

## **DRY CIMARRON SCENIC BY-WAY**

**NEW MEXICO COLORADO AND OKLAHOMA**

**STATE HIGHWAYS NM 406 456 370 325 551 72**

**CO 8 18 385 OK 325**

**NORTHEAST REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

**SPONSORED BY**

**EL LLANO ESTACADO RC&D**

**FEBRUARY 28, 1997**



# El Llano Estacado

Resource Conservation and Development Area  
706 South First Street Box 4 • Tucumcari, New Mexico 88401  
Telephone (505) 461-3535

February 29, 1997

Kathy E. Arellanes, Director  
Scenic and Historic Byways Program  
New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department  
P.O. Box 1149  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-1149

Dear Ms. Arellanes:

Enclosed is our nomination of the "Dry Cimarron Scenic Byways" for the Scenic Byways Program of New Mexico.

We believe this route is an asset to the scenic byway system. The byway's unique geological and historical features offer educational, recreational and photographic opportunities for both area residents and the traveling public. The area is rich in both history and legend offering a glimpse into the past.

Your consideration of this route and its inclusion in the overall system of scenic routes for New Mexico is appreciated. This nomination is for approval as a scenic byway route.

Sincerely,

*Bud Carter*

Bud Carter, Chairman

# DRY CIMARRON SCENIC BYWAY

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# DRY CIMARRON SCENIC BYWAY

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed Dry Cimarron Scenic Byway is unique in concept and features. As a multi-state route traveling through Colorado, Oklahoma and New Mexico, it brings together an expanding vignette of history, cultures and scenery. This is extremely important in that the route mirrors the westward social and economic expansion of our nation. To the east the route begins in Campo, Colorado or Boise City, Oklahoma and offers various routes to Raton, New Mexico on the west. Travelers experience high prairie, national grasslands, nature preserves, unusual geologic formations, volcanoes and mesas.

Unlike the hurried travel on the interstate, there are opportunities to leave the vehicle, indulge interests and gain a knowledge of this little known part of three adjoining states. It is truly a magnet for naturalists, historians or photographers. There is plentiful evidence that "small town America" is alive and well, and preserving the values many people are seeking in their lives.

This project is unusual in that so many private citizens, small business owners and local officials from three states have worked as a team, setting aside local interests to build on an idea which will benefit visitors to the area and nurture the culture and economy of the communities along the byway.

## ROAD SECTIONS

(with map)

The route being nominated for inclusion in the Scenic Byway program consists of roads in three states: Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma. The unique tri-state cooperative effort reaches from Boise City, Oklahoma on highway 325 through Kenton, Oklahoma into New Mexico on highway 456 through Folsom, New Mexico and west on highway 72 to Raton, New Mexico. There are numerous loops and turn-offs which allow the visitor to experience the scenic, historic and scientific wonders of the area.

### In Colorado:

- \*Campo, Colorado roads J, 18, G, to Kenton, Oklahoma
- \*Branson or Trichera, CO south on highway 551 to Folsom, NM
- \*Kirkwell, Colorado south on highway 8 to Kenton, Oklahoma

### In Oklahoma:

- \*Wheless, OK county road to Felt, OK on highway 412
- \*Kenton, OK on highway 13 to county roads G, 18, J to Campos, CO
- \*North on highway 8 near Kenton, OK to US highway 160
- \*From west of Kenton, OK south on highway 406 to Clayton, NM

In New Mexico:

- \*North from Clayton, NM on highway 370 to 456 west to Folsom, NM
- \*At Folsom take highway 551 north to Branson and Trinchera, CO
- \*From Folsom, highway 325 south to Des Moines, NM
- \*From Folsom, highway 325 southwest to Capulin, NM
- \*From Folsom, highway 72 west to Raton, NM

The state and county entities responsible for the roads listed on the byway are: Baca and Las Animas counties in Colorado; Colfax and Union counties in New Mexico; and Cimarron county in Oklahoma.

Although the total length of the tri-state scenic route is 120 miles from Boise City, Oklahoma to Raton, New Mexico, visitors have the option of several smaller loops with access to US 160 in Colorado or US 64/87 in New Mexico for continuing travel. The communities along the route include Boise City, Felt, Wheelless and Kenton, Oklahoma; Campo, Branson and Trinchera, Colorado; Seneca, Clayton, Folsom, Des Moines, Capulin and Raton, New Mexico. The zone of influence may range as much fifty miles from the byway in some areas.

## LOCAL SUPPORT

El Llano Estacado Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. (RC&D) New Mexico is the organization which is nominating this scenic route with the support of High Plains RC&D, Oklahoma; Sangre de Cristo RC&D, Colorado; and Southeast Colorado RC&D, Colorado.

In December 1993, under the leadership of Terry Trujillo from Clayton-Union County (NM) Economic Development Council, Inc., 50 letters of intent were mailed. On December 28, 1993, 22 interested individuals met in Des Moines, New Mexico for organizational purposes.

Finding the concept to have merit, meeting dates were set for January 1994 through May 1994 to compile and design a special byway brochure to be published and distributed by May 1994. At the April 25, 1994 meeting, the Dry Cimarron Scenic Byways Association adopted its Constitution. The proposed Dry Cimarron Scenic Byway data was collected throughout the area by interested individuals and committee members.

Fifty thousand brochures were printed and distributed by August 1994. In late September 1994, 3,000 laminated placemats were available for distribution to restaurants along the route. This work was completed by twelve core committee members representing one city economic development commission, four chambers of commerce, a transportation development commission, a national monument, a state park, one mayor and three individuals representing their respective areas. Non-core members who attended meetings as support groups included representatives from



four area RC&D councils and one soil and water conservation district.

