

DESERT TRACKS



Newsletter of the Southwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

June, 2004

From the Editors

In this newsletter we give the report of SWOCTA's spring mapping trip during which the Trail Turtles returned to the Gila River in the vicinity of Oatman Flats. We have also included an interview with Robert V. (Bob) Hine, an eminent historian of the American west who is currently living in Irvine, CA. Bob's book, *Bartlett's West: Drawing the Mexican Boundary*, concerns one of the earliest official expeditions through the region of the Southern Emigrant Trail. Bartlett's expedition mapped the pre-Gadsden Purchase US/Mexican boundary which overlapped to a considerable extent with the region currently being mapped (using GPS) by the SWOCTA Trail Turtles.



During the 45th Annual Arizona History Convention held in Safford, AZ, April 22-24, the Graham County Historical Society gave special recognition to Betty Lee (on the right; Reba Grandrud is on the left) for her many years of leadership and service to the society. Betty served as president of the society, and she was founding curator and director of the museum. She is a charter member of both OCTA and SWOCTA.





Nigel Cave, Rose Ann Tompkins, Don Buck, Tracy DeVault and Ken White discuss their assignments for a day of mapping. Photo by Judy DeVault

2004 SPRING MAPPING TRIP: “DÉJÀ VU” by Richard Greene

The SWOCTA Trail Turtles returned to the area along the Gila River near Oatman Flats where they previously had their most exciting mapping experience. (See *Desert Tracks*, January 2004.) Rose Ann’s goal was to resolve possibilities for alternate trails and determine whether there are any traces of the trail in the Gila’s flood plain - a slim chance considering the sandy soil and the floods over the years. Most of all it was an opportunity to enjoy the trail, and the artifacts, glyphs and inscriptions we had seen on the previous trip.

This was our biggest group ever. Some of us come a long way to map. The Turtles: Don Buck (CA), Tracy and Judy DeVault (AZ), Richard and Marie Greene (NM), Dave Hollecker (NV), Neal and Marion John (CA), Kay Kelso (AZ), Rose Ann and Harlie Tompkins (AZ), Ken and Pat White (AZ); and guests Terry Cook (CA), Reba Grandrud (AZ), Nigel Reynolds (AZ) and David Schimberg (AZ).

TUESDAY, APRIL 6 - Rose Ann had chosen the “graveyard of artifacts” [on the mesa above Oatman Flats] as the meeting place and camping spot; the scheduled arrival time was 4 PM. Rose Ann and the

Greenes arrived together to find Neal, Marion (with her husky Cisco) and Kay already there. The Greenes set up the EZ-UP shelter and those in camp settled down and waited for the others to arrive. The Whites came in next from Sears' Point where they had been with the DeVaults and with David and Nigel, friends from Prescott. They informed us that Dave and Don (who had arrived a day early to explore some of the sights seen on the last trip) had slipped and gotten bruised at Sears' Point. Before long we could see Dave’s van stirring up the dust with Don in hot pursuit. Dave’s high white roof is a great beacon when you are looking for the position of the parked vehicles while out mapping. Dave showed us his Sears' Point bruises. It was good to see Don in fine shape after the nasty elbow injury that he received on the eve of our last outing. Thank God for cell phones: Reba and Terry, who were unsure about an important turn, called for directions, so Ken and Richard drove out and brought them to camp. Finally, Tracy brought his party in.

This really was Marion’s night; first, she fixed a spaghetti dinner, and then she entertained us with her Yamaha Keyboard, playing the tunes we requested. Then Reba and Marion formed a duo and we were entertained further. By 9:30 we closed down and went to bed under a starry, cool night.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7 - At the first signs of daylight, people were up and moving. The good news was that we would spend another night at the same campsite, so didn't have to pack and break camp.

Everybody wanted to see the nearby ravine (the "Oasis"). Rose Ann had found mention of it in an 1849 diary:

Oct. 21st . . . This evening we left the bottom by climbing the steep ascent to the table land. [Now known as the Oatman Massacre Site] This, as well as the level summit, was covered with dark purple rocks of all sizes and had a most dreary appearance. Their texture is nearly that of our wild stone, but coarse in quality. About a mile from the ascent where the road bends to the south there is a plain trail leading off to the right. This leads to a rocky ravine in which are some holes of excellent water. Near here we encamped, without grass or wood.

(David P. Robrock, ed., *Missouri 49er, The Journal of William W. Hunter* (Univ. of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1992) p. 174-5.)



