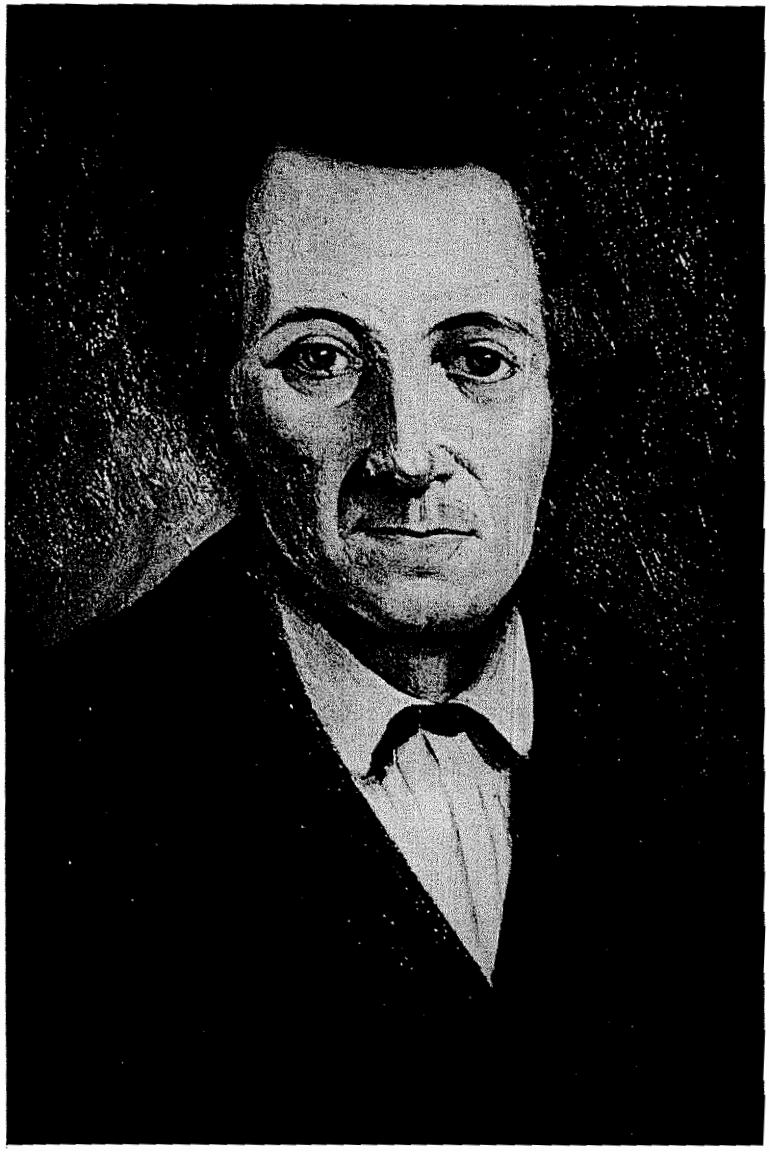

WILLIAM WOLFSKILL
From an oil painting at Zion National Park.

WILLIAM WOLFSKILL

1798-1866

Frontier Trapper to California Ranchero

by

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The Arthur H. Clark Company
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With the return of peace, Howard County had been organized under an act of the Territorial Legislature in January of 1816 and was enjoying a new wave of immigration.[25] St. Louis had become a booming trade center, the home of the principal fur companies and the outfitting base for westbound expeditions. At the age of twenty-three "Billy" Wolfskill decided that it was time for him to set out on his own – time to seek his fortune in the rapidly expanding fur trade of the great Southwest – time to carry his family's pioneer tradition into the yet unexplored areas of the Rocky Mountains, the Great Basin, and even those of distant California.

25 "Some Historic Lines in Missouri," in *Missouri Historical Review*, III (July 1909), 253.

2

On to Santa Fe!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize,
world of labor and the march
Pioneers! O pioneers!

– Walt Whitman

Certainly William Wolfskill had been schooled in a well-rounded curriculum of frontier skills; but it was now time for the young trapper to receive the next phase of his education – that of blazing new trails into the unknown regions of the far Southwest.

