



The Old Santa Fe Trail: The Story of a Great Highway

Henry Inman

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HENRY INMAN (1837-1899) was a Union soldier, veteran of the Indian Wars, author of books on the West, who was born in New York City, and the son of famous painter Henry Inman. At 20 years of age, he joined the US Army, and as a private (later a corporal) in the 9th Infantry served for four years in the Native American disturbances in Oregon and California. When the Civil War started he was transferred to the 17th Infantry, Army of the Potomac, and became a first lieutenant in 1862. At the end of the Civil War he was sent to Kansas, where he distinguished himself in the Indian campaigns, attaining the brevet of lieutenant-colonel in February 1869. On July 24, 1872, he was cashiered from the army. In 1878 Inman took over a Kansas newspaper, the Larned Enterprise. In 1882 he became manager of the Kansas News Agency at Topeka and was subsequently employed on various newspapers in the state. His great interest in the Western frontier prompted the writing of a number of historical sketches of adventure which in 1881 were published in book form as "Stories of the Old Santa Fé Trail". At the time of its publication in 1881 "The Old Santa Fe Trail" was called the most interesting book ever written by an army officer. It can scarcely fail to occur to the thoughtful reader of this engrossing book that the current conception of American history, as gained from the text-books and manuals in common use, is singularly narrow and one-sided. The story of the magnificent pioneering exploits of the Spaniards, and of our own subsequent conquest and development of the vast Western and Southwestern territory which they were the first to enter and to settle, has been curiously neglected. There is no chapter in this story that is richer in the essential elements of romance, or of greater and more absorbing interest to the American reader, than the one contained in Colonel Inman's book. The Old Santa Fe Trail was once the great highway from the lower Missouri River to New Mexico. The first European to traverse it was De Vaca a Spanish explorer of the sixteenth century. De Vaca was the precursor of the later caravans of pack-mules and "prairie schooners," which in their turn gave way to the swift trains of the great Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railway, which now spans the continent, and for nigh a thousand miles of its romantic course parallels and often coincides with the Old Trail. Thus the tourist who is whirled in a palace car over this route is traversing storied ground, where nearly every stream and hill and dale has its tale of peril or adventure. The thrilling story of the Old Trail and its doughty heroes is told sympathetically and in full detail by Colonel Inman. His book has a distinct historical value, and it is as readable as a romance of Scott or Stevenson. It is a book wherein American patriotism and national pride may find true nourishment; and therefore it is a book that every American youth ought to read. TABLE OF CONTENTS I. UNDER THE SPANIARDS II. LA LANDE AND PURSLEY III. EARLY TRADERS IV. TRAINS AND PACKERS V. FIGHT WITH COMANCHES VI. A ROMANTIC TRAGEDY VII. MEXICO DECLARES WAR VIII. THE VALLEY OF TAOS IX. FIRST OVERLAND MAIL X. CHARLES BENT XI. LA GLORIETA XII. THE BUFFALO XIII. INDIAN CUSTOMS AND LEGENDS XIV. TRAPPERS XV. UNCLE JOHN SMITH XVI. KIT CARSON XVII. UNCLE DICK WOOTON XVIII. MAXWELL'S RANCH XIX. BENT'S FORTS XX. PAWNEE ROCK XXI. FOOLING STAGE ROBBERS XXII. A DESPERATE RIDE XXIII. HANCOCK'S EXPEDITION XXIV. INVASION OF THE RAILROAD

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