The vicinity of the Rio Grande and Southern Boundary of New Mexico as referred to by US Surveyor 1851

John Russell Bartlett may have distinguished himself as a linguist and ethnographer, but his three-year stint as Boundary Commissioner, resolving the line determined by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, may have been the low point in his career. Not only was he accused of using public funds to traipse around the newly-acquired territories, but he agreed to a placement of the initial survey point that was not only clearly wrong, but lost the United States some thousands of square miles of land, and precipitated a round of endless wrangling, of which this map was the first salvo.

The correction was never made, as the U.S. bought an additional parcel of New Mexico and Arizona in order to acquire a good route for a southern transcontinental railway line. The only people who were inconvenienced by the border changes were those New Mexicans who moved to Mesilla, wishing to remain Mexican citizens, only to find themselves Americans after all within a few years.

Bartlett published the account of his adventures in the southwest territories as A Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua. Later, he founded the American Ethnological Society, published a dictionary of "Americanisms," and served as secretary of state for Rhode Island. [Bartlett, John Russell]

Images:
2: Forte Paso del Norte

Condé, and later Salazar, were stationed at the Presidio in El Paso. The Americans were building a mirror town across the river, with its own mill, stores, and farms. Before long, the Presidio del Norte would fall into disrepair, as the Americans beefed up defenses at Fort Bliss. Note that even at this date, a bridge had not been built across the Rio Grande.

Quote: (02 December 1850) December 2d.

Received a note this morning from General Condé, announcing his presence, and his readiness to carry out the agreement entered into by the Joint Commission in California, on the 15th February last. I replied immediately, congratulating him on his safe arrival, and stated that I would do myself the honor of calling upon him at 12 o'clock.

At the appointed time I crossed the river, accompanied by Major Van Horne, Lieutenant Wilkias, Dr. Webb, Secretary of the Commission, and Mr. J. C. Cremony, Interpreter. We met General Conde,” with his officers and engineers; also Colonel Langberg, a Swedish officer in the Mexican army, who was then in command of a body of troops just arrived from Chihuahua, for the protection of the frontier against the Indians. The interview was an agreeable one, the engineers connected with the Mexican Commission being gentlemen of education, and graduates of the Military School at Chepultepec. The Interpreter was Don Felipe de Iturbide, the younger son of the late Emperor.

I expressed a desire to General Condé to proceed to business as soon as possible, as we had a large number of engineers and other scientific men in our party, who were anxious to enter their field of labor. The General acquiesced in my wishes, and said he would meet me to-morrow at my quarters.

December 3d.

General Condé, with his son Don Augustin Condé, who acts as his Secretary, and Don Felipe de Iturbide, called by appointment at 10 o'clock, A. M., when the first meeting of the Joint Commission to run and mark the boundary between the United States and the Republic of Mexico, under the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, took place. Two hours and a half were spent at this first session, when we adjoined to meet at the quarters of General Conde the following day.

The meetings of the Joint Commission were held twice a week after this, though there were interruptions at times from the ice in the river, which prevented parties from crossing. [Bartlett, John Russell ]

Overview: El Paso

Although the Spanish did not settle the area until the Pueblo Revolt, Oñate noted it as he crossed the Rio Grande, and it gained significance on maps as an important landmark, where the river continues to be crossed to this day.

After fleeing the warring Puebloans, the Spanish built a settlement on the banks of the Rio Grande and waited eleven years for reinforcements. About two years in, Governor Otermín tried to retake the Rio Arriba to no avail.

During this period, the priests planted vineyards, which bore fruit that made eventually made El Paso del Norte famed in the region for its fine wines and brandies.
The Piro of the Rio Abajo retreated with the Spanish and together they established three mission churches, active to this day: Mission Ysleta del Sud, Mission Soccoro, and San Elizario Mission.

*Quote:* In the name of the most Christian king, Don Philip.... I take and seize tenancy and possession, real and actual, civil and natural, one two, three times... and all the times that by right I can and should....without limitations

*--Juan de Oñate at El Paso, April 1598*

**Images:**

The Plaza and Church of El Paso

Mexican adobe house, Mt. Franklin in distance, El Paso, Texas. 1907

**Links:**

Office of State Historian: Wine Production in El Paso and the Grapevine Inventory of 1755  
http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails_docs.php?fileID=525

**3: Bracito**

1846

*Its location as the first flat area north of El Paso was very thing that made Bracito a poor battlefield in 1846 but it a good campsite for centuries.*

*Quote:* After leaving this town [El Paso], the road winds over a wild, rugged, and hilly country, for nearly eight miles. These hills are the spurs of the mountain ranges, through which the Rio Grande forces its passage. They consist chiefly of limestone, which often appears above the surface, or projects from the hill sides. Many organic remains are here found. There is no bottom land for the entire distance; nor is there sufficient space by the river's bank even for a road or mule path: consequently the way is very difficult and tortuous until the hills are passed.

