

# Follow the Royal Road

## Friends of El Camino Real Historic Trail Site

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### A Great Day At The Fiber Fair

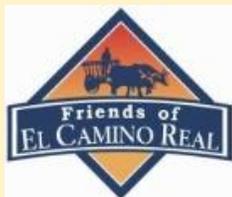


*Are we having fun yet??*

Once again, El Camino Real Historic Trail Site hosted the Fiber Fair – an all-day event on Saturday, May 21. After some really rough weather this spring, we were fortunate to enjoy a nice day for the Fair, and nearly 200 people were in attendance. Those lucky folks were treated to exhibits, displays, demonstrations, food, and “Llamas and Tigers and Bears, Oh My!” Well, the llamas part is true anyway. Local llama ranchers raise them for the wool they produce, which is used for weaving exquisite sweaters, scarves, hats and other items.



Talented artisans shared their knowledge and offered their fine products for sale. It is always such a privilege to buy a treasure directly from the hands that made it. A grand time was had by all.



Photos by Maria Smith-Vega

### A Sampling of the Displays



Beautiful materials are used to make beautiful baskets



Corn Maidens



A weaver's wares ready to be set up for display



Ancient designs interpreted by a modern artist



## El Camino Gift Shop & Bookstore

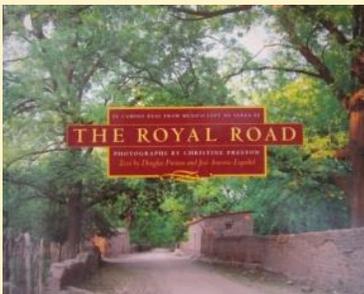
In the April newsletter we told you all about the repair work and reorganization of the space for the book store and gift shop. Now it's time to give you an idea of just what you might find in the shop, starting with the books in this issue, and introducing you to our jewelry and other goodies in a later issue.

The first thing that many of our visitors ask for are books specifically about *El Camino*, its history and geography. They find those books front and center as they walk into the store, with a selection by some of the Southwest's most respected authors.



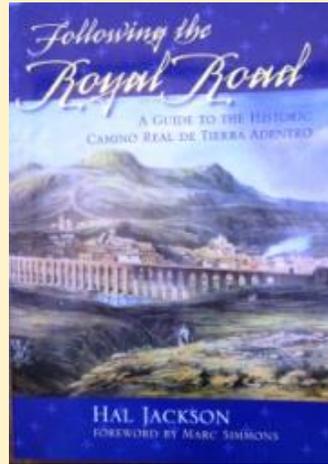
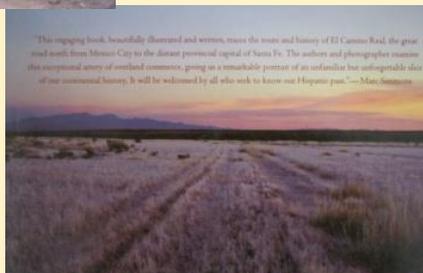
*Books on El Camino Real in the spotlight*

One of the most popular and beautiful is *The Royal Road – El Camino Real from Mexico City to Santa Fe*, photographs by Christine Preston, text by Douglas Preston; UNM Press, 1998. It covers both the route and the history. Now out of print and hard to find, our bookstore scouts are always on the lookout for good copies at book sales and on the internet. Our price in the store varies due to the varied prices we have to pay - when we get lucky!



*Front Cover*

*Back Cover*



While the Preston book is one to read and dream about while sitting by a warm fire on a cold winter evening, our next special selection on *El Camino* is *Following the Royal Road: A Guide to the Historic Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* by Hal Jackson with a foreword by Marc Simmons. Published by the University of New

Mexico Press in 2006, this is the book to take with you when you hit the Trail. It is a useful guidebook providing historical background as well as details and directions for the present day traveler. There are many maps and descriptions of points of interest along the way.

On a more general note, the store has a number of new paperback editions of several New Mexico classics, some of them long out of print. A few examples are:

- The Enemy Gods* by Oliver LaFarge
- Death Comes for the Archbishop* by Willa Cather
- At the End of the Santa Fe Trail* by Sister Blandina Sigale
- Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya
- No Life for a Lady* by Agnes Morley Cleaveland

Traveling grandparents may be more interested in the section of books for children. Here you will find old favorites like *Stellaluna*, and familiar fairy tales retold with a southwestern twist, plus a generous number of activity books (great for keeping little travelers occupied), and teaching books on every sort of outdoor creature or activity. Rocks. Snakes. Stars. Animal tracks. Coyotes. Almost any subject you can think of can be found here. Our book selections run from those that can be chewed on and read upside down by the tiniest future reader to those that will interest the most serious young scholar.