Funding for the project:	1994	1996
Branson, CO	\$ 350.00	\$ 100.00
Baca County CO EDC	250.00	
Boise City, OK		625.00
Felt, OK	25.00	
Kenton, OK	127.25	175.00
Clayton-Union County, NM COC	500.00	500.00
Clayton-Union County NM EDC	750.00	
Raton NM COC		250.00
Raton, NM		50.00
Folsom, NM	75.00	75.00
Des Moines, NM	105.00	125.00
Capulin, NM		<u>125.00</u>
	<u>\$2,137.25</u>	<u>\$2,025.00*</u>

#### Inkind-Donations:

Boise City, Oklahoma through OK Tourism Dept. (lamination)	\$3,000.00
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#### Resource Conservation and Development Councils

El Llano Estacado, NM	\$1,000.00
Southeast Colorado	500.00
High Plains OK, with Boise City, OK in-kind commitment.	

\* Individual donors are listed in Appendix A

## MANAGEMENT PLAN

Promotion of the "Dry Cimarron Scenic Byway" will include use of a map/brochure to be distributed by tourism and business organizations and through presentations to civic groups, service organizations, government entities, school groups and individuals. The presentations will reveal a tri-state area which preserves, protects and interprets scenic, historical and scientific points of interest. Feature stories for local newspapers will be developed. Local radio stations will be utilized to promote and highlight special historic dates or current events along the route. Special events taking place in communities along the scenic byway will be advertised through public service announcements in newspapers, on radio and through posted notices. Informational services for the scenic byway will encourage the traveling public to experience the area, which in turn will enhance local economies and encourage pride of place among the residents.

## MARKERS AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE ROUTE

Signs for the byway will feature an artistic rendering of the native antelope and the name of the byway. Plans call for installation of a byway sign every 10 miles along the road. There are 24 scenic or historic points of interest along the route. The signs at each view point will feature the byway logo and name of the feature. Billboards will be placed in each state identifying the route in compliance with individual state billboard standards.

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The Dry Cimarron Scenic Byway Association is in the process of applying for non-profit designation by the Internal Revenue Service and as such will have the capability to apply for and administer grants for the proposed project. Until designation is achieved the Association will use the non-profit status of the Resource Conservation and Development Councils or other local non-profit organizations to apply for funding.

In the future, these routes will be maintained by the state highway and transportation departments of the three states and where appropriate, the county road departments. The local residents of the Dry Cimarron scenic Byway are committed to the maintenance of the scenic, historical, cultural, recreational and archaeological aspects of this rural byway.

## **INTRINSIC QUALITIES**

### SCENIC RESOURCES

The scenery along the byway retains much of the flavor of pioneer America. Volcanic mesas and sandstone canyons add interest to the high plains short grass prairie, which is punctuated by oak covered slopes and crowned by ponderosa pines at the higher elevations. Endless horizons provide incomparable sunsets.

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**GEOLOGY** - Continuing geological studies of the volcanic environment are revealing new information about the dates and physical properties of this easternmost volcanic field in the United States. All three types of volcanoes: cinder cone, shield and composite are found here. Unique sandstone outcrops offer a gentle, colorful contrast to the rugged lava surfaces. Wind, rain and frost have combined to sculpture both surfaces into an unusual landscape.

**HYDROLOGY** - Playas (shallow lakes) fed by underground sources and runoff dot much of the landscape in the summer. Man-made lakes which provide recreational opportunities may be found in black Mesa State Park, Oklahoma; Clayton Lake State Park and Sugarite Canyon State Park, New Mexico. Folsom Falls and the Dry Cimarron

River in New Mexico are also prominent features of the area. Numerous springs and seeps occur in the tributary canyons to the Dry Cimarron River, providing an essential source of water for the regions' wildlife populations. Sites such as Corrizo Springs on the Comanche National Grassland are closely associated with Native American culture, rock art and petroglyphs.

**VEGETATION** - High plains short grass prairie dominates much of the scenic byway. The Kiowa, Comanche and Rita Blanca National Grasslands are located in the eastern section and two hundred acres of ungrazed native prairie may be seen at Capulin Volcano National Monument. Pinon-Juniper is the dominant forest with Ponderosa Pine at higher elevations.

**WILDLIFE** - Pronghorn antelope, mule deer, prairie dogs and numerous species of birds are seen along the route. The mesas and forests provide ample nesting sites for eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls. For the early morning traveler, sightings of elk, cougar, bobcat, black bear, turkey, and beaver may enliven the trip even further.

#### CULTURAL RESOURCES

**PALEONTOLOGY** - A dinosaur quarry in Oklahoma and trackways near Kenton, Oklahoma and Clayton Lake State Park, New Mexico offer a window into the prehistory of the area.

**ARCHAEOLOGY** - The Paleo-Indian Folsom Culture Type Site is near the byway. While not open to the public, this New Mexico State property is held in high esteem by archaeologists from all over the world. The culture dates to about 11,000 years before present.

A variety of dwelling types are found along the proposed byway area. Lava tubes, cave and rock overhangs provided shelter for early hunters and gatherers. Nomadic Native American people moved freely through the area, but left tipi rings which evidence that culture before and after the arrival of the horse.

Petroglyphs, pictographs, and solar alignment sites are found in Picture Canyon, Colorado, Comanche National Grasslands and throughout canyons on lands adjacent to the byway. Little is known about the people who left these enigmatic reminders of the past.

**ARCHITECTURE** - The remains of sod, stone and wooden homesteads may be seen all along the byway. Many active ranches with their sturdy homes and outbuildings have remained in the same families for over a hundred years. Some towns still boast the commercial buildings built in the grand style of the nineteenth century. Remains of the toll house at Toll Gate Canyon and the Branson Jail are much photographed reminders of the trail days and cattle drives on the open range. The sugarite ("shoogareet") Coal Camp located east of Raton is now a New Mexico State Park.



CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT - Little is known about early cultures until the arrival of the Plains Indians, including the Utes, Kiowa, Comanche and Jicarilla Apache. It is known that Spanish explorers traveled through the area in the sixteenth century. In the nineteenth century, homesteaders threw in their lot with the mix of Native American and Hispanic population. The "Dust Bowl" period of the 1930's brought yet another facet to the area. This scenic byway is unique, in that it traverses three states, each having a cultural heritage of its own.

HISTORY - The area played an important role in the westward expansion of the nation. From the Native Americans and Spanish explorers to the current ranching and commercial communities, many elements have influenced this western heritage. Coronado crossed this area returning from what is now known as Nebraska. Vestiges of the Santa Fe and Goodnight-Loving trails and Granada-Fort Union military freight routes remain. Railroads and the wanderers of the "Dust Bowl" era left their mark on the land. There is the continuing drama of farming and ranching, where "cowboy" skills are still evident and in demand.

#### RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Travelers to the Dry Cimarron area will find picnicking, hiking, hunting, fishing, birdwatching, photography, museums, art gallery and antique browsing, boating, camping, sledding and cross country skiing. There are three State Parks and a National Monument which offer a variety of activities suited to all ages, abilities and interests. There is also the opportunity to relax and enjoy the wonder of nature in all of its abundance.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Signs designating the scenic route are needed along the entire route.

There are at least twenty-four (24) major points of interest, which need signing.

There are seventeen (17) miles of unpaved road that need to be improved. Although passable at this time, surfacing would be a major positive action for travelers.

Designation as a Scenic Byway would increase community responsiveness to up-grade and maintain services and access to the area.

**APPENDIX A**  
**CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 1996 PROJECT FUNDING**

Betty Short	\$ 25.00
Folsom Inn	25.00
Folsom Museum	25.00
Joe and Stephanie Layton	20.00
Kenton Mercantile	120.00
Jane Apple	25.00
LaVerne and Nell Hanners	10.00
Boise City Chamber of Commerce	625.00
Raton Chamber of Commerce	250.00
Raton KOA	50.00
Town of Branson	75.00
Branco	25.00
Country Store Capulin	25.00
Carlos Cornay Service Station	25.00
Southwest Parks	50.00
Capulin RV Park	25.00
Sierra Grande Corp.	25.00
A&M Trading Post	25.00
Bear Paw Art Gallery	25.00
Broadway Conoco	25.00
BARA Valley Telephone	25.00
Clayton Chamber of Commerce	500.00

Sunflowers in Dry Cimarron provide  
excellent food for birds  
Photo Courtesy US Forest Service