The bottom land does not appear for some distance beyond the observatory or, White's Rancho. The only vegetation on this barren district, is the mezquit chapporal, the larrea Mexicana, wild sage, yucca, and Spanish bayonet. In some places, are patches of grama grass. On the immediate banks of the river, are cotton-wood trees, but none elsewhere.

All Americans who visit this district, express their surprise that the Mexicans, when they came out to intercept the march of the American army, under Colonel Doniphan, did not fortify this pass, and make a stand here, instead of facing our troops on the open plain at Bracito, a few miles beyond. [Bartlett, John Russell]

**Overview:** Brazitos

Long-time paraje; mail exchange point on the Camino Real; site of the first land grant in southern New Mexico; site of the Battle of Bracitos during the Mexican-American War. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]

**Links:**

Office of State Historian: Brazitos  

**4: Forte San Eleazar**

1851
Quote: Mr. Bartlett says further: "San Elizario is an old town and correctly placed on the treaty map with reference to the 32nd parallel."

This unfortunate statement has sadly misled the government, as will be seen by the Hon. Mr. Stuart's report to the President, in which he refers to it, basing his assertion on what Mr. Bartlett states, without examination, and has been the cause of much trouble.

The town of San Elizario is not laid down upon the treaty map at all! The old "Fte San Elizario" is, and has distinctly the usual symbol attached designating it as a fort, and it does not refer in any manner to the present town of San Elizario.

The most charitable construction to be placed upon this misstatement of Mr. Bartlett is to attribute it to ignorance, otherwise it was designed to deceive; for a very little study of the treaty map would have pointed out to him that he was wrong. The relative position of the town of El Paso to Fort San Elizario, here referred to, is the same on the map as it is represented to have once existed on the ground.

This old fort was about thirty-five miles below the present site of the town of San Elizario, and which is about the distance that the parallel of 32 degrees is out of place with reference to it and El Paso on the map. But by substituting it (the old "Fte San Elizario") for the situation of the present town of San Elizario, suited Mr. Bartlett's measurement, and hence his conclusion to show that the parallel of 32º was rightly represented, and his line of 32º22' correct.

Quote: About ten miles below El Paso is an island some twenty miles in length; it is one of the most fertile spots in the whole valley, and has been cultivated since the first settlement of the country. On this island, which belongs to the United States, are the towns of Isleta, Socorro, and San Eleazario, chiefly inhabited by Mexicans. Of these San Eleazarro is the larger, and was the old Presidio or military post on the frontier. It contains many respectable Spanish families, and some few Americans. It is now the seat of the county courts. The church and presidio are in a ruined state; they were, nevertheless, occupied by our troops for a couple of years after the Mexican war. [Bartlett, John Russell]

Overview: San Elizario

San Elizario was built first as a military presidio to protect the citizens of the river settlements from Apache attacks in 1789. The structure as it stands today has interior pillars, detailed in girt, and an extraordinary painted tin ceiling.

The missions of El Paso have a tremendous history spanning three centuries. They are considered the longest, continuously occupied religious structures within the United States and as far as we know, the churches have never missed one day of services. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]

Images:

Ruined presidio of San Elizaro

Interior of la Capilla de San Elizario

5: Magoffinsville

Quote: El Paso, on the Mexican side of the river, which I have been describing, contains about five thousand inhabitants; but the number would be much increased by including the many ranchos and haciendas below the town, which properly appertain to it. On the American side there are but few houses; and these may be divided into three groups or settlements. The first is Coons' Rancho. This was the first settlement, and was the military post for about three years, under the command of Major Van Horne. Many of the buildings are now unoccupied.
About one and a half miles below is the principal village, which was established by James W. Magoffin, Esq., a gentleman from Missouri, and one of the oldest American settlers in the country. This place is called Magoffinsville, and was the head-quarters of the Boundary Commission while in the country.

Its enterprising proprietor has erected around a large open square some of the best buildings in the country, which are now occupied as stores and warehouses. This is an admirable situation for a town, and will, no doubt, be the centre of the American settlements at El Paso. An acequia now runs through the square, and the laud around is of the finest quality. A mile further east is a large rancho belonging to Mr. Stevenson, around which is a cluster of smaller dwellings. [Bartlett, John Russell]

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**Overview: El Paso**

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**Quote:** In the name of the most Christian king, Don Philip.... I take and seize tenancy and possession, real and actual, civil and natural, one two, three times... and all the times that by right I can and should....without limitations

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**Images:**

- [The Plaza and Church of El Paso](http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails_docs.php?fileID=525)
- [Mexican adobe house, Mt. Franklin in distance, El Paso, Texas. 1907](http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails_docs.php?fileID=525)

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**Links:**

Office of State Historian: Wine Production in El Paso and the Grapevine Inventory of 1755 --

http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails_docs.php?fileID=525

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**6: San Diego Paraje**

Gray’s map, while attempting to correct the error in latitude that made Disturnell’s map so unhelpful, compounded others. For instance, he shows the road to Santa Fe as going between the mountains and the river. In reality the Jornada del Muerto veered east from San Diego, behind the mountains, and returning to the river above Fra Cristobal, which is why the Jornada was so difficult.

