

SOUTHERN UTAH CHAPTER OF THE OLD SPANISH TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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Chapter Website: http://www.three-peaks.net/spanish_trail.htm
National Website: <http://www.oldspanishtrail.org/>
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President's Message

By Rob Dotson

July was the one-year anniversary of the official beginnings of the Southern Utah Chapter of The Old Spanish Trail Association. The year has flown by and we find ourselves a little bit older and hopefully much wiser and more informed regarding the importance of the Old Spanish Trail.

The dry dust kicked up by thirsty mules and hardened men is still here, asking us to rediscover their difficult past. We can almost see their cold eyelids droop as they stared at starry skies and asked the deep, secret questions. We ask similar questions as we travel our paths in this life. Maybe, with some small efforts to understand how those trailblazers overcame their challenges, we may find answers to our own questions. We must individually and collectively put forth energy to achieve anything great.

The future plans for "Old Spanish Trails Days" are in the works thanks to the work and excitement of Col. Leon Matheson and others. Supporting his energies by volunteering will increase the positive results. Please do so.

This year as President of the organization, I have learned about what good people we associate with and how powerful we can be together. Many good ideas have been expressed and need to be implemented. Don't wait for others to put your good ideas into action. You are influential when you act.

This next meeting will be important for all members to attend, for we will be voting for new association officers. We need all members present for a fair vote. Please attend. Let's do great things for the future of all,

Rob Dotson

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 August 8, 2007 at 7:00 PM.

Those who took assignments for the upcoming Old Spanish Trail Days will report their plans at this month's chapter meeting.

In addition, the chapter plans regular field trips 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.

Special Reprint Book Offer

by Lorraine Carpenter (Forwarded by Leon Matheson)

By now you have all received your issue of Spanish Traces and noted the insert advertising the reprinting of the Crampton/Madsen classic, *In Search of the Spanish Trail*. We [OSTA] have worked for about a month with Gibbs Smith Publishing to convince them to reprint this out-of-print book. It will be reprinted with only one addition, that being a "Preface to the Reprint" by Steve Madsen. Also, the cover now looks more like the Trail days.

On behalf of OSTA, we have agreed to be part of the process of obtaining "pre-orders" for copies of this reprint among our partners and contacts, other than bookstores. Gibbs Smith Publishing will handle the usual book store

contacts and orders. In order to justify the cost of a reprint, Gibbs Smith wishes to get promises for approximately 6,000 orders in total before going to press. Our share of this number is half - 3,000.

What do we get out of this? A lot! If we can get enough promises for orders from our museums, libraries, visitors centers, members, national parks and monuments, etc. to get the reprint to press, Gibbs Smith will handle this arrangement as a fund raiser for OSTA. We will receive 40% of the proceeds from the sale of our 3,000 copies. That could amount up to about \$34,000 to OSTA for our efforts on behalf of this OST classic!

We would like to enlist the help of all of you in reaching this goal. Step 1 is to identify the museums, libraries, visitor centers, etc. locations/partners for your state that should be contacted. In other words, make and email me a list. Don't worry about duplicating what someone else puts on their list; the database will eliminate duplicates. We know you will rise to the challenge. We thank you in advance.

Information on pre-ordering your copy is available at
<http://www.oldspanishtrail.org/news.php>

Mountain Meadows Anniversary Commemoration

Forwarded by AL Matheson

As a part of their commemoration activities for the 150th anniversary of the mountain Meadows Massacre on September 11, 1857, the Mountain Meadows Association will be having their annual dinner program at 5:30 PM, Sept. 8 at the Dixie Center, 1835 Convention Center Drive, St. George, Utah.

The Mountain Meadows Association's theme for their Sesquicentennial Commemoration activities is fellowship and reconciliation.

Area residents are invited to attend. Following music and a buffet dinner, the keynote speaker will be David L. Bigler, award-winning author and historian. He will discuss who the victims were, the route they took from Arkansas to

Mountain Meadows, and apply the lessons learned from the tragedy to our own lives today.

Colonel A.L. Matheson, Utah Director of the Old Spanish Trails Association will speak about the historic trail that the victims followed through Southern Utah to Mountain Meadows.