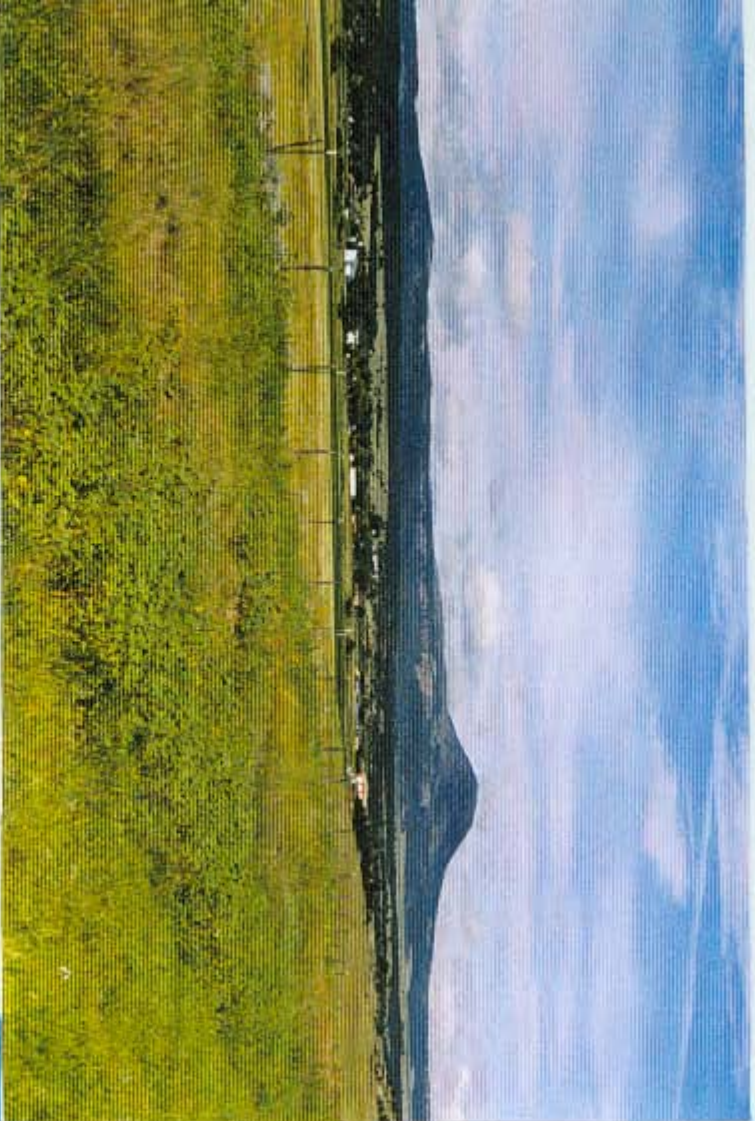




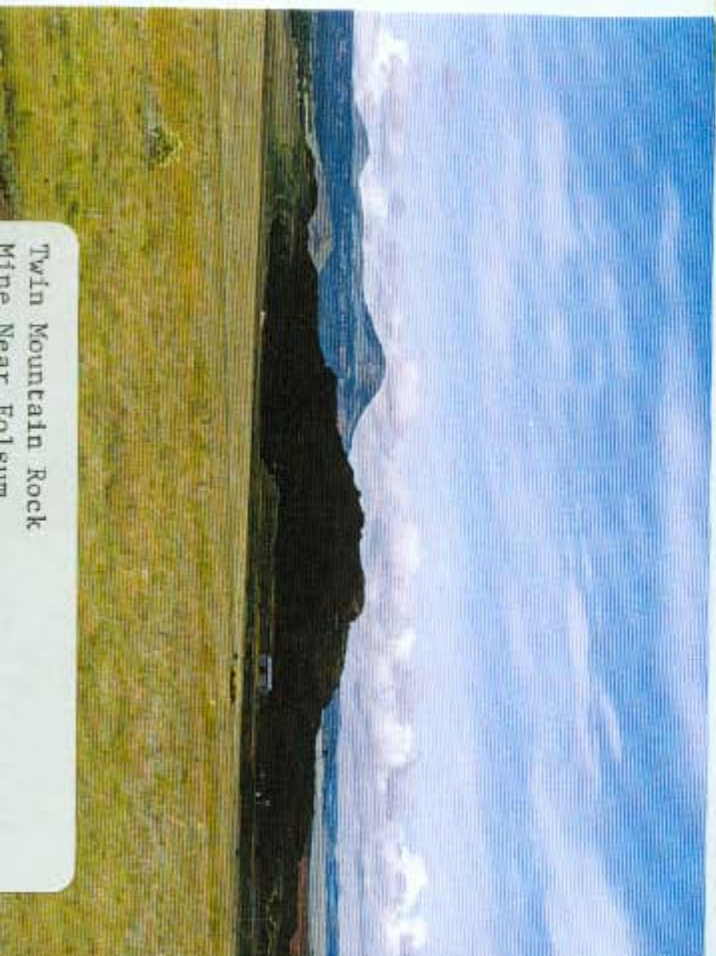


Typical grazing land in Dry Cimarron  
Photo Courtesy US Forest Service

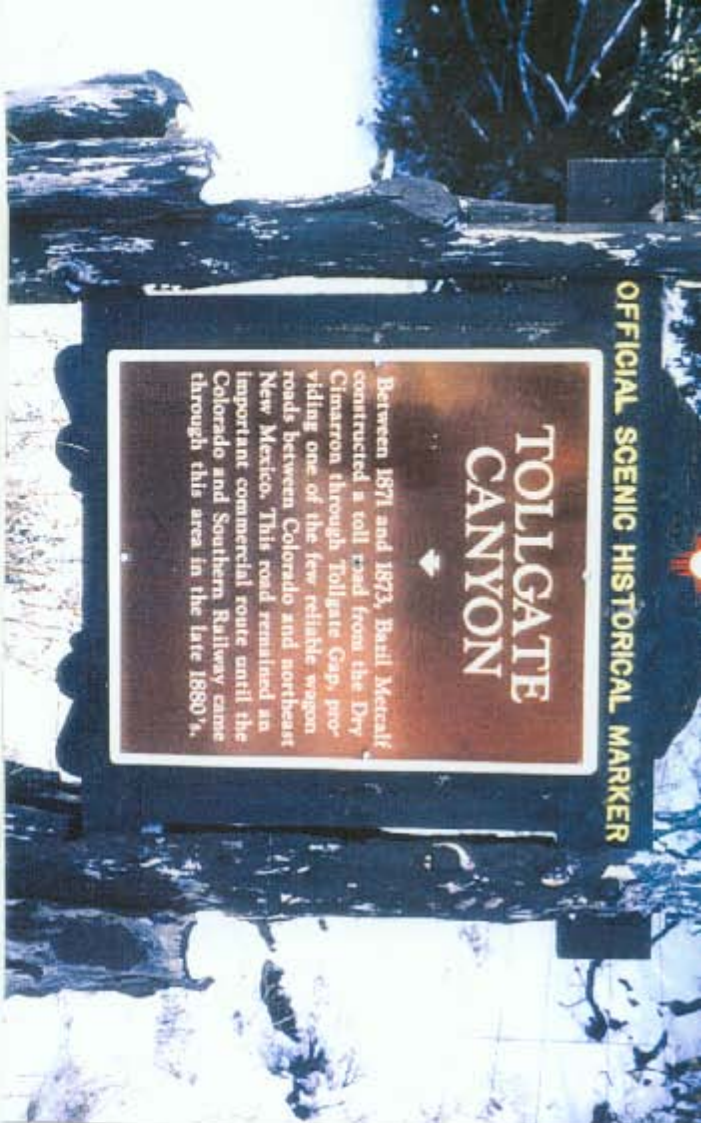




Folsom, New Mexico  
 Photo Courtesy El Llano Estacado RC&D



Twin Mountain Rock  
 Mine Near Folsom



Tollgate Canyon  
Photo Courtesy of SE Colorado RC&D



Tollgate Canyon Cabin  
Photo Courtesy of SE Colorado RC&D





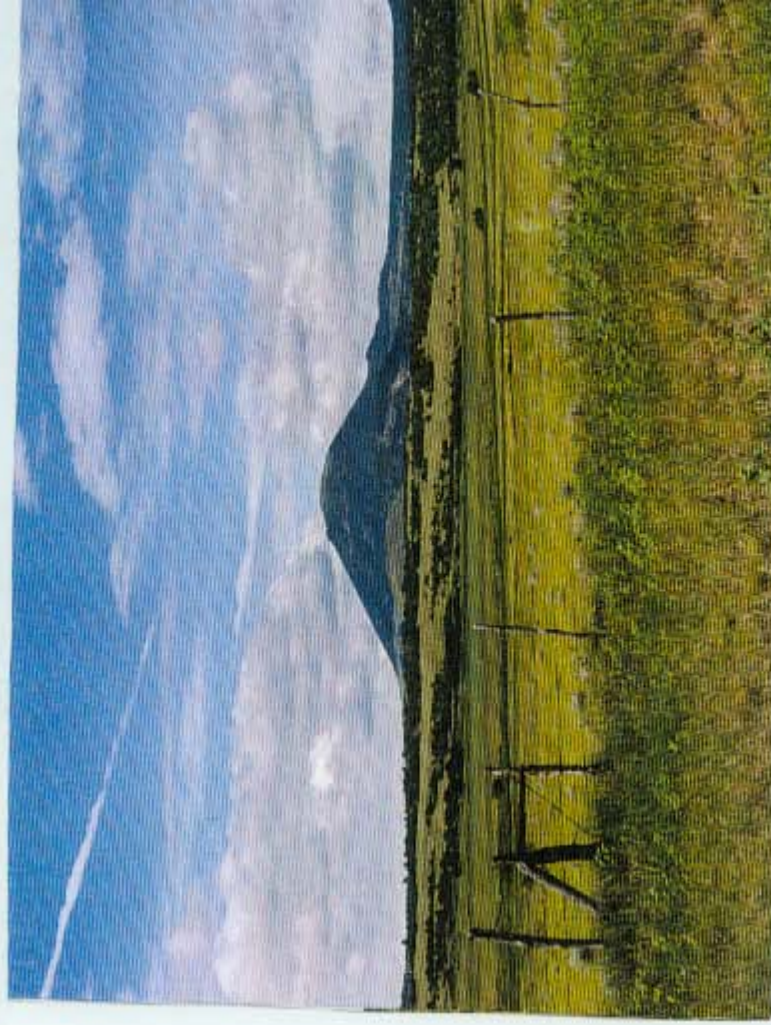
OFFICIAL SCENIC HISTORIC MARKER

NEW GOODNIGHT TRAIL



