

SPANISH TRACES

VOLUME 27 ♦ NO 1 SPRING 2021



Westwater Camp | John N. Macomb 1859 | Ringing the San Salvador Bell

OSTA National Conference

October 28 - 31, 2021

Alexis Park All Suite Resort

Theme: “Builders of the Trail”

Why not plan to stay the day after the “BUILDER OF THE TRAIL” Conference?

Within a half-hour drive from Las Vegas starts one of the most scenic areas in Nevada! Retrace the footsteps of thousands of pioneers and Native Americans who used the Old Spanish Trail over a hundred years ago. John C. Fremont and Kit Carson, during their trailblazing trips traveled through this area. Cottonwood Springs, now known as Blue Diamond, was a major watering spring & pasture along the Trail. Early travelers often referred to the area as “Paiute Springs,” for freshwater.

Blue Diamond offers visitors an opportunity to bike or hike right on the OST, and October is one of the best times to visit Nevada. Come see some of the most scenic areas in Nevada by foot, bike, or sight-seeing in your car along the trail!



OLD SPANISH TRAIL ASSOCIATION

The Old Spanish Trail (OST), one of America's long-distance pioneer trade routes, is recognized by Congress as a National Historic Trail. From 1829 through 1848, traders and pack mules followed the OST on a typically six-week trek from northern New Mexico to Southern California, where woolen goods from New Mexico were swapped for horses and pack stock raised on California's ranchos. Many took the trail — traders, frontiersmen, trappers, families, military expeditions, and Indian guides.

The mission of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA) is to study, preserve, protect, interpret, and promote appropriate use of the Old Spanish Trail (OST), Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT) and closely related historic routes.

We encourage you to join OSTA, help in trail preservation, and increase appreciation of the multicultural heritage of the American Southwest.

| oldspanishtrail.org |

The OSTA website is the place to go for both general and comprehensive background and recent news on the OSNHT and OSTA. The site contains maps, an overview history of the trail, and a bibliography of relevant books with links for purchases of books and other OSTA merchandise from the Association. There is also a regularly updated news page that contains links to government reports, activities of OSTA members, and other news related to the trail. The web page links to National Park Service (NPS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sites, where public documents and maps related to the OSNHT can be found. Memberships (new or renewal) may be paid on the OSTA website, and donations, both general and for specific projects, can be made through the OSTA website as well.



Spanish Traces is the official publication of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, incorporated under the laws of the State of Colorado. *Spanish Traces* welcomes submission of articles, book reviews, and Old Spanish Trail-related news. OSTA assumes no responsibility for statements or opinions of contributors. *Spanish Traces* is copyrighted to OSTA in its entirety, but copyright to individual articles is retained by the author. All matters relating to *Spanish Traces* should be directed to the OSTA Executive Director (Lynn Brittner, ostamgr@gmail.com).

C O N T E N T S

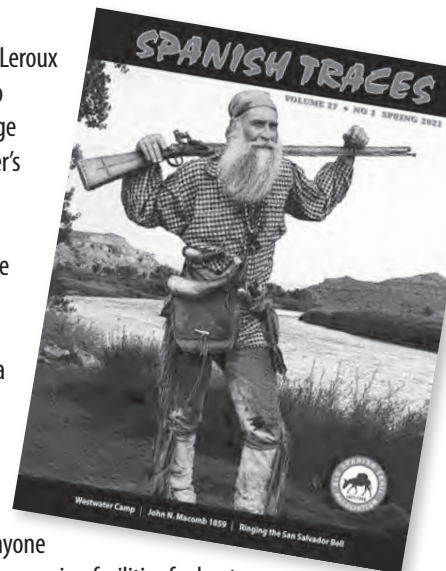
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ON THE COVER

Artistic portrayal of Antoine Leroux on the banks of the Colorado River at Westwater. The image comes from Chauncey Homer's trapper photo inserted onto a contemporary photo at Westwater, designed by Mike Milligan with Photoshop. Milligan explains the background photo includes a river crossing that residents used during low water, with a large cattle ranch on the other side of the river, and should be recognizable to anyone

who camps at the Westwater camping facilities for boaters through Westwater Canyon. It may have also been the location where Native American's crossed the river and numerous tracks were reported by Colonel Loring. The time period of Chauncey Homer's trapper photo is probably closer to 1853, when Leroux was younger but an aging trapper and guide. We know that Leroux was at Westwater at least twice as a guide.



