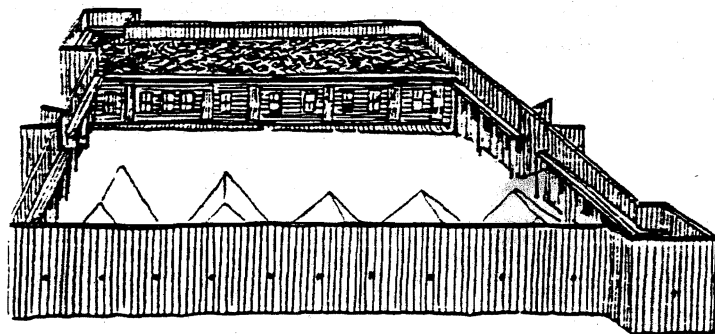


HISTORIC FORT VALLEY ARIZONA

An Archaeological Survey and
Historic Overview



by Robert A. Coody



MUSEUM OF NORTHERN ARIZONA

HISTORIC FORT VALLEY, ARIZONA

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historic sites which were recorded. These moments of history have been divided into significant phases which introduce important patterns in the development of Fort Valley history.

Exploration and First Occupation

The Fort Valley area was known to various trappers such as Kit Carson and Antoine Leroux. Exactly how early, historic contact occurred is not known, but it wasn't until the 1840s that trappers commonly visited the region. They were familiar with the waterways, fauna, and landmarks. Only after the United States acquired the territory in 1846 did deliberate exploration begin in earnest.

Documented expeditions into the area began in 1851 with the arrival of the Lorenzo Sitgreaves Expedition. Captain Lorenzo Sitgreaves was sent into the Arizona Territory to check on the navigability of the Zuni and Little Colorado rivers. After determining that the Little Colorado could not be navigated, he passed north of the San Francisco Peaks and swung south into Fort Valley (Figure 20). His party established a camp at what was later called Leroux Springs, named for the renowned trapper who accompanied both Sitgreaves and Amiel Whipple. It was here that one individual, a Mexican, whose name is not reported but who was suffering from a blow to the head, died. This individual was buried at the foot of a large pine tree which was marked with a cross (Sitgreaves 1853:12).

The next documented account of an expedition along the 35th

parallel that may have gone through the Fort Valley area was privately sponsored in 1853. The expedition was led by Francis Xavier Aubrey, a Santa Fe trader who advocated a road along the 35th parallel to California (Chaput 1972:197-204). Somewhere in northern Arizona, he received eight arrow wounds but lived to return to Santa Fe (Cline 1976:22).

A few months later Lieutenant Amiel W. Whipple, who had been authorized by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis to survey a wagon road across the 35th parallel, located Aubrey in Santa Fe and obtained valuable information from him on the nature of the land he was about to explore (Chaput 1972:197-204).

When Whipple's expedition set forth in late 1853, it was comprised of 120 men, 200 mules and 16 supply wagons. His military escort was joined by Lieutenant Joseph Christmas Ives. Their guides were Antoine Leroux, a well known trapper and trader and Jose Saavedra. On December 17th they reached Leroux Springs, which Whipple named (Cline 1976:27). After watering their stock they returned to the Canyon Diablo/Leupp area to rejoin Ives who was on reconnaissance of that area (Figure 21). The entire expedition arrived back at Leroux Springs on December 28th. They spent 10 days exploring the area. Often the men were so cold they heated basalt rocks and rolled them into their tents for warmth. March of 1854 found them in the Los Angeles area.

