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# Crossings

## Women on the Santa Fe Trail

Frances Levine

The Santa Fe Trail has a special allure in southwestern history—it was a road of lucrative commerce, military expansion, and great adventure. Because these themes are connected with the Santa Fe Trail in the American imagination, however, the trail is not often associated with stories of women. *Crossings* tells the personal stories of several women who made the journey, showing how they were involved with and affected by Santa Fe Trail trade. The Santa Fe Trail was a nexus of nations and cultures, connecting the northern frontier of newly formed Mexico with the quickly expanding western United States, as well as with the many Indigenous nations whose traditional lands it crossed. With her attention on women, Frances Levine enriches our understanding of the Santa Fe Trail and shows how interregional trade affected society, politics, and culture.

Through diaries, letters, and firsthand accounts, Levine seeks to understand the experiences of women who journeyed from St. Louis to Santa Fe, as well as some who made an eastward crossing. *Crossings* focuses on women who traveled during the most crucial period of Santa Fe Trail trade from the early 1820s to the later 1870s, ending as railroads made cross-continental movement a safer and more leisurely experience for travelers. Several of the women made multiple crossings, adding to the depth of their observations of the changing country and dispelling the myth of women in this period as averse to the risks of trail life.

*Crossings* introduces readers to the stories of women such as the Comanche captive María Rosa Villalpando; Carmel Benavides Robidoux and Kit Carson's half-Arapaho daughter Adaline, both of whose lives were dramatically impacted by American expansion; suffragist Julia Anna Archibald Holmes; Kate Messervy Kingsbury, who sought health on the trail west; diarist Susan Shelby Magoffin and her enslaved servant Jane; army wife Anna Maria De Camp Morris; Jewish pioneers Betty and Flora Spiegelberg; and many others. As an expert guide to the people of the Santa Fe Trail, Frances Levine has curated a view of the American West that gives voice to many of the women who made this journey.

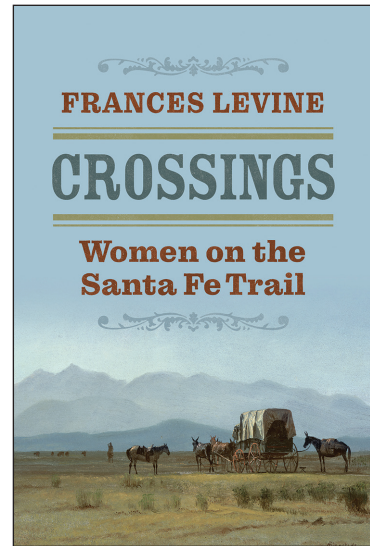
**Frances Levine** is the former president and CEO of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis. She also served as the director of the New Mexico History Museum and the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe.

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“There is no more storied American passage than the Santa Fe Trail, and no better guide to the history of the route than Frances Levine. In *Crossings*, Levine brings her wealth of knowledge to illuminate the lives of diverse women who traveled and women who waited. Her engrossing narrative is an indispensable contribution to our understanding of the people, places, and ideas that made the American West.”

**Virginia Scharff**, coauthor of *Home Lands: How Women Made the West*

“Frances Levine invites us to step into the *Crossings*. Who you find in the passages may surprise and challenge you, but they will also inspire you. These are no ordinary people—captives, companions, and catalysts—but they stand among those that history has forgotten, lives obscured in part by the male figures that loomed large in their lives, but also silenced by those creating the imprints from which history is recorded.”

**Estevan Rael-Gálvez**, executive director of Native Bound Unbound

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“What an engaging collection of fascinating stories, allowing us to meet several women and the men associated with them in their travels on the Santa Fe Trail. A lively account of the convergence of cultures, spotlighting the symbiotic and sometimes conflicted relationships that developed. You’ll find it most entertaining, informative, and enjoyable!”

**Dave Kendall**, executive producer, Prairie Hollow Productions and *The Road to Santa Fe*

“Steel rails put an end to the Santa Fe Trail more than one hundred and forty years ago, but in this important work, Fran Levine shows us that there’s still much to learn about this fabled road and its legacy. Through the lives of the trail-traveling women she ably explores, we are given unique windows not only into a swirling era of US westward expansion but the equally fascinating human experience.”

**Mark Lee Gardner**, author of *The Earth Is All That Lasts: Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and the Last Stand of the Great Sioux Nation*

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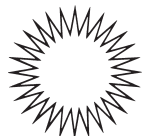
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