

Oct 30 Jornada del Muerto Trailhead Dedication

Santiago! y Ellos! We made the war cry when we arrived at the dedication ceremony. We had been given the signal to move toward the crowd from our little presidio - a cattle tank about 500 yards east of the ceremony. With La Bandera de Isabella fluttering fully in the wind, to give warning to all of our approach, the advanced guard of Miguel Bilbo, Jane Childress and Eric Ernst slowly and cautiously advanced. Blaine Bachman and his wife were stealthily moving in on the crowd from the west to guard against any flanking surprise. But we found the crowd friendly and in good spirits. Blaine's wife (Blaine, put her name in place of "Blaine's wife") took photos.

On arrival an hour earlier and wringing my hands about needed members of La Sociedad de la Entrada, it dawned on me to ask the master of ceremonies, Bill Childress, if there were any BLM employees I could see and there were: his BLM archaeologist wife, Jane, and their park ranger Eric. So I quickly transformed them with some of clothing from me and Barbara (had Jane put on Barbara's thin red wool chemise and gave Eric my morion and sword). Then completed their outfits with Dave's loaner clothing and gear and off we went to hide. Enroute on the modern Camino, Blaine had given me a call by cell phone and while message was broken, I understood him to be on his way and about at Socorro, while I was about at T or C.

The event took place 4 miles south of the Spaceport on the main county road E070 that most closely parallels the Camino Real all the way back to Dona Ana. The Spaceport is essentially at Paraje Alamein. Our current location was a hill called the Yost Escarpment after an 1880s cowboy of the same name. As speechifying got underway, Blaine came around to us where we stood at a portal with ribbon across it in yellow and red intertwined. I gave El Gordo Suisse la Bandera. At one point just before cutting, the speaker Bill Childress turned and asked us which way we were going, north or south and barely understanding his English dialect pointed north. He then said, so you came from Dona Ana? I replied "Donde esta Dona Ana? Venimos Paraje San Diego! ...which is about 10 miles or 4 leagues south (about 3 leagues to a mile).

Bill is the Field Manager for the Las Cruces Field Office and he and the National Park Service director of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (the Royal Road of the Interior Lands) National Historic Trail brought over a giant pair of scissors. I don't know how much those cost but of course I "ruined it all" (not) by giving them my rapier and taking the morion from Blaine's head and putting it on Bill's. Eric and I then tightened the ribbon and I told them to cut skyward from below and thus the deed was done and the poor giant scissors will have to await another ceremony.

100 people attended the event and all were invited out on the trail, which is a mile one way with three nice interpretive panel sites along the way and ending at an overlook where you can see the Spaceport under construction in the distance. At this point the Camino "ramps" off the hill. one-half mile back, the modern trail merges with the original Camino Real and you can clearly see the trace in a number of places. I found an area with cryptobiotic crust and that is significant and a way to verify historic trail traces - It takes about 100 years for cryptos to grow and so 100 years after the Camino had gone into disuse, the cryptos came back. It is a cyano-bacteria crust that brings in nutrients to arid lands soil for higher order plants (<http://www.soilcrust.org> and also <http://www.mineralarts.com/artwork/cryptos.html>). This is actually my own discovery about the nature of pristine historic trail traces and overlying cryptos, and I probably should write it up one day. In 1997 I discovered 15 miles of a "lost" section of the California Trail and found it to be covered by cryptos. Another reason you can see traces is that 200(+) years of impact from the impact from wagons and stock will actually change the geochemistry from surface to at least 6 feet down and higher order plants do not return for about 100 years after disuse. Works nicely with the return of cryptos.

We all walked out on the trail with Blaine and Bandera in the lead. About an hour later we were back at the trailhead and everyone headed home. I came in from the north and left by the south. Point of Rocks also has an new interpretive site and trail. I saw big rocks down near where the Camino was and thought perhaps there would be Native American-Spanish contact petroglyphs or historic writing. But found none, but did find some rock structures, lithics, a possible U-shaped rock shrine (Puebloan) and prehistoric sherds and an olive jar sherd. I also stopped by a geocache called "Paraje" near I-25 and improved it for its owner and put in some thematic items.

On worrying about who will participate, I realize I shouldn't worry - if La Sociedad members can't participate in a ceremony because of their schedules, but we have loaner clothing and gear, we can always enlist people to help as was the case this time and previously at Tome'. Next event is the 5th Anniversary of the Camino Real International Heritage Center on Nov. 20. La Sociedad de la Entrada has a close history with the Center as we helped inaugurate it. Thus, on November 20th the Pikemen of Onate must assemble there for the observance. They are giving us gas money, food &c.

Alferez El Bilbolero. Santiago y Cierra Espana!