Charles Goodnight, the great Texas cattleman, used the Trinchera Pass branch of the Goodnight-Loving Trail until 1875. In that year, he blazed this trail northbound from Fort Sumner to near Tucumcari and Clayton. This was the last trail created by Goodnight marking the end of his operations in New Mexico.

New Goodnight Trail Marker  
Photo Courtesy of SE Colorado RC&D

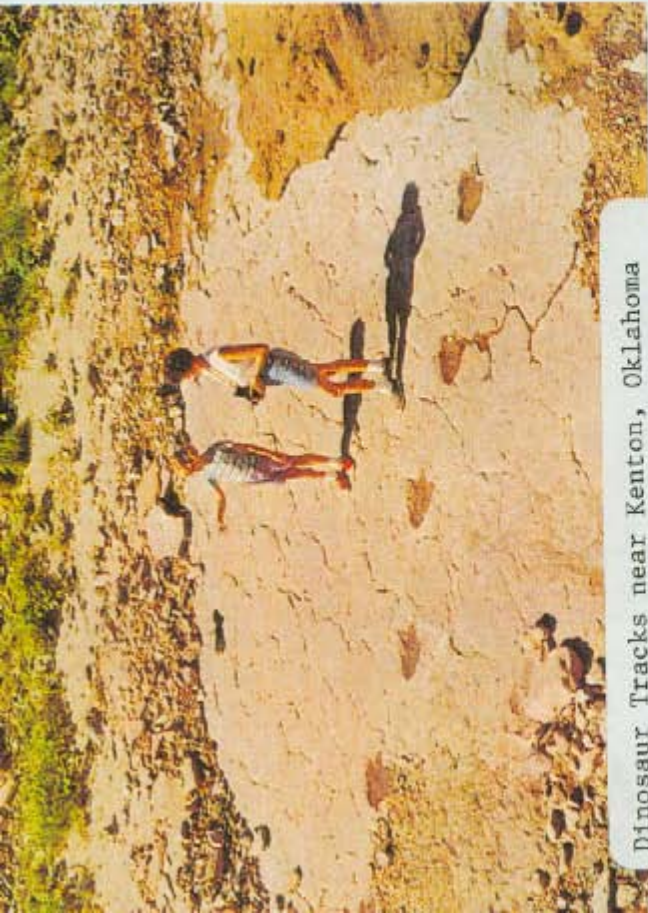


Capulin Volcano National Monument  
Photo taken 3 miles SE  
Photo Courtesy El Llano Estacado RC&D