The Turles set up camp next to the trail, which runs across the photo just behind the vehicles. The site is on the upland parallel the Gila River. The marker in the foreground marks the corner for four sections.

Unlike last fall, our oasis was dry. There was not a drop of water anywhere. Considering all the rain that had fallen recently in Arizona, this was a real surprise. What a difference it made to the feeling of having found a "trail paradise." Still it was a thrill to see the "O. W. Randall 1849"

inscription, the glyphs, the mortar holes and the lush vegetation so rare in this rock strewn barren landscape. We tried to make a connection between a trail junction and the ravine but could not find any branch that led into and then out of the ravine to rejoin the main trail heading west. It seemed that the ravine was used mainly by those staying in the camp area on top.

When we strolled back to camp we were probably more aware than ever that this was an area where emigrant wagons had stayed; this was validated by the many artifacts lying around the area. Rose Ann had heard there was an inscription on the mesa top by the Oatman Massacre site, so a group headed out to find it. It was easy to find the trail to the Oatman site, and our marking tape was still visible from the last time. The group found the inscription, a very stylized "PGdeP," which could be French or Spanish.

That afternoon the wind picked up and the bungies were not strong to hold the EZ-UP shelter; we had to literally "hold on" to it. Reba and Terry had a difficult time securing their tent. Dave's fabulous shower was put up, but the fiberglass supports kept bending over in the wind.

After dinner Don brought out some rods to demonstrate the art of dowsing for Neal. Unlike other engineers who once thought dowsing was nonsense but who have since become believers, Neal remains a sceptic. Then, Rose Ann gave us a simple intelligence test, a nine (yes, 9!) piece jigsaw puzzle of various turtles. It was maddening to find we Trail Turtles simply couldn't work it. We tried to joke our way out of our failure and we had to accept defeat for the evening but we vowed to overcome this threat to our well being. It was a pleasant night. We watched the stars, satellites and air traffic from Phoenix and Marie and Terry saw meteors.

THURSDAY, APRIL 8 – After a nice cool night, we packed up camp, but before moving on we spent time looking for trail in the vicinity. At the south end of the ravine, near the main trail heading west, Pat found a

rock used to form a metate and Judy discovered half of a mano nearby.

After satisfying ourselves that we had checked out all potential traces of trail seen on the aerial photographs, we headed out for Sentinel on Interstate 8. This is a one-store place which (as Reba told us) has the oldest Texaco station in continual operation in the U.S.; it is for sale if you're interested. We then headed for the Post Road Exit. Rose Ann wanted us to see whether remnants of trail could be found into the Gila flats from the gravel pit, where some of us ended up on the last mapping trip. Pat, Ken, Neal and Richard, who undertook this mission, did not find any trail in the sandy Gila flats. Others went to Sears Point and Independence Rock and found plenty of trail remnants.

It was another warm, windy evening in camp and the EZ-UP shelter, which took one too many gusts, was blown over and a metal brace was bent, but it was still usable. We are not sure how it happened but Judy and Richard managed to put the 9-piece puzzle together and were ecstatic. They coded the pieces on the back so that they could reassemble the puzzle and do a command performance for the group.

Harlie arrived in camp after an encounter along the road from the Post Road exit with a man who needed a jump-start for his car. Knowledge of two recent murders in

the area made Harlie wary. He called Rose Ann, giving the license plate number and description of the car, and told the man that his wife would call authorities if she did not hear from Harlie again within fifteen minutes. The jump-start didn't work and Harlie continued towards camp, making his expected phone call. Cell phones do have their uses! And tales of "murderer along the freeway" became part of our camp lore.

Don prepped us on the fall trip: the Applegate Trail, including the Black Rock desert and High Rock Canyon. Don had brought the new trail guide on the Applegate Trail [published by Trails West – see the ad on the last page of this issue] for our purchase and use. Then, Don got down to specifics about the trip. There would be a high probability of flat tires; we would need to carry an extra 5 gallons of gas as there are no services for several days along the route; and there would be some steep and rocky stretches to get through. Although we are a seasoned group and we've seen some rough stuff over the years, nevertheless we were left with some misgivings. But, when Don and Dave finalize plans, no doubt we will all be there.

A dust devil surprised us with its ferocity and suddenness. Sadly the EZ-UP shelter took another beating and two metal braces broke. Dave's shower was appreciated once again as we chatted until heading for bed.



