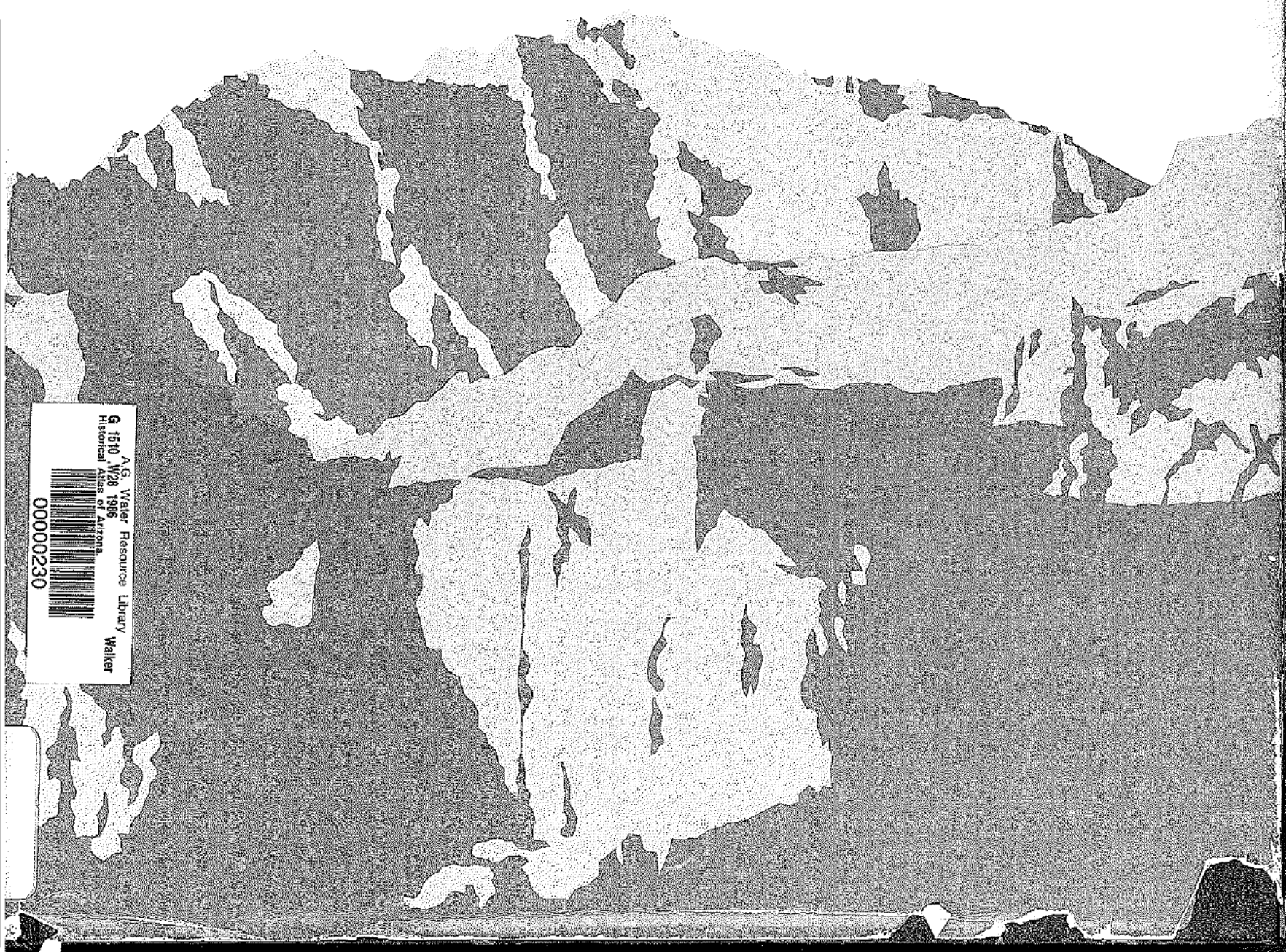


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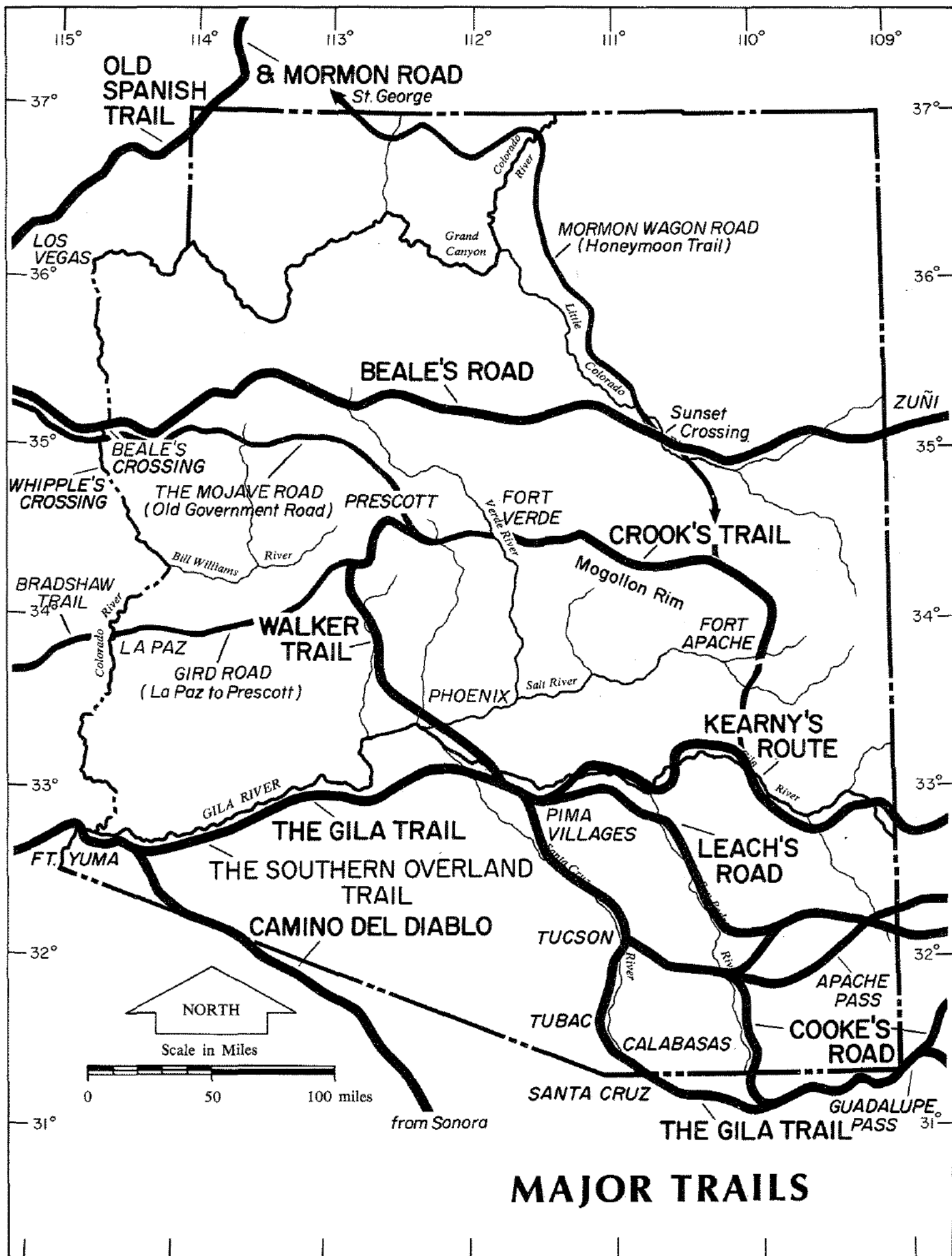
Second Edition

Historical Atlas of Arizona

By Henry P. Walker and Don Bufkin



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MAJOR TRAILS

40. MAJOR TRAILS

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY of the westward movement in the United States the lines of travel followed, for the most part, trails already established by the Indians. West of the one hundredth meridian these trails followed rivers such as the Platte or marched from one water hole to the next.

The Southern Overland Trail, with its many variants, was one of those that ran between reliable sources of water. Portions of this trail were known to the Spaniards as early as the 1700's, when Apache Pass was known as Puerto del Dado, the Gate of the Die; undoubtedly reflecting the gamble one took in passing through this stronghold of the Chiricahua Apaches.

During the Mexican War, Colonel Stephen W. Kearny led the Army of the West over a trail, well known to the mountain men (Map 17), along the Gila River all the way across Arizona. This trail was known to be unsuited for wagons, so Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, who had orders to build a wagon road from the Rio Grande to California, blazed a new trail farther to the south (Map 18).

During the Gold Rush of 1849 many parties of emigrants used various branches of the southern trail—through Janos and Fronteras in northern Mexico or through Apache Pass, as well as Cooke's Wagon Road.

To make travel easier, the federal government appropriated money for the surveying, marking, and improvement of wagon roads. In 1857-59 James B. Leach supervised the work on the El Paso and Fort Yuma Wagon Road—generally referred to as Leach's Wagon Road. This road followed the line

