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Reopening the Anza Road¹

George William Beattie

Anza's achievement of 1774 in opening an overland route from Sonora to San Gabriel had proved that reaching the missions of Alta California did not necessarily involve either the voyage up the coast from Mexico to San Diego or Monterey or the trip across the Gulf of California to Baja California and a long land journey from there into Alta California.

The Anza all-land route had served California well, albeit for only eight years. Over it had come the founders of San Francisco and some of the founders of Los Angeles. Settlements had been made on the Colorado river near the point where the road crossed it, although unhappily they were wiped out in 1781 by the very Indians who had begged Anza to have them established. Without the aid of these Yumas in crossing animals and baggage over the river, the road was useless, and Anza's heroic achievement bade fair to go for naught. Pedro Fages and an escort did make a trip over the route from the Yuma crossing to San Gabriel in 1782 with official dispatches; and in the same year he again traveled the desert part of it, leaving it at San Sebastián to make his way through the mountains to San Diego by way of what later became Warner's

¹ Much of the material for this paper was derived from two groups of manuscripts. One is in the Newberry Library, and consists of copies of documents in the Mexican Archives, cited by I. B. Richman in *California Under Spain and Mexico*, 470, as "Informe (Narbona), with Romero's diary and Romero's and Caballero's letters." This group is referred to hereafter as N.L.N.

The other group is in the Bancroft Library. It is composed of copies from the California Archives, and is referred to in H. H. Bancroft, *Works*, xix, 509, under the title "Romero, Documentos relativos a la Expedicion del Capitan R. para abrir camino entre Sonora y California." Such as have been used herein are in Departmental State Papers, I, 11, 17-18, 23, 24, 27, 28, 51, 67, 75, 77, 83, 84, 88, 91, 92, 93; State Papers, Sacramento, xix, 24; Departmental State Papers, Benicia, Military, LVII, 17. Other sources are given in footnotes.

Ranch. He is the last white man known to have used the road before it fell into disuse.² Travel across the Colorado desert by white people then ceased for nearly half a century, although Spanish and Mexican governmental authorities made occasional efforts to find an alternative route.³ It is of the reopening of a road from Sonora that this paper treats.

With the end, in 1821, of Spanish sovereignty in New Spain, Iturbide's short-lived Empire of Mexico had come into being, although the Californians did not recognize the change in authority until April, 1822. In taking over Alta California, Iturbide fell heir to problems that had long worried Spanish authorities, important among them being that of the menace of foreigners. As early as October, 1821, José Antonio Andrade, Governor of Guadalajara, wrote Iturbide that "to demarcate, organize, and consolidate the new empire would be a task arduous and difficult." He pointed out the weakness of the military forces in Alta California, in view of the advancing Russians and the increasingly aggressive English and American trappers and traders. Two months later he expressed a fear that Spain might cede the Californias to Russia and complicate the task of Mexico still further.⁴ That Iturbide heeded these warnings is evident, for in 1822 he commissioned Rev. Agustín Fernández de San Vicente, a canon of the cathedral at Durango, to make an inspection trip to California, and ordered him especially to investigate foreign activities there.

Commissioner Fernández and Fr. Mariano Payéras, the ranking mission official in California, visited the Russian settlements at Fort Ross and Bodega Bay.⁵ From what they saw in these places and elsewhere they concluded that an overland route from Sonora was an immediate necessity for the strengthening of Mexico's hold on California; and Commissioner Fer-

² "Diary of Pedro Fages," Academy of Pacific Coast History *Publications*, III, 133 *et seq.*

³ Arrillaga's Explorations, 1796, Fr. Engelhardt, *Missions and Missionaries*, 2nd edition, I, 577.

⁴ I. B. Richman, *California Under Spain and Mexico*, 230.

⁵ H. H. Bancroft, *Works*, XIX, 463.

nández recommended that such a road be opened. As a move in that direction, he arranged with Fr. Felix Caballero, of Missions San Miguel and Santa Catalina, in Baja California, to make an exploratory trip from his district to Tucson, crossing the Colorado near its mouth.⁶ Evidently he had in mind Arrillaga's suggestion of 1796 that this might be a feasible route. Of this journey we shall speak later.