**Quote:** (27 April 1851) Left Dona Ana at nine 9 A. M., accompanied by all the assistants, and others attached to the Commission, except those whose aid was required by Lieutenant Whipple in the duty he was about to enter upon [as Surveyor for the Commission]. My train consisted of twelve wagons, drawn by five or six mules each, and my traveling carriage with four mules. The assistants rode on horses or mules.

We continued on our course towards the north, and soon struck the great Jornada del Muerto (Deadman’s Journey), on the Santa Fé road, which we followed for nine miles, when we turned off to San Diego, the old fording place. There is no village nor even a rancho here, although it is marked on the map as a town. [Bartlett, John Russell]
Overview: San Diego Paraje

The paraje and river crossing called San Diego was described as being between the parajes of Robledo on the south and Perillo on the north. For many, it marked the end of the difficult Jornada del Muerto. Fort Selden was built near the site of this historic paraje.

Links:
El Camino Real International Heritage Center: Jornada del Muerto --
http://www.caminorealheritage.org/jornada/jornada.htm

7: Mina de Cobre

1799-

Quote: Gold is said to have been found here when the mines were worked; and many stories are told of large quantities that were buried when the place was abandoned.

About four miles distant, a deep shaft had been sunk, where it was said a skin containing more than five thousand dollars worth of gold had been buried. Several men took their discharge here for the purpose of clearing out the shaft and getting the buried treasure. After several weeks labor, they reached the bottom, and even dug some feet below; but their search was not rewarded with success. This shaft was sunk about seventy feet below the surface. Veins of gold were found, but not sufficient to pay the cost of working; and the spot was abandoned.

I saw many fine specimens of lead, and one of silver ore, which were found in the vicinity; but I did not visit the localities. The Mexicans who had formerly resided here assured me that the existence of silver was known to many at the time; but being in the very heart of the Apache country, it could not be worked.

The Indian Chiefs also said they would show me where there was plenty of gold, if I would accompany them, but that they would not disclose the secret to others. I told them we did not come to their country for gold, and declined their offer. Whether they really knew of any or not (and it is my belief that they did), I thought it best not to put myself in their hands, but to maintain the position I had taken from the commencement; namely, that our object was to survey the boundary between the United States and Mexico, the meaning of which they had been made to fully comprehend. [Bartlett, John Russell ]

Overview: Santa Rita del Cobre Mines

This mineral-rich area was known to native inhabitants long before Europeans "discovered" it. In precontact times, it was a source for low-grade turquoise, and later, the Warm Springs Apache collected copper from the surface.

The Spanish began mining in earnest in 1799, after being given a sample of the pure, malleable copper by friendly Apaches. Within a few years, they had established a presidio and were working the mines with convict labor. Work on the mines continued through Mexican independence, and most of Mexico's copper money from those years was made of the Santa Rita copper, packed out on burros to Mexico City.

After the Americans claimed New Mexico, activity ended for some decades, due to Apache hostilities. The mine was sold to American investors in the 1870s, and today is operated by Phelps Dodge.

The Santa Rita Observation Point is located on the east side of NM Highway 152 just south of milepost 6.

Images:

Valley of the Copper Mines
8: Copper Mine Apaches

1851

Quote: On the day of my return from Sonora, the first Apache Indians we had seen paid us a visit, headed by their head chief, Mangus Colorado, or Red Sleeve. He was accompanied by twelve or fifteen of his tribe, and said he had followed us for several days; that his people had seen us when we went down to Sonora, and were several times near our encampments on the journey. He said they knew my carriage, and that we belonged here. He thought we ran a great risk in going so far with so small a party; as there were many bad Indians prone to theft and murder in the country through which he passed, and whom he could not control.

He said he was a friend of the Americans, and that his people desired to be at peace with us. He remembered General Kearney and Colonel Cooke, when they passed through this country a few years before. I explained to him the war between the United States and Mexico, and its results, all of which he pretty well understood already. I told him that we had now come out to see this country, and mark the line that separated the territory of Mexico from that acquired by the United States; that all the Indians who lived on our side of the border, would have our protection as long as they conducted themselves properly and committed no thefts or murders; but that if they stole any mules or cattle belonging to the Americans, we should pursue and punish them; and by our treaty with Mexico, we were bound to extend to her people the same protection. Our protection of the Mexicans he did not seem to relish; and could not comprehend why we should aid them in any way after we had conquered them, or what business it was to the Americans if the Apaches chose to steal their mules, as they had always done, or to make wives of their Mexican women, or prisoners of their children.

