THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ORDER OF E CLAMPUS VITUS
BILLY HOLCOMB CHAPTER 1069

SOCIETY OF 4x4 VITUSCAN MISSIONARIES

PRESENT THEIR

WINTER ICE EVENT

THE MOJAVE ROAD

JANUARY 21, 22, 23, 6010

WRITTEN BY

MIKE "MOLAR MECHANIC" JOHNSON

CLAMPHISTORIAN • XNGH • X-HEAD ABBOT • CLAMPATRIARCH

ECV

THE SOCIETY OF VITUSCAN MISSIONARIES
OF THE
ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ORDER OF
E CLAMPUS VITUS

TAKES PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING ITS ANNUAL
WINTER 4WD TREK AND HISTORICAL EXCURSION
(NUMBER 33 IN A CONTINUING SERIES)

CONSISTING OF A TOUR OVER THE HISTORIC
MOJAVE ROAD

JANUARY 21, 22, 23, 2005
RECKONED AS THE 6010TH YEAR OF OUR ORDER

UNDER THE AEGIS AND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE OF OUR PATRON
ST. VITUS
AND DURING THE REIGN OF BOB "SHORTNECK" GREEN, NGH
ASSISTED IN TEMPORAL MATTERS BY BROTHER DUMBELICUS

WITH FULL HONORS RENDERED TO FOUNDING FATHERS
SID BLUMNER, XSNGH AND BILL PEARSON, XNGH

TACTICAL CONTROL EXERCISED BY
BOB "BEARBAIT" GALL—HEAD ABBOT V
ASSISTED BY CASS ELLSWORTH, HEAD ABBOT DESIGNEE

REVISED AND UPDATED TEXT COMPILED AND EDITED BY
MIKE JOHNSON
DEAD ABBOT II/CLAMPHISTORIAN/CLAMPATRIARCH

THE MOJAVE ROAD

The Mojave Road, also called the Old Government Road, connected the U.S. Army supply depot in Los Angeles with Fort Mojave, established in 1859 on the Arizona side of the Colorado River north of modern-day Needles. It was used to supply the fort and as a route for the U.S Mail. The trail was approximately 235 miles long, with waystations at Piute Spring, Rock Spring, Marl Springs, Soda Springs and Camp Cady. These outposts will be discussed individually later in the article.

The road started at the Army's warehouses near the port of Los Angeles. In the early days of 1862, at the start of the Civil War, Camp Drum was established at Wilmington as a staging point for the movement of U.S. troops under then-Colonel James H. Carleton to New Mexico Territory. After this time the military base served as the western terminus of the Mojave Road. In the immediate post-war years, practically all the men and supplies involved in fighting the Indians of the southwest passed through Drum Barracks.

After leaving the coast, the Mojave Road went over Cajon Pass and followed the Mojave River to its sink at Soda Lake. There was reliable water at Soda Springs, site of today's Zzyzx. The only long waterless stretch was the 35-mile section between Soda Springs and Marl Springs, a journey made even more difficult by an elevation gain of about 3,000 feet, much of the way through soft sand. Typically, teamsters would leave Soda Springs at night and travel to Seventeenmile Point, so named for its location 17 miles from both Soda Lake and Marl Springs. After making a dry camp, a day's travel would bring them to Marl Springs where water, if not abundant, was always available. Without Marl Springs the Mojave Road would probably have been unfeasible as a wagon roaute.

The next stop was Rock Spring, the most marginal outpost on the route. There was water here, but in limited quantity and often of poor quality. Piute Springs was a day farther on, with ample water and usually some grazing for the stock. After negotiating the treacherous grade at Piute Hill, Fort Mojave was reached after a day of easy downhill travel. The return journey, with lightly loaded wagons, was much easier and faster.

Like many roads that are "established" or "discovered" by the white man, it had its origins in trails used by the Indians, often for centuries. The Mojave Road is no exception. About 20 miles north of today's Needles, at an important ford of the Colorado, lived the Mohave Indians. Our story of the Mojave Road will begin with a discussion of these native people present at the coming of the white man.

This part of the Colorado River valley is the homeland of the once great Mohave Nation. The Mohaves were known to Father Francisco Garces, who traveled among them in 1776 as part of Juan Bautista de Anza's expedition to found the Spanish settlements at San Francisco. The Mohaves called themselves Aha Macav, which was rendered into Spanish as Jamajab, then corrupted to Mohave. At the time of his visits, while a fledgling United States was fighting the early battles of the Revolutionary War on the other side of the continent, the Mohave Nation had a population of perhaps 2500. Their villages controlled the best crossing point on the Colorado River for many miles in either direction.

