

U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Geological Survey

Historic Trail Map
of the Trinidad
1 degree by 2 degree Quadrangle,
Southern Colorado

By Glenn R. Scott
2001

Geologic Investigations Series I-2745
Pamphlet accompanies map

Prepared in cooperation with
The Denver Public Library,
Western History and
Genealogy Department

INTRODUCTION

The map covers the area from 37 to 38 degrees north latitude and from 104 to 106 degrees west latitude. In the map area, on the east are the Great Plains; in the central part of the map are the north-south-trending Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Culebra Range, and Wet Mountains; and in the western part of the map is the broad San Luis Valley. Major modern cities and towns are Trinidad, Walsenburg, Alamosa, and Fort Garland. The map shows the approximate locations of old Indian trails, pioneer trails, wagon and stagecoach roads, railroads, old cattle trails, old mining towns and other towns (many of which no longer exist), and the boundaries and names of Mexican land grants. Numerous historic old photographs are shown on the map layout. Original, hand-drawn artwork consists of a drawing of two covered wagons and a man on a horse. In addition, the map has a topographic base that shows the creeks, rivers, lakes, mountains, modern roads and cities, and township and range and latitude and longitude.

Colorado contains the equivalent of 14 areas the size of the Trinidad quadrangle and each area contains about 7,200 square miles. The Trinidad quadrangle contains all or parts of nine counties, named here with their dates of founding:

Alamosa	March 8, 1913
Conejos	November 7, 1861
Costilla	November 1, 1861
Custer	March 9, 1877
Huerfano	November 1, 1861
Las Animas	February 9, 1866
Otero	March 25, 1889

Pueblo
Saguache

November 1, 1861
December 29, 1866

The formal Colorado Territory was established on February 28, 1861, and Colorado officially became a state in 1876. Settlement of the Trinidad area had started in the 1840's when Hispanic people moved northward into the area from New Mexico. There were animal trails and a few established walking or horseback trails but no wagon trails at that time. In the mountains, access was difficult for all travelers because of the bouldery valley bottoms.

Many of the historic trails in the Trinidad quadrangle were used by Indians long before the white man reached the area. The earliest recorded use of the trails by white men in the Trinidad area was in the 1500's. The Spaniards continued to visit the area into the 1700's. The rivers and creeks of the area were traversed by fur trappers and traders in the 1830's and 1840's in the search for beaver pelts. The fur trappers and traders also sought trade with the Indians. Fur trade routes were established between Taos, New Mexico, and Bent's Old Fort and later to Denver. Discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains in central Colorado in 1858 led to the surveying and establishment of several new trails from the south and east across the Trinidad quadrangle. Essentially, no trail had an important destination inside the Trinidad quadrangle until the earliest towns were founded in the early 1850's. Previous to that the trails that crossed the quadrangle included: the Taos Trail [Trappers Trail or Sangre de Cristo Trail], which came northward from Taos, New Mexico, and headed toward Pueblo, Colorado, and Laramie, Wyoming; the Old Spanish Trail which came northward from Santa Fe through Fort Garland and the San Luis Valley, then northwestward across the north end of the San Luis Valley bound for Saguache, Cochetopa Pass, and points west; the Mountain Branch and the Purgatoire Division of the Santa Fe Trail from the Arkansas River which entered the northeast and east edges of the quadrangle, crossed the Purgatoire River, then left the quadrangle over Raton Pass.

