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1959, pp. 149-153. https://doi.org/10.56577/FFC-10.149

in:

West-Central New Mexico, Weir, J. E., Jr.; Baltz, E. H.; [eds.], New Mexico Geological Society 10 th Annual Fall Field Conference Guidebook, p. https://doi.org/10.56577/FFC-10

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EL MORRO—NEW MEXICO'S HISTORIC HEADLAND

By
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It was September of the year 1849. Returning to the Rio Grande with the army after a dusty, sweaty trip into the Navajo Country, Lt. J. H. Simpson pulled up his horse a few miles east of Zuni to talk to a certain Mr. Lewis, who "was waiting for me to offer his services as guide to a rock upon the face of which were, according to his repeated assertions, half an acre of inscriptions, many of them very beautiful . . . " Simpson's army mates had listened to Trader Lewis with the look of men who have just been promised a furlough with full pay, but the lieutenant figured that anyone who could tell such a whopper must have seen **something**.

The lieutenant's faith was rewarded. He goes on in his journal to say that after riding down the valley a short distance, they approached on their right hand a "mass of sandstone rock, of a pearly whitish aspect, from two hundred to two hundred and fifty feet in height . . . our guide went up to the face of the rock . . . and cried out to us to come up. We immediately went up, and, sure enough, here were inscriptions, and some of them very beautiful; and, although, with those which we afterwards examined on the south face of the rock, there could not be said to be half an acre of them, yet the hyperbole was not near as extravagant as I was prepared to find it . . . I gave directions for a halt—Bird (his orderly) at once proceeding to get up a meal, and Mr. Kern and myself to the work of making fac similes of the inscriptions."

To Lt. Simpson goes credit for being the first English-speaking person to make a record of El Morro, or Inscription Rock, with its desert water-hole and over four hundred magnificent years of Spanish-American history. The name "Inscription Rock" was Simpson's. To the Spanish, the spot had been known as "El Morro" (the headland) at least as early as 1692. Somewhere in the years between 1850 and 1870, someone conceived the idea that the name was "El Moro" (the Moor) because, thinks Dr. Erik Reed of the National Park Service, the Rock somewhat resembles a Moorish castle. Dr. Reed, however, thinks the idea is pure fiction, probably invented by someone who had confused "Moro" and "Morro".

The story of El Morro really begins with Spanish exploration in America, which had commenced from the West Indies island of Espanola in 1496. By 1504, all the mainland shoreline had been explored, and the conquest of the mainland itself begun by 1509. The plundering activities of Cortes in Mexico and Pizarro in Peru followed after 1519. By 1531, Nuno de Guzman had led the first great Spanish movement northward up the coast of Mexico to Culiacan, an isolated frontier settlement which served as a jumping-off place for later Spanish exploration, most prominent of which was the famous Coronado expedition of 1540.

To begin with Coronado directly, though, is to miss a fascinating link in American history—the account of the incredible walk of Cabeza de Vaca, Andres Dorantes, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado and the negro Estevanico (Stephen). De Vaca and his companions were the sole survivors of the Narvaez expedition shipwrecked off Florida in 1528. The four men, undergoing incredible hardships, made their way inland and walked from Texas to Culiacan, Mexico, arriving there in April 1536.

De Vaca's story, of course, came to the attention of Viceroy Mendoza of Mexico City. He very much wished de Vaca, Dorantes and the negro Stephen to continue exploring. De Vaca, however, returned to Spain, while Dorantes and Castillo decided they'd had enough of this wandering about and got married. Only the negro Stephen was available for any sort of enterprise, and he was available because he had been sold by Dorantes to the Viceroy and was in no position to depart.

Although de Vaca had gone to Spain, his reports of civilized people living to the north started a rumor connecting "the northern country with the legendary Seven Cities that were supposed to have been founded somewhere in the west by seven fugitive Christian bishops in the eighth century". Thus was revived the legend which later expanded into Coronado's Seven Cities of Cibola, a nice story of superstition, mystery, and hope of riches.

Viceroy Mendoza had become increasingly interested in the possibility of wealth to be found to the north. He was obliged to make some move because the great Cortes was already claiming the right to all northern exploration. Cortes had some claim, of course. In 1535 he had attempted to found a colony near Santa Cruz, later called "California"—the colony had been a failure; nevertheless, he had a claim. Mendoza, finding himself with only the negro Stephen to send north on a preliminary exploration, had to find someone willing to risk his neck, and he succeeded admirably. A priest, Fray Marcos de Niza, whom the historian Bolton has called the greatest press agent in the history of the west, was more than willing to undertake the trip.