SUMMER 2021 DEADLINE

We would love to receive your comments, suggestions, photos, and ideas for future issues. The deadline for submissions for the Summer 2021 issue is July 2, 2021. Send to Lynn Brittner, ostamgr@gmail.com.



By now we are used to attending events and conferences via Zoom or other computer platforms, but not in person. Virtual meetings have worked, but, as we all know, it is not the same as being face to face with our friends and colleagues. As we move into 2021, slowly across the country and around the world live events are starting to take place with the help of technology and updated safety protocols. As the situation is changing rapidly, we hope that 2020 is firmly behind us and that federal, state, and local authorities work to facilitate widely available vaccinations allowing us to safely travel. With this in mind, we have decided to hold this year's OSTA's annual conference in-person at the Alexis Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada, during the last weekend in October. To provide peace of mind and help attendees feel confident and safe, we will prepare and share best practices for these challenging times with safety measures, health, and sanitation protocol. The Alexis Park All Suite Resort offers a non-gaming environment with recently renovated accommodations at discounted conference rates. Alexis Park resort has a Covid protocol in place with safety first.

The Conference theme is "Builders of the Trail." Reconnect with colleagues and friends, and make new connections,

LOS SENDEROS

By Lynn Brittner, Executive Director

while hearing the stories about early explorers and commuters-on the Old Spanish Trail. The history of Las Vegas Valley encompasses more than 2,000 years of history. For centuries this valley has served as a welcome water hole for weary desert travelers. "Builders of the Trail" will "link the efforts of Santa Fe traders, Native Americans, explorers, military units and individual families and those who traveled with them to build the Old Spanish Trail!"

Although last year's conference was canceled, planning and research continued throughout the year. In late November, we produced a video project filmed in the Mojave Desert, focusing on the area of Emigrant Pass. The video project highlighted the years of work that went into researching this area from OSTA Tecopa Chapter President, Jack Prichett and Tecopa



Chapter members. They retraced trails and footpaths established by Native Americans and later travelers on the trail. Some forty miles of the OST mule trace and wagon ruts following the route in 1849 have been documented with the use of historical maps, nineteenth-century documentary sources, and on the ground GPS recordings. This area has become increasingly more significant especially as it awaits being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Working under a 2011 grant, Mark Henderson, OSTA



Photo by Chad Zalunardo



Video crew at China Ranch, on the trail that leads to the overlook of the Amargosa River.

life member and Salida Del Sol Chapter member, prepared a draft National Register of Historic Places nomination for Emigrant Pass. Last year, the BLM Barstow Field Office took the lead to formally submit the nomination application to the California State Historic Preservation Office. After it receives recommended listing from the state office, the nomination will be sent to the National Park Service for final approval. Once accepted by the NPS Keeper of the Register, Emigrant Pass will have numerous distinguished status privileges, such as being listed in the national database of historic places and part of the National Archives.

This is a public database,



Cynthia Kientz, Tecopa CA

which will describe and document the significance and importance of its historical perspective. It will also encourage further preservation of Emigrant Pass as a historical resource. We are hoping that this nomination becomes official during our next conference, as we present this video.

The Mojave Desert video project will include documenting the work of the Tecopa Chapter, the work to register Emigrant Pass, and footage from a Drone showing segments of the beauty of the longest stretch of the OST in the Mojave Desert. As travelers drive by on Nevada Interstate 80, seldom do they realize they are following sections of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. Also, the recent closure of the parking lot at Emigrant Pass by the Bureau of Land Management has made access more difficult to view the high-potential route of the trail. Viewing this trail will now be more accessible with this video. The intent for this project includes an enhanced understanding of the history and impact that the Old Spanish National Historic Trail has made in this area. It will be used to develop future educational and interpretive projects for OSTA's upcoming exhibits and interpretive plans. During this project, several interviews were conducted with Jack Prichett, Ashley Hall, Glenn Shaw, and Clifford Walker, who discussed their involvement with this section of the trail and revisited the remnants of the trail over 200 years later.