When the trails were built, an effort was made to choose level routes; however, very little grading was done, so the horses, mules, or oxen were constantly traveling down into valleys and back up the other side, and fording streams where necessary. The first roads generally were established along animal trails or Indian trails and then were improved by toll road builders or government road builders. Roads passable for wagons were graded in places and generally were free from tree stumps, large boulders, and deep ruts. Diaries kept by some of the travelers give accounts of the stages turning over when traversing steep slopes along valleys. Deep streams had to be bridged; shallow streams were forded. The post roads and toll roads listed and shown on the historic trail maps here were built quickly and had very rough surfaces compared to the paved and even unpaved roads prepared today. Over the years many types of vehicles used the roads, ranging from huge freight wagons to Conestoga wagons and small delivery wagons. Passenger vehicles also varied considerably in size from large stagecoaches to surreys, buggies, open spring wagons, or even handcarts, such as those used by the Mormons during their immigration to Utah. Travel on the roads must have been especially difficult after strong rains or heavy snowfall. On mountain roads heavy snowfall generally shut down the passage of both mail and passenger traffic. In this report the actual routes of

travel of stages from one point to another can be ascertained by reference to the lists of Post Roads which detail the most-used routes of travel in the Trinidad quadrangle. Stage lines and stations were established on the Taos Trail and on the Santa Fe Trail. The stages traveled as rapidly as the drivers could get the horses or mules to run. Teams were changed about every 10-15 miles at stations where extra stock were kept in order to provide rested and vigorous animals that could maintain the schedules. These stations were called "swing" stations but they provided little comfort to the passengers, as stops were only long enough to provide for the changing of the teams. About every fourth station was equipped with a kitchen and dining room so that the passengers could take meals along the routes. These stations were called "home" stations. Some of them had beds, but generally the stages did not stop for the night and the passengers had to sleep in the coaches as they traveled through the night. Because of the sparseness of trees along the stage routes, many of the stations were simply dugouts along the banks of streams or into the sides of hills. Some stations were made of adobe or, rarely, of logs or lumber.

The Concord Stagecoach

The Concord stagecoach had a capacity of 12-13 people—as many as nine passengers sat inside the coach, while the driver and several other passengers rode on top of the stage. For short distances 10-12 people could ride perched on the top of the stage, making for a total of over 20 people. There were various models of Concord coaches, and the type used in the Old West weighed about 2,500 pounds. It was considered by many to be the finest road vehicle of its time and the finest coach the world has ever known. Probably most of the coaches saw use on the trails and roads out West. No two coaches had the same color scheme; however, the favorite colors used on the coaches were red for the body and yellow for the trim. Depending on the steepness, roughness, and condition of a road, the stage might be pulled by 2-6 horses. The stage drivers changed horses (or mules) about 10 or 12 times in 24 hours, and did it nearly every time in 4 minutes. The change took place when a pin that attached the team's harness to the wagon tongue was pulled, the old team was led away, a fresh team was backed into place, and the pin was re-inserted, making the stage ready to continue its journey. The stage normally traveled 8-10 miles an hour. For each 200-250 miles of road, a stage company had a Division Agent or Division Superintendent who had charge of all company property. In addition to having charge of all the property belonging to the stage company, the Division Agent bought all the hay and grain. He looked after the stock, the scheduling of the stages, and checked on the care of stations and the performance of their keepers. He hired the drivers, stock tenders, blacksmiths, harness-makers, general superintendent, attorney, paymaster, conductor, express messenger, and other employees. The conductor or express messenger rode on the stage and had complete charge of the passengers, mail, and baggage. He was responsible for safekeeping and transport of all valuable items including payrolls, merchandise, ore shipments, and farm shipments. He usually sat beside the driver and he carried a shotgun loaded and ready to use. Stock tenders cared for the teams and made sure the horses were ready when a stage pulled in. The stage driver had to be expert, fearless, sober, and reliable. Drivers were forced to make quick decisions about the horses, the roads, and the passengers. When the driver was in his box he was superior to

everyone on the stage. (Information from McCullough, 1998, and other references listed in the “Sources of Information” in the text pamphlet that accompanies this map.)

