West and Parsons's article traces the history of "the most outstanding of the trans-Sierran trails" across the rugged mountains, the trail the Spanish utilized in the 1500s to connect the isolated silver mines of Topia with the outside world (West and Parsons 1941,408). In the mid-1980s, when we were graduate students at Syracuse University, a professor of ours, perplexed at why West and Parsons went to such remote and largely abandoned mining hamlets, suggested that someone should contact the scholars to ask why they went there and then revisit the sites. Johnathan Walker, who