



*Papago Indians have worn miles and miles of trails across the hard lava. This one leads toward Sykes Crater which hides behind the low ridge to the right. Phillips Butte to the left.*

*"When you travel through a land you travel through its history as well and touch in a secret way the lives of those who have passed through it before you."*

—Leonard Wibberley in *Yesterday's Land*.

From a cluster of extinct volcanoes topped by 4,236-foot Cerro del Pinacate in northwestern Mexico, lava flows spill raggedly for 15-20 miles in every direction, punctuated by hundreds of lesser cones, rough buttes, sharp basaltic ridges and pits hundreds of feet deep and thousands of feet across. Around the southern and western littoral the sand dunes of the upper Gulf of California wash over the lava.

During past centuries Papago Indians wore miles and miles of trails across this hard terrain on their treks in search of salt, fish, and mountain sheep; near ancient waterholes you find their grinding holes, some as much as six inches deep, scoured out of the basalt by squaws in the process of converting wild seeds into meal. They used a lava

tunnel at the base of one of the central cones as a place of worship; some of their prayer sticks may still be found there today.

There are two books telling about the adventures of two groups of explorers who came, shortly after the turn of the century, with horses, wagons, pack mules and Indian guides, to collect wildlife and plants for museums, to "look into certain economic possibilities of the arid and little-known country along the upper Gulf of California," to sketch maps, study the Papago Indian culture and enjoy nature at its loneliest. We suspect the latter objective furnished the greater motivation, while the others lent respectability and funds to the ventures.

William T. Hornaday in *Campfires on Desert and Lava*," devotes half a dozen chapters to his party's sojourn in the Pinacate region in November, 1907, during which they camped at several of the ancient waterholes while observing plant and animal life, hunting bighorn sheep and antelope, and named such features as the Hornaday Mountains, MacDougal Pass, Sykes Crater and Phillips Butte after one another. They also named the second highest of

# Exploring the Pinacate Region

By Niles and Louise Werner

Photos by the Authors

the central cones "Carnegie Peak" after the Carnegie Institution of Washington, for which Dr. D. Trembly MacDougal was studying and collecting desert plants. "Pinacate" is the Spanish name for a black beetle supposedly prevalent in the region.