Capulin Volcano

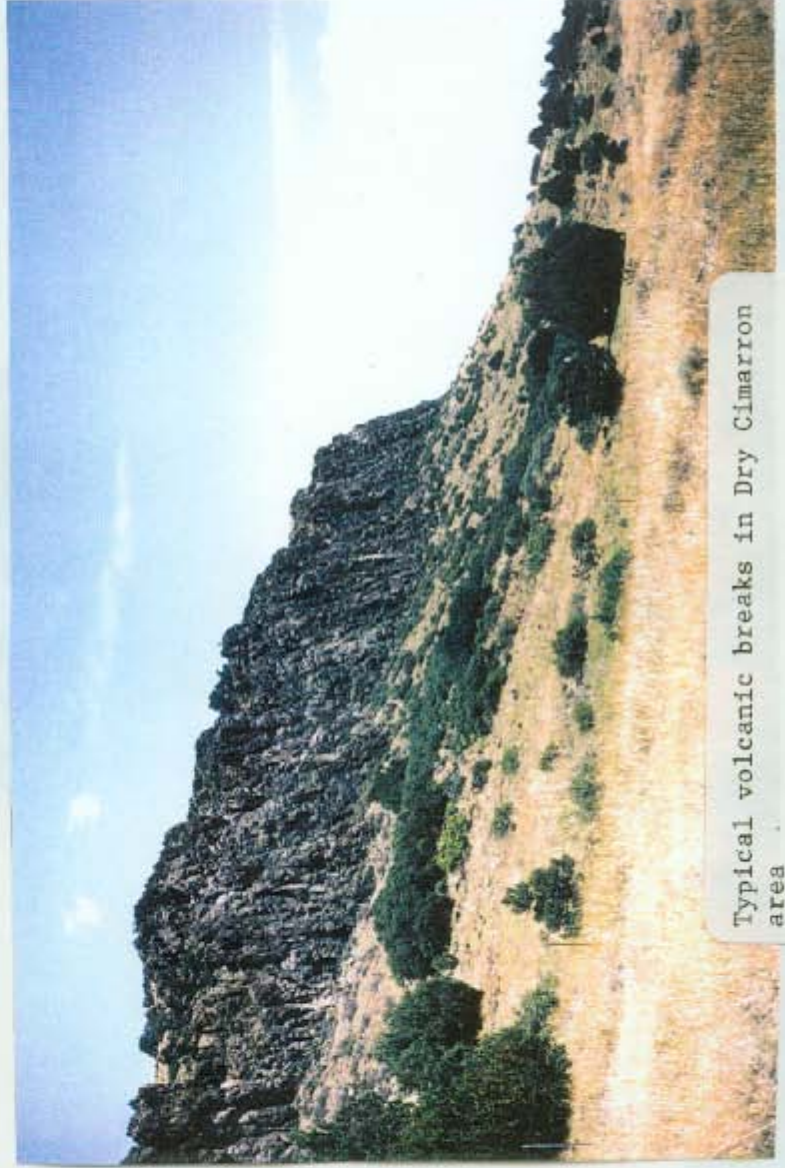




Dinosaur Tracks near Kenton, Oklahoma  
Postcard Courtesy Kenton, Oklahoma



Old Maid Rock Formation near Kenton, Ok.  
Postcard Courtesy Kenton, Oklahoma

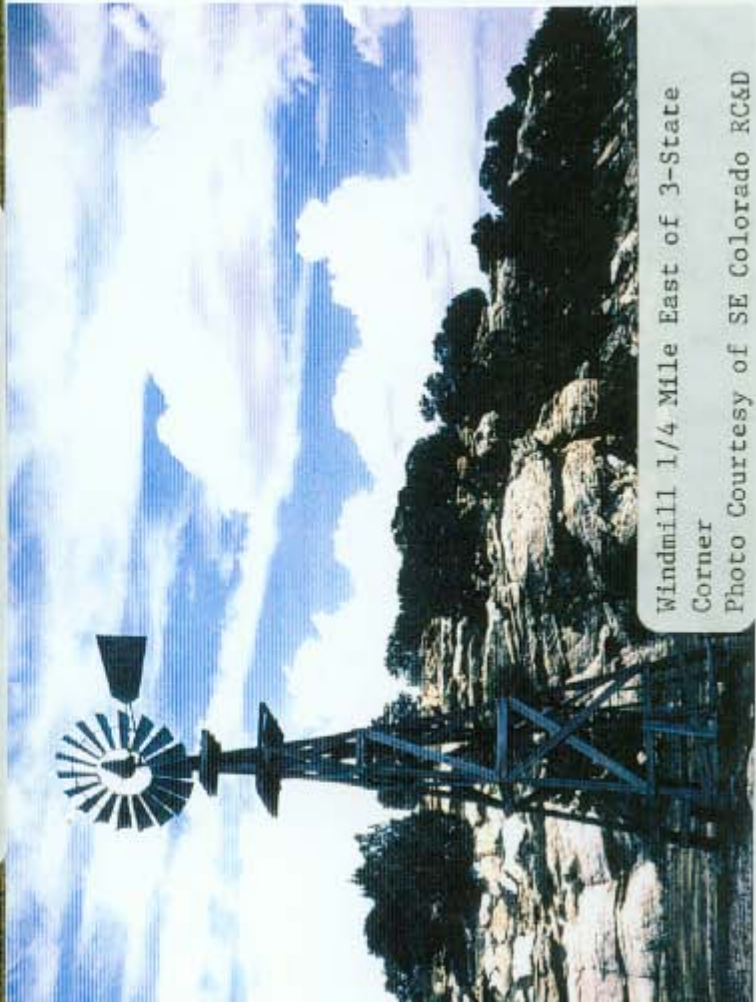


Typical volcanic breaks in Dry Cimarron  
area  
Photo Courtesy SE Colorado RC&D





Sierra Grande, Elevation 8,720'  
SE of Des Moines, New Mexico  
Photo Courtesy of El Llano Estacado RC&D

