

FIRST DRAFT

Rivera's expedition crisscrosses the wild Uncompahgre Plateau

Editor's note: This is the second of two columns about Juan Rivera's 1765 expeditions from New Mexico to western Colorado.

On Oct. 14, 1765, Juan Maria Rivera and his small band of explorers spent a miserable evening near the crest of the Uncompahgre Plateau.

"That night we had a furious storm of wind and rain," Rivera wrote in his journal for Oct. 14. "We called this campsite Purgatorio" — or almost Hell.

The next day, after a march along the top of the plateau, then a difficult descent into Roubideau Canyon, the party finally reached the Gunnison River. It was a welcome respite after weeks of difficult travel.

"We slept on its banks in a beautiful meadow," Rivera wrote.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

Only later, when they met with Sabuagana Utes (later known as the Uncompahgre Utes), would Rivera come to realize how far out of the way his young Tabeguache Ute guide had taken him.

These events and much more are recorded in "Juan Rivera's Colorado, 1765: The First Spaniards Among the Ute and Paiute Indians on the Trails to Teguayo." Author Steven G. Baker of Montrose has used Rivera's journal to trace the explorer's route and record his thoughts regarding his two trips in the summer and autumn of 1765.

The book, released this month by Western Reflections Publishing Co. of Lake City, includes the Spanish-language version of Rivera's extant journal, along with an English translation by Rick Hendricks, the New Mexico state historian.

As the map on this page shows, Rivera's guides took him northwest as far as Bedrock in the Paradox Valley — after one of the most harrowing trail descents of the entire trip — before doubling back to the Uncompahgre Plateau, then north to the Gunnison River west of present-day Delta.

Rivera or one of his men took time to carve an inscription about their journey — today barely visible — in the red sandstone in Roubideau Canyon.

The most direct route from the Big Bend of the Dolores River would have been north to today's Slickrock, Colorado, then across Disappointment Valley toward Norwood, over the Uncompahgre Plateau and into the Uncompahgre Valley near Colona.

This was a long-used, but today little-known Indian route called the Navajo-Uncompahgre Trail. It is the route taken by Fathers Francisco Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante as they traveled north in 1776.

By heading so far north before cutting across the Uncompahgre Plateau, the Tabeguache Utes hoped to keep Rivera from connecting with the Sabuaganas, Baker



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE BAKER

The Rivera company crosses the swollen Animas River in July 1765. Drawing by Gail Carroll Sargent. Below: A map of Rivera's second expedition, beginning in September 1765.

concluded. But they weren't successful in that effort.

While camping for five days at the Gunnison River near Delta, Rivera met Sabuagana Utes, who wondered why Rivera's expedition hadn't come to visit them earlier. They talked and traded until Oct. 20, then Rivera and his men headed south through the Uncompahgre Valley, before trekking over the Navajo-Uncompahgre Trail on their way home. They were back in Santa Fe by mid-November.

Rivera and his colleagues began both their journeys at Abiquiu, New Mexico, at the northwestern frontier of Spanish settlements.

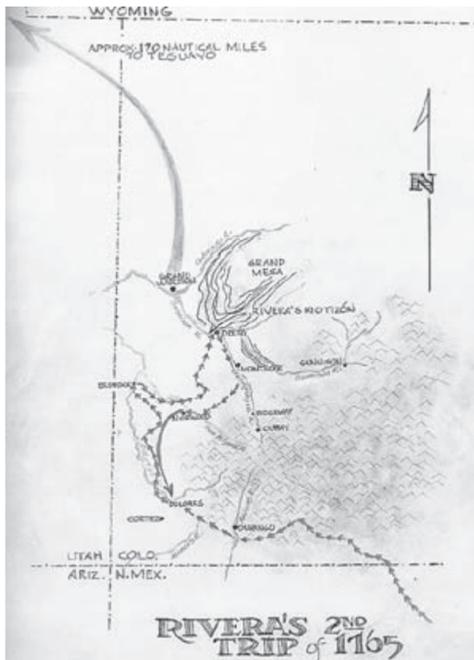
The party included about 15 men and perhaps 60 horses and mules. They probably carried short Spanish swords, a few muzzle-loading pistols or muskets and bows and arrows but few other weapons.