Marie Greene, Richard Greene, Don Buck, Neal Johns and Tracy DeVault.

FRIDAY, APRIL 9 - It was initially cool and cloudy but the sun soon came out. Rose Ann, Don, the Johns and the Whites went to Independence Rock. Tracy, Judy, Kay, Dave and Richard searched for alternate routes to the gravel pit trail that the aerials suggested were worth checking out but had no luck. The group proceeded on to Indian Point. There was one particular rocky section where Tracy left some bumper white on the rocks. Tracy and Richard, who had explored the Indian Point area during the last mapping trip, showed the group a massive rock totally covered in glyphs. The GPS readings took us right to the spot and to the sites of other inscriptions and glyphs seen on the last trip.

It was hotter than 90 degrees on the rocky ground so Harlie stretched a tarp between two vehicles for shade. After lunch Tracy, Don, Kay, Richard and the Whites explored the trail where it went down the mesa into the sandy flats. Once in the sand, the trail disappeared but it was quite visible on the rocky ground. Don and Kay hiked to Howard's Well, a site on the aerial. The Well is a 20 yard square (broken) fenced enclosure with a dry concrete trough surrounded by acacia trees, but there was no water or trail anywhere.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10 – Several of the Turtles left for home, but Tracy, Judy, Ken, Pat and Richard wanted to complete mapping a section of trail around a massive man-made berm. Prior to inching down the rough road to the berm, we passed a group of hunters in the same camping spot as last fall. Ken and Pat took the west side where they had found the trail previously; they found some artifacts (some large links and a fork), but it was obvious that the construction of the berm had bulldozed away any evidence of the trail. Tracy and Richard tracked down their last GPS reading from last fall. They found the single tree clip artifact and the tape marking the spot. Richard found a small metal button which Tracy believed came off trousers. Ken relayed his GPS coordinates on the other side of the berm so that Tracy and Richard

could setup a GO TO on their GPS and follow the trail as they meandered through the vegetation on their side of the berm. Ken's GPS information helped them to keep on a straight line through the brush and probably was the reason that Tracy found a perfectly preserved old bottle. It had weathered in the sun to an even and beautiful amethyst; it sat unbroken after all those years.

Tracy led the group out to Sentinel, and we waved and said our farewells over the radio as we headed for home. The mapping trip was over and, as always, there was much to reflect upon.

Strongbox Custodian's Report

As a result of a decision of the officers, a request for dues for 2004 was made in the last newsletter, as well as in a follow-up postcard. Many members responded by sending in their dues. The result of this is that we now have 32 membership units (sometimes a single individual and sometimes a couple). The treasury stands at a bit over \$800, so we should be in good shape for another year.

Harland Tompkins
Treasurer

Call for Contributions

The next newsletter will be issued in January, 2005. We welcome contributions: articles, news items, book reviews, letters, etc. Send them as an e-mail attachment to

dlawrence@fullerton.edu

or send a hard copy to

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Interview with Robert V. Hine

March 13, 2004, Irvine CA

Robert V. Hine is a distinguished historian of the American West. He was Professor of History at the University of California, Riverside, from 1964 to 1990 and is currently a Professor Recalled at the University of California, Irvine. His publications include *California's Utopian Colonies* (University of California Press, 1983), *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (with John Mack Farragher, Yale University Press, 2000) and *In the Shadow of Fremont, Edward Kern and the Art of American Exploration, 1845-1860* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1983). He was the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships and a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Bob's book *Second Sight* (University of California Press, 1993) is a personal memoir of his loss and subsequent recovery of eyesight. Bob is currently at work on a novel, *El Pocho*, concerning the experience of a recent Mexican immigrant to California.

In the following interview, we discuss his book *Bartlett's West: Drawing the Mexican Boundary* (Yale University Press, 1868), as well as related issues of interest to the SWOCTA membership. This work, which covers the history of the Boundary Commission that mapped the Mexican border prior to the Gadsen Purchase, was published for the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth to accompany an exhibition on the art of the Boundary Commission. As such, a primary focus of the book is the art produced or commissioned by Bartlett and other members of the Commission. It includes some of the earliest visual representations of the Southern Emigrant/Gila Trail.

DT (Desert Tracks) Members of the Oregon-California Trails Association are interested in developing, interpreting and preserving the old trails of western expansion. We consider ourselves "Rut Nuts" because we like to go out, get on the site and see the ruts and traces of the old trails. Using interpretive material we let our imaginations give us some sense of what the experience of the trail was like in the 1800's. This is a very focused approach. What are some of the more general issues that you, as a historian, find to be of interest?