The cost of the dinner program is \$35 per person (\$30 for members of the Mountain meadows Association). Contact Leroy Lee at (801) 816-0682 for reservations and payment information.

National Spanish Trails Symposium

Forwarded by AL Matheson

Southern Utah University will host a western history symposium this fall, featuring the "Spanish Trails of the American West." The Symposium is being organized and sponsored by the Southern Utah Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA), and will be convened at the Adams Auditorium on the campus of Southern Utah University, 300 West Center Street, in Cedar City, Utah, Friday, October 12/13/14, 2007.

Events will begin with a "chuck wagon" trail dinner and Dutch-oven cooking at 6:00 PM Thursday (Columbus Day) 12 October, 2007, by the Sons of Utah Pioneers. Cost is \$10.00 per person, public invited, at the Cedar City Park pavilion, 200 North Main Street.

Friday Morning will see the opening of the Trails Symposium by SUU and OSTA representatives at 8:00AM in the Adams Theatre, 310 West Center Street., to be followed by featured speakers on a variety of Spanish trails topics throughout the day. Two venues will accommodate ample opportunity for participants to select from some sixteen academic presentations throughout the day. Presentations will include discussions on the Anza, Armijo, National Historic "Old Spanish Trail," and the Dominguez/Escalante trails. Government officials will address trails status and management initiatives throughout the Western states, while various historians will

present a variety of academic trails topics ranging from historical events and personalities, to trails navigation, petroglyphs, trail signs and trail markers. Friday evening's event will be a semi-formal Banquet, key note speaker and orchestral presentation by Marshall McDonald and Steve Nelson, composers and arrangers of the "Old Spanish Trail Suite." The concert and banquet will be held in the Great Hall of Southern Utah University at 7:00 PM.

Saturday morning the Spanish Trails Symposium will reconvene at the Great Hall of the Hunter Conference Center at 9:00 AM, with attendees choosing between a no-host equestrian trail ride to historic trail sites, or one of two hosted vehicle treks along Spanish trails. One group will travel along the Old Spanish Trail from Enoch to Mountain Meadow, with lunch at a recently discovered trail site. A second group will travel along the Escalante trail to the casting of lots monument, Thermo Hot Springs camp site and returning to Cedar City via the Parowan Gap petroglyph and Enoch historic trail sites.

Admission is set at \$80.00 per person at the door, including published technical abstracts from the symposium (\$60.00 for OSTA members and students, or \$10.00 per lecture session) The Friday night banquet is \$25.00 per person, for one of three entrees. Trail excursions on Saturday are free to OSTA members or \$10.00 per person in advance. Additional information and reservations may be obtained from Al Matheson: Citabriair@yahoo.com, (435) 586-9762

July Spanish Trails Trek

by AL Matheson

July turned out to be a month of exciting and productive opportunities for the Chapter. The 14 July trek to the southern reaches of the Old Spanish Trail left members with a lasting view of the Castle Cliff Indian dwellings and the "first" look at the 200 plus miles of desert that faced the sojourners on their way to California. The trek began with some 28 people in eight vehicles, and though the day was warming up we enjoyed the morning drive along the Virgin Gorge with Jedediah Smiths diary and

comments in mind. The dwellings on the Virgin were a surprise to many, as were the Beaver Dam cut-off and trail traces which few had seen before.

The group traveled to the Trail markers at Castle Cliff and relished the observations and stories of the people living there and the caves and markers they left behind—including the beautiful Spanish Cross and Broad Sword engraved into the wall. I wonder how many people traveling the highway ever knew what treasures they were passing or how many had gone before them.

A stop was made on the Utah Hill to point out the Spanish Gold mine, discovered by the pioneers to St George... still being worked, by the way, and at Camp Creek for those wishing to view the trail inscriptions and campsite on the last water reasonably available before the desert wastes that awaited them. The nearby gold workings and beehive smelters were also of interest to the group, at least to those not taking photos of the many petroglyphs at the same site.

Eventually the group hove to at Gunlock for a great catered lunch.... Where would you ever find a lunch that good for \$5? Not an easy thing to do. But what made it even better were the stories and histories presented for dessert. Some would have stayed all day?