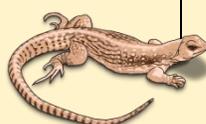
## Early Trails: The Promise and Dangers Of Shortcuts

Imagine, if you will, traveling with an emigrant wagon train for hundreds, perhaps more than a thousand miles. For most of the distance you would probably be on foot, with ill-fitting shoes and ragged clothes, dust stirred up by the wagons coating your face and hair, or in the event of rain, mud sucking at your slippery feet and splashing on you from head to foot. For hours and days and weeks you faced blazing heat or bone chilling cold, depending on the season. On good days, the train might make eight or ten miles; on bad days, washouts, breakdowns, or steep climbs could slow your progress to a couple of miles, or high water at a river crossing might halt things altogether while the group waited for the water to subside. Illness, accidents, and sudden death were always lurking.

Given this bleak scenario, it is little wonder that early day travelers were always looking for shortcuts, no matter how bad the risk might be, and no matter what their destination. This was true on the Oregon/California Trail, the Santa Fe Trail, and on *El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* as well.

Certainly the most famous and disastrous of all was Hastings Cutoff which led the Donner Party into a nightmare of deep snow and slow death in California's Sierra Nevada during one of the worst winters on record. The saddest and most perplexing thing about the tragedy is that they were urgently warned by a group of experienced travelers on horseback that there was no way they could take their wagons over that route. One of the survivors later wrote back home with some good advice: "Don't take no shortcuts." She knew what she was talking about!

The Santa Fe Trail had its own version of a shorter but more dangerous route by way of the Cimarron Cutoff, which shortened the miles between St. Louis and Santa Fe by about 100 miles, but put the travelers in peril as they crossed dry plains with the constant possibility of Indian attack. For most, the ten days or more saved was worth the risk, and the Cimarron Route or Cutoff became the most used route until the railroad came in the 1880s.



The problems faced by travelers on *El Camino* were somewhat different. In fact, they were caught, almost literally, between a rock and a hard place. If you look at the small map on page 4, it is easy to see that the Rio Grande takes a sharp turn to the left (west, as one is going north), while the dotted line of *El Camino Real* peels off and heads nearly due north. The river's pathway was crowded in by rugged mountain ranges – the Caballos, the Turtle Mountains, the Fra Cristobal Range and others. This made passage for wagons extremely difficult due to numerous arroyos which coursed down their flanks to the river, cutting steep canyons and bringing down gravel and debris as they went.

By leaving the Rio Grande and making their way east of the mountains, travelers encountered a wide and fairly flat plain, which was much easier to navigate, but had no reliable water sources for the full 90 miles or so to the point near present day San Antonio, where the trail returned to the river. It must have been hard to look back at the last view of flowing water and green trees, but they really had little choice. It was virtually impossible to make their way along the valley floor.

A rough calculation using the 90-mile distance usually estimated for *La Jornada del Muerto* – The Journey of Death – and modern map mileage from Ft. Selden to San Antonio by way of I-25, shows a savings in mileage of only about 30 or 35 miles. That would be only about four days or so under good conditions. But conditions along the river were definitely not good. For long trains of freight wagons, with large herds of animals and immigrant families struggling to keep up the pace, the time saved and difficulty avoided vastly outweighed the hardship of the waterless passage. For most early *El Camino* travelers, "Don't take no shortcuts" was not an option.

When the railroad finally came through New Mexico, there was still no question. It headed straight down *La Jornada del Muerto*, where it runs to this day. Federal Highway 85 (now New Mexico State Route 1) and I-25 stayed mainly west of the river, more or less avoiding the crunch between river and mountains, but encountering some really big crossings of arroyos coming from the west. It was still a difficult route, even in modern times.

## Friends Website Now Up & Running!

As promised, we are happy to announce that we now have a website. There are still a few places that are “under construction” and some odds & ends that need attention, but we believe you will find it an attractive and interesting place to visit. If you are reading this newsletter on your computer in PDF format, you can access our site by using **Ctrl + Click** on the link below – just put the cursor anywhere in the link, hold down the Ctrl button and left click your mouse:

<http://www.elcaminoreal.org>

Of course, if you have a paper copy you will have to get to a computer or other device and type in the address. Electronics are magical, but not so magical that we can access the Web from the printed page! Not yet, anyway.

## Upcoming Events

### September 17 – Native New Mexico

Celebrate New Mexico’s native peoples at a daylong festival of art, demonstrations, and music and dance performances – and food!

### November 19 – Festival of the Trail

This all-day, family-friendly event features music, talks, demonstrations and crafts and food available for purchase.

