

SOUTHERN UTAH CHAPTER OF THE OLD SPANISH TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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Chapter Website: http://www.three-peaks.net/spanish_trail.htm
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President's Message

By Rob Dotson

It is a pleasure to once again greet you. The weather is changing and the daylight is fading earlier on these cooler days. Now is the perfect time of year to step outside our warm homes and see the signs left by brave and hardened souls who walked the wide and fenceless paths of our great Utah valleys. Some of us were able to venture to a couple of locations within walking distance of Cedar City residents and see some things of interest within a stones' throw of finished roads. Col. Leon (Al) Matheson met with us at the Old Rock Church and read some excerpts from Hafen's book on the Old Spanish Trail -- stories of slavery, Christianity, and death. We eventually hiked to "Squaw's Cave" and made a short trek to see the "American Man". Historical marks in time can be located all around us and we don't even see them until we are directed by someone with vision and desire to see. Then, it is as if we are plunged into a new world. The excitement to see more and understand the heritage people left behind is almost palpable. We need more of you to enjoy this history with us. Invite your friends and family members. We will be planning our next historical fieldtrip in our next meeting and other steps we can take to preserve, protect, and enjoy the signs and symbols left all around us. Please join us.

Your Servant,
Rob Dotson
Chapter President

Meeting Schedule

Meetings are generally held at 7PM on the second Wednesday of each month in the Enoch City Office Building, 900 East Midvalley Road, Enoch, UT. The next meeting will be on 8 November.

In addition, the chapter plans regular fieldtrips to Old Spanish Trail sites. These field trips will be announced at the chapter meetings, local newspapers, and this website. See the chapter website for dates and times.

October Meeting Report

Chapter meeting agenda included discussion of the need to stabilize and preserve a Spanish Trail monument located on Enoch Road in Enoch, Utah. Also discussed was the need for member input (stories, photos) to improve the chapter newsletter and this webpage. One member suggested we produce a brochure that could be distributed to visiting tourists. The chapter president offered the suggestion that chapter business meetings be held every other month with field trips scheduled for the alternating months. The president reported Utah's Iron County Commission will designate certain roads in the county as "Old Spanish Trail Historic Roads." The consensus of the group was that this month's "Spanish Traces" was excellent.

Spanish Trail Treasures

By Al Matheson

Have you ever imagined finding a "Lost Treasure" along the Old Spanish Trail?

Perhaps the answer depends somewhat on your definition of "treasure?"

But if you are one of those persons I have talked to who have a dream of finding Trail treasure, I doubt that you are in the minority. I wonder why it is though, that it seems like those seeking gold and silver always seem to be less successful at it than those seeking other forms of treasure; something like a historic camp site, a winning photo, or maybe just an outdoor adventure with some close friends or family members?

So it is not surprising to me that the newest OSTA Chapter, now known as the Southern Utah Chapter of The Old Spanish Trail Association, should include members who are also seeking their own form of Trail treasure. Not only have Chapter members been searching for treasures, they have already had some success to share.

Here is how it happened.

Shortly after the official organization of a Southern Utah Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA), members meeting in the Enoch City council chambers decided to participate in a local membership drive during a safety and crime prevention fair. The fair was to be held at the Enoch City Civic Center in conjunction with an annual safety education program. Chapter members were duly assigned a time to represent OSTA in an information and membership booth, under a banner that had been provided by the parent association. (By the way, every member so assigned showed up, and on time! Several new members were signed up too, and we all had a great time.)

It was during a lull in the crowd of visitors that Kaye Wellman and Kevan Matheson came on the scene. Their tour of duty gave me a breather, and time to respond to a young man by the name of Chris Lamser, he had been standing patiently waiting for a break in the conversations with visitors to the booth. He had hardly even been noticed until he spoke up. Now, Chris was probably eleven years old and was visiting his Grand Parents who lived "...somewhere in the area." They had apparently ushered him into the evening's

activities, and disappeared over the hill, so to speak.

So Chris had been waiting at the OSTA booth without intruding or commenting until it was his turn and there was an opening for him to join us in the crowd. Chris politely introduced himself to me and asked if we were interested in Indian history? I said "yes, very much so." "I like to hike in the out doors and look for Indian things," he said, and then he added casually, "would you like to see what I found?"

In his proffered hand Chris held out a cell phone to me. It was a photo phone with the flip-top open to reveal a small digital photograph on the screen. The picture was of a very nice Barrier Tribe (?) style pictograph, painted on a glistening white wall. The painting had been done in yellow and red ochre, with red bolts over the left shoulder of the solitary figure. The wall appeared to be white granite with imbedded mica or schist-like particles making it look like it had been painted on plaster.

My answer of ... "YES" did not need a lot of thought or take a great deal of time!

"Chris, where did you ever find that" I asked with unfeigned astonishment, since such pictographs are seldom found in this region, and never of such high quality. "I have never seen anything like this, where was it taken?"