Trolleys in Trinidad

The Trinidad Street Railway was established in 1882 when horsecars began operating in town. By 1888 it had a mile and a half of track, two cars, and eight mules. In 1891 an additional mile and a half of track was in use, six cars were running, and the mules had been replaced by 35 horses. The horsecar system was abandoned in 1904, and a new electrical system was installed. On April 28, 1904, the Trinidad Electric Railway & Gas Company opened with 5 miles of track and five city cars in town and 9 miles of interurban track with three interurban cars. Trolleys visited the county fairgrounds, East Main Street, a loop line by way of Baca, San Juan, Pine, and Arizona Streets, and also a line went to Central Park. The interurban line extended out through the countryside to reach Starkville to the south and Sopris to the west. In 1908 the interurban line was extended to Cokedale and additional track was added to the city lines. In 1911, Federal Light & Traction took over the company and the name then became Trinidad Electric Transmission Railway & Gas Company. By 1920 the automobile had so greatly reduced the numbers of people riding the streetcars that the company asked for permission to abandon the city lines. In January 1922 permission was received and in March the local lines were closed. However, the interurban continued for another year until September 15, 1923, when it too was abandoned. Streetcar fare in town was five cents; interurban fare to the three coal camps was 15 cents. Two cars ran to the coal camps every hour. (Information from Ormes, 1963; Wilkins, 1974; Fletcher, 1995; Ken Fletcher, written communication, 1999; and other references listed in the “Sources of Information” in the text pamphlet that accompanies this map.)

Metal Mining

There are no large metal mining districts in the Trinidad quadrangle. However, prospectors found some bedrock and gold placer deposits here and there. The placer deposits produced small amounts of gold, and a few of the bedrock deposits were developed into mines that produced small amounts of gold, silver, and base metals. One of the bedrock mines was the Plomo mine (now abandoned) on Rito Seco (Dry Creek) on the western slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Costilla County. The mine and mill are about 16 miles southeast of Fort Garland and 7 miles northeast of San Luis. The ore rock in the Plomo mine contained native gold, pyrite (iron sulfide), galena (lead sulfide), sphalerite (zinc sulfide), chalcopyrite (copper iron sulfide), fluorite, and specular hematite. Of these, only the native gold and the galena formed the valuable parts of the ore rock. The bedrock surrounding the ore body yielded only a trace to 40 cents worth of gold per ton of rock. In the actual ore body itself, the gold content varied from \$2.50 to \$7.00 or more per ton. A box of dynamite is visible in this photograph of the Plomo mine,

which indicates that the hard bedrock required blasting in order to break it up. Also visible in the photograph are hand tools and a wheelbarrow, all indicating that hard manual labor was what it took to work the mine.

Coal Mines

Coal mining in southern Colorado started about 1864. However, very limited amounts of coal were mined as early as 1861, when the first wagon load was shipped out by Kroenig (Forrest and others, 1998). The earliest mines were at Starkville and Engleville near Trinidad and the Walsen, Robinson, and Cameron mines near Walsenburg. Between 1887 and 1893 new mines were opened at Sopris, Berwind, Rouse, Hastings, Santa Clara, Forbes Canyon, Pictou, Peerless, and Brodhead. Branch lines and spurs of the Colorado and Southern and the Denver and Rio Grande Railroads were built to the new mines. The coal deposits along the Purgatoire River were made accessible by the Colorado and Wyoming Railroad, and mines were then opened at Primero, Tercio, and other sites. The northern part of the coal field was opened by the extension of the Walsenburg-Pictou branch of the D. & R.G. to Strong, Tioga, Pinon, Sunnyside, and other mines. Richardson (1910, p. 437) considered the mining conditions in the Trinidad quadrangle to be quite favorable. The climate was equable, the water supply was ample, timber was available, and the coal beds were readily accessible and easily worked. However, over the years since Richardson wrote about the coal industry, other energy sources have become more popular, and the cost of extracting underground coal has become much higher than the cost of open-pit extraction. In addition, labor problems caused many of the mines to close down. As a result, all of the coal mines in the Trinidad and Walsenburg fields are now closed. The last mine to close was the Golden Eagle mine (formerly the Maxwell mine) which opened in 1976, but closed on Friday, April 19, 1996. It formerly was owned and operated by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation.