I told them the Americans were bound to do so and could not break their word; and if they (the Apaches) committed any farther depredations on Mexico, we should not shield them from the consequences. Mangus Colorado denied that he had ever injured the Americans; and when I told him I had learned that some of his people had lately attacked a party of our countrymen on their way to California, and killed one man, he pretended to know nothing about it. On a subsequent interview I brought this affair again to his notice, when it appeared that he was acquainted with it, but said it was done by some bad people living in a certain mountain range, over whom he had no authority.

He promised that his people should not trouble us or the Mexican Commission, and that he would send back any mules or cattle that might be taken by his young men; and furthermore, if any strayed away, he would have them caught and sent back to us. I then informed him and the other chiefs, that to show our good feelings towards them, I would make them some presents, and accordingly directed the Commissary to distribute among them some shirts, cotton cloth, beads, and other articles, which pleased them much.

They asked for whiskey, which I positively refused, denying that I had any. Although this was the simple truth, they did not believe it, not being able to imagine how a party of Americans could be without that indispensable article. They were constantly on the look-out for it, and when they saw a bottle they asked if it did not contain the coveted liquor. I one day handed them a bottle of catsup and another of vinegar, and told them to ascertain for themselves. A taste put a stop to their investigations, and they were afterwards less inquisitive. [Bartlett, John Russell]

Overview: Chihenne Apache

The Chiricahua Apache occupied lands throughout southwestern New Mexico, the southeastern corner of Arizona, and areas straddling what are today the States of Sonora and Chihuahua in Mexico. The larger tribal entity is named after the mountains in southern Arizona of the same name.

Although various authors group the various bands of Chiricahua differently, there are three major named bands of the larger group. The Apache designation for the eastern band is "red-paint people" (Chihene). This band occupied most of the Apache territory west of the Rio Grande in New Mexico.

The Chihene were divided into subgroups, or sub-bands, and were named after geographic landmarks within their respective territories. Some of these names included Mimbrenos, Coppermine, Warm Springs, and Mogollon Apache.

The Chiricahua resisted the 1875 order to relocate to the San Carlos reservation, a devastating place of drought, inhumane conditions and disease. Geronimo's band escaped three times. After escaping twice to return to their native lands , the Warm Springs band were labeled as troublemakers and forced to join Geronimo's band of renegades. These bands together-- only about 35 warriors and a little over a hundred women and children-- fought off the U.S. Army for several years. Geronimo surrendered in 1886 and the surviving Chiricahua were sent to Florida, and then to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]
Well, the first time we were living in New Mexico where the -- we call it Warm Spring Reservation, two kind of Apache live there. So we have a nice time. We never had no trouble with nobody. We don't have no fights with no white man or nobody. And live there.

And Geronimo he was out in Old Mexico somewhere in the war all the time. They call him, his name is Badonko Indian, he's not our tribe. But he came to New Mexico there, Warm Springs Reservation. When he was coming on his way to us, why he killed some white people and stole their horses. Then he went around, back on the west side of there, close to the other side of Silver City. Then they go around and get into our reservation and with the horses. The white people follow him. Trail them. They putting him in, they trail him right into our reservation. So they found out- that they thought- this is our, we done it. So he come to the agent and asked agent if your men killed some of our horses and they kill our man. I say, they come into this reservation. So this man, agent, called the men together, these Warm Springs Apaches. So he called them, "Any of you men been out- off this reservation? Off this reservation?" So in about two weeks nobody never was out. so these men, after Geronimo, they went back. Then after that why they found out that Geronimo was in our camp. So this Indian scout they went after him. they brought this Geronimo, two men, Geronimo and then Tado. They came, bring them down to the agency, so agent find out that they the ones that give us trouble. So give us trouble-- so they got these two men in the guard house and put the chains on the legs, both of them. That way they got them in there, in the guard house. So it was- they kept them.

And the first thing we know, without no trouble, all the calvary horses surround us all in that reservation, in that camp. So they told us-- they took us out there to Arizona [San Carlos Apache reservation]. They take our scouts with us. And we went, they took us to about 30 miles east of San Carlos. We was there for about 8 months. So these chiefs, Apache chiefs, they didn't like it. They said, "We got a home up there, our own reservation, why they took us down here, they never said nothing to us. And we stay right here." So they said, "Well, let's go back to our reservation." They said, "Nobody-- well, we never done no harm to nobody there ain't no use to stay away from our reservation." So they started out without agents know. Then they went back, these Warm Spring Apache they went back to Warm Spring Apache. They went back.

On the way back soldier from San Carlos, they find out, they come after us. They chasing us from that mountain. They kill a few of them, but the rest of them moved back to the Warm Springs Reservation, to agency. When we got over there, why we are the same way. They give us ration. Everything's all right when we got back over there. We-- we-- no trouble at all because our agents still there yet. So we are-- stayed down there, at the first place was 1874 that they take us away from there.