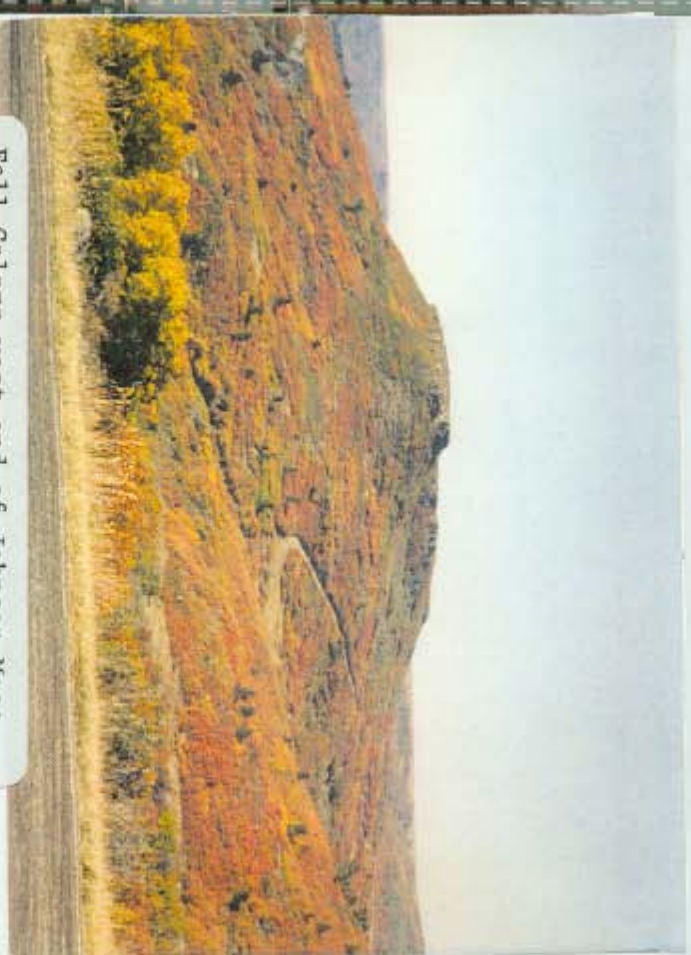


Windmill 1/4 Mile East of 3-State  
Corner  
Photo Courtesy of SE Colorado RC&D

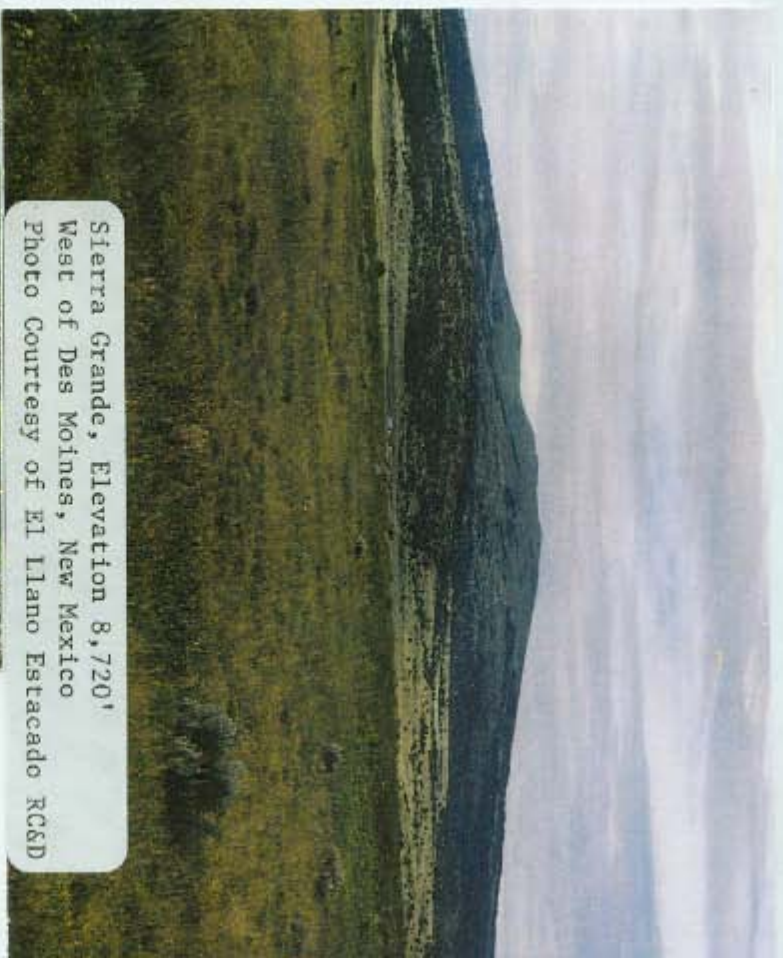


Rock Art at Picture Canyon in Colorado  
Unfortunately, Jackie came later  
Photo Courtesy of SE Colorado RC&D





Fall Colors west end of Johnson Mesa  
Photo Courtesy Ban

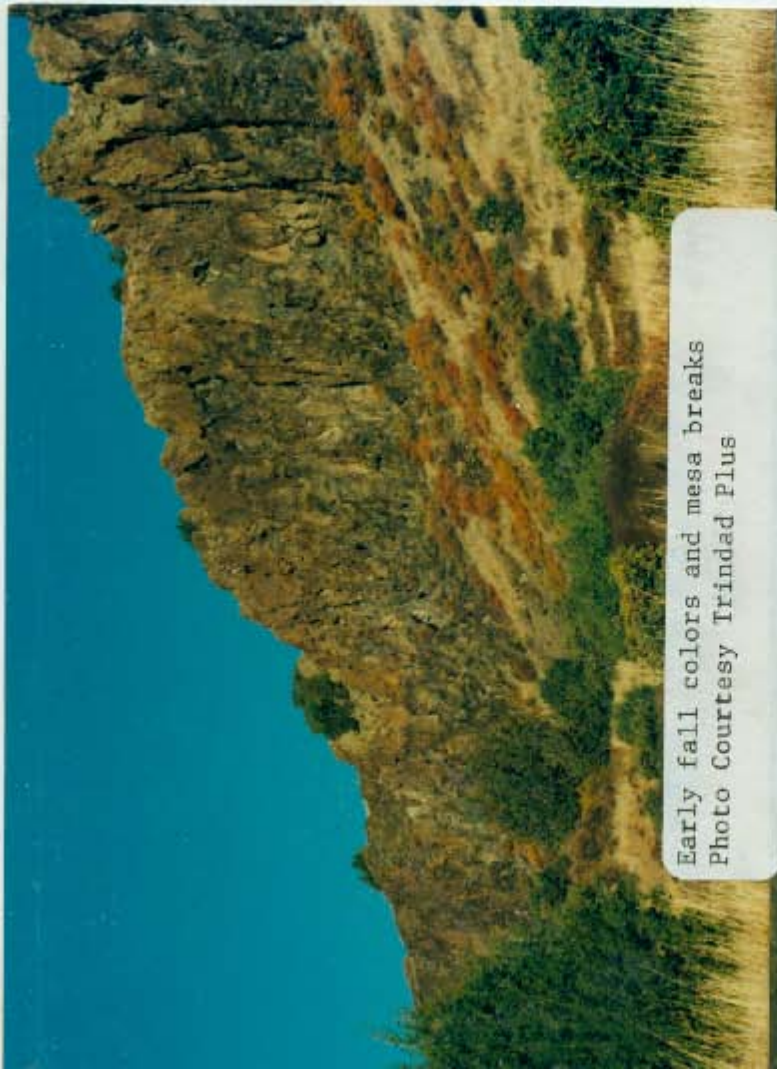


Sierra Grande, Elevation 8,720'  
West of Des Moines, New Mexico  
Photo Courtesy of El Llano Estacado RC&D



