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Introduction

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1956, pp. 13-14. <https://doi.org/10.56577/FFC-7.13>

in:

Southeastern Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Rosenzweig, A.; [ed.], New Mexico Geological Society 7th Annual Fall Field Conference Guidebook, 151 p. <https://doi.org/10.56577/FFC-7>

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Every fall since 1950, the New Mexico Geological Society (NMGS) has held an annual [Fall Field Conference](#) that explores some region of New Mexico (or surrounding states). Always well attended, these conferences provide a guidebook to participants. Besides detailed road logs, the guidebooks contain many well written, edited, and peer-reviewed geoscience papers. These books have set the national standard for geologic guidebooks and are an essential geologic reference for anyone working in or around New Mexico.

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INTRODUCTION

By

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This, the seventh conference in the series, is to carry us to greater heights and greener pastures than before. If these anticipated goals are not to be of a geologic nature, and we believe that they will be, they will at least be such in a literal sense. This year's conference leads us through the majestic Sangre de Cristo Mountains and their picturesque, green valleys. Peaks in excess of twelve thousand feet in altitude will dominate the skyline throughout the trip, and on the third day the caravan will pass in the shadow of 13,160 foot Wheeler Peak, the highest point in New Mexico. Let us hope that our conference will precede the first snowfall, for travel might become exceedingly difficult if such a novelty were to be included in the program.

During the first day the caravan will wind its way along the southern margin of the mountains from Santa Fe to Las Vegas, with a brief sally northward along the Pecos River Valley. This route roughly approximates a part of the old Santa Fe Trail, the western terminus of which could not have been far from the Society's registration desk in the La Fonda Hotel, which bears the name of the old inn at trail's end. Long before the white man came to New Mexico, the site of Santa Fe was occupied by a Tano Indian village, and the spot is known to the Pueblo Indians as Kuapoga - "the place of the shell beads by the water." The rich historical tradition of Santa Fe had its beginning in 1609 when it was founded as the second capital of New Mexico by Don Pedro de Peralta, third governor of the province. At that time the city bore the florid title of La Villa Real de la Santa Fé de San Francisco - The Royal City of the Holy Faith of Saint Francis. As a seat of government for nearly three hundred and fifty years, Santa Fe has flown the flags of four nations; Spain, Mexico, the Confederacy and the United States. For a time, from 1680 until 1692, it was occupied by the flagless Pueblo Indians, who converted the chapel in the governor's palace into a ceremonial Kiva.

As it leaves Santa Fe, the caravan will travel for a short distance over the Cenozoic deposits at the foot of the mountains, and then travel over the Precambrian and late Paleozoic rocks between the mountains proper and Glorieta Mesa. The intense deformation of the high ranges to the north gradually dies out southward, and only moderate structural complexity is encountered during the first day.

South of the village of Pecos are the ruins of Cicuye,

a Tewa village, known to us as Pecos Pueblo. The pueblo is believed to have been built about 1350, and consisted of two large communal dwellings of more than 500 rooms each. It was the easternmost pueblo at the time of Spanish conquest, and served as a trade point between the Pueblo and Plains Indians. Pecos Pueblo was subjected to Spanish conquest and rule, but it prospered until about 1720. From that time on, marauding Apache and Comanche bands as well as disease reduced the population to a small fraction of the estimated two thousand who once dwelt there. When the site was finally abandoned in 1838, only seventeen survivors were left to make their way to Jemez, where they joined their kin. In more recent years the valley of the Pecos to the north has been invaded by the vacationing plainmen of Texas.

Las Vegas (Spanish, the meadows) is our stopping point for the first night. This is one of the more youthful towns of the state, Old Town or West Las Vegas having been founded in 1833. It was here, in 1847, that General Kearny and his Army of the West took possession of the territory for the United States. About 1880, New Town or East Las Vegas harboured one of the finest collections of "bad men" the west has ever known. Amongst them were such colorfully named characters as Dirty-face Mike, Flyspeck Sam, Mysterious Dave, Web-fingered Billy, Soapy Smith, Wink the Barber, and Tommy the Poet. The favorite gibbet of the finally aroused populace was a windmill at the center of the plaza, and it is said that the mill went out of business because the frequent hangings interfered with the grinding of grain.

The second day's tour leads us northward along the eastern foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, then cuts across the range along the valley of the Rio Pueblo de Picuris. Late in the day the route skirts the eastern margin of the Picuris Range, whose pegmatites and schists have supplied the Indians with ornamentally used crystals of feldspar and staurolite. Within this range is an interesting pegmatite deposit, the Harding mine, reputed to be the largest beryl producer in the country. The trip leads through complex structures and an extensive section including much Precambrian.

One of the first points of interest to be encountered during the second day is the rugged, 10,500 foot Hermit's Peak. Traditionally, a wandering recluse variously known as Juan Maria Augustine Anna and Juan Bautista Justiniano arrived, on foot, at Las Vegas in 1863. Seeking solitude, he found a cave below the summit, too low to stand in, too short to lie in, which suited his penitent soul. Villagers flocked to the holy man and it became known by its present

name. Nearby is another mountain whose shape is remarkably suggestive of human features; it is known as El Porvenir ~ "the one to come."

Our stopping point for the second night is Taos, well known today as a popular artists colony. Taos is in reality made up of three independent communities; the main town, San Fernando de Taos; the Indian pueblo, San Geranimo de Taos; and Rancho de Taos, the old Indian farming area. In the language of the Indians, Taos means simply "the village." This famous pueblo with its many storied houses was discovered by Hernando de Alvarado in 1540. The history of Don Fernando de Taos is steeped in revolution and bloodshed. Po-pe of San Juan, one of the leaders of the pueblo rebellion of 1680 made his headquarters here. Attacks on both the Spanish settlers and the pueblo by Apache, Ute, Navajo, and Comanche bands were a constant hazard. In the mid-nineteenth century many colorful characters resided in the area; one of the best known amongst them being Kit Carson. A contemporary of Carson was Padre Antonio Jose Martinez who championed the cause of his people and strove to bring enlightenment to their lives. He was accused of helping to foment the uprising of 1847, which resulted in the death of Governor Bent. Today this community is a peaceful and quiet retreat, beloved by many artists and writers.

The third day carries us through an area of extreme structural complexity, though the distance to be covered is very short. We will drive over Palo Flechado pass at over nine thousand feet, and then drop into the beautiful Moreno Valley. Palo Flechado is Spanish for "arrowed pole" in allusion, it is said, to the enormous number of arrows that were left in the trees after a particularly fierce battle between the Spanish and the Comanche. Moreno Valley with all of its beauty is reputed to be one of the coldest spots in the country, temperatures to 48 degrees below zero having been reported.

Lest this introduction should end on such a cold note, a few words about this year's guidebook might be in order. To the adherents of the cause of the hard-back binding and justified margin of last year, our apologies. Perhaps the return to a lower cost that this return to an earlier format allows will counteract any disappointment. One innovation is to be found - each road log is preceded by an extensive resume of the geology along the day's route. This should be of considerable assistance to the reader.

Finally, to the conferees, from all who have been engaged in the many-fold preparations, a very hearty WELCOME.