Nuestra Revista del Camino Real de Tierra Adentro:

Capítulo 1 - Las Cruces a Dona Ana

By El Bilbolero

As I walked along the Camino Real on Sunday, March 16, I realized La Sociedad de la Entrada needs a strategy to accomplish the daunting task of walking along the Camino Real. It would be logistically difficult to continually bring La Sociedad de la Entrada together to do this. But what about members starting at various locations and walk 2 miles, 5 or 10 or whatever (today was 8)? Walk either direction and keep a journal and make photos along the way. It can be as an individual or two or more. The places we've helped commemorate the Camino Real, or work on that poster, where we got out on the ground and walked, can also be made part of the Revista (Journal). You will recall the Brannigan Cultural Center invite this past Saturday, March 15. That was to join with archaeologists in a public venue to demonstrate hands-on for various aspects of New Mexico prehistory and history. So we attended as members of La Sociedad de la Entrada, and also served as Camino Real Trail Association (CARTA) representatives, as they did not show (we are members of that organization). Archaeology Day is always held at the downtown mall during a farmer market, so there's tons of people there, and thus, lots of visitors to Archaeology Day. We probably talked Spanish colonial to 300(+) people. Barbara and I wore our typical outfits.

The next day was a "kickoff" of the long-overdue Camino walk, starting point at south end was Las Cruces. The book to use is *Following the Royal Road: A Guide to the Historic Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* by Hal Jackson. Everyone should get this book as it is more or less correct, and for you lucky guys up north, Jackson decided to write the book from the point-of-view of people going back south. When you are walking, you find out where he made some errors or mis-identifications. The book indicated "Espina" to be the road (which turned out to be kind of an error, but not by much). As a 'just-in-case,' I asked BLM archaeologist Jane Childress what road or roads she considered to overlay the Camino. She said "Mesquite." The two parallel each other and are about 1/10th of a mile apart. I decided on Espina and went to where it started on the NMSU campus, right at I-10. Yep, nice wide road - the kind that allowed people to successfully U-turn a 6-or-8-up team of mules and wagon - the kind of thing to look for when following historic roads. Started at 1:00 pm with the idea of walking 3-4 hours, or 10 miles. Barbara's support function was to drive 2 miles and wait and thus water stop and map/book coordination for the next 2-mile segment.

What's interesting about Espina and Mesquite is that as you approach them on one of the east-west roads you note a slight rise - a terrace - up off the flood plain. Makes sense. For the first 3 miles, Espina turned out to be quite uneventful - a modern residential zone. So I decided to walk down to Mesquite to see what it looked like and - ah ha! Another wide road but with important additions - adobe houses - old adobe houses. And churches and cemeteries - a big

Catholic complex was "Our Lady of Health." At 4 miles Mesquite intersected Solano, which is one of the big north-south busy roads. But just right there it turned east and on the map, this location was an "8 points," that is, 8 roads intersected right there. Things like that are another good sign of historic roads (I bet that was the original Las Cruces) - very close was an historic sign of the location where Bartlett started his 1848 U.S. boundary survey (later, of course, adjusted). Also there was a high terrace on top of which was a defunct golf course. So the Camino Real came up to and kind of followed the base of this higher terrace. I realized we had forgotten to photo-document the route so Barbara went back along Mesquite to get various photos and I went across Solano to find the continuation, which was pretty easy - on the other side I found a road that had residential green road signs reading "El Camino Real.

Within a mile everything transitioned to rural - the rural/urban interface. The road had narrowed down a bit and I noticed that it seemed to be on the floodplain but there where, in places, it was clearly above by 1 or 2 feet. The actual Rio Grande channel was off to the west about a mile and I never could see that due to all the pecan trees and other signs of successful agriculture - it helps to have such a river close at hand. By the way, another identification factor of an historic road - everything was beeline. The reason for that was the historic economy of stock care. Following a meandering path uses up lots of calories. From the 6-mile point to Dona Ana, you find out how culturally aware those rural people are. In Cruces, I just walked along and no one noticed my 16th Century clothing. But out in rural areas, people kept stopping to take photos and wanted to know what event I was going to - that must have happened 8 times. I simply told them I was an 1598 colonist, not conquistador, and by stopping to talk, they were AT the event. At the approach of mile 8, the hamlet of Dona Ana and Misión de Nuestra Señora de la Purificación (or Candelaria), it is noted that this is a small hillish area above the floodplain. It is, in fact Paraje Dona Ana. The small church is stone and it and plaza are original, though we did not see the usual close-in cemetery. Original - we're talking ca 1598 here (http://donaana.nmgenweb.us/Towns.htm). Out in front is a nice plaza and a bronze statue of Dona Ana. So this is the next location I plan to take off from and make the way to Paraje Robledo (Fort Selden). And then into the Jornada del Muerto. First, however, is this coming Sunday – the Bataan Memorial Death March – now THAT is a walk…

At Brannigan, one of the archaeologists who has worked on the Camino Real asked me an interesting question. "How fast was Onate's rate of march?" I didn't know. He found the answer while in Mexico City translating Camino documents. "The speed of the slowest animal, the pig..."

Mike Bilbo

Mile 3 – adobe on Mesquite

Mile 3 – Historic District

Mile 3 – Our Lady of Health Church

Mile 3 – Suspicious Building Mesquite

Mile 5 – El Camino Real Road Sign

Mile 5 – View East , all of a sudden we are on the flood plain. I think the interface east photo is probably where the Camino really is. Mesquite Road quit at Solano but another road kept on, onto that terrace. So will go look next time. The interface view north is supposed to be the CR (well, that's what the road sign says...)

Mile 5 – View North

Mile 5 – View SE

Mile 6 – Apaches

Mile 7 – Picacho Peak

Mile 7 – Entrada de Doña Ana

Mile 7 – Pueblos

Mile 8 – El Paraje Doña Ana

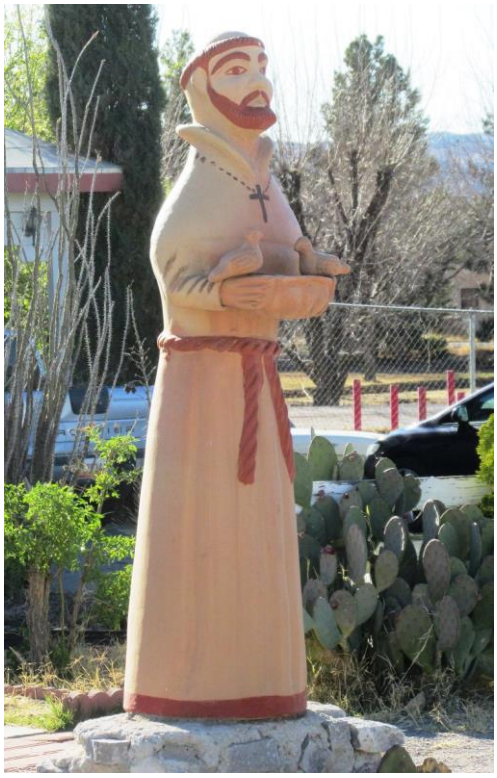
Mile 8 – El Paraje Doña Ana 2

Mile 8 – Mision

Mile 8 – Señora Doña Ana

Mile 8 – Plaza de El Bibolero y Doña Ana

MIle 8 – Plaza Hispanos, socorros



Mile 8 – Paraje de los San Francisco de Dona Ana

Mile 8 – Stone Fortress