BH (Bob Hine) I'll start by saying that you Rut Nuts are performing an invaluable service for academic historians. My wife and I tried to follow the Bartlett trail when I was writing the book, but we were woefully handicapped by not having the skills, stamina and agility to do a rut-by-rut examination. If I had had the reports that you now produce, my writing would have been immensely enriched. The history profession is in debt to all of you. Keep it up, not only for your own interest, but for all that you bestow on the field of history.

To return to your question, if you're a modern historian there are some things you've got to be concerned with. Gender is a central current issue, as I'm sure you trail enthusiasts have noted. How did women handle the trail? Farragher^[1] found that they were better than men at working out many problems. What were their day-by-day lives like, what problems did they face that the men didn't, what were the sexual relations on the trail? For example, remember how the Whitmans faced awful jealousies and interpersonal problems.^[2]

DT This was their honeymoon! Trying to have sex in a tent when you're sharing it with another newlywed couple.

BH It's not easy to imagine!

Race is another big issue that modern historians emphasize. Applied to the trails, you inevitably ask about Indians. Were they a real problem for people on the trails? A lot of historians say that has been overblown, that the Indian menace was really pretty minor. If it could be established that trails were traveled for long periods with no problems with Indians, it would provide an interesting contrast to the view that Indians were an ever-present threat. Did Indians ever give

vital help to a company in trouble? I'm sure you could find plenty of examples.

DT On the Southern Emigrant Trail, the Apaches were always a threat; at the least they threatened loss of livestock. However, a number of writers suggest that the Apaches were so opposed to the Mexicans that they initially considered the Americans as potential allies. The worst problems between the Americans and the Apaches came later.

BH As another important example, consider Mexican relations. You might remember in the Bartlett story, at one point a teamster murdered a Mexican. As recompense, Bartlett offered the family a hundred dollars. I know that a hundred dollars was worth more than it is now, but even so, that was a very cavalier attitude! "Oh, just give them a hundred dollars and that will take care of it." On the other hand, Bartlett had a fairly high level of respect for Conde, the Mexican Commissioner.

DT Your book suggests that this was a good relationship.

BH It was very good. In fact, that was what Bartlett was accused of: it was *too* good. He caved in to Conde too much. I don't think that that was true, but the good relation probably opened him to that sort of charge.

DT There's an obvious tension between developing the old trails – mapping, making interpretive exhibits, encouraging people to visit the sites – and the fact that too much visitation can cause damage to the sites. Can you comment?

BH I've got a feeling that you Rut Nuts are not the real problem. My suspicion is that you're pretty darn good at preserving what you find. You know well who the problem cases are: the four-wheel drives, the dune buggies, the target shooters. When Knox Mellon was the California State Historic Preservation Officer, he had studied the Llano Colony a good deal and was very anxious to get a historic marker on the site.^[3] A beautiful plaque was installed, but it lasted only three or four months. First it was shot all to pieces and then it was carted away. The state kept replacing it, but it was vandalized so often that they finally decided that they couldn't afford to replace it any longer, and now it doesn't have a marker. I suspect that such stories are quite common. The people who pick up artifacts or markers for mementos or shoot up

sites are the real culprits, not trail enthusiasts like yourselves.

DT Even within the set of people who are responsible, if the traffic gets too high, it can cause problems.

BH You can't deny people the right to see these places. If you point out that the sites can get damaged, most people will behave responsibly. Think of the Mormons, it seems to me they are always reenacting their trail.

DT There was a problem at Independence Rock last summer when large numbers of LDS members held prayer services at the rock several times each day.

BH Did they actually deface the rock?

DT They weren't defacing the rock; it was just that the sheer numbers of people scrambling up and down the rock at the same time led to some damage.

BH I suppose you could restrict numbers as they do at the French prehistoric sites. But, that's a different problem from the target shooters.

DT The Trail Turtles in SWOCTA are embarked on a mission of mapping the southern emigrant trails through New Mexico and Arizona, using GPS to do the mapping very precisely. The same trails that Whipple, Emory, and Bartlett mapped are being remapped with GPS. We are interested in hearing your comment on the connection.

