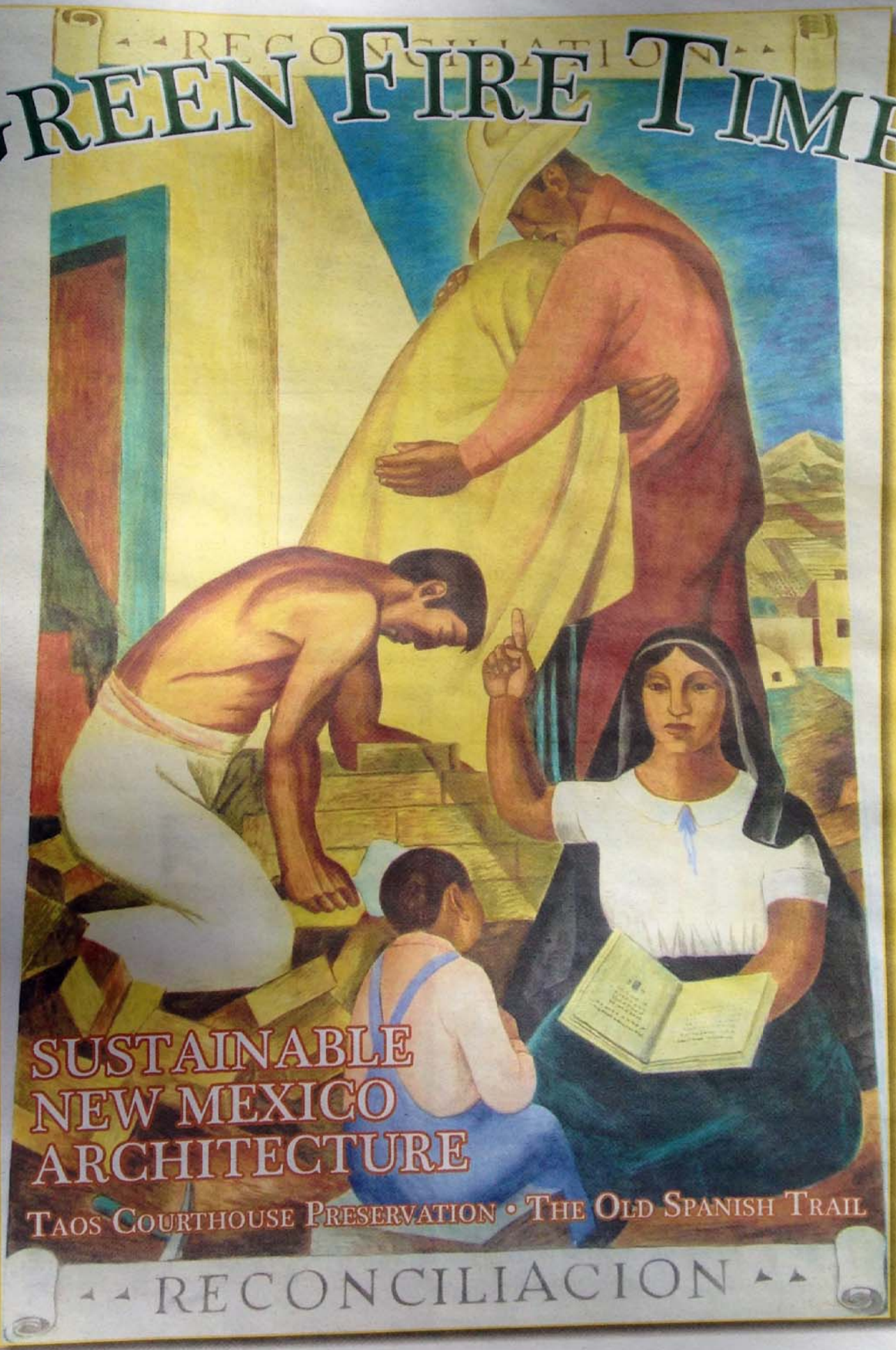
GREEN FIRE TIMES



SUSTAINABLE NEW MEXICO ARCHITECTURE

TAOS COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION • THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

RECONCILIACION

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GREEN FIRE TIMES provides useful information for community members, business people, students and visitors—anyone interested in discovering the wealth of opportunities and resources in the Southwest. In support of a more sustainable planet, topics covered range from green businesses, jobs, products, services, entrepreneurship, investing, design, building and energy—to native perspectives on history, arts & culture, ecotourism, education, sustainable agriculture, regional cuisine, water issues and the healing arts. To our publisher, a more sustainable planet also means maximizing environmental as well as personal health by minimizing consumption of meat and alcohol.

Green Fire Times is widely distributed throughout north-central New Mexico. Feedback, announcements, event listings, advertising and article submissions to be considered for publication are welcome.