In March 1539, Fray Marcos headed north from Culiacan with Brother Onorato, the negro Stephen, and some Indians. Stephen's luck had run out. Being accustomed to living off the country as he travelled, and taking only the best for himself, including Indian women, he so offended the Zunis (many miles ahead of Fray Marcos) that they promptly killed him. Survivors fled back in panic to the Father, who, though badly shaken, insisted on going far enough to view the "fabulous" city at a respectable distance. "With more fear than food," de Niza returned reluctantly to Mexico and Mendoza.

The Viceroy read de Niza's report with much interest, particularly the passages describing the great size of the city and its "golden" apearance—(there is nothing like a New Mexico sunset to improve the appearance of things). The good Father's report was much kicked around for what Coronado's men later plainly called "outright lies." The evidence seems to be that Fray Marcos was guilty of tremendous enthusiasm which was much reinforced by the natural cupidity of the Spaniards. They believed what they wanted to believe. Surely, great riches equal to Cortes' in Mexico were at hand!

All that remained was a Man and a Date. To head the expedition, Mendoza chose the governor of Nueva Galicia, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, a man who had come to Mexico in 1535, married a wealthy widow, and who was now only thirty years old.

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The cost of the Coronado expedition is almost unbelievable. Viceroy Mendoza contributed 60,000 ducats and Coronado's wife put in 50,000 ducats of her own money. Translated into modern cash, this would be two million dollars!

Coronado's commission was dated January 6, 1540; he was to be Commanding Officer of the army and Captain-General of the Seven Cities. Viceroy Mendoza, by no means a sissy, rode with Coronado to Compostela, 500 miles north of Mexico City, where the muster was taken on February 22, 1540, one hundred and ninety-two years before the birth of George Washington. There were about 336 men in the army, of whom at least 250 were mounted. Coronado stated that by the time the expedition left Culiacan, he had about 1500 horses and mules, all the horses being stallions except for two mares. Equipment of the men consisted principally of buckskin coats. Some of the officers had a few suits of armor or coats of mail.

Unusual personnel consisted of three women who went with their husbands, and several young soldiers of fortune: 5 Portuguese, 2 Italians, 1 Frenchman, a German bugler from Worms and even a Scotchman named Thomas Blake. Most of Coronado's men were between seventeen and twenty-five years of age, many of them being "second sons" of prominent Spanish families, well-educated, and seeking their fortunes in the New World. Their departure from Mexico, incidentally, was viewed with much satisfacton—these young idlers had been the source of much mischief and the local elements were most happy to see them go.

Four friars went along with a few lay brothers, and of course, Fray Marcos de Niza. That enthusiast was needed, not just as a guide but as an advance missionary for new Christian frontiers; the promulgation of the Faith was always, at least officially, the prime moving factor in Spanish exploration.

Three chroniclers of the Coronado expedition are known—Pedro Castaneda de Najera (Castaneda's account was written 20 years after the expedition had returned to Mexico), Juan Jaramillo (who kept record of distances), and Pedro Mendez de Sotomayor (the official chronicler of the army, and whose account has never been found).

Early Spanish pioneers owed much to their Indian guides. The Coronado expedition, with eighty Spaniards in the vanguard with the friars, proceeded northward from Culiacan with the help of these Indians. They were used only as guides. Viceroy Mendoza had given Coronado strict orders not to use his Indians as beasts of burden, and Castaneda tells us that they did not; indeed, there was much grumbling on the part of Spanish officers and men about the time lost in packing and carrying equipment. All felt that the order was too scrupulously observed, but Coronado was a man of honor and he did strictly as he'd been told.

The Spanish reached the Little Colorado River in July, six months of tortuous travel from Culiacan, and shortly thereafter, the first of the Zuni villages (Hawikuh, now only a ruin). After a brisk fight in which Coronado came close to losing his life, the Zunis submitted and the Spanish set up their headquarters. By August 1540, Coronado had heard of Acoma pueblo to the east. Visiting Indian chiefs from Pecos pueblo, beyond what came to be called the Rio Grande, gave him further information and invited the white man to visit them. On August 29, 1540, the first of the Spanish parties, under the leadership of Captain Alvarado with 20 men, left Hawikuh for the Rio Grande via Acoma.