This time in 1875 they done the same way, they took us. They surround us with their horses, calvary horses. And then there's one fellow that's name Bigdoya, he's a chief. Chief Bigdoya, he's the man, he don't want to leave this reservation. He said, "You white man never give me this land. When you was out over the sea somewhere, I got this land already to stay on it. Now they trying to take me away. Without a -- no trouble. Never done anything wrong. Never fight nobody. Never kill anybody. Why they trying to take us away from here. I don't like to do that. I don't want to get away from there. They took me away from there before but this time, I just can't get away from here. If you have to kill me before you take this land away from these people. So if your government want to fight, I'm going to get on this mountain here, and if you want to fight-- follow me, I fight."

--Sam Hazous, Fort Sill Apache. Tape made in 1956 by members of the Hazous family. Transcribed by Linda Butler. [Oklahoma Western History Collection]
The first boundary commission, for which John Russell Bartlett served as the American commissioner, was tasked with setting the southern boundary of New Mexico. A.B Gray was supposed to be there to survey the point, but after the boundary commission had waited five months for him to overcome his illness, Bartlett commissioned A.W. Whipple instead.

When Gray did show up, he protested the initial point, but was soon relieved as Chief Surveyor for the Commission by Emory, and sent instead to survey the line three degrees west of the Initial Point.

They believed they had set the line 32º22' north (at what Gray shows as 32 degrees, 23 minutes north, and which Emory later corrected to 32º22'. By the time the second Boundary Commission was deployed, the United States had already purchased additional land along the border, making the Bartlett-Conde line irrelevant.

Quote: Under the date of December 3d, 1850, I spoke of the meetings of the Joint Commission, and of the difficulties that lay in the way of a speedy agreement as to the boundary between the Rio Grande and the Gila, in consequence of two gross errors in the map [by Disturnell] to which the Commissioners were confined by the treaty. ...

The other error was in the position of the town of El Paso, which appears on this [Disturnell's] map to be but seven or eight minutes below the 32nd parallel, while its actual distance is thirty minutes further south. After several meetings, involving much discussion, the Joint Commission agreed to fix the Initial Point on the Rio Grande at the latitude given by the map, without any reference to its distance from El Paso; and to extend it westward from that point three degrees, without reference to where the line so prolonged should terminate.

This being agreed upon, the acting Chief Astronomer, Lieutenant A. W. Whipple, on the part of the United States, and Don Jose Salazar, the Chief Astronomer on the part of Mexico, were directed to “measure, according to Disturnell’s Map, edition of 1847, the distance between latitude 32º and the point where the Rio Grande strikes the Southern Boundary of New Mexico; and also the length of the Southern Boundary line of New Mexico from that point to its extreme western termination,” and to report the result of their examinations to the Commissioners at the earliest period practicable. [Bartlett, John Russell]

Quote: Be it remembered, that on the twenty-fourth day of April, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-one, the Commissioners and Surveyors, on behalf of the United States and of Mexico, named to run the Boundary Line between the two Republics in conformity with the Treaty of Peace, dated at the city of Guadalupe Hidalgo, on the second day of February, one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight, and exchanged at the city of Queretaro, on the thirteenth day of May of the same year, being fully satisfied with the operations made, and the results obtained, by the Chief Astronomers of the two Commissions, do establish this point, on the right bank of the River Bravo, or Grande del Norte, in 32º 22' north latitude, which in accordance with the provisions of the fifth Article of said Treaty, is "the point where it [the said river Bravo or Grande del Norte] strikes the Southern Boundary of New Mexico Be it likewise remembered that the distance from this point to the centre of the bed where now actually runs the River, in the direction of the same parallel, is (219m 4) two hundred and nineteen metres, and four tenths, following the line east from said point.

For the greater solemnity of this act, appear as witnesses, on the part of the United States, Captain Abraham Buford, of the First Dragoons, and Colonel Charles A. Hoppin, Aid-de-Camp to His Excellency James L. Calhoun, Governor of New Mexico: And on the part of Mexico, Mr. B. Juan José Sanchez, Political Chief of the Canton of Bravos, in the State of Chihuahua, as first authority of that place.

Written in duplicate, in English and Spanish, and sealed, at the point established, on the day of the month and year aforesaid.

Pedro Garcia Conde, Commissioner.
John Russell Bartlett, Commissioner.
Jose Salazar Y Larregui, Surveyor.

--from the document buried under the marker for the Initial Point, along with a fragment of the Washington Monument. [Bartlett, John Russell]

Quote: Camp Near Fort Duncan,
October I, 1862.