Chris informed me that he was from out-of state, and that he had been "volunteered" to join with a local Boy Scout troop (he didn't remember which one) on a local overnight outing (earlier in the year). Mr. Singleton (he didn't know his first name) had taken them to a place that had rocks (he didn't know where), and he and another Scout gotten separated from the main group on a day hike and took to climbing around an interesting ridge of caves. He discovered the pictograph in one of the sheltered areas of a large ledge and took a picture of it. It appears that he had thought nothing more of the incident or of his find until the OSTA booth jogged his memory and our interest.

It was at this point that we started to play the game of “twenty questions.”

“How far did you go, Chris?

Answer, Not too Far.

Which direction did you go?

West, I think,

Mountains or no mountains?

Little mountains

Trees or no trees?

Lots of little trees

Mine dumps or no mine dumps?

Big mines, but not close

Good road or bad road?

Dirt roads, bumpy and I got sick

Right or left from the road to camp

Left to the camp, I think

Trees or no trees in camp

A few trees, lots of rocks though

Draw a map from your camp?

Like this, maybe....”

...And so it went.

I was just getting a feeling of confidence regarding where Chris had been, when he had to leave and quickly disappeared into the crowd with his photo-camera. I expected him to return, but I also knew he was concerned about catching a ride home with someone. At least he promised to send me an E-mail photo and his Grand Parent’s address. I had given him my card too, but unfortunately I have never heard from Chris since that afternoon. Apparently the grand parents were on the mother’s side and I never did learn the name of the people with whom Chris was staying.

So, the E-mail never came.

A subsequent search for the Scout Master by the name of Singleton proved a failure; there was no record of the name or of a trip permit having been issued in the area Chris described. Trying to locate the Scout troop was equally unsuccessful. So I feared I had been party to one more “lost” treasure story, with no leads and no sources... other than tidbits Chris had left to torment me with.

The incident was not forgotten, however.

Over the next weeks, when an opportunity presented itself, several members, including my wife Barbara and I started prowling the Escalante desert trying to decipher the young Scout’s directions as best we could. Our final journey wound up taking us several miles west Cedar City, coincidentally along the Old Spanish Trail to a campsite named “Antelope Springs.” (It is in the “Neck” of the Escalante Desert on BLM maps Trail maps.) The location seemed to be the only place that answered most of our scarce clues to finding the pictograph “treasure”. We followed a long graveled road, not too bumpy but with enough dips in it easily have made Chris carsick. It was also in the general area of mining and abandoned iron mines were plentiful.

The pieces were beginning to fit into place. The treasure that just needed finding now.

Our repeated efforts to locate the errant pictograph were fruitless. We were confident that after several attempts we had finally located the actual Boy Scout campsite, the fire pits and distribution of those pits seemed to agree with Chris’ information. The big factor was the challenge of imagining where his hike might have taken him. He could have been anyplace on that darned mountain! It was really getting frustrating.

That was when unsought “treasures” started to reveal themselves to us and the whole picture of things began to change. I was not even watching when it happened.

You see, when I was in my youth, and probably the same age and awareness level of Chris Lamser, I well remember traveling with local tribal leaders in the back of a 1936 pickup truck on a trip to visit a manifestation of “Tobats!” Now, Tobats is the name of the Paiute god of all things of this world, whereas “Shinob” is the Great God, or the creator of all things. The historic location we were to visit that day was also associated with a forbidding and sacred place called the “Council Cave” and it was watched over by Tobats. Neither of these two objectives would have been possible, or even considered likely without the

great respect and friendship between our Paiute guide and Shaman (Woots Parashaunt, as I recall) and the members of our small group.

For me, it was the kind of thing I enjoyed most. The excitement of the journey and the feelings of reverence we felt during the undertaking were palpable as we ventured into the desert. Though I can no longer remember all of the names of those in the group, the little group would have included Wilford Lawrence, William R. Palmer, and S. Alva Matheson, my father. The event was a trip to a place never to be forgotten, and now, the memories of that special trip were about to be revisited, and without my knowledge or permission.

So, back to my story...

It is not often I have reason to "shout" at a new discovery, and "eureka" is not an exclamation common in my family. But this was one time the cards fell in my favor. As I climbed the canyon with Barbara, there on the horizon was the full-face profile of TOBATS! The view was just as I remembered it from years long forgotten. I was elated.



Tobats was in his full glory against a white overcast. That silhouette was in unmistakable relief, and my mind came alive with the memories of my earlier trip. It was only then that I remembered the Counsel Cave! Yes, with a little more sweat and effort, there it was

as well, right where it I remembered it to be. What a thrill.



The Counsel Cave is actually an open cavern formed of a single gigantic granite boulder. It was formed into a perfect theatre, approximately 75 ft wide and nearly 60 ft in height, not unlike imagining a clam shell-like cavern with a flat base. The floor of the counsel area was relatively flat and smooth, with sufficient space to easily accommodate a large group of people. Even the ashes were in place, as evidence of historic use (though more likely from the Boy Scouts camping there).