Captain William Becknell of Franklin, Missouri, had advertised in the *Missouri Intelligencer* of June 10, 1821, for "seventy men to go westward" on a trading project.[1] Becknell assembled his company at the home of Wolfskill's neighbor, Ezekiel Williams, and plans were made for a journey to Santa Fe, the Spanish capital of New Mexico which had recently become a part of the independent Mexican republic. Becknell's venture was so successful and profitable that when he returned to Missouri in January of 1822, two expeditions were organized to return to

1 Quoted in Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 10. Numerous reports of Becknell's and other expeditions of the 1820's are found in the *Missouri Intelligencer*, the first newspaper published in Missouri outside of St. Louis. One of the rare, complete files of this paper is housed in the State Historical Society of Missouri.

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New Mexico in the spring – his own and one headed by Major Stephen Cooper. Young Cooper believed he could keep up with Becknell because he had gained some knowledge of the southwest on a trapping expedition led by his Uncle Ben during the previous spring.[2]

Since many of his boyhood friends, including a number of Coopers and Carsons, were joining one of these expeditions, William Wolfskill felt he could no longer remain at home. He convinced his neighbor, Henry Ferril,[3] a powder-maker in Boone's Lick, that they join the Becknell company. This accomplished, Wolfskill became acquainted with another member of the group, a Tennessee trapper by the name of Ewing Young, and the two made plans to keep in contact after their arrival in New Mexico. The entire company, which numbered twenty-one, planned to depart from Arrow Rock, Missouri, and follow the now-tested route to Santa Fe. From what Wolfskill could determine, Becknell had some kind of contract to supply the Mexican government with gunpowder, a product which was then extremely scarce.[4] The arrangements must have been made during the captain's brief visit to Santa Fe in 1821.[5]

The men set out in May and had covered just a short distance toward the Arkansas River when they

[2] *Missouri Intelligencer,* Sept. 3, 1822.

[3] Ferril, "Missouri Military in the War of 1812," p. 39, states that his grandfather, Henry Ferril, founded the town of Miami, Saline County, Missouri, and that his great-uncle, Jacob Ferril, ran the ferry at Arrow Rock.

[4] Barrows, in Los Angeles *World,* Oct. 1, 1887.

encountered a band of Osage Indians. Fortunately Auguste P. Chouteau, a member of the group who had traded with the tribe for many years as part of the Missouri Fur Company, was able to use his influence to save the horses and supplies. Becknell knew that on his previous trip he had experienced great difficulty in getting even horses over Raton Pass, and realized that taking wagons through that mountain gorge would be utterly impossible. He therefore decided upon a shorter route which would take his wagon train over more level, although more perilous, terrain. This new route, in spite of all its hardships, would become the route over which the majority of travel to Santa Fe would pass for many years to come.[6]

Becknell and his men followed the Arkansas River to a point which would later be called "The Caches" by Santa Fe traders. This area, located about five miles west of modern Dodge City, received its name from a trapping party which lost its pack animals in the winter of 1822. The men were forced to cache their goods and hike into Taos. These holes were soon used as landmarks and could still be seen a quarter of a century later. It had been a struggle to haul the heavy wagons across the roadless country, but now Becknell's company left the river and turned

[5] *Missouri Intelligencer,* June 17, 1823, quotes Becknell as stating that the Mexican governor "was courteous and friendly . . . , expressed a desire that the Americans would keep up an intercourse with that country, and said that if any of them wished to emigrate, it would give him pleasure to afford them every facility."

[6] R. L. Duffus, *The Santa Fe Trail* (New York, 1930), 78.

