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Highway 80 Driving Directions: New Mexico From east to west...

At the border, Texas 20 becomes NM 478. Continue north. Just north of Anthony, watch for the 'Y' intersection and veer left. Follow NM478 up through Vado and Bernillo into Las Cruces.

- New 80. By 1956, at the aforementioned 'Y', you could stay to the right and stay with (then) new Hwy 80. Now NM 460, follow this road north to the I-10 frontage road (Anthony Road). Follow this west frontage road north (will quickly become Stern Rd.) all the way to the NM 478 / I-10 junction in Mesilla Park/Las Cruces. Not much vintage remains. For the "must see every inch" roadie only. Old 80 became Alternate 80 at this point in time until replaced by the NM 478 designation sometime in the 60's (NM478 in place by the issuance of my 1965 NM map).
- Also note that the old Bankhead Highway (BH), Broadway of America, Old Spanish Trail and at least *legislatively* (see next paragraph) original Highway 80 appear to have taken a routing SW out of Mesilla Park to Aden to Cambray. This was never paved and is still isolated and dangerous today. **I do NOT** recommend exploring this routing, but for documentation sake, see the bottom of this page for the routing as it correlates to today's roads. Verified by a 1922 BH map I possess and early NM DOT maps from John Murphey of Santa Fe.

The reason I say *legislatively* original 80 is that I cannot find any evidence that this routing was ever marked or actually used as Highway 80. A November 11th, 1926 original New Mexico Highway Department map shows this old route identified as Hwy 80, but according to 1927 & 1928 New Mexico State Highway Department maps and a 1927 Rand McNally map, this routing had already been bypassed. Therefore, if these old roads were indeed ever Highway 80, they were Highway 80 for just a couple of months tops.

1926 original New Mexico map showing the original U.S. highways found at and courtesy of Steve Riner's fine [New Mexico Roads & Highways!](#)

Stay with 478 all the way through the old downtown area (will become Church St at the one-way split). Continue north out of downtown until intersecting with West Picacho, then take W. Picacho out of town.

- Original 80 Option: Finally, Las Cruces has woken up and has begun to remove the pedestrian mall through downtown. The historic alignment right up through the center of town past the State Theatre may once again be enjoyed. Then, take Las Cruces Avenue

west 1/2 mile until the road dead ends at the RR depot. North on Mesilla to a left (W) over the tracks on Handley. Handley to Valley, then north back to Picacho.

Just as you have to get on I-10 west, get on the north frontage (Airport Road). Airport Road to exit 127 where you have to get back on I-10 until the junction with NM549 at exit 116. where you have a choice.***CHOICE***

- 1) Follow newer 80 by following I-10 to Deming and taking Bus 10 at exit 85 ***OR***
- 2) Take older 80 by following NM549 to Deming at I-10 exit 116.

To me, the choice is clear - old boring interstate, or fine open rangeland along the old routing.

NM549, exit 116: I would take NM 549 west of Las Cruces to Deming. Be sure to check out the ruins of Cambray just past the high RR overpass*. Also note the original road that passes behind the residence. The crumbling adobe structure out front is the remains of an old store that serviced the locals and the Civilian Conservation Corp folks who camped next door while doing a lot of local construction in the early 30's. Further to the NW where NM549 is forced to swing west along the interstate, the old road used to continue onward. If you like, you may cross to the north side of I-10 at exit 102 and head back east about 1.5 miles to CountyA032 north to intersect the old road. However, I found the road to quickly be barricaded with a huge pile of old tires near the rail checkpoint of Akela. A check on Mapquest clearly shows how old road turned due west and was bisected by the construction of I-10. Back to exit 102 and NM549 westward. Check out the cabins on the north side of the road @ MM 11.

** Addendum: as of 05-10-11, the 30's era era RR overpass at Cambray is slated for replacement with a newer structure very soon. However, a turnout with an informational placard may be added to the new structure/*

- Newer 80. The section of Highway 80 now known as NM579 between Akela through Cambray and on to Exit 116 was bypassed circa 1958 by new 80 heading to Las Cruces (now the I-10 westbound lanes).
- Last 80: By the time of my 1965 map, 80 was 4-lane from Las Cruces to Los Corralitos, for 6 miles east of Deming, and replaced by I-10 west of Deming to the AZ border except for the segment immediately around Lordsburg.

Deming: Just east of Deming continue to follow NM549 as it veers to the NW.

- Original 80: headed due west on a line with Dona Ana Rd (now open rangeland - not drivable). It met De Baca Rd., went due north, crossed the 1930's NM539 routing and continued to today's NM377 then west into town. This little bit is drivable (gravel) for the 'must see every inch' enthusiast. This road may have been never paved while 80. A quick jaunt south on De Baca Rd. from NM579 to the intersection of Dona Ana Rd. will reveal the barely discernable old roadbed heading off to the east.