Garces described the Mohaves as warlike and very tall, with many of the men exceeding six feet. They were an agricultural tribe, growing crops on the bottomlands along the river. Partly because they did not have to spend all their time and energy in just eking out an existence, they were inveterate travelers. They had traded for centuries with California's coastal tribes, bartering food for highly prized seashells. It was this path to the ocean that would become the Mojave Road.

The Mohaves were visited in 1826 by Jedediah Smith, scouting new locations to trap beaver. He had no difficulties with the Mohaves while crossing the Colorado, and continued on to the Mexican settlement at San Gabriel. He returned to Utah, attended the annual fur rendezvous at Bear Lake, and again headed west to California. In August, 1827 he stayed a few days among the Mohaves. Sensing no hostility, he and his party started to cross to the west bank. While the group was most vulnerable, divided on opposite sides of the river, the Mohaves attacked. Ten men were killed and two women taken captive, and the survivors escaped with hardly more than the clothes on their backs. Smith and eight others, after incredible hardships, crossed the desert and once again reached San Gabriel. It was on the return leg of this journey that he made the first recorded crossing of the Sierra Nevada, from west to east, in May, 1827.

Smith's tribulations with the Mohaves were a major factor in the circuitous alignment of the Old Spanish Trail, established as a trade route between New Mexico and the California mission settlements in 1829. The logical route would have been from Santa Fe directly westward through northern Arizona, but partly as a result of Smith's experiences, the trail avoided the Mohave villages. The annual trade caravans were forced to loop far to the north, through the land of the Utes and Paiutes, bypassing the more warlike Comanches and Mohaves. This made the route much longer, but a great deal safer, and assured the timely arrival of the woolen trade goods in Los Angeles.

In the 1850s, after the United States had acquired vast tracts of land in the

Southwest as a result of the Mexican War, an increasing number of American explorers and surveyors began to make contact with the Mohaves. In 1854 a survey party led by Army Lieutenant Amiel W. Whipple was exploring a railroad route along the 35th parallel. The group encountered the Mohaves, who welcomed them and showed them the way to the coast.

In November of 1857 Edward Fitzgerald Beale, former Navy lieutenant, led perhaps the most unusual group to ever cross the Colorado. He was tasked with surveying a wagon road from El Paso to Los Angeles and with determining the feasibility of using camels for desert transport. Beale crossed with the help of Mohave guides, swimming his camels across and thus establishing Beale's Crossing of the Colorado. He experienced no untoward difficulties, although he reported that the Mohaves had acted in a threatening manner. Large portions of his route from the Colorado to the Pacific followed the Mohaves' trade route and would later become part of the Mojave Road. Beale journeyed to Fort Tejon, then south to Los Angeles, where his camels caused a great stir. The return trip found him once again at Beale's Crossing on January 10, 1858.

A 104-foot side-wheel steamboat, the *General Jesup*, had been plying the lower Colorado since 1854, carrying supplies from the mouth of the Colorado to Fort Yuma and other small settlements along the river. The steamer's owner and captain, George Alonzo Johnson, had undertaken a free-lance exploration some 300 miles up the river from Yuma. By pure coincidence, on his way back he met Beale's expedition just as it reached the river. Beale availed himself of this piece of good fortune and ferried his party over dry-shod. Because of the behavior of the Mohaves on his first crossing and their previous attack on the Smith party, Beale was accompanied by a military escort. This incongruous scene, with blue-coated soldiers, camels, and a paddle steamer together on the banks of a great river in the midst of a stretch of godforsaken desert, must have been a sight to behold!

As Beale's new wagon road to California was publicized back east, it began to see more traffic, and by 1858 the U. S. Mail was running over this route. On August 30 of that year a wagon train from Albuquerque attempted to cross the Colorado at the Mohave villages. It was attacked by the Indians, suffering many killed and wounded, and forced to retreat to New Mexico. The emigrant party endured untold hardships as they fell back to Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and their plight became widely known due to extensive press coverage. These hostilities rendered the route unusable, putting Beale's wagon road out of business before it had gotten properly started.