of Parke's railroad survey (Map 23), with one notable exception. On reaching the San Pedro River from the east, the road turned north, striking the Gila River about fifteen miles below the junction of the San Pedro and the Gila. While this line saved some thirty miles, it bypassed Tucson, much to the disgust of the residents. Local newspapers commented that many of the water tanks on the road were so constructed that water could not possibly flow into them. This section of the road was little used by travelers, who preferred to stop in Tucson.

Another thought behind the wagon roads was that the route of a wagon road might be converted into a railroad line. Edward F. Beale was sent out to build a road generally along the line surveyed by Captain Amiel W. Whipple in 1853-54 (Map 23). As Beale approached the Colorado River he deviated from Whipple's line by holding directly west instead of swinging south and west along Bill Williams River. This road was followed by a few California-bound parties, most notably the Rose party (Map 38).

A north-south trail was pioneered by James R. Walker and his party of prospectors in 1863. Leaving the Pima Villages, the trail struck out northwesterly to the Hassayampa River, followed that stream to its headwaters, and crossed the Bradshaw Mountains to Prescott. This trail was followed by freighters and stagecoaches.

To shorten the line of communications between Fort Apache and Fort Verde (Map 37), General George Crook had a rough wagon road cut up and along the Mogollon Rim in 1874. This trail, rough as it was, reduced the distance between the two posts by about 50 per cent.