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southward across the desert toward the Cimarron River. The party's supply of water was limited to that which could be carried in canteens, and for Billy Wolfskill this was to be the most harrowing experience of the journey. For two days they found no water and suffered through an almost unbearable burning heat. Nothing was brought to their blurred vision but mirages of lakes, streams and perhaps a small golden city. Wolfskill and the others were forced to cut the ears off their mules and suck the blood. Finally, when chances of survival seemed remote, the party came upon a buffalo which they were able to kill. They found the animal's stomach filled with water and one of the men commented to Josiah Gregg years later "that nothing ever passed his lips which gave him such exquisite delight as his first draught of that filthy beverage." [7]

Knowing that water must be close at hand, Wolfskill, Young and some of the stronger members of the party pushed on to the Cimarron River and returned with water to save the lives of their weaker companions. The fact that Becknell's own journal fails to mention the near-tragedy probably results from his desire to emphasize the trail's advantages rather than its faults. Becknell does admit, however, that it was no easy task to push the wagons by hand up a number of high and rocky cliffs.[8]

[7] Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies* (Norman, 1954), 15.

[8] William Becknell's report in Archer B. Hulbert, *Southwest on the Turquoise Trail* (Colorado Springs, 1933), 56-68. See also "The Journals of Capt. Thomas Becknell from Boone's Lick to Santa Fe and from Santa Cruz to Green River," in *Missouri Hist. Review,* IV (Jan. 1910), 65-84.

Both Cooper's and Becknell's expeditions had set out from Missouri in May of 1822, but that led by Stephen Cooper made much better speed because it was not encumbered by wheeled vehicles. However, Captain Becknell's efforts in getting the first wagons through that rugged country were nothing short of heroic, and for this reason he was recognized in later years as the "Father of the Santa Fe Trail." [9]

Upon their arrival in Santa Fe in the summer of 1822, the members of the company set out to explore the neighboring country for nitre, one of the essentials in their powder-making enterprise. Because the men were unable to find any or to obtain it from any other source, the party broke up and all but three or four went back to Missouri. William Wolfskill and Ewing Young were among those who remained in New Mexico. In the fall of 1822 they organized a trapping party and headed for the Pecos River, where they trapped until December.[10]

The piecing together of an accurate account of the fur trade in the Southwest involves a number of difficulties which are of little consequence in a similar account of the industry in the Northwest. The material available to the historian of the Hispanic period in the Southwest in no way compares with that provided by the journals, records, newspaper accounts, and other sources of information on fur trading activities in the Upper Missouri and Rocky Mountain region. There are several reasons for the

[9] Duffus, *The Santa Fe Trail,* 78.

[10] Barrows, in Los Angeles *World,* Oct. 1, 1887.

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existence of this problem, although the basic one lies in the character of the business itself. The greater portion of the fur trade in the Southwest was illegal because only Mexicans could obtain licenses to trap in Mexican rivers and streams. The Mexicans, however, were not interested in trapping and left the industry without competition to the American trappers, who either had to become citizens of Mexico or conceal the real facts of what they were doing.

Another reason stems from the fact that the fur traders in the Northwest usually worked out of some sort of headquarters in Missouri, where their records and various papers were accumulated and still remain. The trappers working out of Taos and Santa Fe seldom had any permanent organization and would generally dispose of their furs and disband their party after each expedition. Few of them kept any records at all. Some information has been obtained from documents in the Archives of Mexico but here another problem joins the confusion. The Spanish method of handling foreign names, though probably sufficient for their purposes, was seldom consistent. For example, Ewing Young's name is given Julián Joon or Joaquín Joven; Ceran St. Vrain's name appears as Ceran Sambrano; John Heath as Juan Gid; James Kirker is translated into Santiago Querque; Baptiste St. Germain into Bautista Sangerma; and William Wolfskill to Guillermo Guisquiel.

The newspapers of St. Louis and other frontier settlements of Missouri announced the arrival and

departure of trapping parties for the Upper Missouri River and also add to the information on the Northwest. When trapping was at its height in the Southwest, there were no newspapers in New Mexico to make a similar report of their activities. And conditions of trade being as they were, it was probably just as well. But the lack of information does not lessen appreciably the importance of the American fur trade in the far Southwest.

Among the prominent men who trapped in this region were such well-known names as Jedediah Smith, Sylvester and James Ohio Pattie, Antoine Robidoux, Moses Carson, Jules De Mun, David Jackson, David Waldo, Job F. Dye, Thomas Fitzpatrick and numerous others mentioned elsewhere in this work. Dozens more could easily be included.

