Anxious to get on with their journey, the members of the Rose-Baley wagon train did not tarry long in Albuquerque. On June 26, the day after hiring the guide, the Baley contingent, which now included the Udells, the Dalys, and the Hollands, began crossing the Rio Grande by ferryboat. They remained in camp on the west side of the river until Rose got all of his company over.

The first accident of the journey occurred on June 29, when Frank Emerdick, one of Rose’s herders, drowned while crossing the river. This was the first death on the trip, and it cast a somber mood over the entire group.

The next day, June 30, 1858, they again resumed their westward march. “We all left the Rio Grande River, with our guide before us, rejoicing in being again on our journey,” Udell recorded. The first day’s travel took them over some irrigation ditches and through a string of sand hills. The going was rough for their livestock, but because they were fresh and eager for the trail, the travelers were able to make twenty miles that first day in spite of the difficult terrain. That night they camped on a stream which Udell called Rio Pered Creek (probably the Rio Puerco). The stream was dry at the time, but they were able to find water by digging in the streambed.

They were now entering the territory of the Lagunas, a tribe of friendly Pueblo Indians. A Baptist mission had been established among them, and on the evening of July 2, a missionary by the name of Samuel Gorman visited the wagon train and preached a sermon.1 Udell recorded that the talk was very edifying and gratifying to him. Its impression on the other members of the group is unknown.
Unlike most American westbound emigrants, the members of this wagon train did not stop to celebrate the Fourth of July in camp, but spent the day traveling instead. They were not near any well-known camping spots, and being only five days out from Albuquerque, they were eager to get on with their journey. About fifty miles west of Albuquerque they came to a fork in the road; the right-hand fork led to Fort Defiance, while the left-hand fork led to the Indian pueblo of Zuni. Fort Defiance, fifty-five miles northwest of Zuni, was built in 1851 by the United States government in an attempt to establish control over the Navajo Indians. The road went only as far as the fort, and since the emigrants had no need to go there, they took the road toward Zuni, where they would start Beale’s Wagon Road.

Soon they were out of the sand hills and began ascending the Zuni Mountains, a branch of the Rockies. On July 5, they came to a large spring called Cold Spring (Agua Fria in Spanish), so named because of the large volume of pure, cold water that issued from the rocks. Here, they found plenty of grass and wood. It was such a pleasant place to camp they decided to lay by for a day and let the women do some washing and baking, while the men set wagon wheels and shoed horses and oxen.

On July 7, they crossed the Continental Divide which separates the waters that drain into the Atlantic Ocean from those that flow into the Pacific Ocean. The elevation of the Continental Divide in this area varies between 8,000 and 9,000 feet. Formerly, this was a very difficult ascent, but Udell credits Beale with having made some improvements to the road over the summit of the Zuni Mountains that made the passage much easier.

The distance between Cold Spring and the next water at Inscription Rock was twenty-one miles, but because the road was good and they were still fresh, they were able to travel it in one day. That night they camped beside a large pool of excellent water at the base of Inscription Rock. Udell calculated that they were now 116 miles west of Albuquerque and 954 miles from the Missouri River at Westport, Missouri.

Inscription Rock is a high sandstone mesa which, over the eons, has eroded so that from a distance it resembles a castle. The early Spaniards called it El Morro because it reminded them of Moorish
castles they had seen back home in Spain. Today it is known as El Morro National Monument, but is still sometimes called Inscription Rock because Spanish soldiers, priests, and government officials traveling between Santa Fe and Zuni stopped here and carved their names in the soft sandstone. The oldest inscription is that of Don Juan de Oñate, the first governor of New Mexico, inscribed on April 16, 1605, fifteen years before the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock! Early American explorers and army personnel, and later emigrants, also stopped here and added their names to the rock. On top of El Morro are the ruins of two fortified Indian villages.

Although they camped here for only one night, several members from this wagon train carved their names on Inscription Rock. Among them was John Udell, who inscribed his name and the date partially in capital letters, “John Udell AGE 63 JULY 8 1858 FIRST EMIGRANT.” Another who added his name was Isaac Taylor Holland, whose inscription in all capital letters reads, “ISAAC T. HOLLAND JULY 8 1858 FROM MO. FIRST EMG. TRAIN.” The statements “First Emigrant,” and “First Emigrant Train from Mo.,” clearly show that these travelers were keenly aware of the fact that they were members of the first emigrant train to attempt Beale’s Wagon Road. Also leaving their names engraved on the rock were L. J. Rose, R. T. Barnes, Paul Williamson, W. C. Stidger, W. C. Harper, and one Hedgpeth. At least three female members of this wagon train carved their names here. They were Miss A. C. Baley (Amelia Catherine), Miss A. F. Baley (America Frances), and Sarah (Sallie) Fox. Miss A. C. Baley and Miss A. F. Baley were the daughters of Gillum and Permelia Baley. Sarah (Sallie) Fox was the daughter of Mary Brown, and stepdaughter of Alpha Brown. These girls may very well have been the first females to inscribe their names on Inscription Rock. Others from this emigrant party also might have carved their names here, but if so, time, erosion, vandals, or “internal improvements” by the Park Service have eliminated them.

