

Dominguez and Escalante Journal

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September 13

About eleven o'clock in the morning we set out from Arroyo del Cibolo through the plain which lies at the foot of a small sierra which the Yutas and Lagunas call Sabuagari. It extends from east to west and its white cliffs can be seen from the high hills which are reached before Cañon Pintado. Having traveled two leagues and three-quarters to the west, we arrived at the watering place known to the guide. It is a small spring at the foot of the sierra, almost at its western extremity. We continued in the same direction for a quarter of a league along a well beaten trail near which, toward the south, rise two large springs of fine water, a musket shot apart, which we named Las Fuentes de Santa Clara and whose moisture produces much good pasturage in the small plain to which they descend and in which they disappear. From here we traveled a league northwest over the same trail and crossed an arroyo which comes from the plain of Las Fuentes, and in which there were large pools of water. From here downstream there is much good pasturage in its bed, which is wide and level. We again crossed the arroyo, ascended some low hills which were stony in places, and after traveling two leagues to the northwest we arrived at a large river which we called San Buenaventura. - Today six leagues.

This Rio de San Buenaventura is the largest river we have crossed, and is the same one which Fray Alonso de Posada, who in the century was custodian of this Custodia of New Mexico, says in a report, divides the Yuta nation from the Cumanche, according to the data which he gives and according to the distance which he places it from Santa Fé. And in fact, on the northeast and the north it is the boundary between these two nations. Its course along here is west-southwest; farther up it runs west to this place. It is joined by San Clemente River, but we do not know whether this is true of the previous streams. Here it has meadows abounding in pasturage and good land for raising crops, with facilities for irrigation. It must be somewhat more than a league wide and its length may reach five leagues. The river enters this meadow between two high cliffs which, after forming a sort of corral, come so close together that one can scarcely see the opening through which the river comes. According to our guide, one can not cross from one side to the other except by the only ford which there is in this vicinity. This is toward the west of the northern crest and very close to a chain of hills of loose earth, some of them lead colored and others yellow. The ford is stony and in it the water does not reach to the shoulder blades of the horses, whereas in every other place we saw they can not cross without swimming. We halted on its south bank about a mile from the ford, naming the camp La Vega de Santa Cruz. We observed the latitude by the north star and found ourselves in 41° 19' latitude.

September 14

We did not travel today, remaining here in order that the animals, which were now somewhat worn out might regain their strength. Before noon the quadrant was set up to repeat the observation by the sun, and we found ourselves no higher than 40° 59' and 24". We concluded that this discrepancy might come from the declination of the needle here, and to ascertain this we left the quadrant fixed until night for the north stands on the meridian of the needle. As soon as the north or polar star was discovered, the quadrant being in the meridian mentioned, we observed that the needle swung to the northeast. Then we again observed the latitude by the polar star and found ourselves in the same 41° 19' as on the previous night. In this place there are six large black cottonwoods which have grown in pairs attached to one another and they are the nearest to the river. Near them is another one standing alone, on whose trunk, on the side facing northwest, Don Joaquin Lain with an adz cleared a small space in the form of a rectangular window, and with a chisel carved on it

the letters and numbers of this inscription-"The Year 1776"-and lower down in different letters "LAIN"-with two crosses at the sides, the larger one above the inscription and the smaller one below it.

Here we succeeded in capturing another buffalo, smaller than the first, although we could use little of the meat because the animal had been overtaken late and very far from the camp. It happened also this morning that the Laguna, Joaquin, as a prank mounted a very fiery horse. While galloping across the meadow, the horse caught his forefeet in a hole and fell, throwing the rider a long distance. We were frightened, thinking that the Laguna had been badly hurt by the fall because when he had recovered from his fright, he wept copious tears. But God was pleased that the only damage was that done to the horse which completely broke its neck, leaving it useless.

September 15

We did not travel today either for the reasons indicated above.