In January of 1823, William Wolfskill and a New Mexican with whom he had trapped on the Pecos River the preceding fall, set out on a trapping venture down the Río Grande to El Paso del Norte.[11] They trapped whatever beaver they could find on the journey down the river, but soon found the bitter cold made it almost impossible to camp out. The winter snows had covered the ground completely so the two trappers decided to build a small brush hut for protection. On the night of January 27, Wolfskill awoke to find that the New Mexican had built a big fire at the door of the hut, but since this was

[11] Henry D. Barrows, "William Wolfskill, the Pioneer," in *Annual Publications of the Historical Society of Southern California,* v (1902), 290.

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nothing unusual, he went back to sleep. Moments later, Wolfskill was shot in the chest with a rifle ball. He first reached for his rifle but could find only the shot pouch in its place. He then stumbled out of the small hut in search of his partner.

Since the force of the ball had been slowed by passing first through his blankets and then through his right arm and left hand, Wolfskill narrowly escaped death. Assuming he had been the victim of an Indian attack and that his New Mexican companion had been killed, he started back on foot to the nearest Mexican settlement. Summoning all of his reserve strength and courage, Wolfskill began walking over the rugged and snow-covered trail to the town of Valverde, which lay at a distance of twenty-five miles. He arrived the next morning exhausted and weak from loss of blood and reported the incident to the town's alcalde.

Several hours later, much to the amazement of everyone, there appeared at the settlement of Valverde the New Mexican trapper with the report that he had been attacked by Indians and that his partner, Mr. Wolfskill, had been killed. He was naturally astonished to learn that Wolfskill had arrived before him. The New Mexican was required, much against his will, to go back with the soldiers from Valverde and show them exactly where Wolfskill had been shot. In the snow they found the footprints of the two trappers but no others; no signs of Indians were discovered. The soldiers took the New Mexican back to Valverde and kept him confined for several days

until he became nearly frozen. He finally promised to show them where he had hidden the gun, and upon its discovery pretended that he had shot Wolfskill accidently, not being used to the hair-trigger of the rifle.

The New Mexican was given a hearing before the alcalde, who ordered him sent to the governor of New Mexico at Santa Fe for trial. However, his punishment was delayed and, as Wolfskill later learned, was kept going back and forth under escort between Valverde and Santa Fe until he was finally turned loose. Wolfskill could never imagine what motive his companion could have had for wanting to kill him, unless possibly it was for the sake of the old rifle. That and a few beaver traps were all Wolfskill had at the time, and these certainly did not seem of sufficient value to lead a man to murder. According to a statement later made to his son-in-law, Henry Barrows, Wolfskill believed that the loss of blood and his nearly freezing in the long tramp to the settlement saved his life. This was at a time when blood-letting was not uncommon. The rifle ball did not penetrate the breast-bone and was afterwards extracted.[12] It was fortunate for William Wolfskill that he slept with his arms folded across his chest, and was thereby spared for an eventful future in various economic activities throughout the Hispanic Southwest and in the Pacific Coast province of California.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 296-97. Barrows states that the account of this incident was "taken directly from Wolfskill's own lips" and could "be relied upon as absolute truth." Some members of the family felt that Wolfskill's death in later years resulted from the effects of this wound.

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In August of 1823 William Wolfskill returned to Santa Fe and remained there until December in order to regain his strength. The town of Santa Fe, founded in 1608, claimed a population of almost five thousand people. Mexican rule had replaced the Spanish flag in 1822, and from that time on commerce with the east over the Santa Fe Trail was encouraged. The way of life in this historic outpost of the Spanish empire was relatively simple, although there were sharp distinctions between the *gente principal* or gentry, and the *peones* or common people. To one observer the ladies of Santa Fe were "far more beautiful than those of the same ranks in America" and the men were "honest – perhaps more so than those of the same class in the United States, vain and proud of their blood. . ."[13] The architecture of the town was plain and functional, and buildings were made of native mud bricks smeared with a thin mud plaster. To some the town was beautiful because of its simplicity, but to others it appeared as "a wretched collection of mud houses without a single building of stone."[14]

There had not been much progress made in the realm of social and cultural activities, but Santa Fe was not, as Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri stated in a speech to the Senate in 1824, a capital of people among whom all the arts were lost. It was

[13] Quoted from the Evansville, Indiana, *Journal,* in the *Niles National Register,* Dec. 4, 1841.

