression" that no duties would be charged by Mason. Stevenson to Davidson, Los Angeles, December 13, 1847, in Stevenson, "Letter Book, to February, 1848," pp. 336-337.

21. The name of the leader is also given as Juan and José E. Vigil at different places in the various documents cited in this article, but the form Francisco Estevan Vigil appears most frequently and with best authority. Francisco Estevan Vigil had long participated in the New Mexico-California trade. As early as 1841 he was the commander of a caravan. Francisco Estevan Bifil [sic] al prefecto de los Angeles, Rito de Quintana, October 19, 1841, in "San Diego Archives" (MS in the Bancroft Library, University of California), p. 279.

22. Certain information sent to Governor Mason seems to have given the composition of the party as "212 persons of whom about 60 were boys." Mason to Roger Jones, Monterey, February 1, 1848, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., "Letter Book, January-February, 1848," pp. 43-47. It was probably through Mason that this same information was given to the public press. *The Californian* (San Francisco, California), December 29, 1847.

New Mexico, were carried by 150 or 160 pack mules and were estimated to have a first cost value of from \$8,000 to \$10,000. Between seventy and eighty men were named as being owners of merchandise, but there were "as many more interested in the concern." The greatest amount of property owned by any one trader did not exceed "three or four hundred dollars, monied value." Interpreter Foster noted that the company had suffered much from cold and snow on the trip.²³

Like Martinez, the traders protested vigorously when told by Davidson of the terms upon which they were to be admitted into the country. They said that "they considered themselves as *American Citizens*, and that the American government would be breaking its faith with them, should duties be levied on their goods, and that they were poor, had had a long journey and such duties would be ruinous in the extreme." In vain did Davidson try to pacify them by explaining that their goods were simply to be placed on deposit until the governor's decision should be known. The New Mexicans stated that they would leave their goods, "the whole cargo, in Los Angeles, and go back and reclaim from the American government the damage sustained by them in the trip."²⁴

In a report to Colonel Stevenson dated at Los Angeles, December 15, Lieutenant Davidson describes his solution of the difficulty. He wrote:

Matters remained thus until the morning of the 14th, when I received fresh instructions from you by my messenger, and a delegation of power from you, as I was on the spot to make such arrangements [*sic*] with them as were least burdensome and [would] at the same time command respect from them for the American Authorities.

23. The description of the caravan contained in this paragraph is based upon two letters: Stevenson to Mason, Los Angeles, December 14, 1847; Davidson to Stevenson, Los Angeles, December 15, 1847, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File.

24. Davidson to Stevenson, Los Angeles, December 15, 1847, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc., Letters and Orders File.

Thus empowered, I inspected their camp and found their arms but sufficient to protect their property on the road and, besides, useless. Assured of their friendliness to us and of their Americanism, I allowed them to retain their arms.... I exacted from them a list of the owners of the caravan... and of the goods they brought, and a security from their leader, Vigil, that this was correct and given in good faith, so that *should* the decision be made by the Governor that duties be paid by these people on their goods, when they assemble as is their custom about the month of April to return to N. Mexico, at the Cahon [*sic*] pass, the collection of these duties can then be enforced.²⁵

Lieutenant Davidson stated that he was moved to make this determination because the New Mexicans had come under the impression that, as Americans, they would have no duties to pay and because they carried a safeguard from the military commander at Santa Fé. "Besides," he said, "they appear a poor miserable collection of people, manifesting every friendly disposition towards us." Thus, without requiring a bond but after telling the merchants that each was individually responsible for his amount of duties if payment were ordered, and after assuring them of the friendly feelings of the California authorities, the lieutenant gave the New Mexicans permission to disperse and commence their trade with the people of the country.²⁶

Nearly two weeks later Colonel Mason signified his qualified approval of what had been done in the case of the caravan. Through his acting assistant adjutant general, the governor remarked to Colonel Stevenson that the arrival of "so large a body of men partly armed is at least suspicious & although their avowed purpose is that of trade, their presence here affords to the discontented of the country a hope of aid, & thereby tends to disturb the peace & quiet of

25. A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File. For the sake of clarity, some of the punctuation of the original letter has been modified in the extract.

