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Review of On the Santa Fe Trail

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illustrative of the genre's conventions. Because they are excerpts from memoirs, diaries, letters, and reports, not all of the narratives begin with customary preambles, but most of them concur otherwise in their focus on provisions, weather, dangers, routines, checkpoints, and strangers. Generally very terse, these narratives neglect landscape description.

Marc Simmons's introduction compares caravan narratives of the exotic East with narratives like these of the frontier West. His introduction guides the reader to detect how a region of four or five states was formed in part by the existence of such a trail, as well as by the conditions that led to the development of the trail. The introduction also comments on travelers' perceptions of the Indians, and it closes with an account of the advance of technology—the railroad—that made the caravan trail obsolete. Biographical sketches that introduce each document give essential information about the informants and their narratives. A map and appendices provide context.

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On the Santa Fe Trail. Edited by Marc Simmons. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986. Illustrations, appendices, recommended readings, index. ix + 149 pp. \$19.95 cloth, \$7.95 paper.

Twelve sketches populate this pleasant little volume about overland travel between central Missouri and central New Mexico from the 1840s through the 1860s. The informants include teenagers, military and government workers, an aristocrat, a European immigrant, an agent, and a peon. These travelers tell about hardships and danger as they crossed the "vast wild plain" in the years before 1880, when the railroad finally reached Santa Fe.

The editor finds that this "chronicle of the trail" has acquired the dreamlike "mix of illusion and stark reality" that characterizes "pioneering in the nineteenth-century West." The reader will find some of these contemporary accounts regrettably short, formulaic, but