September 16

We set out from the Vega de Santa Cruz on Rio de San Buenaventura, ascended about a mile toward the north, arrived at the ford, and crossed the river. Then we turned west, and having traveled a league along the north bank and meadow of the river, we crossed another small stream which comes down from the northwest and entered it by the same meadow. We swung south-southwest for a league and crossed another small stream, a little larger than the first, which descends from the same northwesterly direction and enters the river. From both of them canals can be made with which to irrigate the land on this bank, which also is very good for crops, although it will not be possible to bring the waters of the Rio Grande to them. We continued to the southwest leaving the river which swings to the south through some hills and ravines which were stony in places. We descended to a dry arroyo by a high and very stony ridge, whose slope on the other side is not so bad. As soon as we reached the top we found a trail, one or two days old, of about a dozen horses and some people on foot, and on examining the vicinity, indications were found that on the highest part of the hill they had been lying in ambush or spying for some time without turning their horses loose. We suspected they might be some Sabuaganas who had followed us to steal the horseherd in this place, where it would be likely that we would attribute the deed to the Cumanches rather than to the Yutas, since we were now in the land of the former not the latter. Besides this, it gave us strong grounds for suspecting the guide Silvestre, because the preceding night he casually and without being noticed went off from the camp a short distance to sleep. During the whole journey he had not worn the cloak that we gave him, but today he left the campsite with it, not taking it off during the whole day, and we suspected that he, having come to an understanding with the Sabuaganas, put it on so that he could be recognized in case they attacked us. Our suspicions were increased when he stopped for a time before reaching the peak where we found the tracks, as if thoughtful and confused, wishing first to go along the banks of the river and then to lead us through here. We gave him no indications of our suspicion, dissimulating it entirely, and in the course of our march he gave us emphatic proofs of his innocence. We continued here along the same trail, descended again to the Rio de San Buenaventura and saw that the people who made the trail had stayed a long time in the leafy grove and meadow which is situated here. We continued on the trail through the meadow, crossed some low hills, and camped in another meadow with good pasturage on the bank of the river, naming the campsite Las Llagas de Nuestro Padre San Francisco. We traveled through the hills, canyons, peaks, and meadows mentioned six leagues to the southwest, and in the whole day's march eight leagues.

As soon as we halted two companions followed the trail southwest to explore the terrain hereabouts and concluded that the Indians had been Cumanches.

September 17

We set out from the meadow of Las Llagas de Nuestro Padre San Francisco toward the southwest, ascended some low hills, and having traveled a league, we left the trail we were following, along which the tracks of the people on foot and of the horses continued. Silvestre told us that they were Cumanches who were going in pursuit of the Yutas, whom they had perhaps learned about while hunting buffalo. We were convinced that this was the case, both because of the direction in which they were traveling and on account of other signs they left. We crossed a dry arroyo, ascended a hill, and having traveled a league and a half to the west over good terrain, dry and almost level, we came to a high ridge from which the guide pointed out to us the junction of the rivers San Clemente and San Buenaventura which, now joined, ran south from this place. We descended to the plain and a large meadow of another river, and having traveled another league and a half to the west we arrived at the junction of two medium-sized streams. These come down from the nearby sierra north of the Rio de San Buenaventura and now being joined flow eastward across the plain until they unite with the Rio de San Buenaventura. The more eastern of the two streams, before reaching the junction, runs southeast, and we called it Rio de San Damián; the other runs to the east and we called it Rio de San Cosme. We continued up the latter stream, and having traveled a league to the west we saw near its banks the ruins of a very old pueblo, where three were fragments of metates, jars, and jugs made of clay. The pueblo was circular in form, judging from the ruins, which are now almost completely leveled to the ground. We turned southwest through the plain which lies between the two rivers, ascended some hills of loose stone, very troublesome for the animals, which were now sorefooted. We descended to another meadow of Rio de San Cosme, and having traveled southwest half a league and west a league and a half through this meadow, we camped in it, naming it Ribera de San Cosme." - Today eight leagues.

A little after crossing we saw columns of smoke at the foot of the sierra, and asking the guide who he thought had sent them up, he said they might be Cumanches, or some Lagunas who were accustomed to range through here hunting.