BH The Trail Turtles obviously are doing it more accurately. Can't you imagine how Emory and Bartlett would envy the tools that we have today? For a reflection of how badly they desired accuracy, take the controversy faced by Bartlett and his astronomers. They had to establish the initial boundary line consistent with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but they found that the Disturnell map used by the treaty gave coordinates completely different from what they found on the ground.^[4] The location of El Paso was thirty miles off. What do you do under these circumstances? Do you use the map that was in the treaty? Or do you say "The Treaty really means this"? If you had had modern technology at the time of the treaty, you wouldn't have had that problem at all. And that issue really dogged the commission. For one thing, it created tensions between people. There were two camps, one which believed that you followed the coordinates of the old map, the

other which believed that you followed the coordinates that you actually found on the ground. They never really agreed on that.

DT Wasn't this issue caught up in pre-Civil War North-South politics? Didn't it have a lot to do with whether the South was going to be able to put a railroad through southern Arizona?

BH Well sure, very much so. But even if you were a northerner and you wanted a year-round trail to California, you had to get the boundary far enough south, and Bartlett wasn't thinking that way. So, yes, there were a lot of politics, but if the technology had been advanced enough, it would have helped a great deal and some of the conflict wouldn't have happened.

DT Is there a survey that acts as a paradigm in the same way that Mary Rowlandson's narrative^[5] stands as a model for the captivity narratives that came afterwards? Later captivity narratives both follow the paradigm and deviate, and the deviations are as interesting as the ways in which the paradigm is followed. Bartlett's issues seem very similar to those of William Byrd in his survey of the North Carolina Virginia boundary in 1728.^[6] For example, Byrd had problems as a leader in trying to control his men. Two of his subordinates, Alexander Irvine and Richard Fitz-Williams, were more lenient to the North Carolinians, and that became a real point of controversy. His men seduced the local women, and Byrd had a real problem trying to control them at night. As they went into North Carolina, Byrd viewed the land as being very different from Virginia: the North Carolinians ate swine, and he considered them as pig-like for doing so. He called the region Lubberland.

BH I think we read William Byrd not because he's a paradigm of surveys, but because he wrote so beautifully. *The History of the Dividing Line* is a fascinating book; when I read it I was taken by it in ways I never was with Bartlett. Bartlett's writing in his *Personal Narrative*^[7] is pretty good, I must say, but not as good as Byrd's. But as for the similarities, gosh, maybe it's just that you get a bunch of men together trying to do something and you're going to get disagreements, particularly when some are in charge of others. A key problem for Bartlett was the issue of authority, the Army versus the civilians. The wagonmasters and people like that also were part of the problem. Some of the men would withhold supplies from the others because they didn't like what they were saying or doing. These are problems that are endemic to the

human race. With the surveying, you simply get another dimension where the technicalities of the survey are also at issue.

DT Just as the US and Mexico were trying to serve their own interests, this was also true between North Carolina and Virginia.

BH Drawing borders, by its very nature, has two sides!

DT In the Byrd survey, they felt an incredible awe as they looked at the beauty of wilderness and a sense of foreign-ness as they went into new territory. You also see this with Bartlett.

BH How true! Bartlett took on the job for that reason: he *wanted* to go out there and see this new land, just as every explorer wants to do. Byrd made a beautiful statement of that feeling.

DT Another interesting comparison was that Byrd had both a public statement but also a private diary. In the latter he has special quirky names for all the characters, and private criticism and gossip. Was this true of Bartlett as well?

BH Yes, there are some private letters and statements of Bartlett that are very revealing. Unfortunately we don't have a full diary; as far as I know, he didn't keep one. It's always possible, of course; these things do turn up.

It seems to me there are at least three different kinds of surveys. The first is a political survey, which is what we're talking about here – borders separating two political entities. Then you've got practical surveys, where you're surveying in order to establish a railroad or a wagon trail. And then you have surveys to expand knowledge, like Lewis and Clark. Sometimes they overlap. This last element is present in the other cases; several of the people in the border or railroad surveys were hired to address scientific or discovery questions. In some surveys the different roles were played by different individuals, and that made for conflict, too. Bartlett is a good example of someone who combined several roles. But he was less interested in the practical issues of the survey, and he was more interested in the expansion of knowledge.

DT We would love to hear some anecdotes about the boundary commission that aren't in the book.

BH You don't think an author ever leaves out the good stories, do you? But if you want my feelings about stories I wish I knew more about,

I'd love to know more about Inez Gonzales. She was the Mexican girl who was a captive of the Apaches and whom Bartlett rescued and took back home into Sonora. It would be marvellous to have her full story.