GREEN FIRE TIMES

NEWS & VIEWS FROM THE SUSTAINABLE SOUTHWEST

WINNER OF THE SUSTAINABLE SANTA FE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

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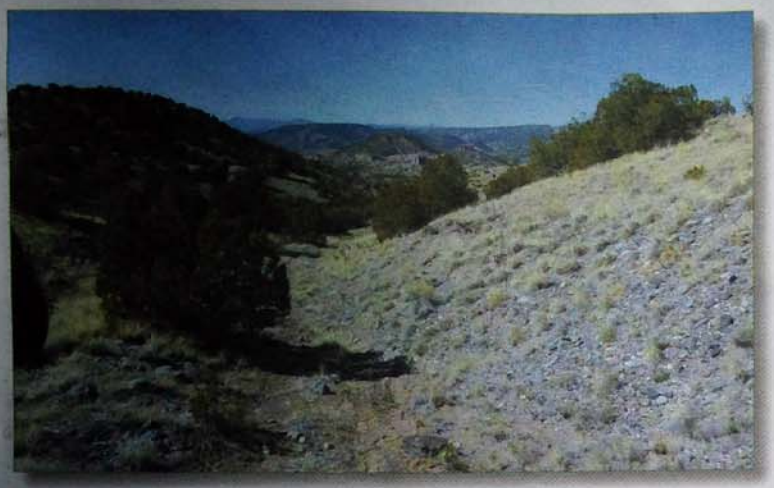
INTERSECTIONS OF ARCHEOLOGY, ARCHITECTURE, CULTURE AND PLACE

Much of the Sustainable New Mexico Architecture focus of this edition of *Green Fire Times* was written by Rachel Preston Prinz, an architectural researcher and preservationist. Rachel loves to share her passion for discovering the *genius loci*—the "Spirit of Place." After having been a project manager in traditional architecture firms for more than 10 years, she founded the Albuquerque-based firm *Archinia*, in 2007, and its nonprofit offshoot, *Built for Life*, in 2012. Rachel has given multiple TEDx and Pecha Kucha talks on sustainability and historic preservation and is a well-regarded designer and architectural researcher. She served as a preservation commissioner in Taos and has led groundbreaking research into traditional and modern means of earth sheltering. In 2014, she launched a television project, *Built for Life*, to celebrate New Mexico's 1,000-year building tradition of no-tech sustainability.

COVER: **RECONCILIACION**
A mural by Emil Bisttram in the Taos County Courthouse **(See page 13)**

CAÑADA DE APODACA TRAIL NOMINATED TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER AS PART OF THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

RACHEL PRESTON PRINZ AND MARK HENDERSON



Looking back toward Apodaca

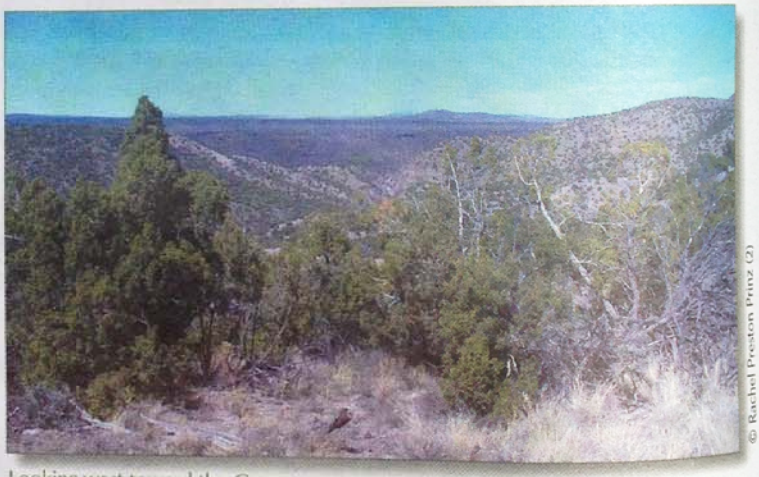
In a nondescript drainage on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land just west of Dixon, one of northern New Mexico's stories comes to life in a landscape that has changed little since indigenous people used these pathways as far back as 600 years ago to move between the pueblos of Picuris and Taos and points further. This is the story of the Cañada de Apodaca, a historic trail recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing intact segment of the Old Spanish National Historical Trail (OST). Cañada de Apodaca is one of two routes into Taos on the 70-mile commercial-goods pack trail and livestock driveway that connected the Mexican territorial center in Santa Fe to the wool production and weaving industry in the Spanish Colonial towns in the Española Valley, to the agrarian plazuelas in the Taos Valley, and on to other markets in Nuevo México and beyond, during the Spanish Colonial, Mexican Territorial and early U.S. Territorial periods.

The landscape remains largely intact and shares the same amazing vistas witnessed by the first European settlers.