Another problem which Iturbide inherited was that of Indian runaways from California missions who were establishing relations with savages of the mountains and deserts and leading them in raids on ranchos, missions and pueblos. Although it related to the missions, this was a civil rather than a religious problem, and it had taxed the ability and the resources of the Spanish government. From as early as 1804, plans had been in the making for an interior chain of missions that would serve to weaken the influence upon savage Indians of runaways from the missions along the coast; and Spanish explorers had followed Indian trails far into the interior of California in a desire to find desirable sites for both missions and presidios. Missions of the second line had been started at Santa Ysabel, Pala, and San Bernardino.⁷

Shortly before the end of the Spanish regime in California—on April 8, 1820, to be exact—Lieutenant José María Estudillo, acting commandant of the presidio of San Diego, had notified Governor Solá, at Monterey, that runaway Indians from Mission San Diego and Mission San Miguel in Baja California, in conjunction with pagan Indians from the mountain country, were seizing cattle, horses, and mules in raids extending from the rancho of San Diego presidio as far north as the valley of the Santa Ana river. Horses broken for use were being sold on the Colorado. The marauders had even attacked the ranchos of the missions, killing the shepherds there and carrying off the women.⁸

A year later, Estudillo, continuing the subject, reported that

⁶ N.L.N., May 25, 1823.

⁷ G. W. Beattie, *California's Unbuilt Missions*, 13-15.

⁸ Bancroft Library (hereafter indicated by B.L.) MSS., Provincial State Papers, xx, 287.

he had taken advantage of the arrival of Captain José of the Cocomaricopa Indians—a tribe on the Gila river allied with the Spaniards of Sonora—to gain some information regarding the tribes along the Colorado and the trails they used in traveling to and from the California settlements.⁹ José Cocomaricopa is mentioned frequently in later documents as a bearer of messages between Sonora and California, and this first appearance probably was for the same purpose. He stated that the round trip between Tucson and San Gabriel required only fifteen or twenty days by his route, which traversed the northern part of the Colorado desert and the San Gorgonio pass, as we shall see. It was, however, a route for foot travel only, and the authorities learned this to their sorrow when they tried to follow it with horses and equipment.

This letter of Estudillo to Governor Solá reveals the reawakened interest of the Spanish military authorities in a road across the Colorado desert. Such an interest was also revealed by the missionaries of San Gabriel, in 1822, in their report prepared for Fernández, Iturbide's commissioner. Speaking of the rancho they had recently established at San Bernardino, they described the region there as "traversed by the road to the Colorado," meaning thereby the "Cocomaricopa trail"; and stated that the settlement would enable them to reach more distant tribes "if we should desire later to establish a route to the Colorado," meaning by this the hoped-for road for general travel to succeed the mere foot-path then existing.¹⁰

On May 5, 1822, Governor Solá sent Iturbide an account of the recent taking of the oath of allegiance to the Empire of Mexico by Alta California officials. The report went via Loreto, the usual way, but a duplicate was sent by way of Tucson, showing that Solá was utilizing the Cocomaricopa mail service.¹¹

⁹ *Ibid.*, 288-9.

¹⁰ B.L., Santa Barbara Archives, "Informe de San Gabriel," *Informes y Correspondencia*, 1802-22, III, art. 3, 268-9.

¹¹ See H. E. Bolton, "The Iturbide Revolution in the Californias," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, II, 188 *et seq.*

In this same year Governor Solá received a dispatch from Iturbide's Minister of Relations calling for suggestions for expediting communication with Mexico City. It was doubtless under pressure of this letter that Solá inquired of Captain José Romero, a cavalry captain in command of the presidio of Tucson, regarding the distance from Tucson to the Colorado river and the steps necessary for prompt transmission of mail by that route.¹²

As a result of Solá's inquiry, Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Narbona, Civil Governor and Military Commander of Sonora, ordered Captain Romero in September, 1822, to set out for Alta California by way of the lower Colorado with a force of sixty men to investigate the possibility of a mail service by that route. This expedition was delayed in starting by certain emergencies, details of which are unknown to us.

It is in 1822, then, that we see the Supreme Government in Mexico City, the government authorities in California and Sonora, and the missionaries in the Californias all agreeing upon the urgent need of a road between Sonora and Alta California by way of the Colorado river, and uniting their efforts to secure it. The Empire of Mexico came to an end in March, 1823, but the Republic that succeeded was no less mindful of Alta California and of the necessity of joining it to Mexico by a land route.