As pleasant as this campsite was, they camped here for only one night, July 7, 1858. Having just laid by at Cold Spring the day before, they felt they could not justify another layover no matter how enticing the scenery. They were eager to get to Zuni and begin their journey on Beale’s Wagon Road.
The names on Inscription Rock were apparently engraved the next morning while waiting to get underway. Since it was late in the evening when they arrived, lack of daylight probably prevented any name-carving that day. This would explain why more of them did not leave their names on Inscription Rock—they simply didn’t have time since most of them were too busy with the chores of camp life during the short time they were here.

After leaving El Morro, the wagon train traveled fifteen miles and camped early that day at Fish Spring. Udell describes Fish Spring as a large spring of excellent water with plenty of wood nearby for campfires, and plenty of good grass for grazing the animals. The travelers amused themselves by picking up shards of prehistoric pottery which they found in abundance around the campsite. An ancient Indian village had occupied this spot; some of its walls were still standing. After carefully studying the artifacts found at the site, Udell came to a conclusion, “The ruins show the work of a more intelligent race than the present inhabitants of the country.”

The following day, Udell recorded, “We came seven miles to a creek, where there is water, wood and grass, and we concluded to lay by until to-morrow, as we were informed there was no grass ahead for a long distance; road good yet. Travel to-day, seven miles, and 997 from Missouri River.”

The next day they traveled eight miles and arrived at the Indian pueblo of Zuni. Because they were driving a large herd of livestock, it was necessary to camp some distance from the village.

Zuni was one of the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola, whose houses, the Spanish had heard, were built of marble, and whose streets were paved with silver and gold. What the Spanish found was a typical Indian pueblo with houses built of adobe, and streets paved with mud and dust.

In 1858, Zuni was occupied by some fifteen hundred to two thousand industrious Pueblo Indians. They were agricultural people who grew corn and vegetables by the use of limited irrigation in the fields adjacent to their pueblo. They not only grew enough food for their own use, but they also produced a small surplus for sale or barter. In addition, they made excellent pottery and jewelry. In the past the Zunis had suffered severely from raids on their villages by the Navajos.
and the Apaches. For protection against these enemies they built their homes with two or more stories. Instead of entering their homes from the ground floor, they entered by climbing a ladder to the flat-topped roof, pulling up the ladder behind them, then climbing down another ladder to the ground floor.

Fort Defiance was established in 1851 by the army for the purpose of controlling the Navajos and protecting the Zunis from these and other marauders. This helped, but the problem wasn’t completely solved until 1863, when most of the Navajos were rounded up by General Carleton and Kit Carson and moved to Fort Sumner (the Long Walk). The army contracted with the Zunis for corn and vegetables to feed the soldiers at Fort Defiance; this helped the Zuni economy.

Spanish Padres established a small mission in the pueblo of Zuni in the early 1600s and were successful in converting some of the population to the Catholic faith (at least outwardly), but despite alien influences, the Zunis were able to keep their unique culture and religion intact.

The emigrants spent a few hours in the pueblo visiting and sightseeing. They found the Zunis friendly and helpful, and they were able to obtain some cornmeal and vegetables, since this was the last opportunity for such purchases before reaching San Bernardino, California, more than five hundred miles away. This might have been the first Indian pueblo that many of the travelers had ever visited; although they had passed the pueblo of Laguna on July 2, they had not stopped. This might also have been the first Zuni encounter with American women and children, for this was the first documented American emigrant train to travel the thirty-fifth parallel route; thus, it was a new experience for both groups.

The Americans found the pueblo both strange and interesting. The Zuni impression of the Americans is not recorded, but it must have been favorable for the Zunis were always kind to the Americans. Among the many strange sights the emigrants observed in Zuni, the one that seems to have impressed them the most, according to Joel Hedgpeth, Jr., was albino Indians. These were the first albinos that many of the Americans had ever seen. Their white skins and pink eyes contrasted sharply with the dark skin and dark eyes of the other Indians. Fellow Indians viewed them as unfortunate.7
The wagon train left Zuni in the late afternoon of July 10. They had to travel four miles west before finding a campsite with sufficient water and grass for the stock. While going for water at the creek after dark, Udell fell from an eight-foot embankment and wrenched his back. The injury was serious enough to keep him confined to his wagon for several days, but fortunately for posterity, not serious enough to curtail his nightly journal entries.