The Army could not let this depredation go unpunished, especially since the

wagon road was the pet project of Secretary of War John Floyd. No time was lost in preparing a military expedition to chastise the Mohaves and establish a military base to guard the crossing. Four companies of soldiers under Major William Hoffman were detailed to establish the new fort. About three months after the attack he was ordered to make a reconnaissance to the Colorado before taking his entire command east. This advance party, consisting of Hoffman, his staff, and companies B and K of Carleton's 1st Dragoons from Fort Tejon, set out to select a site for the post. They reached the river on January 7, 1859, thoroughly disenchanted with their first experience with the Mojave Road. Hoffman's mission was only partially accomplished due to the roughness of the country and the presence of a large number of hostile Mohave warriors. After a minor skirmish, he returned to the coast for re-inforcements and new orders, leaving the Mohaves once again in control of the crossing.

As a result of this abortive reconnaissance, Hoffman made several erroneous assumptions. He felt that a large force would be required (eventually eight companies were involved) when two or three would have been ample. It was felt that at least two companies would be necessary so that one could guard the shore against Indian attack while the other crossed the river. He also stated that the Mojave Road was not suitable for loaded wagons or large groups of soldiers, which, ironically, he disproved by the passage of his own party over it a few months later. Hoffman concluded that it would be necessary to marshal his troops at Fort Yuma and march up the Colorado to the Mohave villages. The Mojave Road would have been a cakewalk compared to this route. Hoffman had never been upriver himself, and his civilian guide, highly regarded mountain man Joseph R. Walker, would surely have known better than to attempt this route. Nonetheless, Hoffman moved ahead with his preparations. His decision was probably influenced by conflict between influential advocates of the wagon road and a group Army officers who were strongly opposed to it.

Despite these difficulties, Hoffman's plan was approved by his superiors. Some of the troops marched overland to Fort Yuma via Warner Springs and the Southern Emigrant Trail, while others went by ocean-going steamer from San Francisco to the mouth of the Colorado, picking up more soldiers in San Diego along the way. Finally, by late March of 1859, the command was at Yuma, ready to commence the Mohave campaign.

In the meanwhile, Beale was wintering in Albuquerque and waiting for spring to resume work on his wagon road. He sent one of his men to Los Angeles to purchase supplies and bring them east. This agent appealed to the Army for aid, but all the available troops were at Yuma and no escort could be arranged. Samuel A. Bishop,

Beale's business partner and namesake of Bishop, California, decided that they would have to move the supplies eastward without the Army's help. This was a tall order, but Bishop was up to the challenge.

He formed a party comprised of about 40 heavily-armed men, two wagons, camels, and pack mules. At Afton Canyon on the Mojave River they met a group which had been trying to carry the eastbound mail through Mohave country for several months, and was eager to join Bishop's expedition. As they neared the Colorado this well-equipped, determined band met a large party of Mohaves, Paiutes and Yumas arrayed for battle.

For the next few days Bishop and his men tried to cross the river in the face of an Indian force that may have comprised as many as 1500 warriors! Although greatly outnumbered, Bishop's force had far superior firepower, and they fought a battle in which several Indians were killed and one of Bishop's men was wounded by an arrow. It was obvious that the river could not be crossed here, and the party, fearing pursuit by the Indians, retreated to Piute Spring, about twenty miles to the east, where grass and water were available. Although not known with complete certainty, it appears that Bishop camped at the site of the stone ruins still present about a hundred yards upstream from Fort Piute.

Two men left the spring to link up with Hoffman, who Bishop hoped was only a day or two downstream. Five days later they found the soldiers, more than a hundred miles away, and one of the volunteers returned with the news that Hoffman was unable to send a relief party. The military expedition, traveling at a snail's pace, would not reach the Mohave villages for nearly three weeks.

Bishop lingered at the spring for a few days, then sent part of the supplies by pack animal to Beale, crossing the Colorado far to the north of the Mohave villages. The bulk of the supplies remained cached at Piute Spring. On April 18, after a journey of more than three hundred miles, Bishop successfully met up with Beale near Flagstaff, despite skirmishing with another group of Indians east of the river.

Hoffman's command crept slowly upstream, greatly hampered by the rough country and heavy brush along the river, finally reaching Beale's Crossing on April 20. Now, however, after laboriously moving five hundred men with their supplies and equipment for hundreds of miles, he found no Indians to fight. Since the Mohaves were an agricultural tribe, they were tied to their land, and were unable to just fade into the desert. It was obvious to the Indians that they could make no effective fight against this many soldiers, so they took the only realistic course and surrendered.