The route of Alvarado, like the three later Coronado parties, is not precisely known. Apparently he took the malpais (badland) route across the lava beds south of El Morro, and thus did not stop here. Reaching the Rio, Alvarado rode up the river, went on northeast to Pecos, and returned to the Rio where he set up camp near the present town of Bernalillo (called Tiguex).

Meanwhile, Captain Cardenas, who had discovered the Grand Canyon, returned to Hawikuh (Zuni) and in the fall of 1540, took an unknown route to Acoma and joined Alvarado at Bernalillo. Coronado himself, with 30 men, definitely did not pass El Morro—it is sure that he went south of here to the Rio, not visiting Acoma, and joining his other men on the River. He had left instructions for Captain Arellano to rest the main body of troops for twenty days at Hawikuh (when he finally got there) and then come on.

Of all the four groups of Spaniards to leave Zuni for the River, it is most likely that Captain Arellano passed directly by El Morro. He left Zuni in December 1540, travelling eastward in 18 inches of snow. The historian Bolton believes they slogged by El Morro but probably didn't stop, thence toward present San Rafael, McCartys, and around the lava beds to Acoma and eastward.

The Coronado expedition ended with tragedy. On December 27, 1541, Coronado fell under a fellow officer's horse during a sporting race and was badly injured. Never recovering from the head injury received, Coronado, sick and disillusioned, ordered the return to Mexico, leaving behind the valiant Fray Juan de Padilla, two other priests and Andres do Campo, a Portuguese layman. These had chosen to remain as martyrs, if need be, for the conversion of the Indians. And martyred they were—all were murdered except do Campo, who matched Cabeza de Vaca's feat by walking from Kansas to Mexico City in five years.

We know nothing of the route Coronado took on his return to Zuni. Did they water their horses at El Morro? We do not know. Our only account states that they threaded their way through the malpais, saw Acoma, returned to Zuni and, completely disenchanted, trudged back to Mexico where the army disbanded at Culiacan in April 1542.

Coronado dutifully reported to Viceroy Mendoza in Mexico City—with no gold. That must have been one of the most uncomfortable meetings in history. Castaneda says Coronado received a cool welcome. The Viceroy proved his worth, though, by backing Coronado all the way when the latter's trial came up some years later. A cynic might say that Coronado was tried for the crime of not having gotten rich—actually, hearings on the management of expeditions was required by Spanish law. Coronado was absolved of all crime February 19, 1546. Completely broken in health, he died only a few years later.

What was the value of this expedition? Was it of any use? Bolton correctly says that **all** exploration of new lands is necessary and valuable. He says, "Coronado made one of the significant expeditions of that remarkable era of the opening of the Western Hemisphere by Europeans." Historical tradition in this vast area, all the way from Mexico to California and Nebraska, runs back to the reconnaissance made by the gallant conquistador. And gallant he was—a great leader, an honest man. In two

terrible years of campaigning he had brought into view a vast continent and lost only 20 men doing it.

For forty years the northern area was largely forgotten. It is well established that no one again penetrated the New Mexico area until, on June 6, 1581, a small party organized by Fray Agustin Rodriguez and headed militarily by Francisco Sanchez Chamuscado left San Bartolome and came directly up the Rio Grande to Bernalillo (Coronado's Tiguex). The party consisted of three priests, nine soldiers and sixteen Indian servants. Although the meager accounts of this expedition do not mention El Morro, the historian Bandelier says, "Chamuscado certanly went to Zuni with eight men, and returned . . . hence it is quite possible that he may have passed Inscription Rock." He goes on to say, "Mr. (Frank) Cushing wrote to me that, after I had left him at the Morro in 1888, he had discovered the name of Francisco Sanchez Chamuscado. It is not impossible, although I did not see it myself. Chamuscado . . . may have been the first to record his presence."

Beyond Cushing's statement, no proof that Chamuscado's name ever was written on the Rock exists. This is not proof absolute. Names have disappeared by erosion, by some early day vandalism; some names may even still be faintly visible but unrecorded.

The three priests, Fathers Santa Maria, Rodrigues and Lopez, chose to remain behind as missionaries, the rest of the party returning to Mexico. Chamuscado died before reaching home. Anxiety over the fate of two of the priests led to the so-called Espejo expedition of 1582, a small party of twelve soldiers headed and outfitted by Antonio Espejo, an independently weathy man, and Fray Bernardino Beltran. Espejo already knew that Father Santa Maria had been killed immediately after Chamuscado had departed for Mexico and he soon discovered that the two others, Rodrigues and Lopez, had been killed somewhat later.