In the meantime, Father Caballero had not forgotten the exploratory trip from Mission Santa Catalina to Tucson via the mouth of the Colorado, that Iturbide's commissioner had suggested, and in April, 1823, Sonoran authorities were electrified by the appearance at Tucson of the doughty Father who had made the trip in twelve walking days, and who declared that he could have made it even more quickly had he not wasted time in efforts to avoid bands of Indians more warlike than those occupying the "pleasant and beautiful lands" along the Colorado. He was accompanied by only two men, one of them a non-Christian Indian named Cota.

¹² *Ibid.*

Governor Narbona promptly reported Father Caballero's feat to the Supreme Government in Mexico City, lauding his courage and stating that Don José Romero, with ten picked men, would accompany him on his return to Baja California, keeping a diary of the journey, watching for points suitable for military garrisons, and conferring with the Indians along the way regarding the carrying of mails to and from Mexico.¹³ The smallness of Romero's escort shows the effect upon Narbona of Father Caballero's optimistic reports and his ignorance of the difficulties of the route the good father had traveled.

The Supreme Executive Power in Mexico was enthusiastic in praise of Father Caballero, and suggested that Narbona cultivate relations of friendship with the new savages. The arrangements for the Romero-Caballero trip were approved, and mail service through the new region was authorized.¹⁴

On June 8, 1823, therefore, Captain Romero, Father Caballero, and ten soldiers set out for Baja California via the mouth of the Colorado. From Tucson they went to the land of the Cocomaricopas by the trail Anza had followed earlier.

Crossing the Gila, Romero held a conference with the Cocomaricopas, one of whose three chiefs was Captain José who was carrying the mail to California. The session was most gratifying. Incidentally Romero visited the rancherías north of the Gila, probably with the idea of furthering friendly relations, returning to the river at Agua Caliente, and crossing it near San Pascual. He then left the Cocomaricopas and the actual exploration began. Before leaving them, however, he assured the elder Captain that the Great Captain of Mexico wished to people his California lands, that he wished the mails to go through Cocomaricopa territory, and that he desired them to have instruction in religion and civilization. To all of this the old Captain replied:

It is good. Now you know that we have a good heart. I shall not see accomplished what you say, but my sons and people I have well advised.

¹³ Refer to note 6.

¹⁴ N.L.N., Letter to Narbona, July 3, 1823.

The carrying of the mail would be a profitable enterprise, as the old chief well understood.

Proceeding toward the southwest, Romero crossed the Gila mountain range by the Tinajas Altas pass, made his way through the sand dunes to the Colorado, and followed it down to the mouth.

When Father Caballero had visited the Indians of this region on his way to Tucson they had received him in a seemingly hospitable manner, supplying him with food, and helping him over the streams and lagoons. On Romero's arrival, the chief captain, Quamaya, led him to a *mesa* and told him that he had laid out much land for a presidio and mission for the Padre [Caballero]; that nearby was water, land for planting, and abundant grass for animals, and that the water never rose to that point, even though the river became very high. Nothing could have seemed more friendly. On nearing the point where the river was to be crossed, the Indians cut mesquite poles and built four rafts. On two of them they loaded packs, equipment, and clothes, the latter having been removed by members of the party in preparation for swimming in case of an upset. The two remaining rafts carried Romero, Father Caballero, the soldiers and their arms. The Indians drove the horses into the water and the crossing began; but on reaching midstream the ones accompanying the baggage rafts suddenly turned and pushed them back to the starting point. Those with the horses turned also, and the ones guiding the passenger rafts abandoned them. The party would have been in sore straits had not the Indian Cota and two soldiers leaped in and pushed the rafts to the west shore. As they struggled, they could see the faithless Indians dividing the horses and baggage on the shore from which they had started.