Coal deposits crop out from the headwaters area of the Purgatoire River eastward to Trinidad, then northwestward past Walsenburg. The majority of the old mines are along this trend. Most of the coal mines had small settlements associated with them. These settlements were connected to each other by roads, and later some were connected by railroads, which facilitated hauling coal to market. The communities had waterworks, sanitary facilities, electric lights, and other amenities of that time. In addition, each community had churches, schools, and clubhouses. Some of these communities are still active and have post offices and schools. (Information from references listed in the "Sources of Information" in the text pamphlet that accompanies this map.)

The Ludlow Massacre

In 1913, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) attempted to organize the coal miners of John D. Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation at Ludlow, Colorado. For some years the UMWA had organized strikes in other coal fields. The workers in the Raton Basin coal field were an ethnically diverse group which had been galvanized by the murder of a labor organizer. They overcame barriers of language and

culture and voted to strike together. Their demands included recognition of their union, a ten percent increase in wages, enforcement of the Colorado eight-hour law, health and safety regulations, and the right to select their own living quarters, eating houses, and doctors. The strike was called on September 23, 1913, after mine operators had refused their demands. Throughout the winter of 1913 and the spring of 1914 striking miners and their families, union officials, organizers, and sympathizers stayed near the mines and established a tent colony which housed some 900 men, women, and children. The union-supported colony warded off strikebreakers and the armed assaults of the Baldwin-Fets Detective Agency. At the request of county officials of Las Animas and Huerfano Counties, Colorado Governor Elias M. Ammons sent units of the Colorado National Guard to the Ludlow area and declared martial law. A military camp was established, and despite the appearance of the National Guard, the miners refused to give up their demands. On the morning of April 20, 1914, guardsmen began firing on the people in the tent village. Five miners and one militiaman were killed and tents were burned. Later it was discovered that a tent dugout was burned that housed two women and 11 children who apparently died of suffocation. The Ludlow Massacre was a public relations fiasco on a national scale for the owners and managers of the C.F. and I. Corporation. The Ludlow massacre was followed by about 10 days of burnings, dynamitings, and murders throughout the coal fields. Finally, Governor Ammons appealed to President Woodrow Wilson for intervention by the United States Army. By April 30, 1914, the Army arrived and replaced the National Guard. Negotiations finally were completed that ended the strike in December 1914. The goals of the miners finally were realized in protected conditions of work, better hours, and higher pay. (Information from references listed in the "Sources of Information" in the text pamphlet that accompanies this map.)

Great Sand Dunes National Monument and Preserve

These fascinating dunes occupy about 40 square miles of the eastern part of the San Luis Valley where they extend about 10 miles north to south against the western edge of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains between Mosca Pass and Music Pass. The fine sand in the dunes has been piled up to a maximum depth of over 700 feet, making them the tallest sand dunes in North America. The major source of the sand is the broad alluvial fan deposited by the Rio Grande, which brings sediment out of the San Juan Mountains and deposits it in the San Luis Valley. Prevailing westerly winds pick up sand from the alluvial fan, but are unable to lift the sand over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, so it is dropped in the great dunes at the foot of the range. Johnson (1967) described seven different types of dunes that resulted from different processes that operated in different places within the dune field. Over time, the apparent net movement of the dunes has been very slow to the northeast. Deposition of sand in the dunes started about 15,000 years ago and continues today. (Information from Johnson, 1967.)