There being no use in returning without flinging a look at the country, Espejo travelled as far north as Coronado's Tiguex (Bernalillo), thence west to Acoma and over the old trail to Zuni. The recorded history of El Morro definitely begins here. On March 11, 1583, a journalist with Espejo, Diego Perez de Luxan, says, "We stopped at a water hole at the foot of a rock. This place we named El Estanque del Penol (The Water of the Rock)." That the water hole referred to by Luxan is El Morro's there can be no doubt—the description of the country, as Espejo's men crossed the Zuni mountains east of El Morro, reinforced by accurate daily travel measurements, makes the identification certain.

It is surprising how little the Espejo expedition knew of Coronado. Although narratives of the latter trip were in existence, Espejo apparently knew nothing of them. To Espejo's pleasure, however, he found three of Coronado's Christian Indians, who had voluntarily remained at Zuni 40 years before, still living there.

To summarize—what of the value of this expedition? The party returned to Mexico and turned in at least two reports—one by Espejo and the other by the journalist, Diego Luxan. The historian Bancroft states that the Espejo expedition was "remarkable, modestly and accurately recorded," and that both the Chamuscado expedition of 1581 and Espejo's of 1582 were "in their practical results vastly more important than the earlier efforts which gave such fame to Niza and Coronado." Well, they should have been better—any work on any subject benefits by preceeding research.

Attempts to settle New Mexico were made between 1584 and 1598; several expeditions were planned and never carried out, while two entradas were strictly illegal. In the light of what we know now, the Spanish attitude toward unofficial exploration seems downright picayunish. Castano de Sosa, for example, in 1590 came up the Pecos River and down the Rio Grande where he was promptly arrested for having entered New Mexico without completing all the necessary paperwork. Juan de Humana and Francisco Bonilla entered New Mexico illegally in 1594-96, paying for this little adventure with their lives. Juan de Onate, who came up next as we shall see, found to his great relief that they had been murdered. Relief? Well, it saved trying them, didn't it?

Don Juan de Onate was a resident of Zacatecas, the son of Don Cristobal de Onate who had been Coronado's substitute governor of Nueva Galicia and who had gotten rich off silver mines practically in his back yard. Don Cristobal was the only man connected with the Coronado expedition who had gotten rich and he did it without leaving home to boot!

The principal authority on the Onate exdedition of 1598 is an Epic Poem. The poet was a certain Captain Gaspar de Villagra. The subject? The conquering and settling of New Mexico. And the hero? Don Juan de Onate. Captain Villagra, perhaps the most romantic figure ever to see Inscription Rock, will have his say later.

Onate was one of several candidates for the settling of New Mexico. After much political throat-cutting, Onate was finally awarded the contract to settle the northern Rio Grande. He had started his bid in 1595. It was three years later, on January 20, 1598, that the army finally started north with 83 wagons, 7,000 cattle, and 130 colonists, mostly soldiers and their families. Proceeding on up the Rio Grande, Onate founded the first capital of New Mexico near the present San Juan pueblo, north of the present Santa Fe, on July 11, 1958. Onate, of course, was the Adelantado (frontier governor).

Don Juan, like his predecessors, immediately started out to explore. Going to Acoma, he was very nearly tricked into being killed there and proceeded on to Zuni where he arrived in November 1598. In the meantime Captain Villagra, who had been on a soldierly mission chasing two deserters, captured them and returned to San Juan to find that Onate had gone to Zuni. Desiring to catch the governor, Villagra started out alone in search of Onate, reached Acoma and found the natives regarding him with cat-and-canary eyes.

With only his horse and a dog for company, the Captain hurriedly left Acoma in a blizzard and promptly rode his horse into a pit, dug, he claimed, for this very purpose. Villagra killed his disabled horse and set off through the blizzard on foot. In his own words, "Leaving the poor creature dead (the dog which he had killed for food and found he could not eat) I set forth in downcast mood to combat this sad fate which so afflicted me. At last I arrived at a great cliff at whose foot flowed a crystalline stream. I threw myself into its waters, blinded and burning with thirst, and drank long of its cool waters." Villagra had hiked 40 miles across the lava beds to El Morro. He continues, "After resting, I proceeded on my journey in search of (Onate). I had hardly started when I met with three of our men who were looking for horses scattered by the storm. They fired their guns with joy

at which the savages, almost on us fled." Villagra writes further that they reached the governor's camp in two days, which would make it near Zuni and correct.