26. Davidson to Stevenson, Los Angeles, December 15, 1847, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File. Davidson's list of traders and their goods has not yet been found among the records of the War Department.

the country." Mason was unimpressed by the traders' statement that they had been assured by the authorities in Santa Fé that no duties would be collected on their goods in California. "It can hardly be believed that any such assurances were given them," he wrote, since the president's regulations for trade in the occupied areas of Mexico must have been known at Santa Fé before the departure of the caravan.

Nevertheless, in consideration of the facts which had caused Colonel Stevenson to relax his first restrictions on the traders and, in particular, "on account of their poverty & the distress that would be occasioned to them by the payment of duties," Governor Mason consented to allow the merchants to remain in California and to conduct their trade upon certain conditions. He specified that a number of the principal men of the caravan were to enter into a joint bond for a sum equal to a duty of twenty per cent of the value of their goods, this bond to be endorsed if practicable by two or more men of Los Angeles and made payable on or before the first day of April, 1848. The New Mexicans were to deposit their arms with Colonel Stevenson before dispersing to trade. They were to re-assemble at the Cajon Pass on or before the next first of April and were to be beyond the Colorado River before the fifteenth day of the same month. On the other hand, if, during their stay in California, the merchants acted in good faith and in no manner violated any of the laws of the country, their bond would be returned "free of any charge whatever." But if any members of the caravan were concerned in any way in any outbreak or disturbance, the payment would be exacted and the persons and property of the whole party would be "made answerable for any injury done."²⁷

27. William Tecumseh Sherman to Stevenson, Monterey, December 27, 1847, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., "Letter Book, March-December, 1847," pp. 239-241. It is interesting to note that in a later letter to the adjutant general, Mason gave as reasons for not imposing a duty the following: "that they were already in the country according to an old Mexican custom, which exemp[ted?] them from the payment of duty; they were poor & friends and to exact from them an unexpected tax would excite public animosity towards us, more detrimental to our interests than the loss of so small a sum." Mason to Jones, Monterey, February 1, 1848, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., "Letter Book, January-February, 1848," pp. 43-47.

Records do not reveal whether or not this bond was actually exacted. It may not have been, since by the time Mason's order reached Los Angeles the traders probably were pretty well scattered.

As early as December 22, some of the blankets and other goods brought by the caravan had been sold to merchants of the Los Angeles area who, in turn, planned to ship them to ports in northern California for re-sale. Colonel Stevenson directed the collector at San Pedro to see that the goods were invoiced as of Mexican manufacture so that the proper duties would be charged upon them at Monterey or San Francisco.²⁸ In February, Governor Mason reported that several of the New Mexicans had been up as far as Monterey, "trafficking [*sic*] blankets." They appeared, he stated, "quiet & well disposed."²⁹

When April 1, 1848—the day set for the traders to gather at the Cajon Pass—arrived, the party was still in the process of assembling in the region of Los Angeles. The authorities seem to have exerted no pressure to force them to leave on the appointed date, possibly because of their good behavior while in the territory. The conduct of the men of the caravan had been "unexceptional," Governor Mason admitted. "They have been scattered," he wrote to the commanding officer at Santa Fé, "& have traded with the people of the country, exchanging their blankets and serapes for horses & mules, large bands of which they design bringing back to Santa Fé."³⁰

On the third of April, Vigil and Juan Ygnacio Morsine [Martinez?], as commanders of the caravan, wrote to the alcalde of Los Angeles informing him that the party would leave for New Mexico on the fifteenth, on which date they were all required to be assembled at San Bernardino. The leaders asked the alcalde to advise "the Colonel"—evidently

28. Steevnson to David W. Alexander, Los Angeles, December 22, 1847, in Stevenson, "Letter Book, to February, 1848," p. 345.

