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Points to be questioned in the narrative accompanying photographs of  
the Rio Grande, River of Destiny, by Laura Gilpin:

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- (10) Statement that first known prospectors were in the San Juan Mountains in 1870.

The whole Sierra San Juan was prospected by placer miners in 1860, when the area was on the neglected eastern edge of the Territory of Utah. Any history of Colorado gives the story of the Baker Party, which was the first large expedition in that area.

In 1870 Dempsey Reese started the first lode mining in the area which had been abandoned by the placer miners ten years before.

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Statement that Otto Mears established a pack trail up the Rio Grande in 1871. This is out of the question, since the treaty of 1868 with the Ute Indians expressly provided that the United States Army would keep all persons not full-blooded Utes out of the area west of the 107th meridian. Fort Garland sent army scouts regularly along all suspected trails. Dempsey Reese and my father and a few others managed to elude the soldiers but nobody would have been rash enough to leave a marked trail before September, 1873, when the Utes signed away all but the hunting rights in the mining region.

Otto Mears dictated his autobiography to Arthur Ridgeway about 40 years ago. This was later published by the Southwest Printing Co. in Colorado Springs. I have read it very carefully. Otto Mears did a great deal of trail building but he did not represent that he ever packed up the Rio Grande. In fact, his autobiography shows that he was very busy elsewhere between 1870 and 1873.

- (50) Repeats the old campaign story about John C. Fremont going up Embargo Creek. This stream empties into the Rio Grande 10 miles beyond the point designated by Miss Gilpin. To reach its headwaters Fremont would have had to go due north, when he knew his goal lay north of west almost a hundred miles farther. This story was advanced by enemies when Fremont ran for President. The account in the Geographic Magazine for October, 1939, gives the true fact that Fremont's fourth expedition went to the headwaters of the Rio Grande.

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The statement in regard to the development of the wagon road over the summit through Stony Pass is in error. The first ox-drawn wagons were snubbed down the western slope in 1875. The first stage came down in the fall of 1876, a couple of months after Colorado Territory became a state. These facts can be verified by referring to Hall, Frank History of the State of Colorado, Vol. 4, Pp. 166 et seq. (1895)