DT Didn't they see her again later when they were returning east?

BH They did, but I'd love to know more about the rest of her life.^[8]

DT If Bartlett were alive today, what questions would you ask him?

BH A lot! I'd question him about his real political orientation and how much that actually affected him. I get the feeling from the way he reacted to Conde's proposals and the way in which the two men worked together that he was acting honestly, irrespective of politics. And yet the decisions obviously had political implications. Did he realize their broader implications? Next, I'd love to know more of his reactions to his Indian contacts. He had a lot of them. He'd go in to tribal villages and take down and translate words. How did he get the Indians to work with him? Were they being truthful? Of course he wouldn't know, but how accurate would they be? To what extent would the Indian working with him be completely puzzled by the whole business: what is this guy doing? Under those circumstances, how did he know that the Indian even understood his point, and what he was getting at?

Finally, Bartlett was so artistic, I'd love to know whether he had favorites among great painters. Who were the people that he was thinking about in his art work? He must have known famous painters.

DT Had he been to Europe prior to this to see European art?

BH Not to my knowledge. But he had a bookstore and he was educated so he certainly was aware of artists and museums of his time. Did he know people like Thomas Cole and the painters that we think of as the Romantics? Were there any relationships with painters? The same with literature. He said that he carried a book of plays along with him. What were they? Why in the world was he reading plays out on the trail? Poetry too; he carried Byron's *Childe Harold* with him. So he had one Romantic poet along, but what about others? Did he have other favorite poets? Those are things I would have fun talking to him about. He doesn't say anything about *Childe Harold* but you can't

escape the feeling that he's on a voyage of pilgrimage into the romantic world.

DT Bartlett was accompanied by other artists and scientists, such as Thurber, the botanist; Bigelow, the surgeon who was also a botanist; Bartlett's secretary Thomas Webb, who was an amateur naturalist; and Henry Pratt, the artist. They must have all kept journals, records and field notes. Where is all this material? In addition, where are Whipple's field notes? Part of the problem here is that Bartlett's survey was terminated, and after the Gadsen Purchase the boundary was drawn further south, so Emory's final report (which has a brief introductory section on the Bartlett survey) didn't need to include this material. What do you know about all this?

BH Unfortunately, I don't know very much. In my research I wasn't focusing on the scientific work of the expedition; I was really writing a story about Bartlett as an artist. When I would come across a journal that was purely scientific, I only glanced at it. It's almost a blessing for historians that so much stuff gets lost! However, if you want to look for Whipple's notes, try the Whipple Papers at the Oklahoma Historical Society.

DT Do these include his actual field notes?

BH I would think so. I went through the Whipple Papers and I wish my memory were better. For the work of any of those people, including Whipple, I would certainly look in the National Archives. There's one Record Group for the Topographical Corps. I'd also check the Emory Papers, which are at Yale. They could be a real source of interest as far as the scientific survey is concerned. If you want published reports, you might try the scientific societies. Most of these men would write back a report to their local society. Bartlett sent a lot of things to the Providence Historical Society. Boston, New York and Philadelphia had several such societies. The Smithsonian would be a big source.

DT What about the other painters? For example, Pratt, where did his paintings wind up? He did an oil painting of Bartlett that we've seen at Magoffin's house in El Paso.^[9]

BH Yes he did, and it's a wonderful painting. Most of the painters did sketching on the trail; they went back to their studios to do the oils. Recently, Peter Blodgett, the Curator of Western Historical Manuscripts at the Huntington Library

told me that the paintings of Henry Brown^[10] have been rediscovered and are being studied by Thomas Blackburn, a scholar at Cal Poly Pomona. So we can look forward to seeing those paintings in the near future.

DT It's easy to get the impression that Bartlett wandered off to pursue his own interests and that he didn't seem to care a lot about his official duties. Wasn't this part of the criticism of him, both at the time and later by historians? On the other hand, weren't there political motives in the criticism?