You will see this obvious rejoining of the old route by the line of telephone poles merging with NM579 as it straightens out again due westward. Follow NM579 into town. NM549 will become Business 10. If you veer to the right at the junction of Spruce (original 80) and follow Pine (now U.S. 180), you will be on newer 80. Follow this west past the Mirador, the Balboa and Butterfield motels until forced to get back onto I-10 west. I do believe the north I-10 frontage road heading west out of Deming to Gage is newer 80 because:

- 1) it looks as if it is on a direct line with a continuation of Pine St. (the newer incarnation of 80) but is bisected by I-10 -and-
- 2) This frontage road 'fronts' nothing and peters out around MM68, only to re-appear on the south side of I-10 about a mile later. Would be interesting to verify this info from some highway records, but believe me-the

NM418 route is more interesting. See below. NM418 will drop you out at MM68-just east of Gage-where these two routings would rejoin-perfect!

Knowing this, I would...

Head back to the east end of town and take Spruce St. (original 80). Note the Baker Hotel and many very early auto courts...especially on the west end of town. Also note the original concrete on the west end of Spruce Street (circa 1930-31 Hwy 80) and follow the road as it curves southwest out of town and becomes NM418.

- 📍 Original 80: turned south on 8th St., met with Dona Ana rd., then west to meet the NM418 routing.
- 📍 1921 BH: turn south from Spruce on Gold St. (now NM11). A west on Pear to 8th, then another turn south to Dona Ana and west to NM 418.

NM418: Check out the awesome old Texaco by MM11 just west of Deming on the north side of the road. The sign on the east side is still advertising tubes! Continue on. Note an old interesting stone building and garage off across the field at the intersection of Pelayo Road (near MM7 I believe). Continue on until NM418 dumps you back onto I-10 just east of Gage where the two routings recombined.

Gage (exit 62): Be sure to exit and take Gage road north just a few feet! Note old asphalt running east-west. I actually took the Chrysler about a 1/4 mile west - plowing through weeds and such. Kind of scary - but I'm just a weenie! 😊 This is a continuation of the old road that would have connected with the NM418 routing you may have just come off of.

Gage to Lordsburg: In fact, from here to Lordsburg, newer (1930's era 80) is subsumed by I-10 westbound. The south frontage is just that - frontage per DOT 'as-built' plans. However, from here to Lordsburg, look to the right (north) by the train tracks and you will see almost constant evidence of that early roadbed that would have tied into the broken asphalt at Gage. Though it sometimes disappears for short stretches, it soon reappears and is unmistakable once you know it. Unfortunately, any evidence of old culverts/bridges and/or concrete has been removed a long time ago. Also, the north frontage road is a convenient place for burying new cables and utility lines so it looks as if the utility companies have already utilized and plan on utilizing more of the old roadbed where there is not much room between I-10 and the tracks.

Exit 55: There is a stretch of north frontage that extends eastward for about a mile (to County D001) and west to the Grant/Luna County lines. However, this stretch is for the 'must see every inch' enthusiast only as it is of recent macadam surfacing and has no real interest except for the obvious tie in to the old roadbed coming west from Gage. No FAP (Federal Aid Project) or other vintage markings at the county line.

Separ Exit 42: Be sure to exit and head back east a quarter mile to explore a neat old station ruin. About 1/4 of a mile past that, the old road is once again subsumed I-10. Back onto I-10 westbound.

Exit 34-NM113 and the Grant/Hidalgo County Line: Stay on I-10. No FAP markers or other evidence outside of the interstate.

Exit 29, Turbine Station Road: More evidence of old asphalt on the north side, but not drivable. For the 'must see every inch' enthusiast only.

Lordsburg: A great place to explore-plenty of goodies in here! Be sure to check out the continuation of

the old road heading east out of town for about 2.5 miles past Frosty's (an old garage and reportedly house of ill repute). This is accessed by crossing the street and taking the frontage road east right across from the Pilot Truck Stop on the east end of town. Also note:

- The old Alamo motel with its fake façade and rusty gas station out front. This used to be a complete 'U' shaped auto court until the west end units deteriorated and had to be demolished.
- The Holiday Motel-the owner reportedly used to fake highway closures in order to fill his motel up!
- The remains of the Hidalgo Hotel-at one time rivaling Fred Harvey houses in hospitality and extravagance
- The Bel-Shore and many others.

Heading west out of Lordsburg, I-10 westbound.

Exploration! Be sure veer to the right at the I-10 exit and stay on Motel Drive for another 1/2 mile until it gets cut-off by the freeway. This would have been the later version of 80 which beyond this point appears to be completely subsumed by I-10. At this point, look to the right...though not marked on maps, you can see original 80 continuing on by the train tracks! About 1-1/2 mile, look for the remains of a washed out small bridge embankment. It was getting dark, so I did not explore any more of this stretch to see how far I could take it, but this is obviously the same road that parallels the train tracks and connects to the road I found at the Gary exit (exit 15).

Gary, exit 15: Continuing on I-10 westbound.