From Zuni westward the emigrants’ journey into the unknown really began. Up to this time they had crossed primitive but well-traveled roads; now they were about to plunge into a land previously traversed only by wild Indians and a handful of intrepid explorers, padres, and mountain men. They would be the first emigrant party to attempt Beale’s Wagon Road. Terra Incognita, here we come!

The road from Zuni to the Colorado River was mostly over a high rock desert and locating water would be critical. The next adequate water west of Zuni was at Jacob’s Well, a distance of thirty-six miles. Since they had already traveled four miles west of Zuni before establishing camp, they had thirty-two miles to go before reaching water. Instead of a well-traveled road to follow, they now had only the faint tracks of Beale’s wagons and a few rock cairns for guidance. They had to be careful not to get lost between water holes. They traveled all day and all night on the 11th, but didn’t reach Jacob’s Well until about 8:30 the next morning. That night Udell made the following entry in his journal: “Wood and grass plenty half a mile off; warm in daytime but cool at night. I suffer much pain from my hurt. [His wrenched back].”

At that time Jacob’s Well was a deep well encircled by a high sand bank. Today, the deep well of the trail period is filled in; deep holes appear from time to time in this area and then gradually fill in, probably with wind-blown sand. Early emigrants thought the well looked like a huge round pot set into the earth. It was a long way down to the water and the sides were so steep that it was extremely difficult for the stock to reach the water, and even more difficult for them to get back out. The water was brackish, but the cattle seemed to like it. After traveling all day and all night, the wagon train spent the remainder of the day at the well, resting and watering their stock.

That evening they hit the road again and traveled eight miles to the next water at Navajo Springs, arriving about 1:00 a.m. They
camped here for the remainder of the night, and laid over the next day. Having traveled forty-one miles in two days over an almost trackless desert, they were exhausted and sorely in need of rest. Udell had a word of warning about Navajo Springs:

> The water of these springs is tinctured with sulphur, and there are concealed mire holes around them. The ground will appear perfectly hard where a person or animal is walking, and in an instant they will drop through, and it takes hard labor to get either out.⁸

As the name Navajo Springs implies, the emigrants were now entering country inhabited by the Navajo Indians. The Navajos did not take kindly to outsiders entering their territory, be they Whites or other Indians. Neither Udell’s, nor any of the other accounts from this wagon train, speak of any problems with the Navajos, or even the sighting of Indians of any tribe while passing through the country between Zuni and the San Francisco Mountains. Since it was summer, the Navajos might have been in the high country where there was better grass and more water for their flocks.

Past Navajo Springs, the next reliable source of water was the Little Colorado River, a distance of approximately forty miles. However, in between there were several small streams which were dry in summer, but sufficient water could be found by digging into the sand of the dry stream beds. The wagon train laid by at one of these locations on the 13th.

They were entering the area of what is now the Petrified Forest National Park. Apparently Udell was not impressed by the sights found in this unique place, for he makes no mention of it in his journal. Some of the other members of the party, apparently more attuned to the wonders of nature, did gather specimens of the petrified wood as souvenirs.⁹

The emigrants arrived at the Little Colorado River near modern Holbrook, Arizona, on July 16. They would follow this river all the way to Canyon Diablo, approximately eighty-five miles. On this segment of the road the Little Colorado River assured them of a reliable source of water. The river was muddy and shallow, but they were able to get clear water by digging holes beside the river bed and letting the water settle until it cleared. The water was brackish but drinkable. The river was also full of quicksand.
Progress down the river was slowed by the stock getting mired in the soft soil near the river. Recent showers made the ground soggy and the road slippery. They were able to avoid the worst of this by moving back from the river. In general, everything seemed to be going well for the wagon train at this point of the journey. Udell’s journal entry for July 18 projected an optimistic mood:

Our large company continue to be harmonious, friendly and kind to each other. My wife was quite ill yesterday and last night, but is much better this evening. I am recovering from my fall. General good health prevails among the company. For all these favors I feel thankful to that Being from whom we derive all our blessings, both temporal and spiritual. Travel to-day, 10 miles, and 1,112 from Missouri River.

By July 22, Udell’s mood shifted from optimism to deep pessimism. He had recovered from his back injury, but now it was his eyes that were troubling him. He writes that his eyes have been bothering him for three or four weeks, but now they were so painful that he could scarcely see to write in his journal. He also complained of an old rupture and writes that he was really unfit to travel, but of necessity he must travel with the company or stay alone and perish among the savages. Although his infirmities were not serious, they were painful.