September 18

We left Ribera de San Cosme and the guide, wishing to cross to the other side of the river and travel on it, led us into a grove or thicket of almost impenetrable rockrose and through marshy creeks which forced us to go back and cross the river three times, making many useless turns. Then through a plain near the meadows of the river, we traveled three leagues to the southwest, swung to the west-southwest for a league, crossed the river a fifth time and again turned west, in which direction, now through the meadow of the river, now along the adjacent plain, we traveled three leagues and a quarter. We ascended a not very high mesa which was level on top and very stony, traveled about three quarters of a league including the ascent and the descent, crossed another small river which near here enters the San Cosme, named it Santa Catarina de Sena, and camped on its bank's- Today nine leagues.

From the ranchería of the Sabuaganas and the campsite of San Antonio Mártir to this place we counted eighty-eight leagues and from Santa Fé two hundred and eighty-seven.

Along these three rivers we have crossed today there is plenty of good land for crops to support three good settlements, with opportunities for irrigation, beautiful cottonwood groves, good pastures, with timber and firewood nearby.

From the country of the Cumanches a very long high sierra descends, running from northeast to southwest as far as the country of the Lagunas. This ridge we could see for

more than seventy leagues. Toward the north of Rio de San Buenaventura at this season its highest hills and peaks are covered with snow, for which reason we named it Sierra Blanca de los Lagunas, and we shall begin to ascend and cross it tomorrow where it is least elevated.

September 19

We set out from Rio de Santa Catarina de Sena toward the southwest without a trail, ascended a short gentle but very stony slope, and having traveled a quarter of a league swung to the west. We descended to the bank of the Rio de San Cosme and traveled along it two and a quarter leagues, making several turns, through almost impassable terrain, now through many stones, now along rocky precipices, one of which lamed one of our horses and forced us to go back about a mile and go down to another meadow by the river. We crossed it, breaking through a thicket of rockrose and tall reeds, and after going half a league to the west we swung to the northwest, taking as a road the bed of an arroyo. Now climbing the sierra and leaving the San Cosme River, we continued along the arroyo which led us imperceptibly into a closed canyon, high on both sides, with no passable terrain other than the bed of the arroyo. Half way up the canyon there is another arroyo which runs from north to south. We followed the one which led us northwest, which with its many windings ran generally west-northwest, and having traveled four leagues we left the canyon which we called Cañon de las Golondrinas because there are many nests of swallows in it, formed with such symmetry that they look like little pueblos. Then we continued on good terrain through a chamise thicket and having traveled half a league west-northwest we swung to the west, ascending a long hill with some timber, and having descended it we entered a plain which is crossed from north to south by a well beaten trail. Having crossed the plain we descended by way of a high, stony and rough ridge to the watering place, which we named San Eustaquio. Having traveled two leagues and a half to the west. This watering place is permanent and well-filled and around it there is abundant pasturage. We arrived very much fatigued, partly because of the difficulty of the day's journey and partly because a very cold wind blew unceasingly from the west. - To day ten leagues.

September 20

We set out from San Eustaquio, leaving for dead one of our strongest horses, the one which had broken his neck at Santa Cruz del Rio de San Buenaventura. We climbed a long but gradual slope toward the southwest, then swung to the west a little less than three leagues and a quarter through a level but troublesome chamise growth with much small cactus. We entered a small valley, wide and gently sloping, and after going a quarter of a league to the south-southwest we again turned west, descended to a small river which runs east and is perhaps the one which we formerly called the San Cosme. We crossed the river to the west-southwest, ascended another hill, long but gentle and passable, and after going a mile we swung southwest for about two leagues through a very pleasant and pretty valley with very abundant pasturage. We camped at the end of the valley at a small marsh with plentiful pasturage in the middle of which there was a good spring of water which we called Ojo de Santa Lucía. Tonight it was so cold that even the water which was near the fire all night was frozen in the morning. - Today five leagues.