This occurred on July 2, 1823. On foot then, with arms on shoulders, shoeless and naked, without food, and under the mid-summer desert sun, Romero and party started across the waterless stretch and the mountain range that lay between them and Mission Santa Catalina—sixty-five miles away. They ob-

tained a little mesquite bean soup at a ranchería where lived relatives of the Indian Cota. Some of the party, Romero among them, began to fail before they reached the mission; and Father Caballero and Cota pushed ahead and sent back water and food. All finally reached Santa Catalina in the night of July 6. Resting two days, and doubtless obtaining horses, they went on to Mission San Miguel. Here Father Caballero was able to obtain for them leather garments such as were worn by mounted soldiers.¹⁵

As a soldier on the Sonoran frontier, Romero was accustomed to the hardships of desert travel and he gives but few details in his report of this journey; but the well-known Pattie party, which, in 1827-28, descended the Colorado to its mouth, and traveled on foot from the river to Mission Santa Catalina over the same route Romero had followed four and a half years before, left a thrilling account of their journey.¹⁶

In reaching Santa Catalina, Romero had complied with the first part of Narbona's instructions. He had learned conditions along the proposed mail line to Tucson. In a letter to Governor Luis Antonio Argüello, Solá's successor at Monterey, he said:

The road from Tucson to Santa Catalina is short . . . it can be covered in ten or eleven days; but there is the obstacle of the Colorado river, for from the month of May to that of August it remains in flood; and furthermore, the Indian nation that robbed us is there. . . According to my instructions, it only remains for me to see the road by which the Cocomaricopas travel. . .

Romero also reported his experiences to Governor Narbona from Santa Catalina, sending a copy of his diary at the same time. Narbona forwarded the report and diary to the Supreme Government in Mexico which, in turn, ordered that they be published in the newspapers of the capital. Romero became a hero.

In his letter accompanying the Romero papers, Narbona

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Romero's diary and report to Argüello.

¹⁶ James Ohio Pattie, "Personal Narrative," in R. G. Thwaites, *Journals of Early Western Travel*, xviii.

declared that forceful measures should be taken to prevent a recurrence of such experiences as had befallen Romero's party; and he offered to march with one hundred fifty soldiers through the tribes between Sonora and Baja California, evidently with a view to overawing them.

In reply, after instructing Narbona to express its thanks and appreciation to Father Caballero, to Captain Romero, and the soldiers accompanying them, and ordering a present for the Indian Cota, to be paid for out of public funds, the Supreme Government authorized Narbona to undertake his proposed expedition to Baja California; stipulating, however, that the main object should be exploration with reference to a mail route, and presidios for its protection. The expedition should *not* be punitive, but instead, should carry gifts to win the friendship and co-operation of the pagans, "even of those who in so cowardly and shameful manner had deceived and robbed Captain Romero." Detailed instructions were also given regarding scientific investigations to be made. Whether this expedition ever started is not shown in any documents we have.

Narbona was advised to keep Captain Romero in mind for promotion, and Father Caballero was recommended to his prelate for consideration. Eventually he was made president of the Dominican missions in Baja California, holding that rank until his death, in 1840.¹⁷

Proceeding northward from Mission San Miguel, Romero and his ten soldiers reached San Diego. From there he sent Governor Argüello a copy of his diary covering his operations to that date, and announced that he would set out for Monterey as soon as he and his command could be properly clothed. In response to Romero's outline of plans for investigating the Cocomaricopa mail route, Argüello ordered an escort of thirty soldiers and ten civilians, under command of Lieutenant José María Estudillo, to accompany him to the Colorado river. This escort included artillerymen with a cannon. Estudillo was directed to keep a diary on both the outward and the return trip.

¹⁷ N.L.N., Instructions to Narbona from War Department.

Romero had reported his progress and his plans to the authorities at Arizpe, the Sonoran capital, also; and on January 30, 1824, Colonel Mariano E. Urrèa, who seemed to be temporarily in charge there, wrote Argüello of arrangements he was making with the friendly Cocomaricopas and Jalchedunes to meet Romero "on the *new road* which they [the Indians] have opened to San Gabriel." He had encountered difficulties in making the arrangements because of the hostility between these two allied tribes and the Yumas.