Mexican Land Grants

The Mexican government in the 1830's was concerned about threats from Texas to acquire the land between the Arkansas River and the Rio Grande, so they began to consider filling up that region with settlers. They also were interested in protecting their northern border along the Arkansas River, so they authorized the governor of New Mexico to establish colonies and grants in those northern areas. They awarded grants of land to petitioners who would bring cultivation and settlement to the lands. At one time a few individuals and practically all of what are now the southeastern Colorado counties of Alamosa, Archuleta, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, Pueblo, Rio Grande, and Saguache were involved in the land grants. The grants were made by Mexican Governor Don Facundo Melagres or by Manuel Armijo of New Mexico in order to induce people to live in what was then northern Mexico, which at that time was occupied sparsely, but almost solely by Indians. By colonizing the area, Mexico's claims to the area would be protected from the Texas and American acquisitiveness. But before the colonization could fully take place, the United States had annexed the Texas Republic in March 1845. Also the war between Mexico and the United States started in May 1846 and the United States soon took over the land that had been set aside for land grants. There were originally 197 private land grants. The titles to these lands came from special grants from the government of Mexico. After being acquired by the United States these lands took on special value, and because the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) guaranteed to Mexican citizens their own property rights, it became necessary that all claims to land be adjudicated and their extent and boundaries fixed by the United States. Congress confirmed 13 grants on June 21, 1860. At least partly in Colorado were the Beaubien and Miranda Grant (the Maxwell Grant), the Conejos Grant (not confirmed), the Nolan Grant, the Luis Maria Baca No. 4 Grant, the Medano Springs and Zapato Grant (not confirmed), the Sangre de Cristo Grant, and the Vigil and St. Vrain Grant. (Information from references listed in the "Sources of Information" in the text pamphlet that accompanies this map.)

Photographs

A brand new Concord stagecoach photographed at the factory of Abbot, Downing, and Company in Concord, New Hampshire. Most of the Concord coaches that were built saw service on the dusty trails throughout the plains and mountains in the western United States. The new stagecoach came with adjustable leather side curtains, leather boot attached to the back of the stage, top deck seat, hand-operated brakes, lamps, and fancy hand-painted ornamental sides. In this view, the shiny leather side curtains are rolled down over the front and back side windows. The "strong box," which contained valuables, was kept under the driver's seat. Passenger's luggage and mail sacks were stowed in the leather boot at the back of the stage. Inside, nine passengers shared three leather-covered seats, and for short distances as many as 10-12 people could ride perched on top of the stage. The coach was beautiful to look at—two hand-rubbed coats of paint were applied, followed by two coats of spar varnish. Photographer unknown. Between 1880 and 1900. (X-21797)

Unused passenger ticket for a round trip from Ludlow to Trinidad on the Colorado & Southern Railway and a letter from a customer requesting a 55-cent refund for the ticket. Fifty-five cents was a lot of money in those days, especially when you consider that an entire day's wages were less than \$5.00 for most working people. The cost of living at that time was about a twentieth of what it is today. So, 55 cents in 1905 would be worth about \$11 today. Letter and ticket courtesy of Colorado Railroad Museum.

“On the horizon down the trail, a cloud of yellow dust appears.

The stagecoach careens into town to the accompaniment of cracking whips, the barking of hysterical dogs, the squeak and rattle of the body and harness, and the thunder of plunging hooves.

For this is a Concord coach, as familiar as the Colt revolver or an Apache arrow as far into the setting sun as the American flag was carried.”

(From the article, *The Concord Coach*, by Seymour E. Wheelock, published in *Colorado Heritage* magazine, volume 4, 1986.)

“The big Concord coach at last lumbered up to the platform. I had never seen such an odd, top-heavy stage outside of pictures in fairy tales. Its body was closed, with doors and windows on both sides and a driver's seat so high that it made me dizzy just to look at it.” (Mabel Barbee Lee's remembrance of her childhood impression of a Concord coach in the early 1890's in Colorado. From the book, *Cripple Creek Days*, by Mabel Barbee Lee, published in 1958.)

