

FIRST DRAFT

Explorer Rivera provides perhaps earliest European account of area

Editor's note: This is the first of two columns on Juan Rivera's expeditions to Colorado.

In 1765, more than a dozen men — explorers, traders and Indians, led by Juan Antonio Maria de Rivera, left Abiquiu, New Mexico, headed northwest.

They traveled first into the Tierra de Guerra — the Land of War — a high-desert no man's land north of Abiquiu with few permanent inhabitants but frequent conflict among a variety of Indian groups who often raided Spanish settlements.

The Spaniards were headed to the Rio Tizon — today known as the Colorado River — and beyond that to Teguayo, a legendary land reportedly inhabited by multiple Indian tribes and heavily bearded men who looked like Europeans. They were known as “the Spaniards of Tizon.” The exact boundaries of Teguayo were unclear, but it was said to be centered along the Wasatch Front in today's Utah.

Additionally, Rivera and his party were prospecting for silver, looking for deposits that had been described by a Ute Indian who had recently visited Abiquiu.

Rivera's exploits are detailed in a new book out this month called, “Juan Rivera's Colorado-1765: The First Spaniards Among the Ute and Paiute Indians on the Trails to Teguayo.” It was written by Steven G. Baker, of Centuries Research in Montrose.

The book includes a foreword and translation of Rivera's journals by New Mexico's state historian, Rick Hendricks. Detailed maps of Rivera's route and color illustrations are provided by Gail Carroll Sargent of Montrose. It is published by Western Reflections Publishing Co. of Lake City.

The large hardback volume offers a brief history of Spanish settlements in New Mexico prior to Rivera's expedition, and reasons the Spanish were so concerned about Europeans possibly living in Teguayo. The book also clarifies earlier confusion about the explorer's route. Its detailed maps and narrative make it possible for readers to follow much of that route.

In two expeditions over the summer and autumn of 1765 that covered a total of 1,300 miles, Rivera and his men were marginally successful with their second goal. They found some silver outcroppings in the San Juan Mountains, although they didn't have tools to actually mine the mineral.

But they didn't reach Teguayo or even the mainstem of the Rio Tizon. During their second journey in the autumn of 1765, Rivera and his party made it as far north as the great ford of the Gunnison River, just west of present-day Delta.

But, if Rivera's expedition's didn't fulfill its primary goals, there were still some notable



DRAWINGS SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL/Steve Barker

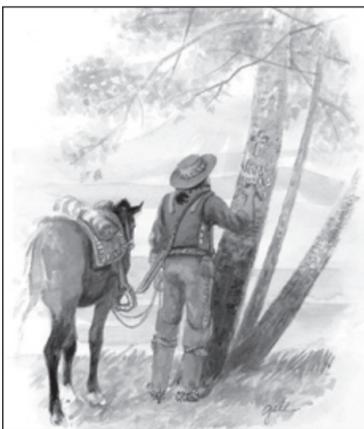
The Rivera company and Tabeguache Utes traded near the San Miguel River in October 1765. The drawings are by Gail Carroll Sargent.



BOB SILBERNAGEL



Juan Antonio Maria de Rivera as he may have appeared about the time of his 1765 expedition from Santa Fe to Colorado.



Juan Rivera carves an inscription on a cottonwood tree at Roubideau Bottoms near present-day Delta. Rivera reported making this carving, and Fathers Dominguez and Escalante also mentioned it.

accomplishments.

For one thing, his journals provided “the first meaningful descriptions of Colorado,” said Baker. Other Europeans had visited Colorado's Eastern Plains and corners of western Colorado, but did not leave any significant record of what they encountered.

Additionally, Rivera provided “the first useful description of Utes and Paiutes” in their home territories, Baker said. For more than a century before Rivera's expedition, the Spanish knew of the Utes, who variously raided or traded with settlers in New Mexico. Prior to Rivera, however, no one had gone to the Indians' lands with specific instructions to peacefully interact with them and learn more about them. His was the first ethnographic reconnaissance of Indians in the Southwest, 100 years before John Wesley Powell undertook a similar project.

On top of that, Rivera's party conducted the first document-

ed archaeological research in Colorado — possibly the first in North America — when they visited and documented Anasazi sites near today's Bayfield. They dug into the sites because they believed the ancient inhabitants operated a smelter for precious minerals there.

Also, members of Rivera's expedition may have been the first Europeans to view Grand Mesa. They met and later traded with Sabuagana Utes — ancestors of the Uncompahgre Utes — who had been hunting on Grand Mesa.

Rivera's trip also laid the foundation for the expedition of Fathers Francisco Dominguez and Silvestre Vélez de Escalante 11 years later, when they sought to complete his failed mission. The fathers went much farther than Rivera, all the way to the Salt Lake region and Teguayo, where they met bearded Ute and Paiute Indians and put to rest the rumor of Europeans living there.

However, to reach Salt Lake, the fathers largely followed Rivera's trail for the first half of their journey. Their writings indicate they had a copy of Ri-

vera's journal to guide them, and members of Rivera's expedition joined the fathers.

All of this is remarkable because Rivera was not a member of the Spanish aristocracy. There was no “don” title before his name. Nor was he a military leader. He was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, but had relatives at Abiquiu, and he had some mining experience.

