

Land of Enchantment

Janet Schrader

Deep in the heart of the Sangre De Christo mountains in northern New Mexico lies a narrow, secluded canyon which can be reached only on horseback. The only lodging available is a small ranch with roughly hewn log cabins, but the location and surroundings are a paradise to behold. The ranch buildings consist of small cabins built in a grove of giant pines, and the ground around is blanketed with a thick layer of sweet-smelling pine needles. A small, rocky stream flows gently in front of the cabins, and the blue sky overhead is bluer than one has ever seen it. The reflection of the sky on the shallow stream and on the many rocks and pebbles on the earthen floor casts a brilliant sheen from the clear, almost artificially beautiful waters.

Pack trips were taken daily into the great mountains where the giant Ponderosa pines and quaking aspens rose tall and stately on every side. One small path was all there was, and the horses followed one another single file into the dense and darkening forest of trees where their hoofbeats resounded with every step and echoed far into the woods. Far above the pines, at about ten thousand feet above sea level, the grasslands were located. Here the cattle from the ranch below grazed on the lush, green foliage and drank from the clear, cool mountain springs. Deer, bear, and other wild life were often visible in this area, and from the mountain top one could look for miles and see in the far distance the snow-covered peaks of Pecos and Sante Fe Baldy. To spend a week at this ranch is like entering a new world of unknown beauty, and to leave this beautiful paradise is like stepping from the pages of a book of paintings, most of which can never be reproduced.