Trinidad in 1867. Looking east on Main Street from Beech Street. The walls of some of the buildings are constructed of adobe brick. Photograph by O.E. Aultman. (X-1875)

San Luis Valley Southern Railway (S.L.V.S. Ry.) steam engine number 106 crossing Rattlesnake Gulch near Blanca, Colorado, in the San Luis Valley. Photograph by Otto Perry, 1953. (OP-15124)

Brand new trolley car number 2 of the Trinidad Electric Transmission Railway & Gas Company. Electric trolley cars such as this one saw service on the lines that extended from Trinidad to the nearby communities of Cokedale, Sopris, Piedmont, and Starkville. Photograph by O.E. Aultman probably in 1904 or 1905, courtesy of Colorado Railroad Museum.

Trolley tracks at the intersection of Main and Commercial Streets in Trinidad, sometime between 1904 and 1922. Photograph by O.E. Aultman(?), courtesy of Colorado Railroad Museum.

Electric trolley cars of the Trinidad Electric Transmission Railway & Gas Company. The car barn for the trolleys is visible in the right background and the electric power plant is in the left background. The number 10 trolley has started on its way along the Park & Baca trolley route. Photograph by O.E. Aultman between 1904 and 1922, courtesy of

Colorado Railroad Museum. Photograph of trolley token courtesy of Colorado Railroad Museum.

Four miners, one pushing a wheelbarrow full of dump rock, pose near the entrance to the Plomo gold mine on Rito Seco Creek near San Luis in the San Luis Valley. A box of dynamite, hammer, shovel, and miner's picks are also visible. Photograph by O.T. Davis, 1894. (X-61720)

Two young coal miners driving an ore train at one of the Primero coal mines in Las Animas County. Photographer unknown. Between 1900 and 1920. (X-63176)

Note from striking coal miners to Undersheriff Jack McQuarrie in Walsenburg during the Ludlow coal-mine strike. Note written in 1913 or 1914. (X-60379)

A protest march of men, women, and children in Trinidad in 1913 or 1914 in support of striking United Mine Workers coal miners during the strike against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation. Photographer unknown. (X-60493)

Horseback rider among the giant sand dunes that are now part of Great Sand Dunes National Monument, which was established in 1932 by President Herbert Hoover. High peaks of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains are in the background. Photograph by G.L. Beam, between 1913 and 1920. (GB-7509)

View of the great sand dunes and Sangre de Cristo Mountains in 1903 before establishment of Great Sand Dunes National Monument. (U.S. Geological Survey Photographic Library, C.E. Siebenthal 57.)

Entrance to the Luis Maria Baca No. 4 Grant, near Crestone, in the San Luis Valley, Colorado. Photograph by M.S. Wolle, 1942. (X-5540)

Map showing the extent of the Mexican Land Grants in what is now southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, as of June 21, 1860. Before 1836, the area encompassing what is now the southwestern U.S. (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, southern California, and southern Colorado) belonged to Mexico. In what is now Colorado, the San Luis Valley and points farther west as well as land south of the Arkansas River belonged to Mexico. Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836, and was then annexed by President James Polk as the 28th State of the United States in 1845. After the war between the United States and Mexico in 1846, what is now New Mexico, Arizona, southern California, and southern Colorado became United States territory. However, the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 guaranteed former Mexican citizens their own property rights in these areas, and, after adjudication, the United States Congress confirmed 13 land grants on June 21, 1860. Five of those grants are in what is now Colorado, and they are shown on this figure. Two other grant requests, the Conejos Grant and Medano Springs and Zapato Grant are shown but were never confirmed. Map scale is approximately 1 inch to 20 miles. (Most of the land grant boundaries are from the undated map, "The Mexican Land Grants," by Herschel Lee.)

Any use of trade names in this publication is for descriptive purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Geological Survey

For sale by U.S. Geological Survey Information Services
Box 25286, Federal Center, Denver, CO 80225

This map is also available as a PDF file at <http://geology.cr.usgs.gov>

Photographic credits:

Photographs are courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department. The photographer (where known) and Denver Public Library call number for each photograph are shown at the end of each caption.

Historical data compiled by Glenn R. Scott in 1999-2001
Manuscript approved for publication, May 15, 2001