29. Mason to Jones, Monterey, February 1, 1848, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., "Letter Book, January-February, 1848," pp. 43-47.

30. [Mason] to Commanding Officer at Santa Fé, Monterey, April —, 1848, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., "Letter Book, February-May, 1848," pp. 50-51.

Stevenson—of the fact in order that they might be helped to get munitions, since none could be obtained in the stores.³¹

To supervise the departure of the New Mexicans, Colonel Stevenson ordered Lieutenant George Stoneman³² of the First Dragoons to the Cajon. The caravan was allowed to leave without being required to pay any duty, but the traders were warned that upon all future imports by land "a duty equal to that charged on goods imported by sea" would be charged unless otherwise ordered by the Treasury Department.³³

Also, in accordance with a practice of long standing, the civil authorities took measures to see that no illegally acquired horses or mules were spirited out of the country in the herds of the caravan. First Alcalde Stephen C. Foster of Los Angeles directed twenty men to accompany the "proper authorities" to the customary examination of the animals of the New Mexicans. After the inspection, which was to take place as the traders "went out," the men were to accompany the caravan for "some distance on the road." For the use of this party of citizens, 400 cartridges were sent to Lieutenant Stoneman to be issued as the patrolling force rode out from the Cajon into the desert.³⁴

The departure of the New Mexicans was described by Lieutenant Stoneman. On April 31 he reported from Los Angeles to the Commander of the Southern District as follows:

31. Vejil [*sic*] y Juan Ygno Morsine [Martinez?] al Alcalde 1º y Juez de 1ª Instancia, Los Angeles, April 3, 1848, in "Departmental State Papers, Angeles" (MSS in the Bancroft Library), VIII, 77.

32. George Stoneman, a native of New York, a graduate of the United States Military Academy, and at this time a second lieutenant in the 1st Dragoons. For more details see Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 930.

33. Stevenson to Mason, Los Angeles, May 3, 1848, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File. As a further precaution against a repetition of the misunderstandings which marked the arrival of the caravan, Mason sent a letter by Kit Carson to the commanding officer at Santa Fé, warning him that it was not prudent to allow such large bodies of men to enter California and stating that in the future a tariff would be exacted upon all imports from New Mexico. [Mason] to Commanding Officer at Santa Fé, Monterey, April —, 1848, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., "Letter Book, February-May, 1848," pp. 50-51.

34. Foster to Mason, Santa Barbara, April 20, 1848, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File.

Sir,

Agreeable to instructions, I have the honor to report the following facts and circumstances, in regard to the performance of the duties assigned to me at the "pass" in the mountains called the "Cajon"—

Agreeable to orders S. no 23, dated South. M. Dist. Cal. March 24th 1848, I repaired to the "pass," and relieved [*sic*] Lieut C. Carson in the duties at that place—³⁵

On the second of April I received an order from Capt. Smith³⁶ to repair to this "Post"—in order to perform the duties of Judge Advocate of a Military Commission, to convene on the 3rd March [April]. This duty detained me 12 days—at the expiration of which time, I returned to the "pass." On the morning of the 23rd March [April], the sentinal, whom I kept posted on the top of a high Hill—overlooking the country, gave information that several bands of animals were approaching, when I immediately sent a Corporal and Four Men up the "pass" about six miles, to a very narrow place, with orders not to permit a man or beast to pass, without permission from me—on the 23rd an American by the name of Goodyear³⁷ arrived, with 231 animals & 4 men—the animals I inspected and by authority gave him a passport—to pass out—The next day I inspected the drove of Horses belonging to a Frenchman by the name of Le Tard [?]³⁷—he had 225 animals and 3 men with him—received a passport and went out.