Exploration! This is where I took the road/train pic that is on my web. Go north to the tracks, and be sure to take a left at the tracks and follow the gravel road almost 1 mile. Right at the entrance to the Nielson's construction company office, look towards the tracks, and VOILA! An old bridge embankment! Take a little dirt embankment up, and follow this old road west. About 1/2 mile, couple of old rusty car hulks along the road. This road will eventually peter out and become subsumed by I-10 as you approach the NM80 turnoff to the south. You can still see it to the north from the interstate by MM13. Following this road back east will get you back to Lordsburg (eventually)-4-wheel drives only! Back to I-10 westbound...

NM80, Exit 5: Here at exit 5 (aptly identified on maps as Road Forks), you have watched the old roadbed and its wooden posts gradually veering in from the RR tracks to the north. Take NM80 south. Granite Gap has a cut-off curve around MM21, and Granite Gap pass itself is pretty with tours of an old mining camp available just on the south side and stunning vistas of the Chiricahua Mountains and valley before you.

Approx. two miles south of Granite Gap, watch for the BHH & original 80 (bypassed circa '35) to veer off to the left (almost due south) right at MM 17.9. Look for the point where the fence line gets wider - a sure sign of a more modern road Right of Way. The old road can barely be discerned by following the shrub line off to the south (fenced off-private property) to rejoin back from the east right at MM 10.1 from the left. Look for the gate in the fence. Not much to see now.

Rodeo: A quaint and photogenic little town full of old buildings now seeing new like as taverns, galleries, etc.

- 🌻 Original 80 Option: just as NM 80 swings to the left (SE) just north of Rodeo, the gravel road in front of you, Brahma Lane, was indeed original 80 through circa 1934-35 when a now non-existent RR overpass was constructed which took one on a wide curve coming into the north end of Rodeo. This old curve can still be seen/walked at the north end of Rodeo.

On through Rodeo (note the pole line along the original alignment coming into town) for a great drive down towards Douglas. You may want to stock up on supplies before continuing on...Douglas and any services are about 90 miles in your future. With that said, let's cruise on into...

Arizona!

1922 Bankhead Highway & possible (at least legislatively) original 1926 Highway 80 routing between Mesilla Park & Cambray (known as NM3 on early maps):

(again, not able to be driven today-for documentation sake only. Once to the Rio Grande dam, most of these roads today are bisected by ranch and Federal lands and thusly are not 'through' roads. Heck, from what I've seen from the RR, they for the most part aren't 'roads' at all...just barely discernable ruts/paths through the desert. However, they are still depicted on Mapquest if you want to 'follow along' with the text):

- >Junction of NM478 & NM373 (Mesilla Park), left (SW) on NM373
 - >Left (SE) on NM28 (Four Points)
 - >Right (SW) on Apodaca Rd.
 - >Left (SE) on NM372.
 - >Right (SW) on Mesilla Dam Rd (NM 374).
 - >Across the Mesilla Dam (originally built 1916 and fenced off and un-drivable today) and hook up with and follow county B006 west.
 - >at fork in road, stay right (west) to stay with county B006.
 - >B006 will gradually veer to the SW.
 - >B006 SW 7-8 miles until intersects county B008. Right (west-Northwest) on B008.
 - >west on B008 approx. 5-6 miles until junction with county B005 (which continues south to RR checkpoint Aden). Continue straight.
 - >West on B008 for approx. another 2 miles until you meet up with the RR tracks.
 - >North a short bit, then Cross to the southwest side of the tracks at the Aden at-grade crossing. Continue west on an unnamed ranch road. Veer north, then NW past the first row of old cinder cones.
 - > Continue N-NW to the pipeline and Pipeline Road. Follow NW past the county line (which probably isn't marked out here).
 - > Continue west approx. another 1.5 miles, then north on another unnamed county road to meet NM549 right across the street from the crumbling adobe ruins that once were the Cambray General Store.
- Note, I know for a fact from roadwork in the area that this old road coming up from the south into Cambray is blocked off from NM579. So is County B008 heading back to the SE at Cambray. B006 is not accessible by B005 from the the north (I-10) end due to the new county landfill, so no access to this old routing from that angle either. The only way I know to reach the the old road is from County B004 (accessible from I-10 at exit 116) south 4 miles to the RR & County B008 (not old road yet!). You can then go east 1/2 mile to the old at grade rail crossing and catch the old road for an unknown distance east and west!*
- Note, if you are following these instructions on Mapquest, switch to the 'map' view if you are not. The 1922 BHH routing followed the little 'fishhook' curve before heading north to Cambray. This is no longer visible via satellite imagery.*

1922 Bankhead Highway in the SW part of the state:

The 1922 Bankhead Guide is clear. The 1921 version of the Bankhead followed a remote and isolated routing south out of Lordsburg on what is today County A-005 (Animas Road). Paved at the end, the old road remains virtually unchanged as it meanders south past cinder cones, mountains and into the open range country to Animas. Road is sandy, but graded. Needless to say, conditions can vary widely, so I recommend 4WD. Also, this stretch is indeed isolated. Be sure to have food, water, gas, etc as you WILL

be on your own.

This road eventually turns west on a paved NM 9 in Animas to eventually rejoin later 80 at NM 80 for the run south into Rodeo.

Bypassed by 24/25 and the designation of original 80 in late '26.

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