The wagon train left the Little Colorado River on July 23 at its juncture with Canyon Diablo near present-day Winslow, Arizona. Canyon Diablo (The Devil’s Canyon) was so-named by Lieutenant Whipple because he found it a great natural obstacle to his thirty-fifth parallel survey. In places the canyon is two hundred and fifty feet deep. He was forced to veer north about twenty-five miles to a point near the canyon’s junction with the Little Colorado River before he could cross with his wagons and mules. Beale, likewise, had to extend his survey road farther north than he wanted in order to find a suitable crossing. Neither Udell nor any of the other members of the wagon train wrote of any difficulties encountered in getting across Canyon Diablo. Apparently they crossed at the same point as Whipple and Beale. Udell does mention that they had some difficulty in locating the road at this point, but they finally found it.

Savedra was uncertain where they would find the next water, so they decided to camp here at Canyon Diablo and let the guide, along with two or three members of the wagon train, go on ahead and search for water. While waiting here for a favorable report from the guide,
some of the men took advantage of the delay and went hunting. John Daly was able to kill a fine deer, providing the company with a dinner of fresh venison that night.

While camped at this site, several of the emigrants carved their names on a large rock nearby, known today as Register Rock No. 4. When the Santa Fe Railroad came through this section of the country in the 1880s, many of its workers also carved their names on this rock. Time and erosion have erased most of the names, but on the leeward side where it is better protected from the wind, the name Gillum Baley, with the date, July 24, 1858, is clearly visible. The date corresponds exactly with the date Udell says that they camped at this spot, thus giving credibility to his journal, or at least to his chronology of events. Also from this wagon train, the name of R. T. Barnes, one of Rose’s men, and the name, M. Rose, are still readable. M. Rose, Amanda Rose, was L. J. Rose’s wife; her family and close friends called her “Mande.”

At 4:00 p.m. on July 24, Savedra and the other men who had gone out to look for water returned to camp with good news—water had been found! They immediately yoked their oxen and got underway that evening. Due to the heat, they had been traveling a lot at night and were becoming accustomed to night travel. They journeyed seventeen miles and arrived at Walnut Creek about 2:00 a.m. on July 25. The creek flowed through a canyon with sides so steep it was impossible for the animals to climb down to the water. The only way that the stock could be watered was for the men to climb down sixty or seventy feet and bring the water up in buckets. Udell claims he brought up twenty buckets of water from the canyon, not bad for a sixty-three-year-old invalid!

After watering the stock and resting for a while, the wagon train moved down the creek twelve miles to Cosnino Caves where they found three large water holes, all containing excellent water. They camped here for the night. That evening several members of the wagon train became ill with a stomach ailment that they blamed on the water, but Udell thought a more likely cause was the half-green fruit that some of them had eaten that day. He wrote that he and his wife had drunk the same water as the others, but they didn’t become ill. Neither had they eaten any of the fruit. The illness was not of long duration, however, since they were able to travel twenty miles the next day.

The wagon train now left the desert temporarily and entered an area of cool forest and stately pines on the lower reaches of the San
Francisco Mountains. These mountains, with a summit of more than 12,000 feet in elevation, are the highest range in Arizona and can be seen in most directions for a distance of nearly one hundred miles. On the night of July 26, they camped at San Francisco Spring where there was an abundance of good water, grass, and wood.

The next day they traveled another seven miles and camped at Leroux Springs on the west side of the San Francisco Mountains. These springs were named after Antoine Leroux, the famed mountain man and guide for the Whipple expedition of 1853–54. The place was so beautiful they decided to lay by for a few days while the guide went ahead to locate water. Udell was greatly impressed by the area, calling it the richest soil he had seen in New Mexico (Arizona was then still part of the New Mexico Territory). He stated, “All it lacks of making it as delightful, and, I think, as healthy, a place as can be found is a settlement of good, civilized, intelligent Christians, and a railroad through it.” Today, the thriving city of Flagstaff, Arizona, is nearby.

While camped at Leroux Springs, several of the younger and more ambitious members of the group climbed to the 12,633-foot summit of the San Francisco Mountains (Humphreys Peak, the highest point in Arizona). From its lofty perch they could see almost one-hundred miles in all directions. In the far distance they were able to make out the Little Colorado River, appearing like a green ribbon as it wound its way through the brown desert. High up on the mountain where it was sheltered from the sweltering sun, the intrepid climbers came upon a large snowfield. They were amazed to see snow in July. Someone in the group suggested that it might be great fun to roll a large rock down the side of the mountain. A splendid idea, they all thought! They laboriously pried a huge boulder from its mountain fastness and sent it on its way. They watched with glee as it leaped and thundered down the mountainside. Look out below!

The layover at Leroux Springs gave the men a chance to do some hunting. They were able to bring into camp a good supply of deer, antelope, and wild turkey. So far, the journey to California had been one grand outing: plenty of good campsites; a fairly good road; enough water to get them through; a sufficient, if not plentiful, supply of wood and grass; friendly Indians or no Indians at all; and scenery that was both beautiful and interesting. However, this was soon to change!