[14] George F. Ruxton, *Ruxton of the Rockies,* ed. by LeRoy R. Hafen (Norman, Okla., 1950), 180.

hardly as primitive as Benton's comment that there were "no books, no newspapers," with people "cultivating the earth with wooden tools and spinning on a stick."[15] There was, in fact, much to interest foreigners – the market-place with its exhibits of melons, fresh fruits and baked piñon nuts; the constant gambling with Mexican cards in glittering saloons or in private homes; the religious processions complete with pomp and pageantry; and the Mexican himself, constantly smoking his corn-husk cigarette, and flashing his welcome smile to the American, English or French visitor. Thus, with its governmental headquarters, its centuries-old society, and its role as crossroads of the Southwest, the pueblo of Santa Fe fulfilled a larger destiny than at first glance was apparent.

But Billy Wolfskill was restless in Santa Fe. He gathered his few belongings together at Christmas time and headed for Taos. Here he found his friend Ewing Young and the two fitted out for a trapping expedition to the headwaters of the San Juan River and other tributaries of the Colorado. They left in February of 1824 with a large party of trappers, but as the men continued around the west side of the Sierra Madre, the various members became separated by working down different streams which suited their individual hunting activities. Finally it was only Wolfskill, Young and another companion, Isaac Slover, who were still together. The three remained

[15] Quoted in Sabin, *Kit Carson Days,* 24.

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out until beaver season was over and did not return to Taos until June. The furs which they collected on this expedition brought nearly ten thousand dollars.[16]

The Santa Fe Trail caravan which arrived in July, 1824, included eighty-one traders, one hundred and fifty-six horses and mules, twenty-five wagons and a small piece of field artillery for the purpose of fighting Indians. When the traders learned of the fur resources on the upper branches of the Colorado River, many of them immediately formed parties to trap the region. Among the members of the group returning with the caravan were Augustus Storrs, appointed American consul to Santa Fe in 1825, and M. M. Marmaduke, later governor of Missouri. Both men wrote accounts of their experiences over the trail. The caravan returned to Missouri in September with $180,000 in gold and silver and $10,000 in furs – a nice profit on an investment of about thirty-five thousand dollars.[17]

In November of 1824, Wolfskill left Taos to go south with a party led by a Captain Owens for the purpose of buying horses and mules to take to Louisiana. They bought the animals in the northwestern part of Chihuahua and drove them as far as the Presidio del Norte. Near this point the party was attacked by Indians and several of the men, including Captain Owens, were killed. The entire herd having been stampeded, the men were left on foot. However,

[16] Joseph J. Hill, "Ewing Young in the Fur Trade of the Far Southwest, 1822-1824," in *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, XXIV (March 1923), 19.

[17] Duffus, *The Santa Fe Trail*, 84; *Missouri Intelligencer*, Aug. 5, 1825.

some of the animals were not captured by the Indians and strayed back to the presidio where they were recovered by Wolfskill and a member of the party known as Belcher. With money left by Captain Owens, Wolfskill was able to buy some other mules and the two men started home with the animals they had collected.

Because of the danger of Indian attacks, Wolfskill and his companion thought it best to return home by way of the Mexican settlements along the Gulf. They started down by way of the Rio Grande with a man who had just come from Matamoros as the pilot of a company of French maritime traders. The men left Santa Rosa on the Sabine River in February of 1825, and in the company of some traders from Galveston Bay hoped to gain passage on a schooner for New Orleans. Failing to make connections, Wolfskill continued on alone by land to Natchitoches, Louisiana, and then booked passage on a steamer traveling up the Mississippi to St. Louis. Weary from his long journey and in poor health because of his chest wound, the young adventurer arrived at his father's home in Boone's Lick in June of 1825.[18]

William Wolfskill thus ended his first expedition into the great region of the Southwest, having been gone more than three years. During this time he had experienced the hardships of opening a new trail to Santa Fe, had been a part of trapping expeditions which penetrated the uncharted tributaries of the

[18] Barrows, in Los Angeles *World*, Oct. 1, 1887.

