

Copy

June 12,
1950

Mrs. May Wallace Ross,
25022 Pennsylvania,
Lomita, California.

Dear Mrs. Ross:-

Mr. Goodwin, of Duell, Sloan & Pearce, has forwarded the list of points you sent him in question of my text on RIO GRANDE. First, my apology for being so long in answering, but I have had a busy schedule and it has taken me some time to check all my sources of information. I am not certain if the sheet sent me by Mr. Goodwin is your copy, or one he has had made, but I take up the points in question in the order in which I have received them.

Page 10.

First, let me state that in such an extremely brief history as is contained in my book, one must confine oneself to authenticated sources of information, and those so considered by the tests of time. I omitted mention of the Baker party for the following reason:

Bancroft: History of Colorado, New Mexico & Arizona.
Volume XXV Page 397

Quote

"A pretended discovery was made in 1860 in the San Juan Country by one Baker which drew a thousand per one to that region who found no gold, although it was there as subsequent exploration and development proved."

On another page

"The Little Giant Gold Lode was discovered and Las Animas district was founded in 1871."

From an article by David Lavender in the Denver Post of November 21, 1948. (The article was about Otto Mears)

"In 1871 silver was discovered in the San Juans and a new horde of prospectors swarmed inks across the hitherto almost untouched mountains of Southwestern Colorado."

Future information may change the dates and information

that I have used. This would be for local history whereas in a book like mine, where only brief mention is made, the most authentic reference must be used. If Baker's strike had been genuine, news of it would have been far reaching and a source like Bancroft would have had it.

2nd item.

Otto Mears: Thank you for catching the misspelled name. I do not know how this got by, but ~~some~~^{some} sometimes do. My sources of information on this were talks with several people in the San Luis Valley who were considered authorities on the early history of the valley. When three people agreed to the same thing, I considered this sufficiently authentic to use. I shall check this information by letter. Someone showed me a small History of the San Luis Valley written by someone connected with Adams College. It is unavailable to me at present, but I am under the impression that this also was my source, that Mears built the first pack trail.

Page 50.

Please note that I did not give a specific point as to Fremont's reaching the Rio Grande. I said "They reached the Rio Grande in the vicinity of Alamosa, following up its course about thirty miles. Does anyone know exactly where they reached the river?" I have checked your reference to the October, 1939, Geographic Magazine. I found a long article about the Rio Grande with no mention of Fremont. Could it be another issue to which you refer? Did Fremont know where his goal lay? Have you read the many interesting biographies and accounts which deal with this expedition? There is no question but that there was a real dispute between Williams and Fremont over where they should go from the top of Mosca Pass. In one biography is a letter from the cartographer of the expedition taking the blame on himself for siding with Williams against Fremont. The cartographer said that Fremont wanted to go toward "Cochetopy", and he lived to regret his decision, feeling that if he had backed Fremont against Williams, they would have gone straight to Cochetopa Pass. My own theory that Fremont "took over against Williams" and was trying to find his way to Cochetopa Pass by following up Embargo creek, is made as a possible suggestion, not a statement. The fourth Fremont expedition is still a matter of controversy and there are various opinions on it. I have read first Fremont's own account, then four other biographies.

I talked to two people in the San Luis Valley who had been to the supposed site of the Fremont camp at the head of Embargo Creek. Knowing the country very well, (I am a native Coloradoan) I have been merely trying to understand the fix Fremont got himself into. There is no question but had he followed his own instinct he would have gotten over Cochetopa Pass and probably reached California. Personally, I do not think this whole business is yet satisfactorily explained. I should be interested to see your source of the "true facts".

Yes, I know and own the History of the State of Colorado. I have found a number of points that differ with other sources. Bancroft's is the older and more established history.

Thanking you for your interest in this matter, and assuring you of my own and my desire to have everything as correct as possible, I am

Sincerely yours,

Laura Gilpin.