### More Future Events – Dates & Times TBA

### Friends Annual Meeting & Special Program:

Those of you who were fortunate enough to attend last October enjoyed a wonderful presentation by Francisco Sisneros, as well as terrific refreshments and a VERY short business meeting. It will be a challenge for us to make this year’s program meet that standard, but we’ll try our best.

**La Pastorela** – One of Socorro’s most beloved Christmas events, sponsored in part by The Friends of El Camino. La Pastorela has been a tradition for years, presented at Socorro’s historic Opera House.

## About the Friends of El Camino

### Board of Directors:

Kay Krehbiel – President  
Maria Smith-Vega – Vice President  
Lorraine Archuleta – Secretary  
Liz Vallejos – Treasurer  
Sandra Qureshi – Board Member  
Virginia Hawthorn – Board Member  
John Larson – Board Member

### Contact Us:

Friends of El Camino Historic Trail Site  
PO Box 399  
San Antonio, New Mexico 87832  
575-854-3600 – Ranger’s Office  
575-854-3679 – Museum Shop  
Email: [friendselcamino@gmail.com](mailto:friendselcamino@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.elcaminoreal.org](http://www.elcaminoreal.org)

### Find Us:



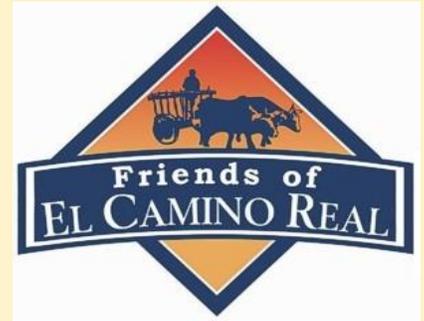
Take I-25 to Exit 115, which is about half way between Socorro and Truth or Consequences. Turn east for a very short distance and then right (south) on Highway 1 about 1½ miles. At the Rest Stop (which cannot be accessed from Highway 1), turn left (east) onto the paved road 3 miles to the El Camino Trail Site. Informational signs and picnic rest stops are along the way to the large parking lot at the Museum entrance.

### SPECIAL NOTICE

Because the State of NM is in a budget crisis due to the recent fall in prices for oil & gas, all state agencies face funding cuts to help meet the deficit. The Friends and staff of the Trail Site intend to keep it running as normally as possible, but it would be wise to call and check for changes in hours or programming before making a visit. We will try to keep you informed by sending out emails to our membership and posting updates on the website.

# Friends of El Camino Real Historic Trail Site

## Membership Application



Memberships January 1 to December 31

\$5.00 discount after July 1

<i>Date:</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Please check here if this is a renewal</i>
<i>Member Name:</i>			
<i>Family Names for Family Membership:</i>			
<i>Mailing Address:</i>	<i>No./Street Address</i>		
	<i>City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Zip</i>
<i>Emails:</i>	<i>1:</i>	<i>2:</i>	
<i>Phones:</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2:</i>	

### Select Your Interests (X)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact me about planned giving.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Let me know about volunteer opportunities at the site.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to receive emails about current events & issues at the site.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to help preserve the historic Camino Real Trail for the future.

### Select Membership Category (X)

<input type="checkbox"/>	\$20	Individual	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25	Family
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$15	Senior/Student	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$200	Business/Sponsor

## Thank You!

Friends of El Camino Real Historic Trail Site, PO Box 399, San Antonio NM 87832  
For information: 575-824-3600

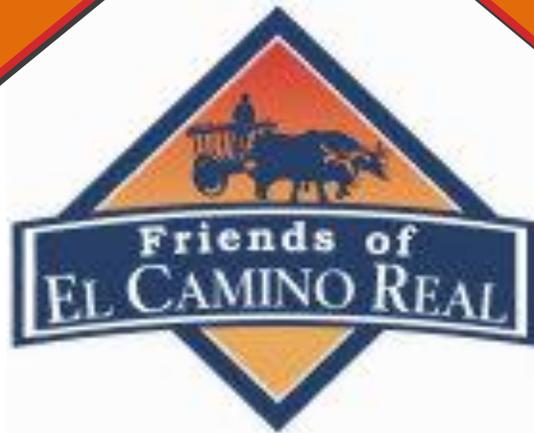
# Membership Benefits

Friends Newsletter "Follow the Royal Road" and Website [www.elcaminoreal.org](http://www.elcaminoreal.org)

***Mission***  
To support  
El Camino Real  
Historic Trail Site

**Free  
Admission**

**Five  
One-Time  
Visitor Passes**



***Follow the  
Royal Road  
Newsletter***

***Camino  
Gift Shop  
10% Discount***

**Notice of  
Special  
Events &  
Programs**