On April 23 Hoffman held meetings with some of the principal chiefs. They agreed to the terms of surrender, having no other viable option. They furnished

hostages as evidence of their good faith, agreed not to interfere with travelers or with the mail, and consented to the building of an Army post at the river crossing. Originally christened Camp Colorado, within a few days it came to be known as Fort Mojave.

With hostilities averted, Hoffman's priority was now to feed and supply his troops, already on short rations. The *General Jesup* had accompanied him, but because of low water it had been able to carry only a small portion of its intended load of supplies. If starvation was to be avoided, something had to be done immediately.

Less than a week after his arrival at the river, Hoffman divided his command. Two companies of the 6th Infantry and a detachment of the 3rd Artillery were left behind to garrison the post under the command of Major Lewis Armistead. Two companies went downriver to Yuma on the steamboat, accompanied by the Indian hostages. Hoffman and the remaining four companies would have to walk out. Having experienced two different overland routes to the Colorado, Hoffman chose the once-despised Mojave Road as the lesser of two evils.

Half the men crossed the river on April 25 and the remainder followed the next day. The plan was to have two columns, separated so as to put less of a strain on the desert waterholes. Each column consisted of about 50 soldiers, 40 mules, and assorted teamsters and packers. Hoffman led the first group, while the second was commanded by Captain Richard Garnett. All the troops eventually managed to reach civilization without any insufferable hardships.

Upon reaching Piute Spring, some of the hungry soldiers found and ransacked Bishop's cache of supplies. Bishop would later report some six thousand pounds of goods missing, although this may have been an exaggeration. Hoffman, who had completed his campaign against the Mohaves without any great distinction, was now in the unenviable situation of being responsible for the theft of private property from government contractors by soldiers under his command.

When he returned to Piute Spring, Bishop discovered the theft and filed a formal complaint with the Army. An investigation was undertaken, with legal wrangles continuing on into 1861. Hoffman was censured, although this did not prevent him from later being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. The matter was never satisfactorily resolved, and the outbreak of the Civil War brought the investigation to a halt. Bishop was never fully reimbursed for his lost supplies.

The business now at hand was supplying the garrison at Fort Mojave. The vagaries of the Colorado River made provisioning by steamboat impractical, and for a while the soldiers at Fort Mojave again went hungry. The Army Quartermaster at Los Angeles, Captain Winfield Scott Hancock, hired ten eight-mule-team wagons from

freighter Phineas Banning to supply the desert outpost commanded by his close friend, Major Armistead. The steady stream of supply wagons between Los Angeles and the fort firmly established the Mojave Road, whose continuation to Albuquerque and points east was known as Beale's Road.

Hancock and Armistead were later to face each other at the Battle of Gettysburg, where both were wounded, Armistead mortally. Hancock was commander of the Union II Corps, and Armistead led a brigade of Pickett's division in Pickett's Charge, as did former Captain Richard Garnett. Armistead's men momentarily breached the Union line before he was wounded, and Garnett was killed in the charge.

Except for a short time when it was abandoned during the Civil War, Fort Mojave was an active Army base until 1890. During this period, California Volunteers patrolled the Mojave Road, but never engaged hostile Indians. Following the Civil War the post became the most important military base in this part of the country, and at the height of the campaign against the Hualapais in the 1860s as many as 500 men were stationed here, along with hundreds of horses and mules and large amounts of supplies. The site remained an important crossing of the Colorado for many years.

In 1890 the fort was turned over to the Department of the Interior and became an Indian school, a role it played until the 1930s. The buildings were torn down in 1941-42, and all that remains today are a few foundations and concrete slabs. The site of the fort is now within the boundaries of the Fort Mohave Indian Reservation, established in 1890.

In addition to Fort Mojave, there were several other smaller military establishments between Beale's Crossing and Los Angeles. In an attempt to better understand the Mojave Road we will individually discuss these posts and stopping points along this desert highway.

CAMP CADY

Because of the length of the Mojave Road, it was evident that waypoints and outposts would be needed. The most important of these was Camp Cady, established on the banks of the Mojave River roughly midway to Fort Mojave. The post was approximately 20 miles east of the modern town of Barstow, and nine miles east of Forks of the Road, the junction with the Old Spanish (or Salt Lake) Trail, which linked the former Mormon settlement of San Bernardino with Salt Lake City.