Romero started from San Gabriel for Sonora by way of the Cocomaricopa trail on December 15, 1823. The effort to reach the Colorado by this route was a failure, and the party returned to San Gabriel. The first announcement of the unhappy outcome of the expedition is the following letter from Fr. José Sánchez, of San Gabriel, to Governor Argüello, dated January 27, 1824:

We have learned that the expeditionary military force commanded by Don José María Estudillo combined with the party of Captain Don José Romero has arrived at San Gorgonio in its retreat along the road to the Colorado by way of Guach'na [Guachama ranchería], otherwise known as San Bernardino; that after having traveled by unknown roads, badly fed, the animals scattered or almost all lost, some of the men on foot and others half mounted; after having at the end of a month used up all the provisions, they were able to return to San Bernardino where they now are. Ah Señor! What an expense. May it be for the Glory of God.¹⁸

This letter from Father Sánchez was followed by one from Romero, written after his return to San Gabriel. He reported that from the time he left San Gabriel, his progress was retarded by the poor condition of the horses. After passing the Cahuilla Indian settlements the animals were three days on the desert without water, when the guide admitted that he was lost. It was then that the expedition retraced its steps, reaching San Gabriel, January 31, 1824, with such animals as had survived six days without water. Thus ended Romero's first attempt to cross the Colorado desert from San Gorgonio Pass.

¹⁸ B.L., *Archivo de Obispado*, IV, part II.

Lieutenant Estudillo forwarded the diary he kept during the journey—a diary whose whereabouts is now not known—from San Gabriel to Governor Argüello. His letter of transmittal is extant, however, and in it he expresses an unfavorable opinion of the San Gorgonio route to the Colorado, saying that although the road was being traveled by Cocomaricopas, they went on foot only, and it should never have been attempted by a troop of cavalry with remounts and pack animals. He added this very significant statement:

It is well known that there are no other roads more suitable than the ancient ones explored by the engineers, Miguel Costansó, José Darío Argüello, Juan Bautista de Anza, Fernando Rúiz, Felipe de Neve, and Pedro Fages.

Two weeks later, ten Jalchedune mail carriers arrived at San Gabriel with the heart-breaking information that Romero would have reached the Colorado by sundown of the day he began his retreat, had he only changed his course from east to south.

Shortly after this humiliating return to San Gabriel, revolts started among the California Indians at Missions Santa Inez, La Purísima, and Santa Barbara, and delayed for many months a second attempt to reach Sonora, since Governor Argüello was unwilling to weaken his forces through furnishing Romero the escort he would have required.

The reopening of a route between the Colorado and the settlements in California had been meeting with discouraging delays, but something interesting now happened. In July, 1824, the alférez, Santiago Argüello, reported to the commandant at San Diego that he had just led a company from San Diego to the Colorado in pursuit of horse thieves, but that his efforts had been largely wasted since he had not overtaken the robbers and had obtained "no results from the journey other than learning the road." In reality, "learning the road" was of the utmost importance, since the route the Indians took corresponded very closely to the old Anza road, varying only in going through the mountains by way of Warner's Pass instead of the Pass of San

Carlos. Argüello's accidental discovery of it brought it to attention again.

Meanwhile Romero was marking time at Mission San Gabriel until he could begin his second attempt to follow the Cocomaricopa trail. In August, 1825, Governor Argüello received letters from the Commanding General of Sonora suggesting the use of eighty soldiers from Mazatlan as an escort for Romero. These soldiers had been sent to California as a reinforcement in 1819, after the attack by the Argentinians under Bouchard, and they were now due to return.

Echeandía, who succeeded Argüello, had also been strongly impressed by the Mexican authorities with the importance of opening the road between Sonora and California. Immediately upon assuming office he assigned Romualdo Pacheco, efficient sub-lieutenant of engineers, to service with Romero, and arranged for a force of laborers under a retired corporal to accompany him and clear the way.

By the time that Romero was in position to set out from San Gabriel on this second journey over the Cocomaricopa trail to the Colorado, General José Figueroa, destined later to be governor of California, had succeeded Narbona as governor of Sonora. Evidently he too had been directed to push the road to California, and on November 17, 1825, he wrote from the Colorado river that he had just reached that point with a considerable force, and would await Romero's arrival.

Romero's fame in Mexico had become very considerable. In January of the preceding year, Colonel Urrea had forwarded to him the formal thanks of the Mexican Minister of War, and now Figueroa informed Romero again that the Supreme Government was greatly pleased with his services, and that he [Figueroa] was transmitting a commission as a Lieutenant Colonel. Captain Anza had been made Lieutenant Colonel by the Spanish viceroy, Bucareli, in 1774, on opening the first overland road from Sonora to California. A similar honor was now being bestowed upon Romero fifty years later for his efforts to reestablish a land route.

