

The Route

Vigil's caravans walked and rode horseback from Santa Fé to Abiquiu, NM; then northwest to today's sites of Ignacio, Durango, Mancos and Dolores, CO; then to Moab, Green River, Parowan, Veyo, Shivwits, UT; Mesquite, Moapa, Las Vegas, NV; Barstow, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles, CA. It was mostly wild country in the 1840s.



1841 Emigrants

A party of 134 emigrants traveled the same route at about the same time, maybe often with the Vigil group. They included John Rowland, William Workman, Benjamin Wilson, Lorenzo Trujillo, Manuel Vaca, Juan Felipe Peña. Each became a leader in his new home state. Their names still appear in California history and geography.

What happened when:

- 1598 Spanish colonists entered northern New Mexico.
- 1610 Santa Fé founded.
- 1821 Mexico achieved independence from Spain, claiming today's CA, AZ, UT, NV, NM and most of CO and TX.
- 1829 A. Armijo of NM opened regular caravan trade with CA.
- 1836 Texas independent of Mexico, later announced it wanted all land to the Rio Grande.
- 1841 Vigil caravan left for CA on Sept. 6, arrived late Oct.
- 1842 Rowland left CA for NM on April 6; Vigil left April 18 with 4,150 horses.
- 1846 US-Mexico War; U.S. Gen. Kearny took over NM and CA.
- 1847 Vigil led new caravan to CA, Nov.-Dec.; left CA in 1848 with 4,582 horses and mules.

- Vigil's last OST caravan 1847-8
- OSTA organized in 1994.
- OSNHT approved in 2002.

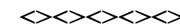
Old Spanish Trail Profiles

Francisco Estévan VIGIL



He served as Comandante of two of the last great Trade Caravans

ON THE
OLD SPANISH TRAIL
SANTA FÉ – LOS ANGELES
AND RETURN
now a
National Historic Trail

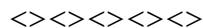


Old Spanish Trail Association

Francisco Estévan Vigil's

1841-2 trip showed good planning and disciplined trading. He and 35 other New Mexican merchants traveled to Los Angeles in 5 weeks and 4 days. They left 7 men in California, but recruited 166 more New Mexicans there to help herd the 4,150 horses back to Santa Fé.

The trip yielded profits. In CA, horses and mules cost about 5 pesos each. In Santa Fé, eastern traders paid 20 pesos per animal. They took them to Missouri and sold them for 100 pesos each.



The 1847-48 caravan again proved Vigil's leadership skill and diplomatic acumen. He worked well with California's new U.S. military officials. All of his traders affirmed their new U.S. citizenship.

They traded as far north as Monterey, then gathered at San Bernardino. U.S. officials cleared 4,582 horses and mules for return to New Mexico, along with 209 men and one woman.

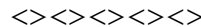
This caravan was known by many as the last of its kind conducted by New Mexico traders over the Old Spanish Trail. Mormon settlement (1847) and the 1849 California gold rush led to other kinds of trading, often using long portions of the OST.

Today

Don Francisco Estévan Vigil's great-great grand-nephew, Dr. Pablo Vigil, works as a physician in Las Vegas, NM. He has served on the Board of Directors of OSTA.

This brochure is based on his article in *Spanish Traces* in 2001. Dr. Pablo wrote:

The adventure and romance of traveling with one of these caravans is extremely fascinating to me and to think that my ancestors accomplished this task is very gratifying.



Sources:

Vigil, Pablo. 2001. *Four Thousand Horses to Santa Fé, New Mexico.* Spanish Traces 7(1).

Hafen, L.R. and A.W. Hafen. 1993. *Old Spanish Trail.* Lincoln, NE: Univ of NE Press.



The Old Spanish Trail Association researches, protects, and interprets. See www.oldspanishtrail.org.

Passports and Rules

Vigil carried a passport from New Mexico and a set of rules on both trips. Even though his men were citizens of Mexico (1841) and of the USA (1847), some earlier caravans had made California officials uneasy.

Vigil's instructions from New Mexico's governor in 1841 stated:

- *He [Vigil] shall lead the caravan with as much order as if it were in national service. ...*
- *When they come to a tribe friendly to this Department, the Indians should not be harmed or given any cause for complaint. ...*
- *The commander may inflict punishment by arrest or by any other means in conformity with the laws.*
- *If the commander fails in this, or in anything else... he shall suffer the penalty imposed by [CA] officials.*

Finally, the Los Angeles Prefectura was asked to help Vigil to keep order:

- *It is requested that the authorities of his destination give him the aid which he may need to punish insubordinates who lack the proper respect for him.*