...On my reaching the ground to take charge of the Survey, November, 1851, I found that Mr. Bartlett and the assistant Surveyor had agreed upon the Initial Point, 32º 22', and that a great stone monument had been erected, marking the point, and having the usual inscriptions, and the names of the American and Mexican Commissioners, Astronomers, and Surveyors.
The Surveyor (Mr. Gray) came out long after the Initial Point was agreed upon, and the monument erected and the line begun, relieving the acting Surveyor (Lieutenant Whipple), and protested against the point. With the protest and the views of the Commission before him, both sides, it is presumed fairly stated, the Hon. Secretary instructed the Surveyor to sign the maps; but before the instructions reached him he was relieved, and I was appointed in his place, with the same instructions.

I therefore considered the matter as settled, and the action of the Government as final. The official documents which have been prepared for the purpose, referred to in my letter of appointment and instructions, never having been presented, no action has been taken in the matter definitely and finally to "settle this important point." I quote from my instructions, for as I shall presently show, it has, by the views taken of the subject by both sides, ceased to be an important point.

But I have done this in compliance with the letter and spirit of my instructions. Mr. Salazar, the Mexican Commissioner and Surveyor, met me at the Presidio del Norte, August 1st, to sign the maps of the Rio Grand forming the boundary. Neither party had the maps properly prepared, nor was Mr. Salazar at all prepared in money or means to go on with the work at the rate I was progressing. I had already signed, conjointly with him, as astronomer and surveyor, the only maps fit for signature; but he remained pressing me to sign other maps which involve incidentally the Initial Point agreed upon by Mr. Bartlett, Mr. Conde, Mr. Salazar, and Mr. Whiffle, from which Col. Graham had started his survey of the river. Therefore, on the 28th of August, signed the maps according to my instructions, with the reservation contained in the paper, a copy of which is herewith sent, marked A., signed conjointly by Mr. Salazar and myself, and the statement therein referred to, setting forth on the face of the maps that it was the "boundary" agreed upon by the two Commissioners, April 20, 1851."

I presume it was never intended I should give my certificate, as Astronomer and Surveyor, to the correctness of the determination of a point which had been determined by the observation of others, and without consultation or advice of mine. On the other hand, I do not for a moment doubt the power of the Government to instruct me on the subject, or hesitate as to my duty to obey its mandates, which I understand as requiring me only to authenticate the Initial Point agreed upon by the Commissioners of the two Governments.

In reference to the importance of the point, I think it as well to state that the line agreed upon by the Commissioners, April, 1851, is about thirty-three minutes north of the line contended for as that laid down on Disturnell's map, but reached about sixteen minutes of an arc further west; and as both lines run three degrees of longitude west, the difference of territory is three degrees of longitude, multiplied by thirty-three minutes of latitude, minus sixteen minutes of longitude, multiplied by about forty minutes of latitude, each having a middle latitude that may for the purpose of computation be assumed at thirty-two degrees. Neither line gives us the road to California, and the country embraced in the area of difference, with the exception of a strip along the Rio Grande about nine miles long and from one to two wide, is barren, and will not produce wheat, corn, grapes, trees, or any thing useful as food for man or for clothing. [Emory, William H.]

Images:

Boundary Marker 1, view from the west

Links:
The Handbook of Texas Online: Bartlett-Garcia Condé Compromise --
http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/BB/nbb2.html

True Position of 32 deg North Latitude

1851

Disturnell's erroneous map, on which the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was based, showed El Paso a few minutes below the 32nd parallel, but in reality, it is 30 minutes below. The boundary commission determined
that the boundary should follow the latitude lines on Disturnell’s map, adjusted to correct astronomical observations, rather than the description given in the treaty. A.B. Gray strenuously objected to this interpretation, and refused to sign the maps, at which point the commission terminated him as chief surveyor, and replaced him with Emory. Emory did sign the maps as instructed, with the written caveat that his signature did not mean that he agreed with the line that Condé and Bartlett had determined for the boundary.

Quote: In my judgement, the point where the southern boundary of New Mexico intersects the Rio Grande, according to the treaty and the treaty map, is about eight miles above the town of El Paso, not forty-two north, as General Condé and Mr. Bartlett agreed to fix it, by adopting the parallel of 32º22' north latitude.

The fifth article of the treaty makes the “Rio Grande the line to the point where it strikes the southern boundary of New Mexico, thence westwardly along the whole southern boundary of New Mexico, which runs north of the town called Paso, to its western termination, thence northward along the western line of New Mexico, until it intersects the first branch of the River Gila” &c.

Afterwards the same article of the treaty says, “The southern and western limits of New Mexico mentioned in this article are those laid down in the map entitled ‘map of the united Mexican states, as organized and defined by various acts of the Congress of said republic, and constructed according to the best authorities. Revised edition, published at New York in 1847, by J. Disturnell.”

