

FIRST DRAFT

Remarkable expedition far from failure

Editor's note: This is the first of two columns on the Dominguez-Escalante expedition.

Two hundred forty years ago today, two Franciscan friars arrived in Santa Fe with eight companions. They had spent five months in wearying horseback travel crossing parts of Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. They had covered roughly 1,700 miles.

On Jan. 3, 1777, Fray Francisco Silvestre Vélaz de Escalante turned over to his superiors a journal of the expedition he led with Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez. "Everything stated in this diary is true and faithful to what happened and was observed in our journey," Escalante wrote at the conclusion of his detailed journal.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

Despite their long trip, the friars did not travel as far as Monterey, California, the ostensible goal of the expedition. Consequently, many people since have said they failed in their mission.

However, there is compelling reason to believe that reaching California was never the main goal of their trip — at least not as far as Escalante was concerned.

In a letter dated July 29, 1776 — the day the expedition left Santa Fe — Escalante said he proposed the journey to determine whether there really were bearded Europeans living beyond the Colorado River, as Ute Indians claimed, "but not to go as far as Monterey."

Indeed, the route the expedition took to Utah Lake didn't make sense if the primary goal was to reach Monterey.

Escalante also said the goal of reaching Monterey with 20 men or fewer "has never seemed attainable to me." However, to appease religious and government leaders, Escalante added that there was a slim chance of making it to California.

Although there had been Spaniards in New Mexico since 1598, with a brief absence following the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, a permanent Spanish presence in California began only in 1769.

In 1774, authorities in Mexico asked the Franciscans to assist the government in finding an overland route from New Mexico to Monterey. Dominguez and Escalante were both enlisted.

Dominguez was born about 1740 in Mexico. In 1775, he was sent to the New Mexico province to inspect the Franciscan missions there and to study



DRAWING BY BERNARDO MIERA Y PACHECO

A close-up from one of Bernardo Miera y Pacheco's maps of the 1776 Dominguez-Escalante expedition showing bearded Ute men and their wives, with nets for catching rabbits. The Rio de San Raphael is the Colorado River and the Rio de San Xavier is the Gunnison. The teepees in the far right corner represent where the expedition visited Sabuagana Utes on the banks of Roan Creek. The large river in the upper left corner of the drawing is the fabled Buenaventura, which at the time was believed to flow from the Rocky Mountains directly to central California. Although the full river didn't exist, parts of it, such as some of the Green River shown here, were real.

possible overland routes to Monterey.

Escalante, 10 years younger than Dominguez, was a native of Spain who had come to Mexico City in 1767 and was sent to New Mexico in 1774. He was assigned to the Zuni Pueblo west of Albuquerque.

Although nominally second-in-command of the 1776 expedition, Escalante was more experienced traveling in Indian country. And his letters show he was promoting such an expedition well before Dominguez reached New Mexico.

In 1775, Escalante traveled west to Hopi pueblos in today's north-central Arizona. There, he met a Havasupai Indian whose people lived near the Grand Canyon. He told Escalante the canyon was impassable and the only Indian tribes beyond it were hostile.

Therefore, Escalante wrote to another friar in August 1775, the overland route to Monterey could not go due west from New Mexico, through Hopi country.

Escalante suggested an expedition of 20 men could head northwest through the country of the "Yutas," or Utes, toward California. In the process, they could determine if there were bearded men living there who might be descended from members of the Coronado expedition of 1540.

This was a persistent rumor in Mexico, although Escalante said he didn't believe it. However, if it were true, he said, "This discovery would be of utmost utility" to the government and

religious leaders of Spain.

Explorer Juan Rivera had tried to find the bearded ones 11 years earlier, when he led two expeditions from New Mexico into what is now western Colorado. He only made it as far north as the Gunnison River near present-day Delta.

Escalante clearly knew of Rivera's efforts and hoped to do what Rivera could not.

Dominguez and Escalante found bearded men, but not Europeans, when they reached Utah Lake in late September of 1776.

Describing the Timpanogos band of Utes who lived near Utah Lake — Escalante also called them Lagunas — the friar said, "They have good features and most of them have heavy beards."