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Colorado River on the Pacific Slope, had survived an attempt on his life, and had managed to escape from an Indian attack to make the long trek back to Missouri. For a lesser individual this might have been sufficient, but Billy Wolfskill had just begun.

Wolfskill was not content to remain at home for long. He soon left for Natchitoches where he had arranged to meet Belcher on the fourth of July of 1825. Belcher had kept the mules on the agreement that Wolfskill would then take them to the east and sell them for the benefit of Captain Owens' family, the latter being neighbors of Wolfskill's father in Boone's Lick. Belcher was not to be found at Natchitoches at the same time agreed upon, so Wolfskill traveled west to San Felipe de Austin, a distance of over three hundred miles. There he finally made contact with Belcher and took charge of the mules, which he knew would bring a good price in the southern states. These mules were the type which later became known as "Missouri mules" although they were actually of Mexican origin. Wolfskill drove his mules across Louisiana and Mississippi to Greenborough, Alabama, and there sold the animals. He decided to remain in Alabama for the winter, but in March of 1826, the young trapper-turned-mule-trader returned by way of Mobile and New Orleans to his home in Missouri. Once again in Boone's Lick, Wolfskill gave the proceeds of the sale to Captain Owens' family.[19]

[19] *Ibid.*

In nearby Franklin, Ewing Young, who had returned from a successful trapping and trading season in Santa Fe,[20] was organizing a party to return to New Mexico. Hearing news of his friend from Tennessee and remembering his profitable venture with Young in the Southwest, Wolfskill could no longer ignore the lure of the fur trade. In this, however, he was not alone, for the year 1826 was especially notable for the number and size of the trapping parties which were fitted out soon after the arrival of the caravan from Missouri in the latter part of July of that year. The leaders of the parties had to apply to Governor Antonio Narbona of New Mexico for passports to Sonora, and these were generally issued for "trading purposes" only. Narbona soon realized that the principal intention of these persons was "hunting beaver on the San Francisco, Gila and Colorado Rivers," and therefore wrote to the governor of Sonora to inform him of the size and character of the parties to whom he had issued passports. In the letter he states that J. Williams and Sambrano (St. Vrain) were taking twenty-odd men; that Miguel Rubidu (Robidoux) and Sylvester Pratt were taking thirty or more; that Juan Roles (possibly John Rowland) had eighteen in his party; and that

[20] Libro donde constan copiadas por menor las cuentas seguidas a los estrangeros de la America del Norte que han introdusido efectos de comercio sugetos al pago de los derechos del quince por ciento de internacion y tres por ciento de consumo en todo el presente año de 1825 en la Aduana Nacional del Territorio de Santa Fee del Nuevo Mexico; MS no. 81, Ritch Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

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Joaquin Joon (Ewing Young) had eighteen in his company.[21]

Upon their arrival in Santa Fe, Young secured the passport mentioned above, but sickness prevented his going out with the party. He hired William Wolfskill to take charge of the expedition, which had fitted out to trap the Río Gila. Among the members of the group, which originally numbered eleven, were such well-known figures as Milton Sublette, brother of the equally famous Rocky Mountain trapper William Sublette, and George Yount, a Missouri businessman who had arrived with the caravan that summer.[22] In addition they were joined by a party of five trappers which had been organized by Thomas L. Smith, later known in California as "Peg-leg Smith," and a Frenchman by the name of Maurice Le Duc.[23] These two adventurers had explored a large area of central Utah, had their horses stolen by Ute Indians, fled across the San Juan into Arizona and finally ended up by spending several days with the Moqui Indians near the Little Colorado River before returning to Taos.[24]