Now this story was written in verse and completed after Villagra returned to Mexico. The work was published in 1610, fourteen years before Captain John Smith published his **General Historie of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles.** Villagra's epic is not considered good poetry, not even by Villagra, but historians note with pleasure that the work can claim to be the first published history of any American commonwealth.

Captain Juan de Zaldivar was on his way to join Onate too. He and his men, not so lucky as the lone Villagra, were attacked without warning at Acoma and most of them, including Zaldivar, fought to the death. The few survivors leaped over the mesa edge, fell perhaps 200 feet into soft sand, and miraculously escaped. Onate, wondering what had delayed Captain Zaldivar, heard the terrible news at El Morro from seven of the survivors on December 13, 1598.

The governor and his men rode to San Juan on the Rio Grande, avoiding Acoma, leaving that little problem to Captain Vincente de Zaldivar, the murdered captain's brother, who, in January 1599 assaulted the Sky City and in three days gave the Acomans a good beating. Our gallant Villagra was along, too, and, although he modestly writes down his own exploits in the battle, he was directly responsible for the victory. The fighting poet, you might call him.

Opposing elements in the Spanish camp were now beginning to cause Onate trouble. The colonists and the friars aligned themselves politically against Onate and his soldiers because the latter were sometimes guilty of unnecessary cruelty toward the Indians, holding them in subjection, collecting food and clothing from them to the point of outright theft, and planning new entradas. In fairness to Onate, however, it must be stated that his letters in defense of his policies indicate that he himself treated the Indians fairly, and that the trouble-makers were a certain insubordinate group of soldiers.

The attitude of the colonizers was "leave well enough alone." They wanted to settle down. "Set up agriculture and stock raising and convert the Indians," was their cry. After all, why had they come to New Mexico? But the Governor was the Governor and he had his way. Continuing his explorations in 1604, Onate with 30 men rode out to the Gulf of California, and on April 16, 1605, Onate cut the oldest proven inscription at El Morro:

> "Passed by here the Governor, Don Juan Onate, from the discovery of the Sea of the South, on April 16, 1605."

Onate probably ceased ruling as governor in 1608, while the village of Santa Fe was founded somewhere between 1605 and 1616. It is certain only that the city was founded after Onate returned to Mexico.

The history of New Mexico, from the fall of Acoma in 1599 to the famous Pueblo Revolt of 1680, will never be complete. The home archives were destroyed in the Revolt, and there is no way of replacing them. Several interesting inscriptions were engraved at El Morro during these years: a long, flowery passage describing the results of an otherwise unknown visit to Zuni by Governor Eulate in 1620; the only poem on the Rock, done in honor of Governor Silva Nieto in 1629; the murder of Padre Letrado at Zuni in February 1632; and the record of an expedition in 1636 to Zuni by four Spanish officers.

Increasing disrespect of the Pueblos for the Spanish led to the Revolt of 1680. Heavy tribute had been demanded of the Indians; they were obliged to render absolute obedience to the Spanish; lapses from the Faith led to flogging: the Indians were, in short, fed up. A San Juan Indian, Pope by name, organized and carried out the rebellion so successfully that in only three days following August 10, 1680, four hundred Spanish were killed, including 21 friars. The survivors, some 1950 Spanish, were obliged to flee to El Paso.

For twelve years the Spanish were unable to return, although attempts were made. Pope retained complete power but his promised Indian prosperity never materialized. There were civil wars, drouth, and pestilence. Pope's rule was oppressive. It was the old familiar story of the successful troublemaker unable to rule.

The appointment of Don Diego de Vargas in 1691 marked the re-establishment of Spanish government. This remarkable man, in many ways the greatest as well as the last of the conquistadores, left El Paso on August 21, 1692, and headed north with 60 soldiers and 100 loyal Indians. No blood whatever was shed in this campaign of 1692. De Vargas visited all the pueblos, going to Acoma on November 3, 1692, and leaving his famous inscription at El Morro. He then returned to Mexico.

On October 13, 1693, de Vargas and 70 families (over 800 settlers) set out from Mexico for the Rio Grande, arriving at Santa Fe on December 16. It wasn't so easy this time; the Spanish were forced to fight to occupy Santa Fe. The city occupied, 70 rebellious warriors were captured, and, after having been forgiven for their crimes, were promptly shot. De Vargas showed he could be rough if he had to be.