Prior to being used as a formal trail between Santa Fe and Taos, the only trail to or from Taos was a network of prehistoric aboriginal footpaths along the Río Grande. The more formalized trail of the Hispanic settlers followed those paths and then turned slightly eastward to avoid the fragoso, or rugged, Río Grande Gorge (La Caja del Río) and the gorge's embudo, or funnel/chokepoint. Just outside Dixon, the trail split into two routes. The High Road, known as the Camino Alto or summer route, is the same route that visitors taking the High Road to Taos enjoy today. This passes through the Colonial settlements of Chimayó, Truchas, Ojo Sarco, Las Trampas, Chamisal and Picuris Pueblo. The 3-mile-long Cañada de Apodaca National Historical Trail occurs on the Low Road alignment, the Camino Abajo or winter route. The natural drainage is associated with the North Branch of the Old Spanish National Historical Trail and was heavily used between 1829 and 1848 as a pack trail from Taos on New Mexico's northeastern frontier with the United States.

Historic documents offer us a glimpse into life along the route both before and after the Mexican period. One of the first known records of travel on the route between the Española Valley and the Taos Plateau was made as part of DeVargas' reconquest expedition of 1694, where De Vargas and his cadre apparently traveled to Taos via Picuris on the High Road.

Historic trails are as much a concept as a reality. Many factors dictated regular shifts in the path of travel. Where in one season a user might traverse the path in a certain manner, a flooding stream, a fallen boulder, or an unknown visitor sharing the road might cause the user to adjust the path accordingly. So, what we know of today as a trail, when all the routes are mapped, looks more like a corridor of interwoven paths along a general way. We can see this illustrated in historic documents. In 1705, Roque Madrid was ordered by interim New Mexico Gov. Francisco Cuervo y Valdez to lead a military expedition against the Navajos. Madrid led a force of 100 soldiers and militia with 300 pueblo auxiliaries into the contemporary core of Eastern Navajo territory. Madrid's account infers that Picuris Pueblo and Taos Pueblo are the gateway settlements of the northern frontier, and he discusses in some detail the challenges of utilizing a small and rugged pack trail for moving a large force of men. He had to adapt to the conditions of the path.



Looking west toward the Gorge

In 1776, Friar Francisco Atanasio Domínguez conducted an inspection of the Catholic missions of New Mexico, including those at Taos and Picuris. He wrote specifically about each of the two routes to Taos in his account, reporting that the "best highway leads through" the "Cañada de Apodaca." In 1779, Gov. Anza returned from the campaign against the Comanche via the Camino Real to Embudo along the same well-used pack trail.

The Cañada de Apodaca Trail negotiates a drainage between the Picuris Range and the Río Grande Gorge. The trail travels north from the Española Valley, where the Río Grande emerges from the gorge to flow through soft pinkish sediments of the Tesuque Formation, through the community of Embudo. Here, the trail parallels Highway 68 up the Rito Cieneguilla to the Río Vista hill, with its commanding view of the Llano de Taos, or Taos Valley, an expansive plain formed from 3- to 5-million-year-old basalt lava flows. The upper part of the Apodaca Trail trace, called the Spur Ridge, is currently one of the few identified segments of intact historic pack trail that has not been substantially altered by later wheeled-vehicle use or grade construction on the entire OST.

A number of natural landmarks and features are visible from the trail. At the entrance to the Cañada to the south are Cerro de Arriba and Cerro Abajo, upper and lower hills, respectively, with Mesa de la Cejita, a dark-colored volcanic basalt-capped mesa beyond. Around the corner of the upper and lower hills, just beyond view, is a natural pillar from the Santa Fe Formation, which was used as a landmark for travelers to know they were on the right path. To the southwest is the distinctive flat-topped Pedernal. To the west are a cluster of hills known as Cerro Azul and the three-pinnacled hill Tres Orejas, both of which emerge from the

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volcanic tablelands of the Taos Plateau. Looking slightly southwards, the traveler sees the Jémez Mountains, the volcanic peaks on the north margin of the Valles Caldera. To the northwest, the ridge of the Tusas Range, and towards the east, Picuris Peak comes into view at the crest of the historic trail. To the southeast are Trampas Peak and the Truchas Peaks, the second-highest peaks of the Sangre de Cristo Range.

The complicated topography of the Cañada de Apodaca illuminates the isolated frontier outpost landscape at the Taos trade center in the early historic period around the 1600s. Taos emerged as the information center of northern New Mexico, where knowledgeable guides could be engaged to navigate the complex networks of trails from New Mexico to California, which most often passed through vastly varied and often extremely complicated terrain. These guides were often able to help travelers to connect with—or avoid—the different indigenous peoples encountered along the way.

The Cañada de Apodaca Trail was known as a particularly difficult obstacle between Taos on the northern frontier and the core settlements and governmental administration at Santa Fe in the Mexican Territorial period in the 19th century. By this time, the Española Valley had become the most populous settled region in Mexican Territorial New Mexico, and it developed homespun workshops of exportable goods, or efectos de país, including woolen woven outer garments called serapes and woven blankets for bedding called fresadas.