On top of Emigrant pass, looking east.

One of the highlights of being in the Mojave Desert was staying at "Cynthia's Place" in Tecopa, California. Cynthia Kientz, founder of the Tecopa Chapter, generously hosted our team at her lodge, which is located right on the old Spanish Trail Highway and the OST. Visitors staying at her place are provided safari packages, and educational tours while exploring the Mojave Desert along the OST. Cynthia is both a long-term partner and educator of OST, and we appreciate her significant donation towards the Mojave video project. The video will be shown at the upcoming OSTA's Las Vegas conference. We look forward to working together to prove that we can return in person and reconnect in secure ways.





PRESIDENT PATHWAYS

By Paul Ostapuk, OSTA President

It is part of OSTA's mission statement to bring to life the history of the Old Spanish Trail by telling stories of its diverse people and their interactions. We have much to learn from these diverse cultures (Anglo, Hispanic, Native American, and others) during this time period. By understanding the complex weave of those social, political and trade connections, we can expand our perspectives and provide depth to our national experience.

In this issue of Spanish Traces, we offer historical perspectives regarding the Westwater campsite in eastern Utah and the saving of the San Salvador Bell in California during the tremendous floods of 1862 flood that put large sections of the state underwater.

Both of these articles provide a fascinating view of past events.

They are stories worth telling.

I want to take this opportunity to expand on a concept initiated in the past issue of Spanish Traces (winter 2020). In that issue, we published the complete listing of sixty-two (62) historic sites and forty-three (43) high potential route segments identified in the 2017 Comprehensive Administrative Strategy for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. That's a total of 105 physical locations. It's my hope we begin highlighting a number of these places in future issues of Spanish Traces.

I am calling on OSTA chapters to help in this endeavor! Before us is an opportunity to tell local stories and acknowledge special aspects of the landscape. In doing so, the association can help breathe life into the trail. For local chapters, it can mean field trips with purpose and perhaps a new way to engage the public, involve our youth and grow our membership.

CHAPTER CALL TO ACTION:

OSTA chapters can play an important role documenting trail corridor resources. Your pictures and field notes help document baseline conditions for the trail corridor.

Your efforts in the field can help record landscape features, bring attention to cultural sites and help our agency partners recognize the potential for public recreation and interpretation.

Featuring historic sites and high potential segments in Spanish Traces can increase public awareness and at the same time assist stewardship efforts to help protect these trail resources.



Sketch of San Salvador de Jurupa church and bell

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Back Country Horsemen prepare for their two year trek from Los Angeles to Santa Fe on the Old Spanish Trail.

Photo by Richard Waller

The Old Spanish Trail has been called the most arduous and difficult trail in the United States. With Native American historical roots, the trail was used by the adventurous and opportunists bringing textiles from Santa Fe to trade for mules and horses in Los Angeles beginning in the early 1800s. Spanning more than 2500 miles, parts of the trail were used by fur trappers and later by railroad and military surveyors.

The Old Spanish Trail Association, its members, friends, and partners, are dedicated to protecting, interpreting, and promoting the Old Spanish National Historic Trail and related historic routes.

The Old Spanish National Historic Trail was established by Congress in 2002. It has often been referred to as the most arduous, difficult trail in the United States. Its designated routes cover six states and some 2,700 miles, traversing mountains, deserts, rivers, and coastal valleys. It was historically used by curious and brave, enterprising, and sometimes nefarious men, forging trade routes between the Mexican cities of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Los Angeles, California. New Mexican woolen goods were traded for California mules and horses, but the trade also included furs, hides, and even captives.

[Read more about the trail's history](#)

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Learn more about the Old Spanish Trail Association by visiting the website oldspanishtrail.org.

See page 39 for membership information.

CHAPTER REPORT

Tecopa

By Jack Prichett

Since 2008, the Tecopa Chapter has documented—through use of historical maps, nineteenth-century documentary sources, photos, and on-the-ground GPS recording—some forty miles of the Old Spanish Trail mule trace route (1829-1848) that crosses our chapter's territory.