Jedediah Smith christened the Mojave the Inconstant River for its pernicious habit of flowing freely above ground, then disappearing into the sands, only to

reappear once again on the surface. Even so, it was a dependable source of wood, water, and grass, the three essentials for overland travelers. As traffic increased over the Mojave Road, so did the inevitable conflicts with the native inhabitants. The murder of three white men along the Mojave River in early 1860, allegedly by Paiutes, led to the establishment of Camp Cady.

In the spring of that year 80 troopers from companies B and K of the 1st Dragoons under Major James H. Carleton left Fort Tejon to commence a campaign against the Paiutes. On April 19 they built a stout adobe fortification just north of the river, at a spot where surface water was available most of the year. From this strategic location the troops could patrol both the Mojave and the Salt Lake roads. Carleton named the post Camp Cady after his friend, Major Albemarle Cady, commander at Fort Yuma.

After three months of skirmishing with the Indians, the desert roads were deemed safe for travel. Carleton met with eight of the principal chiefs, and a peace treaty was signed on July 3, 1860. With Carleton on this campaign was Dr. Jonathan Letterman, who would later make great improvements in medical care during the Civil War, and for whom Letterman Hospital at the Presidio in San Francisco was named. In addition to Camp Cady, two other crude fortifications were built by Carleton's men, one at Soda Lake (Hancock's Redoubt) and one at Bitter Springs, 50 miles northeast of Cady on the Salt Lake Road. Immediately after signing the treaty, Carleton and his command abandoned Camp Cady.

With the beginning of the Civil War, soldiers were called away from duty in the Mojave Desert or went south to join the Confederacy, and California Volunteers patrolled this desert country. More ranchers and settlers were moving into the desert along the Mojave River, and they increasingly demanded protection from marauding Indians. Accordingly, in April of 1865 California Volunteers regarrisoned and expanded the fort, erecting about 35 adobe structures. The fort was manned for nearly a year, until April 1, 1866, when it was again abandoned. It is estimated that 2000 wagons a year were passing over the Mojave Road at this time.

No sooner had the soldiers left than news came of three men killed near Cajon Pass, allegedly by Indians. This caused a howl of protest from the settlers, and the military commander of the newly formed Department of California, General Irvin McDowell, was much maligned in the local press. When a military courier and his escort were attacked by Indians, as was a civilian wagon train, popular clamor resulted in the re-establishment of Camp Cady in June of 1866, this time by about 20 U.S. Regulars.

On July 29, 1866 a small battle took place at Camp Cady. Three soldiers were killed and three wounded outside the walls of the fort while most of the garrison was

away on detail. The remaining troops, bravely assisted by the camp laundress, defended the besieged fort until reinforcements arrived a few days later. This so alarmed the mail and supply contractors that they demanded military escorts for every trip, which resulted in a continuing military presence here.

Sometime in 1868 it was determined that Camp Cady would be upgraded to a proper military base. Consequently, the post was moved about a half mile west of the original redoubt in June of that year, a parade ground was laid out, and many substantial new structures were erected. The new buildings were occupied in November, 1868, although some of the better buildings at the old site, such as the stone hospital, continued to be used.

On April 24, 1871, after a lasting peace in this part of the desert had been obtained, the military abandoned Camp Cady. It continued to be used as a civilian waystation until President Arthur ordered its final disposal as surplus military property in 1884. It later became part of Camp Cady Ranch, which raised cattle, sheep and horses until recent times. In 1938 a major flood destroyed the remaining adobe ruins at the old post. Camp Cady Ranch is now owned by the California Department of Fish and Game. A Billy Holcomb Chapter plaque commemorates Camp Cady, and the ruins can be reached by a short, easy hike along the riverbed.

Indian depredations near Camp Cady were only one part of a bigger picture of problems along the Mojave Road. Mining discoveries in eastern Arizona and at La Paz, on the east bank of the Colorado near Blythe, led to increased traffic over both the Mojave and Bradshaw Roads and more conflict with the native inhabitants. This influx of miners and settlers led in 1864 to the formation of Arizona Territory, previously a part of New Mexico, with its capital at Prescott.

High on the list of Prescott's priorities was the establishment of communications with California, upon which Arizona was almost entirely dependent for supplies and manufactured products. By early 1865 the U. S. Mail was being carried from Los Angeles to Santa Fe over the Bradshaw Trail via La Paz, Wickenburg, and Prescott, thereby avoiding the Mojave Road.

