

Meet Thomas (Tom) Tate Tobin



Real People! Real Stories!

Santa Fe Trail Hall of Fame

Thomas (Tom) Tate Tobin
(1823 – 1904)

- Explorer, Tracker and Scout
- Bounty Hunter, Mountain Man, Trader and Trapper
- Carried dispatches, alone, from General Kearney to Fort Leavenworth
- Escaped the Pueblo Indian Revolt
- Helped build Fort Garland
- Farmer and Rancher

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During his lifetime, **Thomas (Tom) Tate Tobin** was renowned as the bounty hunter who tracked down and single-handedly killed the notorious Espinosa brothers who murdered over 30 Anglos in Colorado and New Mexico, allegedly in retaliation for relatives killed in the Mexican-American War. After numerous failed expeditions by posses and Army troops, Tobin, who was known for his scouting and tracking skills, was hired and succeeded in killing the men. However, Tobin was much more than a skilled tracker and bounty hunter. Tobin was born in 1823 in Saint Louis to Bartholomew and Sarah Autobees Tobin. His half-brother was the famous frontiersman Charles Autobees. In 1837, at the age of 14, Tobin left Saint Louis with Autobees and Ceran St. Vrain and traveled along the Santa Fe Trail with supplies destined for Simon Turley's whiskey distillery in Arroyo Hondo, NM. Between 1837 and 1847 Tobin worked at Turley's distillery, made numerous trips along the Taos and Santa Fe Trails in the employ of Turley and the Bent St. Vrain Company, trapped, scouted for the Army, and farmed. Was friends with the Bents, Kit Carson and Wild Bill Hickock.

In 1847, Tobin was working at Turley's distillery when the Pueblo Indian revolt erupted. The mill was attacked and Tobin was one of only two men who managed to escape. Arriving in Taos, he and his brother Charles joined the militia led by Ceran St. Vrain that successfully defeated the insurrectionists. That same year he and his wife Pascuala began farming along the San Carlos River near the settlement of El Pueblo in southeastern Colorado. His crops were sold to the Lt. Col. William Gilpin's troops who were camped near Bent's Fort.

Until his death in 1904, Tobin farmed and ranched and served as an occasional guide and scout for the Army. His frontier skills and knowledge were said to rival Kit Carson's. His relationship with the Carson's took an odd twist in 1888 when he was shot and stabbed by Billy Carson, Kit's son, who was married to Tobin's daughter Pascualita. Tobin had confronted Carson after he beat Pascualita and in the altercation Carson beat and shot the elderly Tobin. Although seriously wounded and expected to die, Tobin recovered to live another 16 years. (Carson died in 1889 of lockjaw after accidentally shooting himself in the leg.) Tobin's final years were lived in near poverty on his ranch near Fort Garland, CO, trying to collect pensions and old government debts for services performed, including the killing of the Espinosa brothers. Few funds were ever collected. He died May 15, 1904, and is buried near Fort Garland.