

An Alternative Arizona

Last time I wrote about how Arizona was created out of the western half of the New Mexico Territory in 1863. This time let's have some fun talking about how things would be different today if Arizona had been fashioned out of the southern half of the New Mexico Territory, as proposed many times in the 1850s and early 1860s.

First, let's look at the map. We'll assume that the New Mexico Territory was split on an east-west line at the 34 parallel, as outlined in ten (unsuccessful) bills to the U.S. Congress. Everything above 34N latitude belongs to *New Mexico* and everything south of 34N latitude belongs to *Arizona*. (Note: *italics* font designates the "fantasy" states.)

Arizona loses about 60% of its land area, mostly mountainous high country, including the Grand Canyon, Prescott, Flagstaff, the Four Corners region, and the Mogollon Rim country. But *Arizona* picks up about 40% of New Mexico's land area, additional rugged southwestern desert, along with Silver City and the Gila Cliff Dwellings, Las Cruces, Alamogordo, White Sands National Monument, Roswell, and Carlsbad Caverns. Familiar summer-escape towns to Tucsonans - like Payson and Pinetop - are now in *New Mexico*.

Arizona must revise its Spanish-conquest historical records to account for Spanish expeditions through southern New Mexico to establish mines around Socorro and the first Spanish settlements around Santa Fe in the late 1590s and early 1600s, decades prior to Father Kino making his first mission-building excursions northward into Arizona in the 1690s. However, Tubac (1752) and Tucson (1775) retain "old(est) pueblo" honors in *Arizona*, because the earlier Spanish pueblos were established in *New Mexico*.

Economically, *Arizona* keeps its traditional strengths, the five "C's," cattle, copper, citrus, cotton, and climate, plus most of its cropland, while losing considerable lumber business and tourism from northern Arizona's wonderlands. *Arizona* gains southwestern New Mexico's copper mining business (Chino open pit); considerable military business associated with Holoman AFB at Alamogordo and White Sands Missile (Test) Range, between Las Cruces and Alamogordo; and vast crude oil and natural gas production from the Permian Basin in southeastern New Mexico. *Arizona* also picks up Roswell, a center for irrigation farming, dairying, ranching, manufacturing, distribution, and petroleum production; and tourism from southern New Mexico.

A sobering thought in today's turbulent times is that *Arizona's* border with Mexico increases about 50% in length, all the way to El Paso, Texas. That's a 50% increase in thorny border issues such as drug running and illegal immigration.

There's good news and bad news for *Arizona* with respect to water. The good news is that *Arizona* gains two mighty rivers that flow out of the mountains of Colorado (Rio Grande) and northern New Mexico (Pecos), eventually merging and continuing south to the Gulf of Mexico while irrigating an enormous watershed in south-central and eastern New Mexico. Restricted by potential water rights issues with

New Mexico and Texas (and notwithstanding severe droughts in last three years), these two rivers are a fantastic resource for *Arizona*.

The bad news is that Parker Dam built in the 1930s along the Colorado River to form a gigantic reservoir, (Lake Havasu) to supply water to Mexico and seven western states, including Arizona via the Central Arizona Project, now borders *New Mexico*, not *Arizona*. We might ask ourselves if the years of political struggles and planning that finally resulted in CAP canal delivery of water to southern Arizona by the 1990s, would have succeeded - or would the city of Tucson, by then completely dependent on rapidly depleting ground water, be but a shrinking desert oasis today.

The best result for *Arizona* in this fantasy recreation of states (according to my in-house expert, Pat) is the acquisition of New Mexico's commercial production of chile peppers along the so-called "Chile Trail," extending across southern New Mexico and including Hatch, the "Chile Capital of the World." *Arizonans* may have to usurp New Mexico's official eatery question, "Red or Green," referring to the choice of red or green chiles that one gets with many local meals.

Can you add additional differences today if Arizona had been formed from the southern half of New Mexico?