

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

This last year was the beginning of something great. We have had a few field trips and some great ideas expressed and implemented. But this was just the beginning. I see 2007 as an abundant year, full of great efforts and accomplishments.

To achieve anything great, it takes ordinary people with extraordinary effort. Nobody can accomplish much on their own. We all need each other. As a chapter, we need each and every person to make greater strides. I challenge all our members to make a little more effort to help us. And where will we go? What do we see as some mileposts that will help us move forward? Here are a few that have come to my mind;

1. An increase in membership. This will take some doing. Invite your friends and family members to come to chapter meetings. We will be learning about the amazing challenges and achievements of those who traveled the Spanish Trail.
2. Federal grants are available and can be obtained with some serious work. We have obtained some great volunteers to help. Being serious about plans and the future of The Old Spanish Trail makes a big difference in obtaining serious financial help.
3. Plans for a museum located on the Old Spanish Trail in Enoch City are being designed with the help of New Horizons Engineering and Bulloch Brothers Studios. I believe the residents of our local communities will benefit greatly from these efforts. Our elementary school teachers will be able to receive great tools in educating

our children and grandchildren throughout the years to come.

4. The idea of "Old Spanish Trail Days" has been brought forward for consideration. This type of event can further bring us together as neighbors and friends. We need more good ideas and help to implement this type of event.

As you can see, these four challenges can be daunting if one or two people try to do them all. We need each other. I challenge myself and all of you to join with our group with a renewed commitment to give what you can. Have a prosperous year!

Rob Dotson
President
Southern Utah Chapter
Old Spanish Trail Association

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. Old Spanish Trail. The next chapter meeting will be March 14, 2007 at 7:00 PM.

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.

Trail History

www.museumtrail.org/OldSpanishTrail.asp

The Old Spanish Trail witnessed a brief but furious heyday between 1830 and 1848 as a trade route linking Santa Fe, New Mexico and

Los Angeles, California. During that period, Mexican and American traders took woolen goods west over the trail by mule train, and returned eastward with California mules and horses for the New Mexico and Missouri markets.

The Trail left Santa Fe and split into two routes. The South or Main Branch headed northwest past Colorado's San Juan mountains to near Green River, Utah. The North Branch proceeded due north into Colorado's San Luis Valley and crossed west over Cochetopa Pass to follow the Gunnison and Colorado rivers to meet the Southern Branch near Green River.

From central Utah the Trail trended southwest to an area now shared by Utah, Nevada and Arizona. It crossed southern Nevada and passed through the Mojave Desert to San Gabriel Mission and Los Angeles.

The Trail originated in ancient, native American Indian trade routes. Two of these routes ran north-south along the eastern and western margins of the upper Rio Grande Valley, between the adobe pueblos of present-day New Mexico and Colorado's San Luis Valley. Perhaps the oldest, in use for nearly 1,000 years, later became the West Fork of the North Branch.

Between 1598 and 1830, Spanish (1598-1821) and later Mexican (1821-1830), and American (1821-1830) traders connected these native trade routes to complete the Old Spanish Trail.

Well-documented Spanish expeditions that led from Santa Fe to central Utah, along the eastern half of the Trail, include Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera in 1765, the Dominguez-Escalante party of 1776, Manuel Mestas in 1805, and the Arze-Garcia party of 1813. But Spanish traffic was fairly constant between 1765 and 1821 to trade with the Ute, including for slaves.

In the 1820s, fur-trapping parties pushed west from New Mexico, following the Gila and Colorado rivers south of the Trail, while others used the Spanish route northwest from Santa Fe to trap the Green River in eastern Utah. These men included: Antoine Robidoux (who built forts on the North Branch), Ewing Young,

Etienne Provost, William Wolfskill, George Yount, Jose Martin, Jedediah Smith, Kit Carson, and Ceran St. Vrain.

Mexican trader Antonio Armijo made the first commercial, round-trip journey along a southern variant of the route in 1829-1830. William Wolfskill and George Yount's commercial pack train of 1830-1831 inaugurated consistent use of the entire route from 1830-1848.

During the Mexican War, 1846-1848, the Americans' Army of the West conquered New Mexico, then blazed a new, southern variant of the route to California, hastening the end of the Old Spanish Trail. Several famous journeys were made along the Trail, from west-to-east, including one by Kit Carson and Lieutenant George D. Brewerton in 1848.

After the Mexican War, wagon roads on competing routes largely ended use of the Trail.

In the 1850s and 1860s, portions of the Trail's eastern end were mapped by U.S. government expeditions, while the western portion of the trail witnessed Mormons heading to California. U.S. government expeditions included Capt. John W. Gunnison in 1853, and Lieutenant E.F. Beale in 1853.

By then commercial traffic had died out, leaving wagon ruts visible where once only mules trod.