In 1865 this contract expired, and after considerable political intrigue it was determined that henceforth the mail to Prescott would be routed via Hardyville, therefore utilizing the Mojave Road. Beginning in May there was weekly service from San Bernardino to Fort Mojave and Hardyville (now beneath the waters of Lake Mead), with the mail taking five days to reach Rock Spring. This change in route resulted in immediate requests for military escorts for the coaches carrying both mail and an increasing number of passengers.

At first, soldiers from Camp Cady provided protection. In the final days of

1866 Camp Rock Spring was established to shorten the relays, but the distances involved were still great, the number of soldiers small, and difficulties numerous. In August of 1866 it was recommended that additional outposts be established at Soda Lake, Marl Springs, and Piute Creek. These will be discussed individually at greater length.

CAMP ROCK SPRING

In September, 1866 the mail company petitioned the commander at Camp Cady for escorts. He had no orders, but sent soldiers anyway, fearing the mail would not get through otherwise. This *ad hoc* arrangement was formalized a few weeks later when a garrison was authorized for Rock Spring. Camp Rock Spring was established on December 30, 1866 by 20 men from the 8th Cavalry. Two men from the mail company were already living here and were much heartened to have the soldiers for neighbors.

The detachment set up camp, using two abandoned mining tunnels to store supplies, while the men lived in tents. Water was available, but it was not abundant and was sometimes of poor quality. This was the most isolated post and had the most marginal water supply on the entire route.

Although the military presence at all the springs along the Mojave Road was important, the camp at Rock Spring had the distinction of being an official Army post, as attested to in military archives. An officer was in command, and records were regularly forwarded to higher headquarters. The posts at Soda Springs, Marl Springs, and Piute Springs, although often called "camp" or "fort," were considered to be only temporary outposts, never holding official status as a military base.

In the first nine days of its existence there were five deserters from Camp Rock Spring, a figure typical of the Indian Wars-era Army. About two weeks later the desert was hit by a bitter snowstorm which blew down the tents, reducing the men to wrapping themselves in blankets and scraps of canvas and huddling in the tunnels for protection from the elements. Seven more men deserted the next day. When desertions from Camp Cady are figured in, 23 men from a single company of the 8th Cavalry deserted during a two-month period. In March of 1867 the mail run was expanded to twice-weekly, the additional service being by mule train. This placed even greater demands on the already thinly-spread escort troops.

As indicated by the Billy Holcomb plaque at the site, the camp at Rock Spring was visited on an inspection tour by Brigadier General James Rusling on April 20, 1867. Rusling was quite negative in his reports about the Mojave Road in general and Camp

Rock Spring in particular, though he was sympathetic to the plight of soldiers sent to such a lonely post. He felt that both Camp Cady and Camp Rock Spring should be abandoned, and an escort sent through with the mail all the way from San Bernardino to Fort Mojave. Conditions at Rock Spring deteriorated to the point that many of the men began to show signs of scurvy.

In early 1868 rumors began to fly that the mail route would soon be soon be changed back to the La Paz-Wickenburg-Prescott route of 1865. The exact reasons are not clear, but it again appears that political machinations were involved. Some sources state that the mail contractor had lost nearly 100 head of stock to the Indians in one year, putting quite a dent in his expected profits, and wished to get out from under the unfavorable contract.

By March of 1868 the contractor had completed his arrangements, and it was announced that the route would change as soon as animals could be moved and new stations established on the La Paz road. The first mail under the new contract arrived at Prescott on March 26, and the switch was completed by April 18, thus marking the end of the Mojave Road as a mail route.

Despite the miserable conditions at Camp Rock Spring, the troops soldiered on until the camp was officially deactivated, in the midst of the switchover, on January 2, 1868. With the mail going by the new route, its reason for existence was gone. Although it continued to be maintained for a while as a small outpost of Camp Cady, it was abandoned for good on May 21, 1868. During its short history a total of three officers and 70 enlisted men from three units had served here, never more than 20 or so at one time.

Today there are remnants of rock walls constructed by the Army, and the remains of the tunnels are still visible on the edge of the flat area adjacent to Rock Spring Wash. Petroglyphs are found here, as is a more recent inscription placed Charles Stuart of the 4th Infantry in 1863. There are also faint ruins of a structure erected by the mail company across the mouth of the wash from Camp Rock Spring.