On the whole, de Vargas appears to have been an excellent administrator. It did him little good. His term of office expired in 1696 and Pedro Rodriguez Cubero replaced him as governor. The two men did not get along and Cubero had his rival tossed into jail where poor de Vargas remained for three years locked up in the Governor's palace in Santa Fe.

He was finally ordered back to Mexico City, tried for charges which had been trumped up against him, exonerated, reinstated, and sent back to New Mexico where, a humorous account puts it, "Governor Cubero, on hearing that de Vargas was approaching, disappeared with much tact and speed into the brush." De Vargas assumed office again on November 10, 1703, but suddenly took ill and died at Bernalillo on April 4, 1704, and is buried in Santa Fe. He is much venerated by the Spanish, and with good reason.

The remaining years of Spanish-Mexican rule showed a decline of the missions. In the years roughly 1696-1754, however, several attempts were made to bring the Moqui (Hopi) into the Fold, but the independent Hopi would have no part of Spanish rule. In 1716, Governor Feliz Martinez, whose name and good intentions are duly inscribed on the north side of Inscription Rock, attempted to talk the Hopi into Spanish rule. After being rudely handled, he returned in disgust to Santa Fe.

The last old Spanish date at El Morro is 1774. From this date until 1849 no one, so far as we can prove, wrote his name on the great Rock. The coming of Lt. Simpson in 1849 marked the end of a great age of Spanish exploration, Christian zeal and settlement, just plain greed, and

slow decline.

We come now to the opening of the West and the last days at El Morro. In 1851, Lt. Sitgreaves was sent out to trace a possible new inland water route to California. After all, did not the primitive maps show the Zuni River flowing into the Little Colorado, the latter into the Colorado, and the Colorado into the Gulf of California? Anyone who has seen the Zuni "river" today will have serious dobuts about floating even a paper cup on it, but we must remember that this was 1851 and this territory still unknown to Americans.

Off the regular trail at El Morro, and unseen by visitors, one finds Lt. Sitgreaves' inscription, and with it the name Dr. Samuel Woodhouse, who was officially the surgeon with the expedition. The good doctor spent most of his time studying birds, his real interest, and he gave his name to several newly discovered birds, including the Woodhouse jay. The young doctor-naturalist had the hard luck to be bitten by a rattlesnake near Zuni and somewhat later, as he was warming himself around an early morning campfire, an Indian put an arrow through his leg. One gets the impression that the Doctor felt the natives were somewhat hostile.

Lt. Edward Fitzgerald Beale is probably the best known visitor of the 1850's because of his famous Camel Caravan. Setting out from San Antonio, Texas, with imported camels in 1857, Beale travelled up the Rio Grande, thence west to Grants, New Mexico. At this point Beale rode a camel up to Ft. Defiance, Arizona, leaving the main caravan which travelled directly west past El Morro to Zuni. Proceeding on with the camels to California, Beale proved the animals' worth. Dislike of their smell, their awkward gait which made riders sick, their filthy spitting habits, and the general preference for horses led to their eventual abandonment. Civilization with its railroads would have soon made the beasts obsolete in any case. Some of the animals were sold, other strayed in the desert or escaped and some were reliably reported to have been seen as late as 1907. (People with low alcoholic tolerance have seen them as recently as 1958.)

A decided difference of opinion exists regarding the value of names inscribed on Inscription Rock after 1849. People still drop by the Monument looking for ancestral names, relatives who "went west" and were never heard from again. These people are definitely interested in modern names. Many others forcefully incline to the opinion that most engravers at El Morro since 1860 were just plain vandals. All writing is now prohibited, of course, and has been since November 1906 when El Morro National Monument was created, to be administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

But when all opinions are considered, there can be no question that El Morro is and always will be primarily a monument to the Spanish conquerers. A great testimonial to them may be found in these words of Charles Lummis:

"You must not imagine that this (writing on the Rock) came from the idle-mindedness which gives ground for our modern rime about 'Fool's names, like their faces, etc.'. These old Spaniards were as little of the braggart as any set of heroes that ever lived. It was not for notoriety that they wrote in that wonderful autograph-album, not in vanity, nor idly. They were piercing an unknown and frightful wilderness, in which no civilized dwelt—a wilderness which remained until our own times the most dangerous area in America. They were few—never was their army more than two hundred men, and seldom was it a tenth of that—amid tens of thousands of warlike savages. The chances were ten to one that they would never get back to the world—even to the half-savage world of Mexico . . . No! What they wrote was rather like leaving a headstone for unknown graves; a word to say, if any should ever follow,

'Here were the men who did not come back'."