On the 25th I began to inspect the animals belonging to the New Mexicans, and finished on the

35. This notation throws new light upon Carson's activities during the winter of 1847-1848, as Carson himself merely states that he was stationed at the Tejon Pass during a part of this period. Christopher Carson, *Kit Carson's Own Story of His Life as Dictated to Col. and Mrs. D. C. Peters about 1856-57*, edited by Blanche C. Grant (Taos, N. M., 1926), p. 87.

36. Andrew Jackson Smith, captain, 1st U. S. Dragoons.

37. Miles Goodyear, well-known mountain man, who, with his brother Andrew, was embarking on one of the most remarkable horse-trading ventures ever recorded. These animals were driven to Missouri. No profitable market being found there, Goodyear turned about and, in 1849, brought them back to California, where the Gold Rush had created a demand for horses. It is said that the mountaineer made a profit on the venture. See Charles Kelly and Maurice L. Howe, *Miles Goodyear, First Citizen of Utah, Trapper, Trader and California Pioneer* (Salt Lake City: privately printed for the authors by the Western Printing Company, 1937), pp. 96-109.

26th—The party consisted of 209 men, and one woman—having with them 4628 animals—I took from the American one mare—not legally vented—and from the New Mexicans, 33 animals with the brand of San Bonaventura [*sic*], 2 Government Horses, and 10 not legally vented—on the 27th the New Mexicans began to go out, and I in order to arrive at this Post in time for muster, was compelled to leave on the 28th, arriving here on the 29th. A party, under the command of Ricardo Bejar,³⁸ and organized by order of the alcalde at Los Angeles, was left to follow the New Mexicans on the road, for the purpose of preventing any irregular proceedings.³⁹

With pardonable pride, Colonel Stevenson reported the results of the supervision of the homeward bound traders. "I believe this is the first time in the History of California," he wrote to Governor Mason, "that a Mexican caravan has departed, without taking with them a large amount of stolen animals—not one passed out with them on this occasion—and as they will be followed twenty days by a party of 20 Mounted Californians and two Juezs [*sic*] de Campo's, who are ordered to prohibit all trade with the Indians, 'tis not probable the people of the Country will loose [*sic*] an animal."⁴⁰

On May 4, Kit Carson, with Lieutenant George Douglas Brewerton and a small party of men, left the vicinity of Los Angeles for the United States. The first link of their journey was over the Old Spanish Trail, and after about eight days of travel in the desert they overtook the New Mexican caravan. Brewerton has left a lively and well-known description of the motley cavalcade and of the man-

38. Ricardo Véjar, a *ranchero* of the Los Angeles area. See Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 761.

39. A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File.

40. Stevenson to Mason, Los Angeles, May 3, 1848, in A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File. On May 16, 1848, Stevenson wrote to Mason from Los Angeles, reporting that the twenty men charged with following the New Mexicans had performed that duty "most faithfully," had returned their arms to Alcalde Foster, and had returned to their homes "some days since." A. G. O., 10th Mil. Dept., Misc. Letters and Orders File.

ner in which the traders pitched their nightly camp. After sojourning near the New Mexicans for a night, Carson and his party pushed ahead. History seems to provide no further glimpse of the merchants and their *caballada*.⁴¹

With the disappearance of the caravan of 1847-1848 into the desert stretches of the Old Spanish Trail, the story of the New Mexican commerce between Santa Fé and Los Angeles comes to an end. If the number of horses and mules collected is a reliable index, the trade of this last year must have been one of the most prosperous in the history of the traffic, but forces beyond the control of the simple merchants of Santa Fé took away their livelihood at the moment when it seems to have been most remunerative.

41. George Douglas Brewerton, "A Ride with Kit Carson," in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, VII (August, 1853), 306-334. Brewerton's entire account of his journey to the United States, first published in various numbers of *Harper's*, has been edited by Stallo Vinton and published in book form under the title *Overland with Kit Carson; a Narrative of the Old Spanish Trail in '48* (New York and Chicago: A. L. Burt Company, 1930).