The trail passes through vastly varied and often extremely complicated terrain

Meanwhile, Taos continued to transition as a center of commercial activity in the Santa Fe trade, based on the activities of trappers and Indian traders like the iconic Kit Carson and the lesser-known Antoine Robidoux. Information and isolation were critical pieces of the puzzle in answering why people would make Taos a central place in commerce. The use of the Taos route was probably less about transporting woven goods to California than it was about Taos being the source of knowledgeable guides, scouts and traders who had geographic knowledge required by the merchants and packers, or arrieros, that were transporting already-procured woven woolen goods to California and herding thousands of mares from California for breeding stock to produce Missouri mules.

By 1821, when México declared independence from Spain, the frontier trade center and commercial functions at Taos Pueblo were being supplanted by commercial trapping, particularly for beaver pelts harvested from the Great Basin by Spanish-, English- and French-speaking entrepreneurs and guides based in the agrarian settlements in the Taos Valley. Traveling the trail was part of doing business. By the American Territorial period, the pre-Colombian aboriginal network of footpaths had been reorganized to accommodate pack animals—mules, horses and donkeys—for transport of commercial items. Charles Bent, Kit Carson, Antoine Robidoux, William Wolfskill, Isaac Slover and William Workman all built on the business- and family-friendly policies of the Mexican government as trappers. It is probable that all were regular users of the Apodaca Trail.

The only known historical accounts that specifically document the trail during the Old Spanish Trail period of 1829-1848 are related to the "Insurrection Against the Military Government in New Mexico." In 1847, the multinational war hero George A. F. "Fredrick" Ruxton left military service and embarked upon a voyage to explore the frontier territory in what is now New Mexico and Colorado. He describes his trip from Santa Fe to Taos:

> We crossed, next day, a range of mountains covered with pine and cedar; on the latter grew great quantities of mistletoe, and the contrast of its bright green and the somber hue of the cedars was very striking. The snow was melting on the ascent, which was exposed to the sun, and made the road exceedingly slippery and tiring to the animals.

© Rachel Preston Prinz

Looking southwest over the Embudo Valley

> On reaching the summit a fine prospect presented itself. The Rocky Mountains, stretching away on each side of me…whose isolated peaks stood out in bold relief against the clear, cold sky. Valleys and plains lay between them, through which the river wound its way in deep cañons. In the distance was the snowy summit of the Sierra Nevada, bright with the rays of the setting sun, and at my feet lay the smiling vale of Taos, with its numerous villages and the curiously constructed pueblos of the Indians.

In the middle decade of the 19th century, W.W.H. Davis, a decorated officer from the Mexican War, was appointed to the New Mexico Territory as U.S. attorney. With a great curiosity about the territory and its people, he traveled around the state, keeping a prolific diary. In 1856, Davis described the Apodaca route and its landmark features, including the natural pillar formation that identified the trail's southern boundary.

Portions of the route were improved sometime after Davis' account, and the Apodaca Trail was effectively abandoned with the completion of the Military Road through the Río Grande Gorge in 1876. Lieutenant George Ruffner of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers described what remained of the road as follows:

> Between Taos and Santa Fé there formerly existed a very disagreeable passage by a steep and bad road over a mountain spur reaching from the main chain to the cañón of the Río Grande. Freight, except such as could be carried by burros, was almost prohibited…Now, however, through the munificence of the General Government, a new road has been constructed down the cañón of the Río Grande, and a level route, straighter than either of the old roads, can accommodate all possible travel.

By the early 20th century, the Cañada de Apodaca route was relegated to "historic trail" when the route to the Harding and Copper Hill mines and the modern highway from Dixon to Peñasco were developed on a bypass to the south. This realignment of the major transportation corridor has helped to protect the historic road to some degree.

The Cañada de Apodaca Trail was first recognized and described by Taos matron, artist, and historian Helen Blumenschein in 1968. Since that time, field historians John Ramsey and Charles "Corky" Hawk, along with their collaborators, have mapped and documented the various pieces of the trail from Taos to the Española Valley. While the landscape remains largely intact and shares the same amazing vistas witnessed by the first European settlers from 400 years ago—and even before—our understanding of the importance of this arterial network from Santa Fe to Taos continues to evolve.

The intact historic landscape includes a contributing structure of braided trail that features an intact historic pack-trail alignment. This unique site, unknown to most and protected on BLM property, provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a setting that has changed little since its original travelers transported goods, services and people to markets near and far.

New Mexico's Mark Henderson is a career archaeologist with over 30 years' experience in the field and on the ground. The mission of his firm, Chupadero Archaeological Resources, is to encourage public participation in archaeological research.