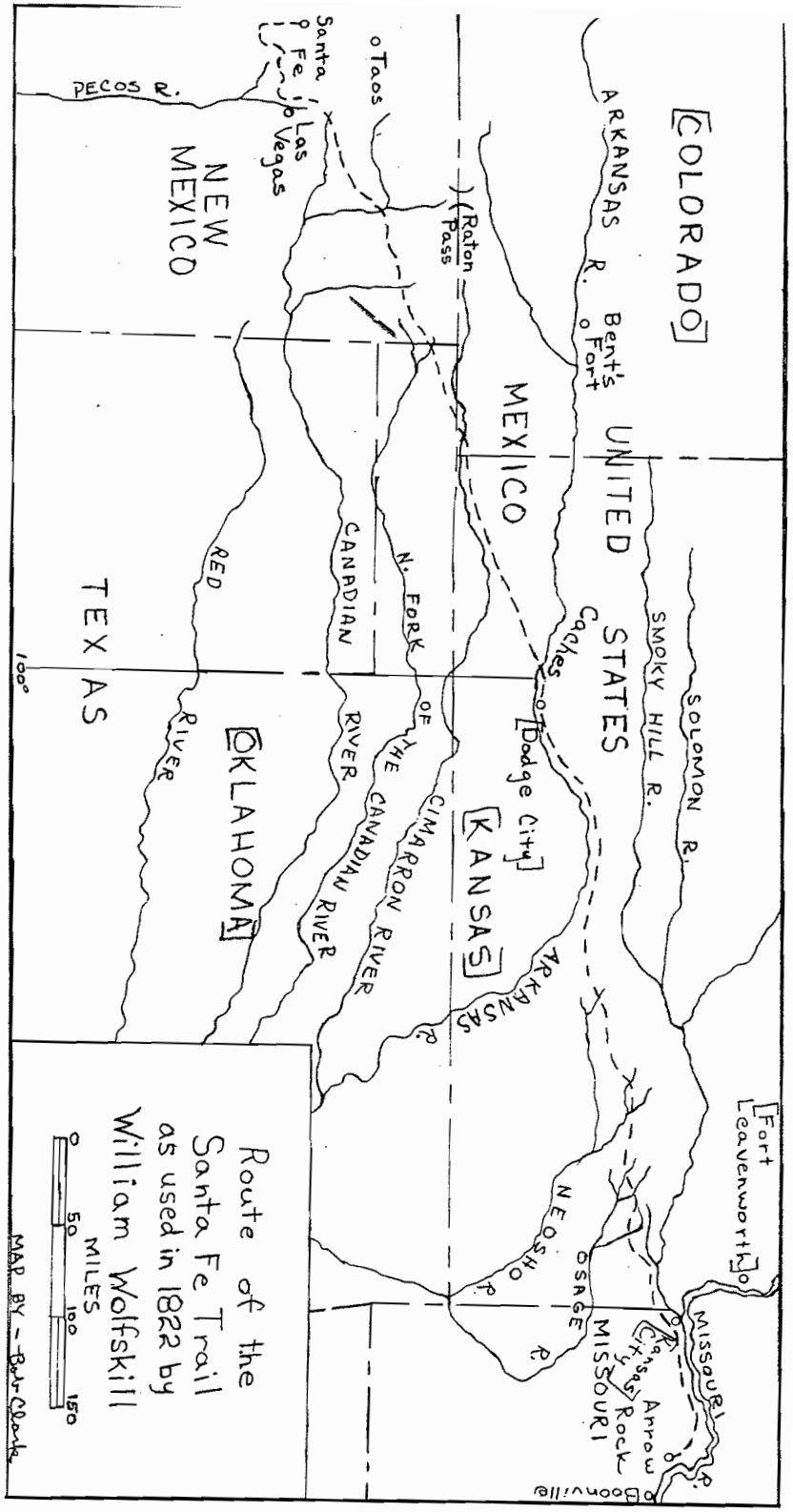
The party headed for the Gila River and after traveling for two to three weeks found good trapping areas. The beaver were abundant and all appeared

[21] Antonio Narbona to the Governor of Sonora, Aug. 31, 1826, Archivo de Governación (Mexico), Comercio, expediente 44; copy in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[22] Charles L. Camp, ed., "The Chronicles of George C. Yount," in *California Historical Society Quarterly,* II (April 1923), 10.