OUTPOSTS AT SODA SPRINGS AND MARL SPRINGS

The Inspector General of the Military Division of the Pacific made an inspection tour over the Mojave Road a few months after that of General Rusling. He recommended that arrangements be made for escort riders to change horses at Soda Springs, near modern-day Zzyzx. On August 21, 1867 a post was established there. The plan was to eliminate Camp Rock Spring by establishing outposts at Soda Springs,

Marl Springs, and Piute Springs. A blockhouse and corral were planned for each location. To give an idea of the shoestring nature of this enterprise, only three men were assigned to the little post at Soda Spring, which was completed by September, 1867. The site is now private property.

Meanwhile, a small detachment of soldiers established an outpost at Marl Springs. A stone building for protection of the garrison and a stone corral, somewhat crude but adequate for the task at hand, were finished by November 6. Although not impressive in appearance, the post was very important because of the reliable water at the two springs here. Without it, the Mojave Road as a practical route for wagons would probably have been impossible.

As if to underscore the need for this post, on October 16 Paiutes attacked the mail wagon nearby, killing an army surgeon. The next day, while the little fort was still under construction, a group of 20 to 30 Indians attacked the three-man garrison. The soldiers remained under siege through the night, expecting to be rushed and wiped out at any moment. Early the next morning, strictly by coincidence, a column of 150 soldiers rode into Marl Springs, thus lifting the siege with no casualties on either side.

There are two separate springs here, upper and lower. They were named by Lt. Amiel W. Whipple in 1854 for the clay-like soil that surrounds them. Rock ruins from the Army period are still visible, as are remains of later occupancy. There was sporadic mining and milling here over the years, and a good example of an arrastra is located nearby. There are water tanks and a wooden corral that were still in use until the end of cattle ranching in the opening years of the 21st century.

The Army post at Marl Springs existed from October 5, 1867 to May 22, 1868, when it was abandoned one day after Camp Rock Spring. The maximum number of troops ever stationed here was eight, though the actual number was usually less. Soda Springs, as previously noted, was occupied for a short while during 1860 by men of the 1st Dragoons. In the spring of 1867 a temporary post was maintained there for a few weeks. It was continually manned as an outpost of Camp Cady from August 21, 1867 to May 23, 1868, when it was abandoned, one day after Marl Springs. The usual garrison was three men.

FORT PIUTE

The outpost at Piute Spring is popularly known as Fort Piute, although never called this by the Army. It had by far the best water supply of any of the desert

stations between Fort Mojave and Los Angeles, and today boasts the most extensive ruins.

Fort Piute is located adjacent to Piute Spring, or Piute Creek as it is sometimes known. This is a flowing stream in the middle of the desert, with an output estimated at 150,000 to 250,000 gallons a day, which flows about a mile before disappearing into the desert floor. At Fort Piute the Mojave Road makes a steep ascent of about 1,000 feet from Piute Valley up to Lanfair Valley to the west. Although parties on foot or with pack animals could go straight up the canyon, wagons had to go over the steep road that came to be known as Piute Hill. This route deservedly gained a reputation as one of the worst grades on any of the western wagon roads.

By early November of 1867 the outposts at Marl Springs and Soda Springs were operational, and a party was set to leave Fort Mojave to begin construction of Fort Piute. On that very day, a party of 60 armed Paiutes arrived at the fort requesting a meeting with the commandant. Captain S. B. M. Young (for whom Patton's Camp Young was named) was in temporary command, and felt compelled to retain the troops in the face of this potential threat. The meeting was peaceful, however, and on November 27 ten or eleven men of Company D of the 9th Infantry, under the command of Lieutenant James Hardenbergh, left to establish the post at Piute Spring.

On December 1, General Irvin McDowell, who had commanded the Union Army at the first Battle of Bull Run, was on an inspection tour of the Mojave Road. With him was Major Henry Robert, who would later become Chief of Engineers of the U.S. Army. During this visit Robert designed the fort as it was finally built. Robert later gained fame as the author of *Robert's Rules of Order*, still the authority on parliamentary procedure to this day.

Lieutenant Hardenbergh left with McDowell's party the next day, leaving Sgt. Patrick Kiernan in charge. On December 13 another lieutenant assumed command until New Year's Day, when he returned to Fort Mojave. He was the last officer ever stationed here. The building of the stone redoubt and corrals and the excellent discipline of the troops here were largely due to Sgt. Kiernan's leadership.

While soldiers at Soda Spring, Marl Springs and Rock Spring lived in crude huts, worn-out tents, and holes tunneled into banks, Fort Piute was built with proper living spaces, a stone fireplace, and neat rock corrals. At one point Sgt. Kiernan sent to Fort Mojave for carpenter's squares so as to construct his rock building with straight corners, but none were available. While desertions were common elsewhere, no soldier ever deserted from Fort Piute. The garrison consisted of a maximum of 18 enlisted men, with sometimes as few as 11 in residence.