In the first place, I would remark that it was the plain and manifest intention of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to convey to the United States the entire territory of New Mexico, as a district of defined limits. A mere glance at the negotiations which preceded the treaty will suffice to show that the Mexican negotiators had no purpose, and did not consider themselves, they being officers of the central authority, as vested with the power to dismember the States of Chihuahua and Sonora. They were willing to cede New Mexico, and nothing more, except California.

In ceding New Mexico it was necessary to describe its southern limits westward from the Rio Grande.

The original article of the treaty which defined the boundary only mentioned the southern and western limits of New Mexico, without stating where those limits were; but after the discussion, the reference to “the town called Paso,” and to Disturnell’s map were inserted as determining the line meant and intended in the treaty.

What did those interpolated references mean? Surely they meant that the line should be run on the surface of the earth, with reference to the town called Paso, and have the same relative position with regard to that town as it had according to Disturnell’s map; and to mark that line properly nothing more was necessary than to go to the church on the plaza of the town called Paso, the most proper, and usually the most central point in Mexican towns, and then, guided by Disturnell’s map, proceed to measure and mark the boundary of the two republics, so that it should have the same bearing to the actual position of the town as the map line bears to the map position of it.

Had this course been pursued, the southern boundary of New Mexico would have been run and marked almost exactly where the decree of the Mexican Congress and long use and custom have placed it.

The States of Chihuahua and Sonora was cut off from the Territory of New Mexico, and in making Chihuahua a State, the government had the right to exercise, and did actually exercise, the privilege of defining its boundaries.

That was done in 1824, by a decree which made the northern boundary of Chihuahua, which is the southern boundary of New Mexico, a line touching the northern limit of the town of Paso del Norte “with the jurisdiction it has always possessed.” That jurisdiction extended to El Paso del Norte, the point at which the Rio Grande breaks through the mountains, a natural frontier about eight miles above the central part of “the town called Paso,” but which is more frequently termed El Paso.

...Mr. Bartlett refused to be guided by the actual position of the town of Paso, an object specifically mentioned in the treaty, and consented to be governed by a reference to the imaginary position of a parallel, which was evidently located, as far as the region referred to is concerned, without the aid of astronomical observations. [Gray, A.B.]
TIMELINE: SHIFTING ALLEGIANCES

1800
In 1800, Napoleon signed the secret Treaty of Ildefonso with Spain, stipulating that France should provide Spain with a kingdom if Spain would return Louisiana to France. Napoleon's plan for dominating North America collapsed when the revolt in the French colony of Saint-Domingue succeeded, forcing French troops to return defeated to France. As Napoleon's New World empire disintegrated, the loss of Haiti made Louisiana unnecessary.

Nov 1801
Philip Nolan, a surveyor who worked for Louisiana Trader James Wilkinson, and (who had established trade into Texas and had a wife & child in San Antonio de Bexos) left Louisiana to invade Texas with 30 countrymen, was killed en route by Spanish forces under Pedro de Nava. Nolan is sometimes credited with being the first to map Texas for the American frontiersmen, but his map has never been found. Nonetheless, his observations were passed on to General James Wilkinson, who used them to produce his map of the Texas-Louisiana frontier in 1804.

1803
On November 30, 1803, Spain's representatives officially transferred Louisiana to France. Although the French representative was instructed to transfer Louisiana to the United States the next day, twenty days actually separated the transfers, during which time Laussat became governor of Louisiana and created a new town council. During this time he is issued secret instructions in which France lays claim to the Rio Grande from the mouth (Rio de las Palmas on the Gulf) to the 30th parallel. "The line of demarcation stops after reaching this point... the farther we go northward, the more undecided is the boundary."

This becomes the basis for the Texian claim to eastern New Mexico.

On December 20, 1803, the French officially gave lower Louisiana to the United States. The United States took formal possession of the full territory of Louisiana, although its boundaries were vaguely defined, in St. Louis three months later, when France handed over the rights to upper Louisiana.

1804
Jean Baptiste La Lande stole a wagon team and expatriated to New Mexico, becoming the first American to move there.

1805
Admiral Lord Nelson defeats the Spanish navy at Trafalgar, precipitating the end of Spanish military force.
James Pursley arrives in New Mexico trying to drum up trade with the Plains tribes, and stays in Santa Fe as a carpenter.

1806
Expedition headed by General Wilkinson and Lieutenant Zebulon Pike travels west with secret instructions to scout out the northern Spanish territories. Dr. John Robinson joins the expedition at the last minute, but becomes a valued member of the party.

1807
Robinson meets Don Nemesio Salcedo, Captain General of Internal Provinces.
Salcedo refuses his attempt to defect.

1812
Robinson meets with Secretary of State James Monroe, who is concerned that filibustering activity might provoke war with Spain; appoints Robinson to the post of envoy to Nemesio Salcedo.
Robinson goes from Natchitoches through Texas, meeting Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara and Augustus Magee. He also meets with Salcedo, who suspects him once again of spying, and refuses to enter negotiations.