The Beale Wagon Road

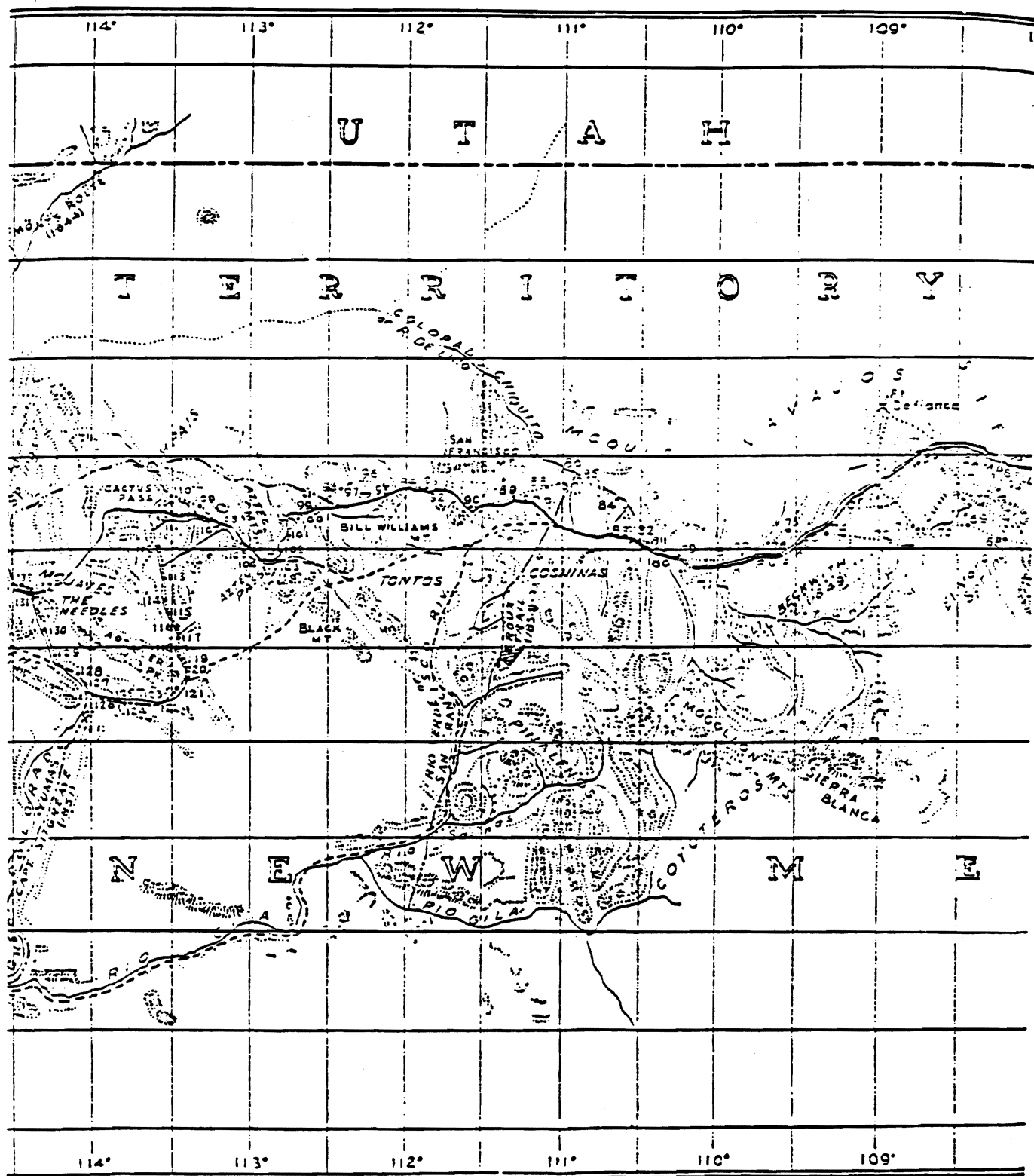


Figure 21: The route of the Amiel Whipple Expedition of 1853 through northern Arizona.

Two years later in April of 1856, 60,000 residents of California signed a petition urging Congress to construct wagon roads connecting them to the east. On April 22, 1857, Secretary of War John Floyd notified Lieutenant Edward F. Beale that he had been appointed to construct a wagon road along the 35th parallel from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Los Angeles, California (Jackson 1952:241-45). Beale's expedition included 25 camels, brought along to test their usefulness in the Southwest, and 10 supply wagons. September 12th found Beale's caravan in the Fort Valley area, camped at Leroux Springs. Beale described the valley as "the beautiful valley of Leroux Springs with Leroux Spring bursting out of the side of the mountain and losing itself in the valley below" (Thompson 1983:109).

In 1858 Beale retraced his route to New Mexico from California and then reported to Washington, D.C. Later that year Beale again came west, this time with two artillery guns, possibly mountain howitzers (Bearse, Edward and Gibson 1969: 235-236). When Beale again reached Leroux Springs on April 15, 1859, his delight in this place was unbounded:

The weather delightful; no one could pass through this country without being struck with its picturesque and beautiful scenery, its rich soil, and its noble forests of timber; the view from our camps of this morning is unsurpassed in the world; the soil is rich with black loam,

the grass, gramma and brush equally mixed, and the timber, pine of the finest quality and greatest size; water at this season we find everywhere, nor is there at any time any lack of it at this place (Cline 1976:40).

Somewhere near Leroux Spring on his first trip, Beale measured "a pine nineteen feet in circumference and of very great height" (Cline 1976:35).

On this each of his trips, Beale and his engineers made further improvements to the road. They also may have spent some time making improvements to Leroux Springs. They may be the ones who dug a basin into which the springs flowed, providing water for animals and men alike. On July 2nd, 1859, F.C. Engle, a member of the expedition, noted that the springs had been diverted down a trench for 1500 feet, and in spots it was dammed to form pools. This trench may have provided water to a station of the Central Overland Mail Company.

The First Historic Structure

The Central Overland Mail Company was established in 1856 to carry mail and supplies by wagon or rider over the new road between California and New Mexico (Gerald 1983:118). Stations were established at various springs, including Leroux Springs. This station is the first historic structure known to have existed in Fort Valley, although it's exact location remains unknown.

A segment of this operation, which extended from Prescott to Albuquerque, was run by Solomon Barth, who was stationed in Arizona. The service became unreliable at the advent of the American Civil War due to unavailability of help and fears of raiding parties of Southern sympathizers. It was discontinued in the early 1860s. Barth's last transactions through Fort Valley included hauling salt from Zuni, New Mexico to Prescott, Arizona. He was later to settle in St. Johns, Arizona. The last report of the existence of the Leroux Springs mail station is in May 1876, when a member of the Boston Party (see below), discovered the remains of a burnt cabin and stock corral below the springs.

The Lost Colony

In the June 15th, 1872 issue of the Weekly Arizona Miner, a newspaper out of Prescott, Arizona, an article appears on a "New Colony" located at the base of the San Francisco Peaks. In summary this article mentions an A. H. Henderson who was at work laying off farms and crops being planted by sixteen members of the settlement. Others individuals associated with this endeavor were Dr. J. Anderson, Professor J.W. Glass and Alva Smith, the leader of the party. It was reported that others were coming from Colorado, Montana and "elsewhere".

This colony was reported as being 65 miles north of Prescott. If this is true, then it can be placed roughly north of Williams, Arizona. However, this article also places it at the base of the San Francisco Peaks. If we draw a line from