Of particular interest was the discovery by members of the Chapter of a map that led them to a "treasure" cave of Indian writings and "maps" of a sort, on a large panel in a hidden cave. It was located by members prior to the trek and not on the agenda even though it was close by. It was discovered near the solstice date and that fact revealed that the cave is also a solstice calendar as evidenced by the sun's track across etched marks in the stone face.

The return trip was via the Mountain Meadow and Spanish Trail traces, a GREAT time was had by all who share the trip, and yes, we're ready to go again!

The Steer Hole

by AL Matheson

The winter of 1850 was colder than usual, portent of another cold winter some thought. A chill fell upon the small group of settlers as they gathered their courage and their belongings to challenge the California Trail in search of a new settlement “somewhere” to the south. For most of the group, Salt Lake City in the Utah Territory had been home for only a short time, hardly long enough for anyone to feel at home with their new surroundings. But then who knew what was over the next hill? The only thing that was sure in every one’s mind was that it would take a winter trek to be in place and to be ready for spring planting, regardless of where they found themselves at the time. It is called survival!

The destination of the train being lead by George A Smith was a wide and fertile valley of the “Pah-ro-wan.” It was a valley of abundant streams for irrigation, and a lake “teeming with fish” and wild game... as Parley P. Pratt and Jefferson Hunt had reported in their early expeditions into the area. Everything the group of settlers needed would be provided “in abundance” it was reported, and from first appearances as they crossed the Beaver River divide that certainly seemed to be the case. Perhaps someone should have asked what the interpretation of Pah-ro-wahn was to the Paiutes? Shortly after finding the answer, being “Evil Water” they would also find reason to name the dead lake the “Little Salt Lake.”



Little Salt Lake (Parowan lake)

But hopes were high and everything was new to the group. Their first stop in the new valley was at a large spring just before picking up the

Old Spanish Trail at Little Creek Canyon. Near the artesian spring they found a large set of deer or elk antlers hanging on a small tree in the otherwise barren valley, and thus it was named the “Buck Horn” spring. Some say, however, it was actually named for an odd looking cactus with the appearance of antlers that the settlers had never seen before, but either way the place was to become known as the “Buckhorn Flat. Eventually the Buckhorn Flat boasted a “Buckhorn City,” with some 35 families living there.



Little Salt Lake from Buckhorn Camp

Some of the party was disposed to stay at the Buckhorn Flat and not travel another foot! But with the entreaties of George A Smith, and the promise that future town sites would be discussed before a final decision was made, the group continued on across the valley to eventually settle at Center Spring, now know as Parowan, Utah. It was January of 1851, and it yes..., it was still cold.

As exploration of the Parowan Valley expanded and winter weather abated, some of the group remembered... or had never forgotten... the Buckhorn Flat and the grazing potential of the surrounding area. Eventually a small outpost was constructed near the Buckhorn Spring and the cattle herds were turned out into the flat for grazing and forage because the flat had several natural assets. First, it was far enough away from the Old Spanish Trail that those traveling east on the trail to Santa embarking from Little Creek canyon toward Los Angeles, would not likely see or notice either the cattle herds or the camp. Another asset was that the Little Salt

Lake formed an east-west barrier nearly 10 miles long over which the cattle could not cross. Additionally, the lake was bounded on the west end by the Cliffs of the Parowan Gap and on the north side of the lake by foot hills and forests of pinion and juniper trees that also formed natural barriers to the cattle. Such circumstances limited the resources necessary to guard the herds and release the men for building homes and working the farms.



Little Creek Range Looking East

By the end of the century the security of the Buckhorn Flat pastures and the abundance of open grazing and range resulted in a manifest increase in herd size and the quality of the animals. Eventually it was decided to improve the blood line with a new entity... a Brahma bull. Eventually a willing bull with an evident bloodline was purchased out of state and transported by rail to Salt Lake City, it was then driven to a new and hopefully attentive harem at the Buckhorn Flat and left to realize his dreams.

All proceeded as intended, with happy herders and a happy sire extraordinaire, until one late evening when the errant bull did not come home from an extended foray with the female set. The morning heralded a search for the errant bull but with negative results. Time to bring in the big guns!