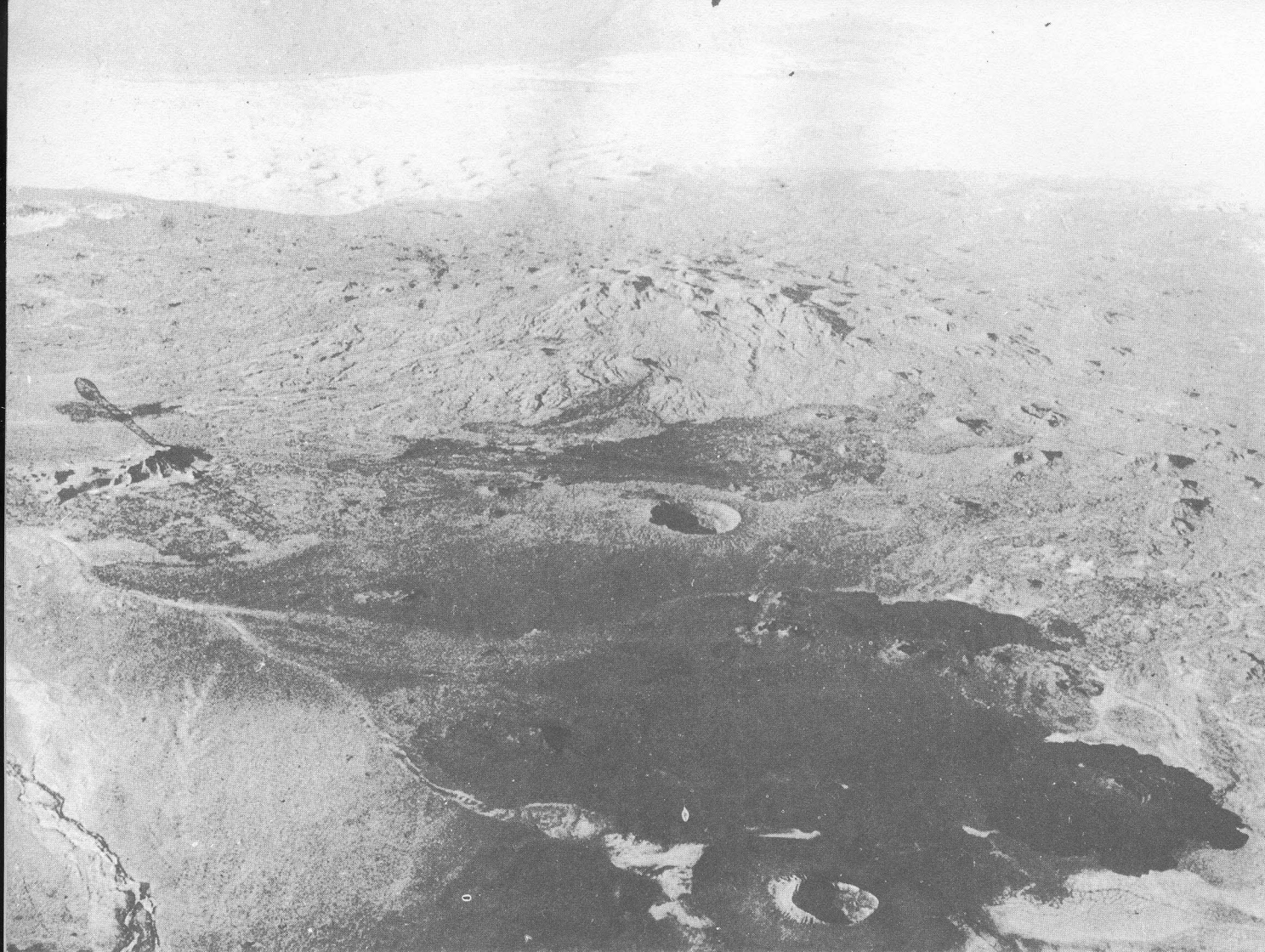
During the winter of 1909-10 Carl Lumholz spent a month in the region as part of a year-long study of the Papago Indian culture. In his book, *New Trails in Mexico*, he tells of climbing Cerro del Pinacate from the east, finding enroute, with the aid of an old Papago Indian, the Sacred Cave in the lava tunnel. Mr. Lumholz discovered a pit a mile across and more than 600 feet deep, which he named Crater Elegante. Both books are out of print but may be found in the reference sections of some libraries and with dealers in rare books.

In recent years Mexican woodcutters have pushed their trucks up some of the great dry washes that slash the lava, in search of ironwood, much prized as fuel for their village kitchens. While we have these woodcutters to thank for such tracks as there are, a Norteamericano-in-a-hurry is likely to curse their meanderings. Some of the tracks do lead near

some of the more interesting features; the question is: which track leads where? Many of them simply deadend in some wash. Without anything to mark the numerous forks, we backtracked many a rough mile in our 4-wheel-drive International Travelall, eliminating one cul-de-sac after another in an endeavour to find the campsites of the Hornaday and Lumholz parties.

After four week-long searches, scattered over a period of four years, a good many questions remain unanswered and our sketch map is by no means complete; question marks indicate mysteries such as: "Which track, if any, leads to the Tule Tanks, from which the Hornaday party climbed Cerro del Pinacate?" "In the maze-like network of tracks west of Crater Elegante, is there one that connects to the Papago Tanks?" "Does the track that disappears under the sand dunes to the southwest of the peaks, reappear later and perhaps connect with the eastern approaches?" "Which of the many red cones seen from the summit is Cerro Colorado, mentioned as being such an outstanding landmark?" Part of the

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*Crater Elegante in the middle. Large as this crater is (600 feet deep, a mile across and 3 miles around), one easily passes it by at ground level without realizing it is there, because the low ridge one sees does not register as being part of the rim of a huge pit. Cerro Colorado in the foreground.* Photo by Austin Long