Yet he was chosen by don Tomas Velez Cachupin, the Spanish governor of New Mexico, to head the expedition to the Ute lands. Although the expedition had Cachupin's blessing and possibly his personal financial support, it was not sanctioned by the government of New Spain.

Within a few years of his expedition, Rivera may have returned to Mexico City with Cachupin. Then he disappeared from the historical record.

The journals he wrote of his journey also disappeared — for nearly 200 years. They were rediscovered in 1969 in military archives in Madrid, Spain. There has been one previously published translation of the journals. The Baker-Hendricks book is the most comprehensive examination of the journals and the expedition itself.

Information for this column came from interviews with Steven G. Baker, and from his book, “Juan Rivera's Colorado-1765.” The book may be ordered through Western Reflection Publishing Co., Lake City, 970-944-0110 or publisher@western-reflections.com. It is expected to soon be available at the Museums of Western Colorado and Barnes & Noble.

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Now that the Colorado House and Senate are done attempting to tweak the state's \$27 billion budget for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1, it will be up to a conference committee to iron out the differences between the two legislative chambers. That six-member panel, however, is made up of the same six lawmakers who drafted the spending plan. The biggest battle this week will be over how to fund the state's Air Quality Control Division. Republicans are trying to cut its budget to prevent it from working on President Barack Obama's stalled Clean Power Plan.

■ **Today:** The Senate Judiciary Committee is to hear HB1308, which would make it illegal to misrepresent what is a service animal.

■ **Tuesday:** The Senate Transportation Committee is to debate a bill to allow local authorities to allow golf carts to cross state highways at designated spots.

■ **Wednesday:** The House Transportation & Energy Committee is to discuss HB1315, a measure that would legalize seaplanes in landing and taking off from Colorado lakes.

■ **Thursday:** The Senate Health & Human Services Committee is to take testimony on HB1336, a measure that calls for the study of turning the entire state into a single geographic area for the purposes of determining insurance premium rates. The proposal is designed to help lower rates for mountainous areas of the state, which consistently have been much higher than other parts of the state.

■ **Next week:** Time is getting tight before the end of the 2016 session for lawmakers to get their work done, with less than a month left. There still are expected to be numerous issues to work out, including a proposal to turn the state's hospital provider fee program into a stand-alone government enterprise, freeing it from the impacts of the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights.

Scheduled committee hearings are subject to change. All floor action and committees can be watched or heard on the Legislature's website at www.leg.state.co.us. Check that website to see which measures are available for remote testimony, and how to register to speak. — Charles Ashby

REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

4 cited while protesting sit-lie ban

COLORADO SPRINGS — Four protesters will have to appear in Colorado Springs Municipal Court for violating the city's new sit-lie ban.

About 150 protesters gathered Saturday to oppose the Pedestrian Access Act, which took effect that day and bans sitting, lying, kneeling or reclining on streets or sidewalks in the downtown and Old Colorado City business districts during business hours.

The four demonstrators who were arrested volunteered for the citation and had coordinated with the police before the protest so they would be ticketed under the ban rather than an obstruction ordinance. The Coalition for Compassion and Action organized the event. If convicted, the protesters could be fined up to \$500 each.

Critics of the sit-lie ban say it criminalizes homeless people who don't have other options.

Taxi cab hits car, killing both drivers

DENVER — Two people are dead after a taxi cab with no passengers and a car collided early Sunday.

Denver police said the taxi cab was going the wrong way on a street when it hit another car, rolled over and caught fire.

A witness pulled the driver out of the taxi cab, but the drivers of both vehicles died. Investigators are looking into whether speed or alcohol played a role.

Family dog survives 300-foot fall

ST. GEORGE, Utah — The pet dog of an Eagle Mountain family is recovering after surviving a 300-foot fall.

The McInnes family said Sunday that Toby, a 1-year-old English sheepdog poodle, is resting at home. The family was hiking Thursday at Gooseberry Mesa when Toby leapt off a cliff. The dog fell 150 feet and then tumbled another 150 feet down the mountain.

A first responder was able to reach him and carried the 75-pound dog up a steep incline. Toby has injuries to his head, brain and eyes. A veterinarian was amazed by Toby's survival.

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Reward for booze bandit

A reward of up to \$1,000 is being offered for information leading to the arrest of a stylish, young Hispanic man caught by security cameras throwing rocks to break the glass front door of a liquor store on March 31, the Grand Junction Police Department reported last week.

The man fled Kokopelli Liquors, 2996 D Road, about 11:30 p.m. carrying several bottles of booze. He is believed to be between 18 and 25 years old.

He was photographed wearing black pants, black shoes and a black Nike-brand hoodie pulled close around his long face. A scarf covers the suspect's mouth, but one

image shows he has black hair with bangs swept right to left above large, trimmed eyebrows.

Pictures of the suspect may be viewed at 241STOP.com.

The total estimated damage and property loss exceeds \$600, police said.

Call 241-7867 to provide information about the crime anonymously. Should the information lead to an arrest, Mesa County Crime Stoppers will pay a reward of up to \$1,000 without asking the identity of the informant.

Activity reports for the Grand Junction Police Department and the Mesa County Sheriff's Office were not available on Sunday.

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