

## The Old Spanish Trail

In 1774, Fathers Escalante and Dominguez blazed a trail via the Cañón Grande which became known as the Old Spanish Trail, connecting Santa Fe with San Diego and Los Angeles in California. De Anza added an extension to San Francisco in 1776 while on his way from Santa Fe to found that city. The Spanish had already connected most of their American holdings by a trail from San Agustín, Florida to San Antonio, Tejas. They lacked a connection between San Antonio and Santa Fe to have a complete route from San Agustín to San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco in California. Pedro Vial resolved this problem by blazing a trail from Santa Fe to San Antonio in Tejas, probably what is known as the **Old Pecos Trail**, connecting all these cities in 1787. Add the three Caminos Real connecting San Agustín and Jacksonville in Florida, Santa Fe and Ciudad Mexico in the center, and San Diego and San Francisco in California, plus the King's Trail from San Luís (Saint Louis, Missouri) to New Orleans, one could now travel anywhere in Spanish North America. **This entire trail from the Atlantic in the East to the Pacific in the West is the Old Spanish Trail.** Many only think of the Western portion from Santa Fe West to California or the Eastern from San Antonio East to Florida.

**The Santa Fe Trail** -- Coronado and Fray Padilla, had begun a new trail as far as Kansas in 1540. Still, a need existed for a direct route East. Having completed the Old Spanish Trail, Pedro Vial turned East to San Luís (St. Louis) and blazed the trail in 1788 from Santa Fe, which would become the great trail connecting Santa Fe and points West, as well as Mexico, to San Luís and points East, as well as the United States, the Santa Fe Trail. The Spanish had connected all of North America as the master road builders. This would become the source for all subsequent trails connecting the East with California.

**The New Spanish Trail** -- In 1829, Antonio Armijo, wanting a way to California which would avoid the Cañón Grande, blazed a trail further North, via the Ute Territory. This, with the connections in Santa Fe, became known as the New Spanish Trail or just the Spanish Trail.

These would be the roadways across America until the 20th Century. There would be corrections and connections to the Santa Fe Trail, such as the **Cimarrón Bypass** or the **Mormon Batallion Trail** but the work was complete. While the Spanish may have used old Indian footpaths in their work, nevertheless the trails did not exist until the Spanish came along. Rather, the Indians did what these Spaniards did, which was to use the easiest ways to go where they wanted by following game trails created by deer, bisons et al. The Indians cannot claim origin to the trails.