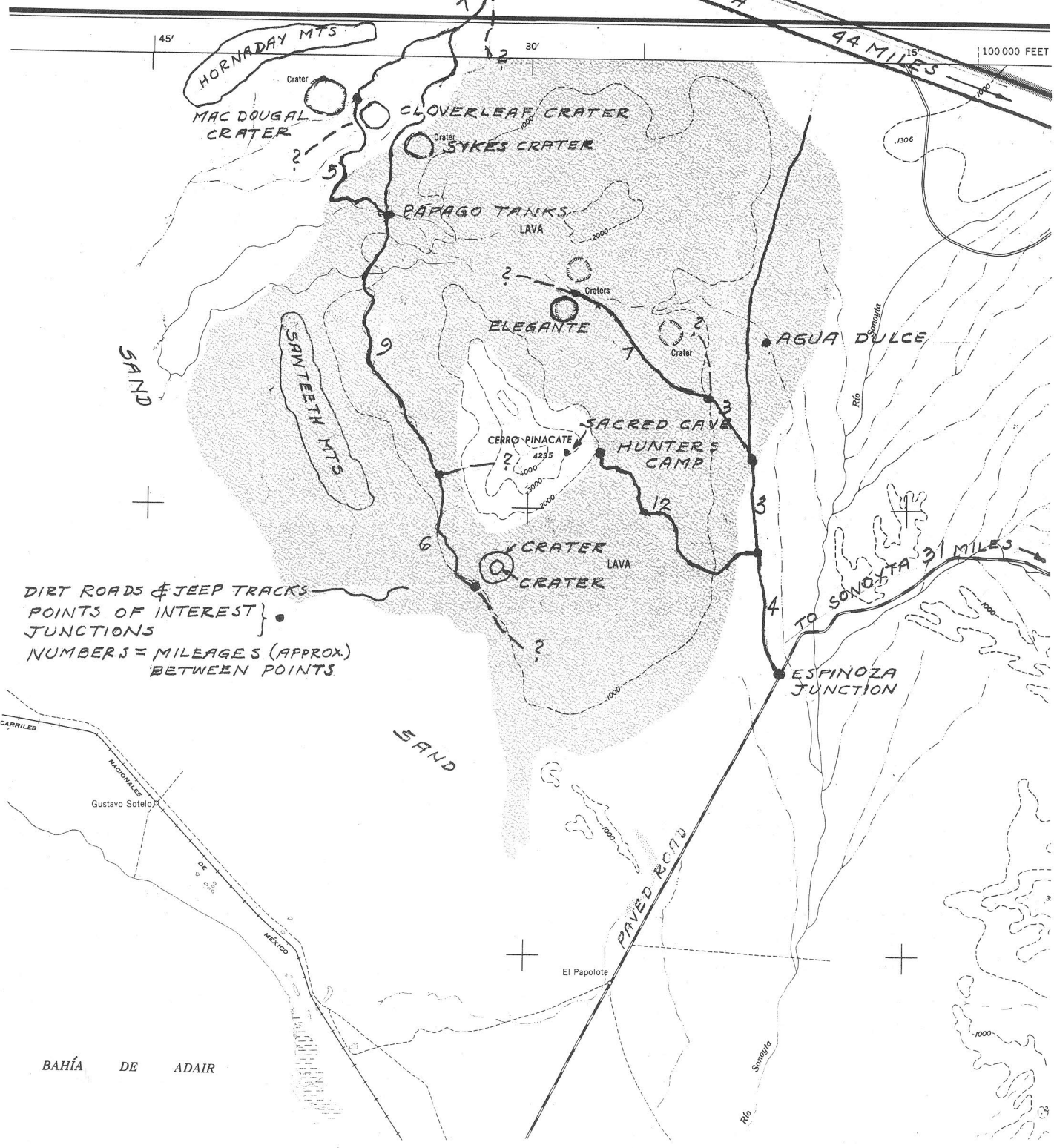


*This is how Crater Elegante looks looking south from the north rim. Only a small portion of its 3-mile circumference can be photographed at one time. A 50-foot high band of cliffs encircle the throat all the way, the north side affording ledges for climbing down. In the background are the central volcanoes Pinacate and Carnegie.*

TO SAN LUIS 80 MILES  
 PAVED HIGHWAY K 2610 TO SONOYTA  
 ARIZONA U S A

SONORA MEXICO

:250,000



DIRT ROADS & JEEP TRACKS  
 POINTS OF INTEREST }  
 JUNCTIONS }  
 NUMBERS = MILEAGES (APPROX.)  
 BETWEEN POINTS