On Sept. 30, 1776, after reaching the Sevier River and meeting other Utes, Escalante wrote, "These people here have much heavier beards than the Lagunas... In features they look more like Spaniards than like the other Indians hitherto known in America... It is they, perhaps, who gave rise to the reports of the Spaniards' living beyond the Colorado River."

Expedition member and mapmaker don Bernardo Miera y Pacheco included drawings of the bearded Utes on one version of the map he made of the journey. (See drawing on this page.)

Some Utes, such as the Pahvants living near the Sevier River, wore mustaches and beards when Mormons arrived more than 70 years later.

Searching for European-looking people may not be the only reason the friars veered as far north as they did. A desire for religious converts and new lands for Spanish settlement might also explain why they didn't follow a more direct westward path through the Grand Valley and across the San Raphael Swell.

The friars were partially successful in meeting those goals. The Laguna Utes not only accepted Christianity, but urged the Spaniards to return to build missions and live among them. Some Paiutes also were ready to convert.

But the proposed missions never materialized. After the Dominguez-Escalante expedition, Spanish authorities lost interest in the Colorado-Utah region and its residents.

It would be almost 50 years, after Mexico obtained its independence from Spain in 1821, before a reliable overland route from Santa Fe to California would be established. It came to be known as the Old Spanish Trail.

Information for this column came from David Bailey of the Museums of Western Colorado; "Pageant in the Wilderness by Herbert F. Bolton; "Juan Rivera's Colorado - 1765," by Steven Baker; "Letters of Velez de Escalante," in "The Missions of New Mexico," by Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez.

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Phone scammers refer to Sheriff's Office as trick

By SENTINEL STAFF

Cases of phone scams related to sheriff's offices are on the rise and scammers have become more sophisticated lately, according to the Garfield and Mesa County sheriff offices.

A current scam in Garfield County includes callers asking for money for reasons such as late taxes, an overdue car payment, a loan, or something of that nature.

Callers tell residents to pay quickly through a credit card or debit card or by purchasing a debit card at a store.

"Today's scammers are using spoofed callback numbers to lead you to believe you are contacting the sheriff's office or some other legitimate law enforcement office or an entity such as the IRS when you return the call," according to a press release from the Garfield County Sheriff's Office.

"They have done their research, and by checking websites, news articles and other sources, they are using legitimate names of deputies, officers or even commanders from various agencies or offices to make their claims appear legitimate."

Scammers are using a sense

of urgency to get residents to act immediately, using threats such as arrest or penalties. They place the calls during weekends or holidays when it is difficult to verify claims.

"They may know your name or the name of a close relative or someone else in the house you live in," the Sheriff's Office said.

As always, never give personal information over the phone, the Sheriff's Office said.

In Mesa County, scammers recently have been calling residents and impersonating a sheriff's deputy, threatening to jail people if they don't pay up.

Scammers sometimes say people have a warrant out for their arrest and need to pay a fine by going to Walmart and transferring money or using a prepaid card.

Authorities say if there's a warrant out for your arrest, an officer would contact you directly.

Anyone wanting to verify information with the Mesa County Sheriff's Office should call 244-3500. In Garfield County, call the Sheriff's Office at 945-0453.

IN BRIEF

SENTINEL STAFF

Woman's body in Orchard Mesa canal

Investigators were determining the circumstances surrounding a report of a woman's body that was found in an Orchard Mesa canal Sunday afternoon, according to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office.

The Sheriff's Office received a report of a missing person on Sunday morning and the body matched the description given, according to spokesman Henry Stoffel.

Stoffel said family members went out looking and found the woman, who is in her late 20s.

Her body was located in a canal with less than 2 feet of water near East Danbury Circle. The area is between Oxford Avenue and 28 Road.

"It looks like an unintended death," Stoffel said.

Stoffel said the Mesa County coroner will determine the cause and the manner of the woman's death.

Cops: Father stabs son at KOA camp

FOUNTAIN — Police in Fountain say a man from Florida is in custody after allegedly stabbing his son in a New Year's Eve fight at a KOA campground.

Ovidio Lopez Jr., 52, was in El Paso County jail Sunday on \$10,000 bond.