Trail Treasure? Oh, by the way, did I forget to mention the fact that the place where we were standing is practically ON the Old Spanish Trail?

The Trail to Antelope Spring winds just below the Counsel Cave, though the cave is completely invisible from the Old Spanish Trail, and if a person knew where to look, Tobats could likely be viewed from a selected spot near Antelope Spring. The bower below the Boy Scout camping area forms a perfect valley for holding large herds of animals transiting the Old Spanish Trail to or past the springs, though I am confident the Indian use of the site had no association with Old Spanish Trail, except by geological coincidence.

One would think that with my an unanticipated journey into the past, and the exquisite joy of returning to a long forgotten time and place,

that I would have been sated by the experience? Not so. Treasure hunting on the Old Spanish Trail is not quite like that. The thrill of discovery... you should be forewarned... seeks renewal and replenishment, and besides... the glyph that started all of this had not even been found!

That is, not yet anyway.

So it was that over the next several weeks my wife and I spent our available time returning to the Tobats site, photographing it and locating our discoveries on GPS for fellow OSTA members seeking to share our treasures. Then one evening we invited my grandsons and their family to share in our search, and wouldn't you know, they found the pictograph within minutes after our leaving their vehicles. My intuition suggested that a Boy Scout would most certainly climb to the highest places, and make long climbs through thick brush and otherwise follow a long tortuous journey to some unknown and inaccessible place. I was wrong. Chris's "long" journey had been less than a few hundred yards from his campsite!

Well, Chris did say he was from Las Vegas? Maybe distances are measured differently there?



The pictograph was found in a rock cove about 15 feet high and 30 feet long, the figure being sheltered in a wind-eroded cavity that was obviously chosen to protect the image from the Sun and adverse elements. The ochre paint

remains clear to this day, the figure is well defined, and the site is unaffected by vandalism or marred by intrusion in any way. There was no evidence of anyone ever having been there before our visit.

The pictograph is a solitary similar to a Barrier style or possibly Fremont figure, as I mentioned. It is about eight inches high, with a series of four zig-zag lines of lightning (?) over the individual's left shoulder at a vertical angle. The figure is singular, with no associated marks or other lines or additions. The pictograph does not appear to be of local origin, or even associated with Paiute styles or rock art that I know of. With the single exception of one other petroglyphs site that I know of, this glyph has no similarity with any known pictographs or petroglyphs at our area. My presumption is that the figure that Chris Lamser eventually led us to find is associated with a much older civilization than the Paiutes, or perhaps an individual trading from some distant culture and who had a reason to find the Counsel Cave in his travels?

Now that would be a story to tell.

The Whole of the OSTA organization should well benefit from the discovery of this Trail treasure. The long lost Tobats is well worth visiting by anyone with an interest in history, certainly by every person interested in a factual piece of Indian related or sacred tribal lore. Many of the local Paiute and Paheed tribesmen know of the "Place of Schinob" or the Place of the High God. It is commonly referred to as the Parowan Gap on general road maps. The Parowan Gap is significant, not only because of the sacred nature of the Shinob profile and the petroglyphs that abound in the Gap area, but it is more commonly visited because of the alleged celestial and calendar inscriptions at the site and the alignment of the site solstice events.

But do the tribes or members remember the place of Tobats? No, I don't think so.

I don't know of a single person who remembers the existence of the sacred Tobats

site, certainly there is no one among the local Indian tribesmen I have spoken with who know of it. And I have never heard the site discussed at any other time since my 1950s visit to the site. My good friend Clifford Jake, Chief and Shaman of the local Southern Paiute Band of Indians never spoke of it in our many discussions, nor was it mentioned in discussions with my father in times past.

I suspect that Alva was, along with the others on our trip, had been asked not to discuss or disclose what we had been shown. And I am confident the participants would have honored that request and would have said nothing had they been asked about it. What is sad is that there seems to be neither knowledge nor interest on the part of the Indians today in learning or remembering such a significant part of their culture and religious past. My calls and comments to tribe members still go unanswered. That is unfortunate, I believe, but it does not detract from the reality, sacredness or beauty of this truly historical site to those who do appreciate it.

The Tobats site is only a short distance of the Old Spanish Trail Camp Site at Antelope Springs. The site has seasonal access on a graveled road that IS on the Old Spanish Trail, and though it is within walking distance of a motable road, a four-wheel drive or high clearance vehicle is recommended. Camping facilities do not exist, but the natural surroundings could not be more accommodating to campers, except for the absence of water. The Antelope Spring itself no longer exists except as a memory, it was siphoned off by the BLM for local cattle herds and wild life several years ago. The water table has also been lowered from years of agricultural pumping in the Escalante Valley.

OSTA members interested in finding the Tobats Treasure site, Counsel Cove or pictograph site can contact me directly or a member of the Southern Utah Chapter for directions. The site will not be made available to the general public or to casual visitors.

Some treasures, as you know, still need protection.

Al Matheson, Utah Director
Old Spanish Trail Association