Figueroa also informed Romero that the Yumas, through their head men, were approaching him in a desire to reestablish the friendly relations they had broken nearly half a century before; and he urged Romero to show all possible good will toward them when he reached the Colorado. He realized how dependent the Mexican Government would be upon their good will should a road through their territory ever be planned.

This change in the attitude of the Yumas was all-important. Evidently they saw that their enemies, the Cocomaricopas, were reaping material benefits serving as dispatch bearers between Sonora and California, and they realized that their massacre of the Spaniards at the river in 1781 had reacted unhappily upon themselves. The investigations of possible routes to the south and to the north of them showed them the advisability of gaining the friendship and confidence of the Mexicans at once.

As for Romero, the news of the friendly overtures of the Yumas apparently changed his ideas completely. His knowledge of both the lower Colorado and the Cocomaricopa routes was sufficient to show the superiority of the Yuma route recently followed by Santiago Argüello. His interest in the Cocomaricopa route must have diminished accordingly, although he made the attempt to travel it as ordered.

Apparently not grasping the effect of the changed attitude of the Yumas on the choice of a mail route, Governor Echeandía instructed Romero, on this second attempt to reach the Colorado, to proceed as far as the summit of San Gorgonio pass and tarry until Pacheco could construct a fortification there. Romero protested against such delay, reminding the governor that Figueroa was waiting for him at the Colorado, and that for this reason the fortifying of San Gorgonio should be postponed. A deeper reason was undoubtedly the realization that the San Gorgonio route in all probability would not be adopted anyway.

Pacheco, the engineer, also disapproved the idea of fortifying San Gorgonio, for he wrote Governor Echeandía, arguing

that winters in the Pass were severe and snows very frequent, and a garrison stationed there might easily be incapable of moving in an emergency arising during a winter storm. The argument was specious, since the fear of snow in San Gorgonio was largely baseless. It served merely to obscure the real thought in the minds of Romero and himself—that of the superiority of the Yuma route.

But Romero and Pacheco were not to have their way without opposition. The fathers at San Gabriel were anxious to have the road to the Colorado run through San Gorgonio Pass, and on November 23, 1825, Fr. José Sánchez wrote Governor Echeandía referring to “the abundant resources” of San Bernardino, and the desirability of beginning work on a road through that region. They had long considered San Bernardino a potentially important point, and had cherished plans for a mission there. As far back as 1822, they had talked of opening a direct road between San Gabriel and San Bernardino, and this new road was in use in 1825, when Romero’s second expedition set out. We can understand their desire to have it a part of the main road to the Colorado.¹⁹

Romero left San Gabriel on November 28, 1825. Having only a scanty supply of provisions, he decided at the last moment that the soldiers from Mazatlan—excepting fifteen that had been sent to him at San Gabriel—had better remain in service at San Diego until other arrangements could be made for sending them home. In addition to the shortness of food, his animals were again in poor condition for the journey they had to make. Nevertheless, the second attempt to reach the Colorado was a success. Lieutenant Pacheco reported to Governor Echeandía from a place he called Laguna de Chapela, that after a journey of eighteen days from San Gabriel, the expedition had reached the river, and that he had made rafts and had crossed Romero’s men, animals, and equipment.

General Figueroa had found it impossible to wait for

¹⁹ Fr. José Sánchez’ letter of January 27, quoted herein, refers to the road from San Gabriel to San Gorgonio via San Bernardino as if generally known.

Romero at the river as he had planned, as a Yaqui uprising in his province had demanded his presence. He therefore sent Romero word that an escort would await him at Agua Caliente, one of the Cocomaricopa villages on the Gila, instead. The Yumas were then considered friendly, and Figueroa evidently felt that Romero was in no danger from them.

In Romero's report of the second trip, he had no word of commendation for the road over which he had just traveled. Apparently he had been convinced even before starting that the road from Yuma to San Diego by Warner's Pass was the one best adapted to serve the needs of Sonora and California.