On both trips, Rivera was accompanied by Joaquinillo Trujillo, a Kiowa genizaro Indian who spoke Ute and served as the expedition's interpreter.

Rivera had several assignments from New Mexico Governor don Tomas Velez Cachupin when he undertook his two expeditions. One was to look for silver ore, which Ute visitors to Abiquiu had reported.

That was largely accomplished on the first trip, in July 1765, which took Rivera as far as the Big Bend of the Dolores River.

After spending days among Paiutes and Utes frantically trying to connect with a Ute named Cuero de Lobo, the Spaniards finally found him.



Rivera and several of his men accompanied Cuero de Lobo into the La Plata Mountains west of present-day Durango. There, Rivera wrote, "the whole sierra is pure ore."

But, lacking suitable prospecting tools, they were only able to use their knives to carve out a few small samples, which they packed back to Santa Fe.

Equally important for the second trip, which began in September, were instructions to search for a route to Teguayo. That was the legendary land of multiple Indian tribes near the Great Salt Lake and the place where bearded people who resembled Europeans supposedly lived.

Reaching the Rio Tizon — today called the Colorado River — was a critical part of that assignment. Rivera believed he had accomplished that based on what his Indian guides told him when he arrived at the

Gunnison River near Delta.

Rivera was also charged with learning as much as he could about the people who resided on both sides of the Tizon. That's one reason he was determined to meet with the Sabuaganas, not just the Tabeguache and Moache Utes and the Paiutes.

Because his horses and mules were exhausted, and their feet sore, Rivera decided to rest them at the Gunnison River rather than continue toward Teguayo.

He returned to New Mexico with important information about several different bands of Utes and Paiutes and their whereabouts in the country north of New Mexico.

His expedition also gathered critical data on the route to Teguayo, which Dominguez and Escalante would use 11 years later, as would Spanish traders who began to visit more distant Ute territories soon after Rivera's expedition.

Information for this column came from interviews with Steven G. Baker, and from his book, "Juan Rivera's Colorado, 1765" The book may be ordered through Western Reflection Publishing Co., Lake City, Colo., 970-944-0110 or publisher@westernreflectionsublishing.com. It can also be purchased from Steve Baker at Centuries Research Inc., 970-249-2283. It is expected to soon be available at the Museums of Western Colorado and Barnes & Noble.

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2016 THIS WEEK IN THE LEGISLATURE

Last week, the House didn't get to a controversial bill to turn the state's hospital provider fee program to provide health care to the poor into a state-owned business, but it is scheduled to come up today. And like last week, it's uncertain if that will happen because the bill has been delayed over the past three weeks now. Its chief sponsor, House Speaker Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, D-Boulder, says she's running out of time to negotiate a compromise with Republicans, who have generally opposed the idea.

■ **Today:** The Senate State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee is to debate HB1361, a measure designed to give patients a choice on the pharmacies they can use.

■ **Tuesday:** The Senate Judiciary Committee is to hear HB1337, a measure that would ban introducing

new evidence in appeals in groundwater disputes.

■ **Wednesday:** The House Transportation & Energy Committee is to discuss SB157, a measure that would bar the state from implementing its own clean power plan until a U.S. Supreme Court stay on a federal plan is lifted.

■ **Next week:** This will be the last full week of the 2016 session. That means that bills will be flying left and right as lawmakers struggle to complete their business by the time the session ends, which is on May 11.

Scheduled committee hearings are subject to change. All floor action and committees can be watched or heard on the Legislature's website at www.leg.state.co.us. Check that website to see which measures are available for remote testimony, and how to register to speak.

— Charles Ashby

REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

Four shot in Denver; details scant

DENVER — Four people were shot in downtown Denver early Sunday.

