

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

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

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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

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