BH You've certainly hit the nail on the head! Wasn't it amazing how many interests he brought with him? That's why he *came*. He petitioned to become the Commissioner because he wanted to get out and see what the country was like, to study Indian languages and see how the Indians lived—he wrote books on ethnology. He was interested in literature, as his language connections represent. A lot of people think he wrote *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*; he didn't, but it could well have been him. He's very much that sort of person. And he was an artist. All those things interfered with his official duties. But you have to remember that, as far as his official duties were concerned, part of the problem was the fact that he got ill on the trip to Ures. I suppose you could argue that the Ures trip wasn't really necessary, but he thought it was. He felt he had to go down there to get supplies. He got very sick with typhoid and nearly died, and it took him a long time to recuperate. He spent a couple of months in Ures and nearby. You can imagine what that would do to the official work of the expedition. It really fell apart at that point. So it wasn't just his interests that affected the work of the expedition -- there were other problems. And of course, there was the constant bickering.

But there are other criticisms that are harder to explain. There was the charge by the Army that when they were in El Paso he, or somebody, assigned all the soldiers to a house of prostitution. Heaven knows whether that's accurate or not, but that was the charge.

DT It seems as though he didn't really know how to organize. He had trouble getting people out there in a timely way. People had their own schedules and different agendas. There were a lot of delays.

BH Maybe he had no choice. There was a date set when he was supposed to meet with Conde, and he got to El Paso in time to make that meeting. Everybody else dawdled and dribbled in from all over the place. I don't know how much of that was his fault. And remember that the soldiers were under a different command and they never thought of Bartlett as having the authority to issue orders to them. It was inevitably a hopeless confusion. A lot of people could have done better in holding that expedition together and doing the work.

DT For example, Emory, who took it over and ran it as a military enterprise.

BH That's right. Emory was an experienced guy and Bartlett was not. He was out there for different reasons than Emory.

DT You had a story about the author Christopher Isherwood.^[11]

BH He's listed in the credits of my book. He was on the Riverside campus as a visiting lecturer and one of the things he was supposed to do was to talk to students and others about their writing. I was bold enough to take him a chapter or two of the Bartlett. He read it very dutifully. The next week I sat down with him and he said, "You know the problem with you historians is that you don't know how to hold the punch of a story until later, to string people out and make them want to go on. Don't tell what's going to happen until you have to at the very end." So I went over the manuscript with that in mind and held back things I might have said earlier instead of giving the conclusion at the beginning as we often do in writing history.

DT That was good preparation for the novels you've been writing.

BH Maybe so! I often think about Isherwood's comments when I'm trying to figure out how to hold a person's interest, how to keep them turning the pages.

1. John Mack Farragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (Yale University Press, 1979).

2. In 1836, Marcus Whitman and his bride, Narcissa, traveled west with Henry and Eliza Spaulding, another newly wed missionary couple. Henry Spaulding had proposed to Narcissa earlier, but she had turned him down.

3. The Llano Colony was a socialist utopian community in the Antelope Valley during the period of the First World War. See R.V. Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies* (University of California Press, 1983).

4. The drafters of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo accepted Disturnell's 1848 "Map of the United States." The coordinates of El Paso (where the southern boundary was supposed to leave the Rio Grande) as given by the map were 35 miles north and 137 miles west of the actual coordinates as determined by Whipple. Bartlett's decision to accept the latitude given on the map as the starting point was a compromise, whereby the point at which the boundary ran north to the Gila River was moved farther west.

5. K.Z. Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (Penguin Books, 1998).

6. Byrd wrote parallel accounts of his expedition: the official *History of the Dividing Line* and the *Secret History*. The difference between them is the latter's playful commentary. Using pseudonyms that characterize the expedition's participants, Byrd records the survey party's joking, drinking, and sexual escapades. See William Byrd, *Histories of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina* (Dover, 1967).

7. John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora and Chihuahua* (Rio Grande Press, Chicago, 1965).

8. Some of Inez Gonzales' later history is recounted in John Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches* (Indian Head Books, 1991).

9. Many of Pratt's paintings are reproduced in Dawn Hall, ed., *Drawing the Borderline, Artist-Explorers of the US-Mexico Boundary Survey* (The Albuquerque Museum, 1996).

10. In the spring, 1852, while in San Francisco, Bartlett commissioned Henry Brown to travel into northern California to view and paint the scenery and scenes from local Indian cultures. Three of the drawings are reproduced in *Bartlett's West*.

11. Christopher Isherwood was an American novelist and playwright. He is probably best known for *The Berlin Stories*, stories that fictionalize his life in pre-World War II Berlin and that were adapted as the stage play *I Am a Camera* and the popular musical *Cabaret*.



Desert Tracks: the Newsletter of the Southwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

Past newsletters and a color version of this newsletter can be found at:

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