Police tweeted that two of the four are in critical condition. The shooting happened about 1:30 a.m. on the west side of the downtown area near Cherry Creek. No information was available on the suspects or victims.

Monument may expand into Colorado

ALAMOSA — Plans to expand the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument northward from New Mexico into the San Luis Valley are getting more support and more opposition.

Rio Grande Water Conservation District Board Member Dwight Martin said residents don't need the monument in Conejos County because it serves no purpose.

"I am adamantly opposed to this monument designation," Martin said.

Anna Vargas, project coordinator for Conejos Clean Water, the organization promoting the expansion, said it would have little effect on work that has already been done on the monument. It also would recognize the existing Rio Grande Natural Area, which lies in the proposed monument expansion area.

"We are not trying to trump any of the work that's been done on the natural area," Vargas said. "We don't want national monument designation to have any implied water rights."

Rent up, wages stagnant in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY — New research shows rents rising while wages mostly stay stagnant in Utah.

Experts are seeing more residents in the state who are one medical bill or other financial emergency away from becoming homeless, the Salt Lake Tribune reported.

"They are living right on the edge," University of Utah economic analyst James A. Wood said. "A medical bill, a traffic accident or something else comes along they hadn't planned on, and they end up with a serious threat of eviction."

Wood, a fellow within the university's Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, added: "We're in a period where we have declining affordability."

His research says the gap between earnings and housing costs is even tighter for low-income residents.

Demand for rental property is high, but an uptick in apartment building along the Wasatch Front will mean high-end rents.

Body of fisherman pulled from reservoir

SPANISH FORK, Utah — The body of a man has been recovered from Spanish Fork reservoir.

Spanish Fork City police say search and rescue teams pulled the fully clothed body of 20-year-old Jose Eduardo Castellanos on Sunday morning.

Lt. Matt Johnson says Castellanos' family reported him missing when he didn't return from fishing at the Spanish Oaks Reservoir on Saturday.

Authorities found his car in the parking lot. A hat and vest were also found on a reservoir bank.

But searchers then had to wait for daylight. According to Johnson, Castellanos was found in 5 feet of water.

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Gun safe stolen

Jason Kidd, 29, could face felony counts of second-degree burglary and theft between \$20,000 and \$100,000, as well as a misdemeanor count of possession of a defaced firearm after being accused in stealing a truck and a gun safe full of valuables from a Grand Junction home.

The gun safe — which included a 1911 model .45 handgun, a .20 gauge pistol-grip shotgun, a .300 rifle with a scope, a .44 semi-automatic carbine, silverware, a gold pocket watch and other various jewelry — was taken from the back wall of a garage in the 2200 block of Rock Valley Road in October.

Officers claimed to have matched Kidd to DNA evidence recovered from a cigarette butt found at the crime scene, among wit-

ness identifications.

Mesa County Court Judge Bruce Raam issued Kidd a personal-recognizance bond Friday in county court.

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

■ Deputies received a report of a female, juvenile runaway from the 400 block of Alamo Street on Friday.

■ Deputies received a report of a man in the area of the 100 block of Glade Park Road who was firing a gun at vehicles on Saturday.

■ Christopher Caldwell, 43, was arrested in the 2800 block of Pinehurst Lane on Sunday on suspicion of assault and domestic violence.

According to the Grand Junction Po-

lice Department:

■ Joseph Brown, 38, was contacted by police on suspicion of striking a person and causing pain in an incident in the 200 block of First Street on April 9.

Brown received a summons in that incident and was booked into Mesa County Jail on suspicion of a parole violation.

■ Rion Paxton, 18, was contacted Saturday in a traffic stop at 2428 U.S. Highway 6&50 on suspicion of drunken-driving. He was arrested on suspicion of drunken-driving, violation of a protection order, possession of an illegal weapon, possession of marijuana by a person under 21 and several driving-related infractions.

■ JR Jaquess, 29, was arrested at 550 South Avenue on Sunday on suspicion of possession of a schedule II drug, drug paraphernalia and theft.

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