1813
Robinson publishes inflammatory epistles in favor of Mexican revolution (see Liberty Showering Her Blessings), is dismissed by the State department.
Texas declares independence in April.
Royal forces reclaim it in September. King Joseph Bonaparte (Napoleon’s brother) flees Wellington, Ferdinand VII returns to the throne.

1814

Robinson disputes with Toledo about leadership of the revolutionary force. Moves to New Orleans, offers support to Governor Claiborne, is refused, takes a post in the militia, in a hospital near New Orleans

1815

Robinson sails for Veracruz to help the revolution. He writes for support to President Madison, including a copy of the new Mexican constitution, and remains with the Republican Army for 18 months (through the end of 1816).

1816

Robinson retires from his commission as Brigadier General in the Mexican Revolutionary Army.

1817

Robinson condemned by Spanish envoy Onís, engages in verbal battle in papers, settles in Natchez.

1819

John Quincy Adams, President Monroe’s Secretary of State, negotiates a treaty with Luis de Onís to define the boundary of Texas (the Adams-Onís Treaty Line). Under the Florida Treaty, Spain cedes Florida and Texas west to Sabine River.

1821

Texas becomes a province of Mexico following the revolution. Mexico combines Texas & Coahuila, opens immigration to large numbers of Americans into Texas. William Becknell takes wagons across what will become the Santa Fe Trail.

1822

Regular route established along Santa Fe Trail "led directly to the San Miguel by way of the Cimarron River instead of following the Arkansas to the mountains direct to San Miguel instead of by way of Taos." (Chittenden)

Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri petitions the Senate, to make the Santa Fe Trail a permanent road "to draw from the bosom of the wilderness an immense wealth which now must be left to grow and perish where it grows or be gathered by the citizens of some other government to the great loss of Missouri." Commissioners mark out a road from Missouri to the Mexican boundary. Sibley surveys a new, longer road.

1824

Mexican constitution establishes Texas and Coahuila as sister states, as with New Mexico and Chihuahua.

1835-1836

Texans revolt against Mexico, and fight for independence, claiming all land to the Rio Grande.

Texas rebels capture General Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto, and win a surrender with the Treaty of Velasco, which stipulates that the "limits of Texas would not extend past the Rio Grande." However, Mexico never ratifies this treaty.

1837

United States grants formal recognition to the Republic of Texas.

New Mexicans overthrow centralist governor Albino Perez, Manuel Armijo rises to power in 1838. The government offers large land grants to both native citizens and to American merchants such as St. Vrain, Maxwell, and Mirabeau.

1841

Texas expedition led by Brigadier General Hugh McLeod, and accompanied by journalist George Wilkins Kendall, travels across the Llano Estacado to ask New Mexicans to join Texas in independence or to open trade. Governor Armijo has the Texans captured, brutally mistreated, and forced to march in chains to Mexico City, where they remained imprisoned for several years.

1843
Texas sends two raiding parties to New Mexico in retribution for the mistreatment of the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition.

Taos gets closed as a port of entry.

1844

Question of Texas central to United States presidential election, and popular support of annexation sweeps James K. Polk into office.

1845

 Annexation of Texas; formally admitted as a state December 29, 1845.

State constitution supports Texas' claims to all lands extending to the Rio Grande.

1846

Polk declares war with Mexico, and General Zachary Taylor invades Mexico along the Rio Grande in Texas.

United States forces led by General Stephen Kearny seize New Mexico, and Governor Armijo is persuaded to surrender without a battle.

Colonel Alexander Doniphan writes the code for governing the Territory of New Mexico.

New Mexico is designated the Ninth Military Department of the United States.

1847

Rebels in Taos lead an uprising against the American government, and kill Governor Charles Bent.

1848

Mexico signs the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which cedes lands in California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico to the United States. The boundary of New Mexico is described in relation to Disturnell's map, which showed erroneous distances.

1848 Fort Bliss established.

1849

The Department of Interior established. Interior would manage most of the lands in New Mexico for some time to come.

1850

The Texas boundary compromise required Texas to release claims to lands in eastern New Mexico, in exchange for a settlement of debts. As part of the Compromise of 1850, New Mexico was finally admitted as a territory, with the issue of slavery to be decided by New Mexicans.

1851-1853

Fort Bliss abandoned for Fort Fillmore

1852-1860

Cantonment Burgwin established to control Taos rebels. The fort was decommissioned in 1860 and the soldiers moved to Fort Garland or Fort Union.

1852 Boundary Survey

1st international boundary commission established in accordance with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

This survey runs into difficulties establishing the boundary line, and the Americans realize that the line as surveyed does not give them a transcontinental railway route.

1853

Gadsden Purchase from Mexico expands New Mexico territory.

1854

Fort Bliss moved to Magoffinsville.