Beginning in 1849, gold rushers and Mormon parties, riding in ox-drawn or horse-drawn wagons, followed much the same path as the Old Spanish Trail. The wagon trails were first recorded by General Land Office surveyors in 1857 and show up on post-1849 maps as the Great Salt Lake or Mormon roads.

Tecopa's GPS tracking of the OST mule trace is important for two reasons. The first is that we have found, and documented, using two non-artifact dating methods, that a long segment of the mule trace diverges significantly from the later Great Salt Lake road. The mule trace proceeds in a near beeline across the California Valley. The later wagon roads crossed the California Valley, well to the south of the mule trace.

Our careful documentation of the mule caravan route is significant because the National Park Service's official map of the OST records the



Four members of Tecopa chapter's trail field work committee during a 2009 field trip in the vicinity of Stump Spring, which is very near the California/Nevada state line. From right to left, Scott Smith, who has handled almost all the GPS recording and data management from 2007 through today; George Ross (now deceased), a half-Paiute Native American raised in the 1920s in Tecopa, who led the committee to many segments of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail and the later wagon road; Barbara Milliken, chapter board member and treasurer who has participated in dozens of field expeditions; and Dixie Ross, daughter of George, who assisted the chapter. Chapter president Jack Prichett took the photo.

route of the later wagon trails. Moreover, the trail route as described in Harold Steiner's 1999 *The Old Spanish Trail, Across the Mojave Desert* and Crampton and Madsen's *In Search of the Spanish Trail* (2007), is very close to the NPS's "official route." None of these three sources record or map the independent path of the mule trace here. Our detailed field research report will lay out, when published, the first documentation of this

previously overlooked track of the original Mexican mule caravan route.

The chapter is now finalizing our packaging of the data we have collected. The package of field records, maps, waypoints, and photos will be submitted to the NPS, the BLM, and Inyo County.



CHAPTER REPORT

Fish Lake, Utah

By Stephanie Moulton

The Fish Lake Chapter is sad to report the passing of Robert “Bob” William Leonard Jr. on February 16th, 2021. Bob was a long time OSTA member, occasional Traces contributor, and a great trail friend. In 1980, Bob accepted the Forest Archaeologist position on the Fishlake National Forest in south central Utah. He retired from the Forest Service in 2017. His extensive work on the Fish Lake Cutoff of the Old Spanish Trail was recently published in his book, “A Trail of Many Tales.” Tree ring samples and field notes documenting the FLCO were recently transferred from the USDA Fishlake National Forest in Richfield, Utah, to the OSTA archives at Southern Utah

University (SUU) in Cedar City, Utah.

Did you know that Bob originated the use of metal silhouettes to mark the Old Spanish Trail? There are four sets of silhouettes along various sites of the cutoff. The largest set is at the Old Spanish Trail interpretive site above Zedd’s Meadow where the cutoff enters into the Johnson Reservoir valley. Two smaller sets are located at the north and south ends of Fish Lake, and the last is up Kingston Canyon along Hwy 62 just four miles off Hwy 89 and the main route of the trail. All of



these silhouettes are Santa Fe-bound while most of the other silhouettes I’ve seen are Los Angeles-bound.

Wendy Stokes, fellow archeologist for the Fishlake National Forest, mentioned, “Bob had a knack for gathering volunteers. Whether it was metal detecting on the OST/FLCO, painting guard stations, working on trails, etc., he could always get people to work with him. In addition, he absolutely loved giving campfire talks up at Fish Lake. He was a true steward of cultural resources and will be dearly missed.”

To say Bob was disappointed when the NPS did not include the FLCO in the CAS study is an understatement. He continued to present the case for the FLCO to anyone he could. Hopefully, we will continue the fight for the inclusion of the FLCO to the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.



CHAPTER REPORT

Descendants

By Conchita Marusich

Last year, The Descendants & Travelers of the Trail Chapter greeted the holiday season by having a Zoom party on December 19, 2020. It was our first Zoom party ever and we wondered how our members would respond. We had a great time. We said good bye to what had been a difficult year of the virus and welcomed the new year with a fun party online that was safe and allowed our members to participate from the comfort of their own homes. Members joined us from California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Australia. My daughter, who lives in Brisbane Australia, got up extra early to be part of our holiday celebration since Australia is a full 17 hours ahead of California.