September 21

We set out from Ojo de Santa Lucia to the southwest by the same valley which we had just ascended, through a grove of white cottonwoods, and having traveled a quarter of a league we swung west a league and three quarters, now through thickets of troublesome chamise, now through low valleys of very soft earth, the animals sinking and stumbling every instant in the many little holes which were hidden in the grass. Then we descended to a fair-sized river in which there is an abundance of good trout, two of which the Laguna, Joaquin, killed with an arrow and caught, and each one of which would weigh somewhat more than two

pounds. This river runs to the southeast through a pretty valley with good pastures, many creeks and pretty groves of white cottonwoods, neither very tall nor large around. In this valley, which we named Valle de la Purisima, there are all the advantages necessary for a good settlement. The guide Silvestre told us that part of the Lagunas, who used the fish of the river as their customary food, lived in this valley at one time, and that they withdrew for fear of the Cumanches who were beginning their raids into this part of the sierra. Having crossed the river and ascended a hill, we entered the floor of the valley and, having traveled a league to the south-southwest, we swung to the west through a ravine with much chamise and bad terrain, and, having gone three-fourths of a league, we crossed a small stream of very cold water. We continued west another quarter of a league and entered a dense grove of white cottonwoods, dwarf oak, chokecherry, and royal pine. Through the same grove we took the south slope of a wooded ravine and, having traveled a league west by south, we crossed to the other side. The guide, anxious to arrive as quickly as possible, went so fast that at every step he disappeared in the thicket and we were unable to follow him, for besides the great density of the wood, there was no trail, and in many places his track could not be seen, so he was ordered to go slowly and to remain always in our sight. We continued through the grove which became more dense the farther we went, and having traveled half a league west, we emerged from it, arriving at a high ridge from which the guide pointed out to us the direction to the Lake, and, to the southeast of it, another part of the sierra in which he said there lived a great many people of the same language and character as the Lagunas. By this ridge we traveled southwest a quarter of a league and descended it to the west, breaking through almost impenetrable thickets of chokecherry and dwarf oak, and then through another grove of cottonwood so dense that we thought the packs would not get through without being unloaded. In this grove the guide again annoyed us by his speed, so that we were forced to keep him back and not let him go ahead alone. In this dense growth Father Fray Atanasio got a hard blow on one of his knees by hitting it against a cottonwood. Finally with great difficulty and labor we descended to a deep and narrow valley where we found sufficient pasturage, which abounds in all the sierra, and water for ourselves and for the animals. We camped here's after having traveled in the descent a league to the west, naming the place San Mateo. Today six and one-half leagues. Tonight it was much colder than on previous nights.

September 22

We set out from San Mateo to the southeast along the north slope of this valley in which there were many perilous defiles and slides with no other trail than the one which we were opening. The rough and uneven ground of the sierra here forced us at each step to change our direction and to make many turns. Suffice it to say that after going up and down hills and high elevations, some of them rough and stony, for about five leagues, we descended by a long passable slope with plentiful pasturage to a small plain between two creeks which join in it, after traveling along the slope a league to the southwest. When we arrived the animals were all worn out. There was plentiful pasturage and so we camped in this place, naming it San Lino. -Today we traveled six leagues which, on account of the many windings, would take us with respect to San Mateo, three leagues west-southwest.

From the top of the last ridge we saw in front of us and not very far away many large columns of smoke arising in the same sierra. The guide Silvestre said they must have been made by his people who were out hunting. We replied to them with other smoke signals so that if they had already seen us they would not take us to be enemies and thus flee or welcome us with arrows. They replied with larger smoke signals in the pass through which we must travel to the Lake, and this caused us to believe they had already seen us, because this is the most prompt and common signal used in any extraordinary occurrence by all the people of this part of America. Consequently, we warned Silvestre that tonight he must be on the qui-vive lest some of his people who knew of our arrival should approach the camp

to see what people had come here. And about two o'clock in the morning, the hour when according to his opinion there might be one or more Indians close at hand, he made a long speech in his language, giving them to understand that we were peaceable people, friendly and good, but we do not know whether or not anyone heard him¹⁰.

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