When the mail route changed, the first post to be abandoned was Fort Piute.

When the mail route changed, the first post to be abandoned was Fort Piute. The troops marched back to Fort Mojave on May 3, 1868, only one week after the buildings were finished and after only five months of occupancy.

About 100 yards up the canyon is a circle of stones believed to be temporary fortifications built by Samuel Bishop and his men when they retreated from the Colorado to Piute Springs to cache their supplies. Nearby was a large stone engraved with Bishop's name. In 1974 it fell into the wash and broke. To preserve this piece of history, a helicopter and a tow truck were utilized to recover the stone, which is now in the possession of the BLM.

The old fort was again garrisoned for about two weeks in 1880 by troops searching for Chemehuevi Indians believed to have killed several white men. In the 1920s, 140 acres near the fort were homesteaded and later patented by Thomas Van Slyke. The acreage was sold in 1944 to George and Virginia Irwin, who undertook an abortive attempt at turkey ranching, but gave up after two years due to the inroads of the local coyotes and bobcats. Remnants of this operation are still visible. The land and its rare desert riparian habitat now belong to the Department of Fish and Game.

About 1938 a flash flood washed away a considerable part of the stone corral, but many remnants are still visible. In 1973 Fort Piute was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The rock remains, though still impressive, are much diminished from even a few years ago. Please do not add to this destruction by souvenir hunting.

The Mojave Road served in the 1860s and 1870s as a major desert highway. Many civilians traveled over it, as did soldiers, military contractors and mail carriers. In the late 1880s the Santa Fe Railroad came through this part of the desert. It basically paralleled the Mojave Road a few miles to the south. With it came dependable sources of water every few miles. This led to the abandonment of the Mojave Road. Later, the first highways in the region followed the rails because of the water and the easy grades. It now requires only a few hours in an air-conditioned automobile to cover the distance once traversed by the Mojave Road. It lives on as a recreational road that serves to remind us of the hardships endured by these early soldiers and desert travelers.

It is useful to put the service of the soldiers who manned the posts along the Mojave Road in the proper perspective. This was the Indian Wars Army, very much different from the force that fought the Civil War. Almost all of the junior enlisted men lacked prior military experience. The Army was small, thinly spread across a huge frontier, and often poorly trained, equipped, and motivated. The desertion rate was high. But for the vagaries of the Army system, the soldiers that served at Fort Piute

and Camp Rock Spring might have soldiered with their contemporaries along the Bozeman Trail, at Beecher's Island, or with Custer at the Battle of the Washita. Chance, however, consigned them to postings in this military backwater, whose history today is little known. As noted on the plaque at Camp Rock Spring, quoting General Rusling, there was "no glory there, nor much chance for military fame, but true military patriots were they, to submit to such privations...Yet these are the nurseries of the Army, and from such hard schools we graduated a Grant and Sherman, Sheridan and Thomas." Their contributions should not be forgotten.

A Note About Spellings

I have used the common conventions of Mojave for the Fort, Road, and River, and Mohave for the Indian tribe and reservation. I have used Piute for Fort Piute to correspond with the spelling of Piute Valley and the Piute Range near the fort. I have used Paiute for the Indian tribe, although there are many other spellings, such as Pah-Ute, Payute, etc.

SOURCES

The major sources for Mojave Road information are the following books by Dennis Casebier, published by the Tales of the Mojave Road Publishing Company of Norco, California. All of the following books were utilized to varying degrees:

Guide to the Mojave Road.

Carleton's Pah-Ute Campaign.

The Battle at Camp Cady.

Camp Rock Spring, California.

Fort Pah-Ute, California.

Also useful was *The Beat of the Drum: The History, Events and People of Drum Barracks, Wilmington, California* by Don McDowell, Graphic Publishers, Santa Ana, 1993.

In addition, I have consulted the following Billy Holcomb Chapter history keepsakes:

"The Mojave Road Trip 1988" by XSNGH Sid Blumner.

"Shootout at Government Holes:HEMORRHOID V 1990" by Sid Blumner, XSNGH.

"CampCady:Spring Clampout 1994" by Phil Porretta, XNGH.

"Seventeenmile Point-Marl Springs:Fall Clampout 1993" by Mike Johnson, XNGH.