A posse was formed after an emergency meeting in Parowan the following Sunday. It was not the "ox in the mire" this time, but the "where-did-the-ox-go" issue that drew their attention, and the search was on. The Buckhorn Spring was nearly a day's ride to the

north, necessitating a camp at the spring over night before an organizational meeting the following morning. The group was divided into groups for an initial sweep of the pasturage, with a decision to meet at the far west end of the lake. A signal was arranged..., one shot for locating, two for assembly and three for a find or emergency.

No shots were heard, the group assembled without much comment, but with great puzzlement. No trace of the bull had been found—no tracks, no carcass, and no odor. It was decided that the group would ride eastward in a line abreast, traveling from the west end of the lake to the east end, along the foothills to ensure the area had been fully searched.

It was nearly sunset before the first two shots were heard, coming from the north ridge of hills. When the group gathered it was not to find a lost bull as they hoped, but it was to help locate a faint odor of death that was wafting in the wind. The local search soon resulted in another two shots... that which is lost has been found? Well, perhaps in a sense. When the group assembled and questioning glances were shared with not response, one of the mounted posse directed their attention downward!



Steer Hole "Re-Discovered"

There below the assembled horsemen was a square hole, some 4 feet on a side, from which the odor of death was emanating. A lariat was thrown into the hole and of the group was lowered into the maw of the opening, there to find the missing bull. Amid some consternation

the group returned to camp until the following morning when they returned to inspect the situation. What they found was the carcass of the bull where he had fallen, most likely from inadvertent wandering through the sage brush, into a non-visible cavern. The entry was a vertical shaft some 16-20 ft straight down, to an opening in the top of an underground domed room. The chamber was nearly flat (less talus/wind fall), but against the wall of the chamber were three rawhide packs and two ea. Two pronged picks made from iron and lashed to handles. The searchers removed the objects for inspection, and promptly determined that they were of Spanish origin, evidently because of their age, the absence of any other residents in the region who could have been responsible, and the close proximity to the Old Spanish Trail.

The artifacts from the "Steer Hole," as it was soon to be named were taken by the searchers on their return to Parowan and put on public display. Eventually the artifacts found their way to the Utah State Capital rotunda and were on exhibit there as part of the Spanish heritage of Iron County. The current disposition of the artifacts is unknown, presumably they are in storage in the Salt Lake City, and no record of their location has been found.



The history of the Steer Hole has become legend in several families, as early as 1950 I was first introduced to the Steer Hole in the company of several Spanish Trail enthusiasts. Finding the Steer Hole was nearly as difficult as it was for the original searchers, but the rewards were greater. The general observation

was that the persons who excavated the Hole were careful to leave no evidence of their effort; there was no berm and no evidence of spoil. It is not in a mineral area nor is it in any location that would suggest a well.

I returned several years later with a scout group to make the descent one more time, but over the years I had no reason to revisit either the Steer Hole or to reflect on the Spanish connection to the Hole. With a resurgence of interest stemming from the designation of the National Historic Old Spanish Trail my interest was renewed... but I found myself unable to find the site again. Eventually in preparation for the 2007 Symposium at Southern Utah University, I made another effort..., a successful one this time.



Resorting to the air, and in the company of one of the Southern Utah Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association, Jim Guyman, we winged our way to follow the Old Spanish Trail through Iron County. Eventually we detoured over the Little Salt Lake and I remembered the Steer Hole and its association with the Trail. After flying some expanding searches from the best location I could remember I found that I was not too far off, just too far to walk from here to there. Now where did I put that GPS?

Now it was time for a ground assault, this time with another OSTA member, Lane Lmoreaux. There it was, just as I remembered it! Someone had done some exploratory digging and left their detritus, but otherwise it was unchanged. The mysteries still remain, however..., who, when, why, how, etc.

No purpose seems to justify such a monumental expenditure of effort to just dig a hole, except for the possible use of the Steer Hole as a holding chamber for slaves? That would fit the packs and rock picks found, the clean and flat floor, domed ceiling, and close proximity to the Old Spanish Trail, etc. It would be easy to lower a rope or pole and remove it as a holding chamber, but nothing else makes any sense to me...

... Anyone have a better idea?

Websites Recommended by Chapter Members

Utah Rock Art Research Association -
<http://www.utahrockart.org/>

Mountain Meadows Association -
<http://www.mtn-meadows-assoc.com/>