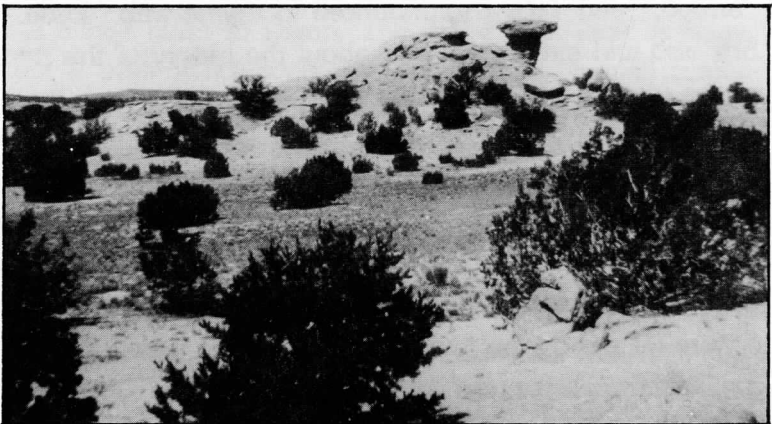


CHAPTER 3

Main Street, U.S.A.?

It took a little more than an hour to drive the fifty miles on an excellent highway to Dixon. We left Santa Fe by driving up a long, fairly steep hill, then we drove up and down and around hills among the foothills east of the Rio Grande valley. Far off to our left and looking like clouds on the horizon there was a big range of mountains named the "Jemez." Quite close to us on our right was another range called Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) because at sunset the ridge is blood red. Most of the range was snow covered and dotted with evergreen trees but some peaks were too steep and rocky to have either vegetation or snow. Those in the distance looked all white with pink, lavender, and gold edges. On one peak a rock formation resembled the head of a horse. On another there was a big "S." Not far from Santa Fe we passed a sandstone formation that looked like a camel resting in the desert.



Camel Rock

There were several old villages in the valley, but the highway did not go through them. We were in the foothills until we reached a canyon and the highway was forced to follow close to the Rio Grande. The river seemed to have a swift current, and there were some rapids although it was not very big. Dr. Bowen said it would be much bigger in the spring when the snows melted and the spring runoff filled all the streams.

As we drove along, Dr. Bowen asked me numerous questions about what I had done at Woman's Hospital and wanted to know everything *new* in obstetrics. When I told her about Kielland forceps—the indication for use and the technique for applying them—she said she thought the hospital should have some and she would order them right away. She did just that, and it was not long before I needed them.

She told me that in Spanish the top of a plateau is called a "mesa" (pronounced mā' sa), a wash is called an "arroyo," and Taos is pronounced to rhyme with "louse." She also told me a great deal about the history of this part of the country.

Coronado and his expedition explored this area in 1540. The first permanent settlement was established by the Spanish in 1598, more than twenty years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. After being part of the Spanish empire for more than two hundred and fifty years, in 1846 it became part of the United States by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo which ended the war between the

United States and Mexico. Under the terms of the treaty, all of Texas, all of California, and all of the land between was ceded to the United States. This included what is now New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada, along with parts of Wyoming and Colorado.

This northern part of the territory, so far from the central government, had always been neglected. It took more than a year for a message from Santa Fe to get to Spain and back and at least six weeks for one to go by ox cart from Santa Fe to Mexico City. When the area became the U.S. Territory of New Mexico in 1846, the U.S. Congress continued to neglect the education and welfare of its scattered inhabitants. Soon after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo was signed, American settlers began to move in and with them came Protestant missionaries who established schools.¹

When we reached Embudo River, a tributary of the Rio Grande, we turned east off the main highway on to a side road. This road followed along the river for much of the one and a half miles to Dixon. The entire area took its name from a peak which looks like an embudo (funnel) turned upside down. Originally the plaza (village) was called Embudo, but in 1902 the name had been changed to Dixon, in honor of the Plaza's first Postmaster. The village was located in a valley about one and half miles wide and five or six miles long.

¹ For a history of Protestantism and Presbyterian missions in New Mexico and Colorado, see *Sowers Went Forth* by Ruth K. Barber and Edith J. Agnew published in 1981 by the Menaul Historical Library of the Southwest, 301 Menaul Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107.

The houses were adobe, some with flat roofs and some with pitched roofs covered with corrugated metal. They were strung out along the river and the narrow, twisty, unpaved main street. Nearly every house had a window full of bright red geraniums. Children, chickens, and dogs wandered on the street completely unconcerned about the little traffic. It certainly did not look like it could be part of the United States, and I was surprised to see the American flag flying over the Post Office building.