Although Estudillo's diary of the first trip to the Colorado, and Pacheco's journal of the second trip have not been found, and we have therefore no positive descriptions of the way they went, there are expressions in other documents that throw considerable light on their routes. The passing through San Bernardino, or Guachama, as the natives called it; the evident desire of the missionaries for a road through San Gorgonio Pass; the proposed military post at San Gorgonio; the three days' travel without water for their animals after passing the land of the Cahuillas, many of whom dwelt in the pass—these all indicate that on both trips Romero paralleled to some extent the line now followed by the Southern Pacific railway, at least as far as the Salton Sea region. The map made by Garcés in 1776 locates the Jalchedunes on both sides of the Colorado between the Yumas at the junction and the Mohaves some forty leagues above the junction. The Jalchedunes and the Cocomaricopas were allies, while the Yumas and the Mohaves were their enemies. It is clear that the Cocomaricopas must have traveled a road that crossed the river in the land of the Jalchedunes for Romero wrote Argüello, in July, 1823,

Although they [the Cocomaricopas] go between the nations, they leave their enemies to the right or left a distance of more than twenty leagues.

This would suggest a river crossing not far from the present bridge between Blythe and old Ehrenberg.

When Figueroa decided to wait no longer for Romero at the river and left an escort for him at Agua Caliente on the Gila, he must have expected Romero to reach that point by the Cocomaricopa trail. A fairly direct road between Ehrenberg and Agua Caliente shown on modern maps proves the feasibility of an Indian trail between these points. It seems probable therefore that the Cocomaricopa trail crossed the mountains north of the desert near the old Dos Palmas stage station, followed what later formed the stage route past Chuckwalla springs to the river, and from there went to Agua Caliente. It is significant that when, in 1862, a wagon road was first being lined out, the promoter, W. D. Bradshaw, was guided by a map drawn for him by a Cocomaricopa Indian whom he met in what is now the Coachella valley.²⁰

On January 2, 1826, Governor Echeandía wrote the Minister of War from his headquarters in San Diego that he had sent Lieutenant Pacheco with five [fifteen?] Mazatlan soldiers and thirty Indian laborers to accompany Colonel Romero over the Cocomaricopa road from San Gabriel to the Colorado; and that after carefully investigating this road, Pacheco had returned to San Diego by the direct road from the Pass of the Yumas, assuring him that the Cocomaricopa road was impracticable, and the other route traveled was the desirable one. Echeandía stated that Pacheco had already established a garrison at one point on the road from Yuma to San Diego, and was building a shelter for troops which would be completed within a month. Transit would therefore soon be assured from San Diego to the Pass of the Yumas where the Colorado could be crossed with ease.

On March 30, 1826, Figueroa wrote Echeandía:

It is fitting that both Commanding Generals make efforts, each on his own part of the road, so that they may begin their correspondence.

When, finally, the road from San Diego via Warner's to

²⁰ G. W. Beattie, "Development of Travel between Southern Arizona and Los Angeles," *Southern California Historical Society Publications*, 1925, 250. The Garcés map, 1776, is reproduced in H. E. Bolton *Palou's New California*, IV, 88.

the Pass of the Yumas on the Colorado was made the official route into California, the San Gabriel fathers were disappointed for a time, but they were not off the road entirely. Two roads from San Gabriel connected with the San Diego-Colorado road—one the “Canyon road to the Colorado,” running by way of Temescal and Temecula, and entering the San Diego-Colorado road in the San José [Warner’s] valley; and the other, the road by San Bernardino—later officially designated the San Bernardino-Sonora road—which went to the summit of San Gorgonio Pass, turning south at that point, and leading on through San Jacinto to the vicinity of Aguanga, on the Canyon road. Both these roads were old and much-traveled Indian trails.²¹

After all these efforts to reopen the overland road into California, resumption of travel across the desert by white men was not rapid. This is made clear to us in the few documents we have referring to early use of the new route. In a letter written by Fr. José Sánchez to the President of Mexico, in 1830, he says:

. . . In these last years the Sonorans have undertaken their journeys to this territory with greater frequency, but in the past year four of them were murdered on the western bank by a small band of Indians. . . This deed had diminished the business operations of these people, and only in the event of seeing the road made safe will they resume their trade on a large scale.