Lopez is accused of first-degree assault in the late Saturday fight with his 27-year-old son, Ovidio Lopez III.

Police Sgt. Scott Gilbertsen says the younger Lopez was taken to Memorial Hospital with life-threatening wounds.

Man missing after leaving for trail run

SALT LAKE CITY — Police are searching for a former Utah lawmaker who disappeared after he left to go on a run in southern Utah.

St. George police said Sunday that Chad Bennion was last seen when he took his car, an Oldsmobile Bravada, to go trail running Saturday afternoon.

Police say Bennion often jogs on remote trails in Southern Utah and was last seen wearing black running pants and a white T-shirt.

Bennion was a Utah State representative for the Salt Lake City suburb of Murray who also served as chairman of the Salt Lake County Republican party.

Cause of death released in chairlift fall

GRANBY — A Texas woman who fell from a chairlift at a small Colorado ski resort last week died from a rupture of the aorta and other traumatic injuries, an autopsy concluded.

Kelly Huber, 40, of San Antonio fell 20 feet from the lift on Thursday at Granby Ranch Ski Resort about 90 miles west of Denver.

Two daughters, ages 12 and 9, also fell with Huber. The 12-year-old was treated and released from a local hospital, while the 9-year-old was being treated at Children's Hospital in suburban Denver. Her condition hasn't been released.

Granby Police Chief James Kraker released the autopsy results this weekend. Authorities were still investigating how the three fell. The Quick Draw Express lift at Granby will stay closed until state regulators can determine it is safe, said Lee Rasizer, a spokesman.

Zion National Park bursting with visitors

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALT LAKE CITY — Officials at southern Utah's Zion National Park say they're being overrun by visitors, even during the usual winter lull.

Rangers have had to block tour buses and oversize vehicles from Zion Canyon to control the crowds during the holiday season and close the road. Cars are sometimes rushed through the toll gate without the usual

\$30-per-vehicle charge as traffic backs up into neighboring Springdale.

Visitation is expected to top 4 million for 2016, a record. The number of visitors headed to see snow-covered red rock during the park's off-season has jumped by the biggest margin, ticking up nearly 70 percent since 2010.

Winter used to be at quiet time at the park located 160 miles from Las Vegas and about 300

miles from Salt Lake City. But that's rapidly changing, park ranger John Marciano said.

"It used to be a time to breathe, regroup and rehire," he said. "Many of the park rangers have different positions. We are stretched so thin we have to rotate positions."

Some Springdale residents, meanwhile, are calling on the state to tone down its "Mighty Five" tourism campaign focused on the state's national

parks.

"We are ruining our park with too many people. It has not been fun," town councilwoman and park volunteer Lisa Zumpft said. "I would like to see our town protected because it is losing its character."

The crowds don't necessarily translate into more traffic at town businesses, gallery owner Tina Fairlamb said. "I see a lot of cars coming and going, but I don't see a lot stopping."

BLOTTER

COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF



Woman pays for items with counterfeit \$100

Authorities are seeking information about a suspect who paid for items with a counterfeit \$100 bill at Rite Aid, 400 N. First St. on Dec. 19.

According to Crime Stoppers of Mesa County, security cameras captured a picture of a black female between the ages of 25 to 35, who is about 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighing 170 to 190 pounds.

The woman was wearing blue jeans, a light winter coat with a fur-lined collar and carrying a tan purse.

A photo of the suspect is at www.241stop.com.

Anyone with information in the case should call Crime Stoppers at 241-7867.

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

- Paul Linden, 53, was arrested Dec. 23 on suspicion of drunken driving in the 3900 block of U.S. Highway 6&24.

- Deputies were dispatched to an assault in the 3200 block of the Interstate 70 Business Loop on Tuesday.

- Deputies were dispatched to a home in the 400 block of Sundown Drive on a report of an assault on Friday. No charges were filed.

The Grand Junction Police Department did not file a crime report Sunday.

Pick 3 Sunday: (Midday) 6-1-2 (Evening) 4-7-1

Cash 5 Sunday: 7-8-16-18-26

For information, go to www.coloradolottery.com.

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