[23] "The Story of an Old Trapper. Life and Adventures of the Late Peg-Leg Smith," in San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin,* Oct. 26, 1866.

[24] David Lavender, *Bent's Fort* (New York, 1954), 62.



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well, even with the arrival of a band of Apaches. The Indians demonstrated apparent signs of friendship and willingly shared a feast with Wolfskill and his companions. Just as they were leaving, however, one of the red men shot an arrow into an animal. This meant a declaration of hostilities. The trappers, although well-armed, did not wish to begin fighting Indians, so they decided it would be best for them to leave that part of the country. They packed their things for a hasty retreat, but Tom Smith and Milton Sublette were determined to take up their traps. While completing the task, the two men became the target for a shower of arrows and Sublette was hit in the leg. Only with the aid of Smith did he manage to escape. The members of the party, now relieved of their traps, were left with no choice but to return to Santa Fe.[25]

Ewing Young, who had meanwhile recovered, reorganized the party and set out with about thirty men for the same general area on the Gila River. Somewhere in the vicinity they picked up James Ohio Pattie, who had luckily escaped being massacred by sneaking out of Miguel Robidoux's party the year before. This self-styled hero was allowed to remain with the group.[26] They were successful in trapping without further trouble from the Apaches, but they ran into more serious difficulty with the Mexican government upon their return to Santa Fe.

[25] "The Story of an Old Trapper," in San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin,* Oct. 26, 1866.

[26] Joseph J. Hill, "New Light on Pattie and the Southwestern Fur Trade," in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly,* XXVI (April 1923), 253.

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It all stemmed from a change in personnel in the Mexican capital while the ill-fated expedition was out in Arizona. There had always been in existence a law which prohibited foreigners from trapping beaver in Mexican territory under penalty of confiscation, but Governor Narbona, realizing there were no native Mexican trappers, thought it would be expedient to issue licenses to foreigners who would take along a certain number of Mexicans and teach them the methods of trapping. Prior to the return of Young's party, Narbona was succeeded by Manuel Armíjo who, they learned, was planning to seize their furs. To prevent this Young and Sublette stowed the furs in the house of "a wretch named Don Luis Cabeza de Vaca," on the outskirts of Santa Fe, while they attempted to obtain a trading license. However, the location of their hiding place became known and soldiers under the direction of the alcalde of Santa Fe confiscated their entire catch. Only Milton Sublette, who boldly seized his two packs and ran, was able to get to the United States with any of the furs. Ewing Young figured that he had lost $18,000 to $20,000 worth of furs to the Mexican government.[27]

Fortunately, William Wolfskill was not a member of Young's second expedition to the Gila, having gone to Sonora, Mexico, with William and Robert Carson. The Carson brothers had arrived from Missouri in the fall of 1826, leaving their sixteen-year-

[27] Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 227-28; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 70.

old brother Kit, or so they thought, back in Franklin. Young Kit Carson had been apprenticed to David Workman, brother of trapper William Workman of later California fame, to learn the saddler's trade. To a boy from Boone's Lick, saddle making seemed extremely dull. When he learned that his brothers were heading for Santa Fe, Kit followed on a mule and caught them a few miles out of Franklin. William, Hamilton and Robert about-faced Kit and his mule and instructed him to return home. A little way back Kit let the mule go, and joined another caravan belonging to Bent, St. Vrain and Co., and in spite of all, managed to finally arrive in Santa Fe.[28]

When William and Robert Carson joined Wolfskill's expedition to buy work-mules, mares for breeding and other horses in Sonora, they had dismissed Kit from their thoughts and eagerly looked forward to the trip to the northern parts of Mexico. They traveled to Arispe, Oposura and other towns in Sonora. Wolfskill and a partner whose name was Talbot gathered about two hundred animals and started back with them by way of Taos. Again victims of an Indian attack, they lost all but twenty-seven of the animals. With these, Wolfskill and the Carson brothers arrived at Independence, Missouri, a little before Christmas of 1826. William Wolfskill decided to spend the remainder of the winter at home, making only one short business trip to Kentucky for his father.[29]

[28] Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 13.
[29] Barrows, in Los Angeles *World*, Oct. 1, 1886.

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