

# Northern New Mexico Case Study

## Research Inquiry

The Office of the Attorney General of New Mexico hired SHRA in 2016 to research the history of several rural roads for a legal case between a private landowner and several government entities. While the region had long been host to colonial and pioneer travel routes, the specific paths taken by travelers was unclear. It seemed possible that settlement and travel in this region had occurred before the land was surveyed by the U.S. government, and that these were perpetual public roads. SHRA needed to match the historic record with physical paths through a rugged landscape.

## Methodology

SHRA's research began with early maps, survey plats and field notes of the region. SHRA worked with a GIS specialist and surveyor to overlay these 19th century survey maps with patent files, school sites, and post office sites in a Google Earth file. The specialist delineated historic roads on this map using evidence from modern field surveys. SHRA investigated newspapers, diaries, and sketches to determine travel records in the region and to narrate settlement patterns. SHRA also developed a nomenclature to differentiate one route from another amidst a confusing record of name changes. County, state, and federal records of road maintenance allowed SHRA to establish a timeline of road use and maintenance.

## Research Conclusion

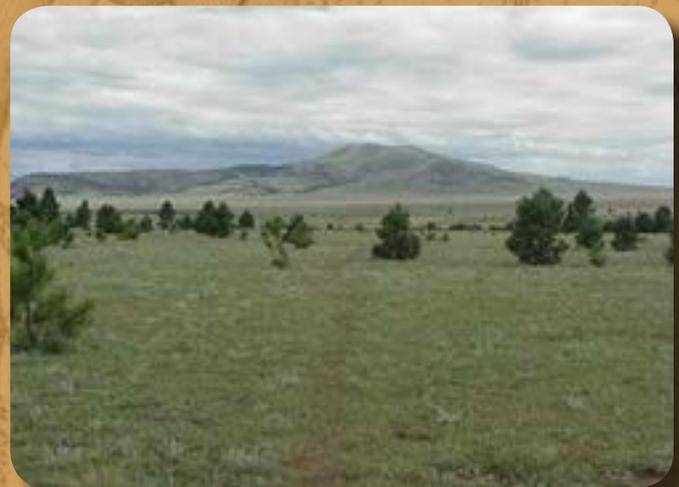
SHRA's research showed a long history of use for several of the primary roads in this legal case. Using a detailed study of maps and careful readings of historic texts, SHRA matched the historic record with the locations of several of the roads in question today. SHRA crafted a narrative report for use in a legal proceeding, and SHRA principal Jennifer Stevens will be testifying as an expert witness in the lawsuit.

## Repositories and Collections Consulted

- U.S. National Archives:
  - U.S. Post Office
  - U.S. General Land Office
- New Mexico State Archives:
  - Department of Transportation Records
  - County Collections
- Historic Maps
- County Records
- Historic Newspapers

## Deliverables

- Narrative Report with Visual Appendices
- Project Database
- Expert Testimony
- Google Earth KMZ File with Historic Data Points



Contact Jennifer Stevens, Ph.D., for references  
or more information ~ 208.426.0206