



U. S. Government Map, showing location of Sacramento Springs (arrow) near Klinefelter.

So they went up Piute Wash, too, and rounded the end of Dead Mountains. Whipple's description is unmistakable. They stopped at the springs there, to which Whipple must have given the name Sacramento Springs, for his is the first published account to use that name. The Whipple party rested there, but went on to a dry camp in Lanfair Valley. The American party was a large one, with many riding and pack animals. So the Mojave guides explained they would take a longer route farther north. By the time the chiefs had piloted the party to the next camp, at Piute Springs, they were on another variation of the Mojave Trail. This route, said the Indians, was better for white men in large groups with many animals, because there were more adequate springs along it at intervals of a day's march.

The more northerly route, beginning at the Colorado, at the villages where Ft. Mojave was soon to be built, was the one which became the white man's Mojave Road, suitable for wagons, and built by Lt. Beale in 1859. Thus Sacramento Springs found itself a little to the south of the white man's wagon road of the 1860's into the 1880's.

When the railroad was finally built however, in 1883, the surveyors returned approximately to the more direct Indian foot path, because it offered a shorter route and a more level roadbed. Like Father Garces and Lt. Whipple, it partly followed Piute Wash from the river crossing and the new settlement at Needles to Sacramento Springs. In the days of steam, of course, locomotives needed water at regular intervals. A well was dug and a station called Klinefelter was built near the springs.

During construction of the railroad, supplies were hauled in wagons from point to point. It was not long before the wagon trails were connected, and a road of sorts evolved paralleling the tracks. This marked the end of most of the through traffic on the Mojave Road a few miles to the north. On the new road there was the advantage of help available by flagging down a train in case of emergency. Furthermore, the railroad had established stations at approximately 5-10 mile intervals, with storage tanks of water for the engines, and telegraphic communications.

Inevitably the automobile took over, and by the second decade of this century, a transcontinental road, following the railway, had been welded into the National Old Trails Highway, the legitimate ancestor of the great U.S. Hwy. 66, and finally the freeway I-10.

Meanwhile in the 1880's and 90's, a mining boom had struck the eastern Mojave Desert. Klinefelter grew into a regular little settlement there near Sacramento Springs, as ore was brought from the nearby mountains and shipped on the railroad. The town was located on the Old Trails Highway. Then the mines closed, and people moved away.

Railroad structures at Klinefelter remain. A grove of trees at the spring offering welcome shade to random and unofficial campers within an ornamental low rock wall is just about all that remains of the settlement. Between it and the railroad tracks now runs Highway 95, the U.S. route that parallels the Colorado River north and south, and connects the several transcontinental routes.

Only in imagination now at Sacramento Springs can we see the Indians and the priest in his dusty robe and sandals, the men in army uniform with their pack animals, big freight wagons pulled by hardy mules and perky Model T's with radiators steaming from their long pull up from the river. Instead huge trailer trucks bound for Las Vegas, and campers with boats in tow headed for the river fishing resorts, and all manner of sub-compacts whiz by the age-old springs beside the road.