Father Sánchez had become as alive to the advantages of the road via Warner’s and Yuma as were the officials who reopened it, even though he had worked earlier for the San Gorgonio route. In enumerating for the Mexican President the measures that he considered of major importance in developing California, he stressed the necessity of making the road from the Colorado safe. Apparently the small garrison stationed near Yuma by Pacheco had either been withdrawn or found inadequate. For safety’s sake Sánchez advocated the erection of a military post on each side of the river, and another at some

²¹ G. W. Beattie, *loc. cit.*, 228-9.

point midway between the river and San Diego—the valley of San Felipe seeming the most suitable to him.²²

Another reference to travel over this reopened road is the oft quoted statement of J. J. Warner. He traveled it to San Diego in 1831, as an employee of David E. Jackson. While in Sonora the party evidently made inquiries concerning the route, and no one could be found in either Tucson or Altar—both military posts—who could give any information concerning it. Use of the road at that time must have been very infrequent. Warner says that from the crossing of the Colorado to the San Felipe valley, there was no trail—not even an Indian path.²³

Although travel by this route was slow in developing, there is evidence of frequent use of it during the Mexican War. Lieutenant W. H. Emory wrote of Warner's Pass, in 1846, as the "great pass to Sonora."²⁴

Over this route, and its two connections with Los Angeles, in the days of the gold rush, many thousands of immigrants entered California. A few years later the Butterfield stages included it in their route from San Francisco to St. Louis.

Summary

1. From the time, in 1781, that hostility of the Yuma Indians had compelled the abandonment of the Anza land route from Sonora to California through their territory, the idea of finding another practicable route had been in the minds of the authorities in both Mexico and California. Various plans had been proposed.

2. In 1796, a route via the lower Colorado to the Californias was surveyed far below Yuma territory, and a presidio to protect it was proposed at the mouth of the river. Nothing further was done.

²² B.L., *Exposicion dirigida al Vice-Presidente de la Republica sobre el estado actual de las misiones en California y sus necesidades*. Copy of document found among private papers of Juan Bandini. San Felipe valley lies just east of Warner's Pass.

²³ "Reminiscences of Early California, 1831 to 1846," *Southern California Historical Society Publications*, 1907-8.

²⁴ Executive Document 41, 30 cong., 1 sess., 105.

3. By 1821, encroachments in California of Russians and of English and American trappers and traders made quicker transit between Mexico and California imperative. A route crossing the Colorado north of the Yuma territory, and over which Cocomaricopa Indians were carrying government dispatches between Mexico and California by way of San Gorgonio Pass offered great possibilities as a road for general travel.

4. In 1823, Fr. Felix Caballero, a Dominican missionary in Lower California, explored the region between his station at Santa Catalina and Tucson, by way of the lower Colorado, and reported optimistically on his route. Captain José Romero, Commandant at Tucson, accompanied Caballero back to Lower California to investigate the route more fully, proceeding thence to San Gabriel, and attempting to return to Tucson by the Cocomaricopa route. The difficulty in crossing the Colorado in its months of flood, and the danger from hostile Indians along parts of the way, convinced Romero that the Caballero route was impracticable.

5. Romero's first attempt, in December, 1823, to reach the Colorado by the Cocomaricopa trail failed. Losing his way in the desert, he and his party retreated to San Bernardino, reaching San Gabriel again in January, 1824.

6. In July, 1824, Santiago Argüello while pursuing Indian horse thieves from San Diego to Yuma, learned their trail. The desert part of it proved to be the old Anza road, but it crossed the mountains by Warner's Pass instead of by Anza's Pass of San Carlos.

7. In 1825, Romero attempted a second time to reach the Colorado from San Gabriel by the Cocomaricopa trail, Romualdo Pacheco, an engineer, accompanying him. Fortifications were to be erected at San Gorgonio on the way out.

8. In November, 1825, Romero learned from the Governor of Sonora that the Yumas were seeking to reestablish friendly relations with the whites. This would make the old Anza road available again. That road, rediscovered by Argüello, was

preferable in Romero's mind to any other, and he and Pacheco omitted the fortifying of San Gorgonio.

9. The second attempt to reach the Colorado via San Gorgonio and the Cocomaricopa route succeeded, but Romero's report was not in favor of it. Pacheco proceeded to San Diego, and reported in favor of the Argüello route. In 1826, he was sent out to clear it and establish a post for its defense near Yuma.

10. This route from San Diego to Sonora, via Warner's and Yuma, became the official one for mail while California governmental headquarters remained at San Diego. By means of roads connecting it with Warner's Pass, it also became the official route between Sonora and Monterey. It was traveled extensively during the Mexican War period. Still later it formed one of the main routes of immigrant travel to the California gold mines.

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[Footnotes]

¹¹ **The Iturbide Revolution in the Californias**

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