Folsom Falls after rainfall  
Photo Courtesy of El Llano Estacado RC&D





Early fall colors and mesa breaks  
Photo Courtesy Trinidad Plus



Farmland, farm equipment near Folsom, NM

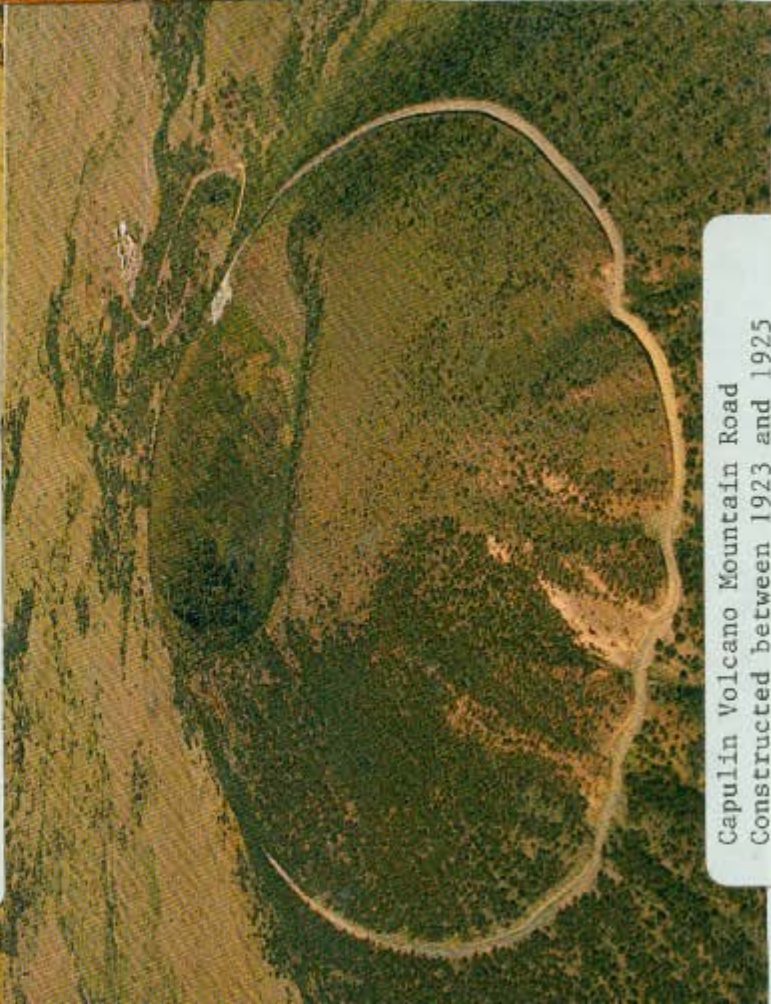


Winter is near in Dry Cimarron  
Photo Courtesy Trinidad Plus

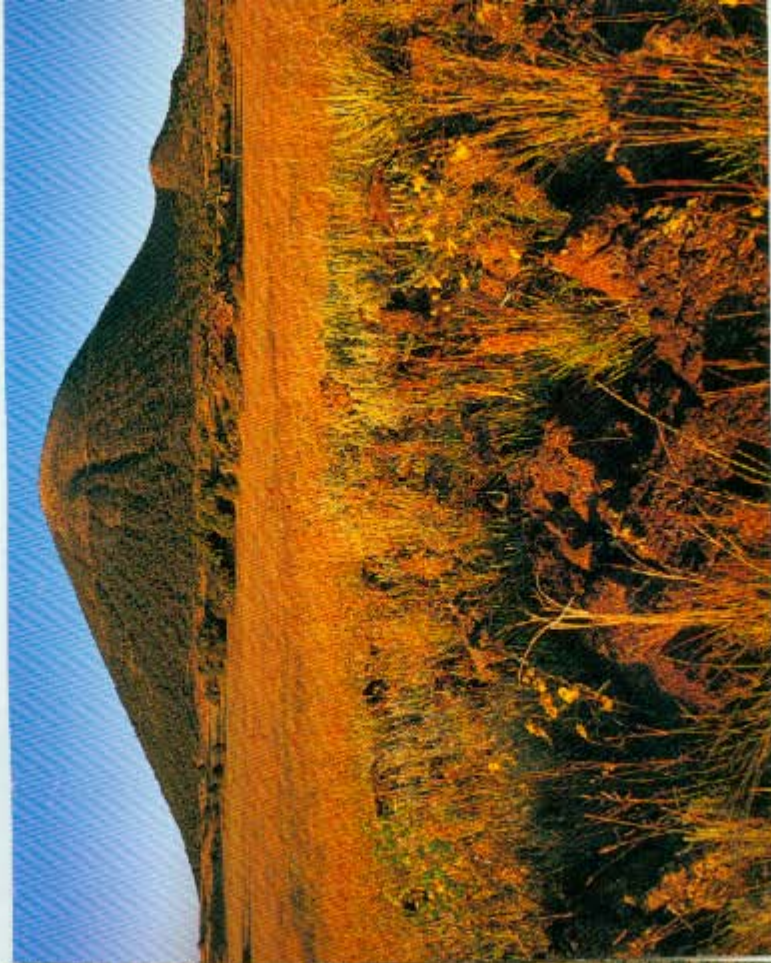




Robinson Peak West of Capulin Volcano  
Sangre de Cristo Mtns in background  
Photo Courtesy Postcard



Capulin Volcano Mountain Road  
Constructed between 1923 and 1925  
Photo Courtesy Postcard



Capulin Volcano Mountain Late  
Summer Vegetation colors  
Photo Courtesy Postcard