Descendants Chapter member, Deborah Trujillo Terracino, put together an enjoyable Jeopardy game based on the Old Spanish Trail. Deborah made it just hard enough to be challenging but everyone knew many of the answers and it turned out to be a really fun experience. It was so well received that we hope to have another Old Spanish Trail Jeopardy game at a future Zoom meeting. We also exchanged holiday recipes which were delicious.



We will have our second Zoom meeting on April 17, 2021 when Lenny Trujillo, a member of both the Descendants and Agua Mansa Chapters, will give a PowerPoint presentation on DNA. He will trace the roots of his DNA in Northern New Mexico and show how that DNA "traveled" to California. He will also look at the DNA results from different testing sites and explain how to understand DNA charts when comparing DNA of family members and relatives.

We found Zoom was a wonderful way to connect our members during the pandemic and would encourage other

chapters to try Zoom for some of their meetings. Zoom allowed us to bring our members together to share our stories and get to know each other. Unfortunately, the pandemic has caused too much isolation and we need to stay connected. If you are interested in joining our chapter, we always love welcoming new members.

We wish all of you a wonderful 2021 and hope that the virus will recede, allowing us a return to some form of normalcy. See you on the Trail, Conchita Marusich President, Descendants & Travelers of the Trail Chapter

Along The Trail	California Dreaming	New Mexico Natives	Awesome OSTA	Who Knew?
100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500	500
Team 1 0 + - Team 2 0 + - Team 3 0 + -				

IN MEMORIUM

Tom Sutak



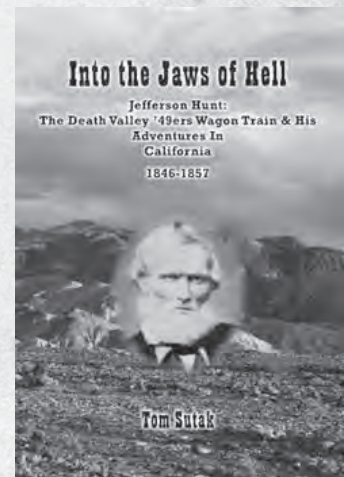
Tom Sutak passed away on December 17, 2020 after a hard-fought battle with cancer. Tom is survived by his wife of 42 years, Terri Sutak, and his

son, Steven. A retired Security Executive, Tom enjoyed 20 years of active retirement. He authored a historical biography, published numerous scholarly articles,

and researched the historic Old Spanish Trail. For years, Tom volunteered his time and talents with the UC Berkeley Student Cooperative.

The Old Spanish Trail Association board, staff, and members are still mourning the passing away in December of our friend and colleague, Tom Sutak. Not only was Tom a stalwart of the Tecopa chapter's work, but also the director of OSTA's Research Committee. His 2012 book, *Into the Jaws of Hell*, has become a standard source for research on the Utah, Nevada,

and California sections of the OST. But it was Tom's acuity with data, his generous sharing of his knowledge, and his insatiable desire to solve historical mysteries that made him beloved and respected by his colleagues. He is sorely missed.



Memories of Robert Leonard Jr.

By Mayor Dave Ogden

My friend and colleague, Bob Leonard, passed away on February 16, 2021. My most memorable reflections of Bob are of him out in the field—I considered him to be a “Roman” archeologist, classic and exploring the ground looking for clues to the past. If he stumbled and fell, he would get back up and go right back to work. When we discussed history, Bob would often refer to Winston Churchill's words, “The farther back you can look the farther forward you are likely to see.” We spent hours of conversation that usually revolved around the Old Spanish Trail. However, Bob was also enthused about Civil War history, European history, the Old West, and Spanish Colonization of New Mexico. Another passion of Bob was learning about mules, as well as



learning to stay aboard one and most importantly how to fall off, which he did more than once.

He often came into my office, mostly to discuss any number of things, but usually we would get around to talking about the thousands of hours he spent researching the Fish Lake Cutoff on the Old Spanish Trail.

He was positive that traders going to California and back to Santa Fe used the Cutoff, weather permitting. After all, it cut seventy-two miles off the distance with better water and feed. There were fish for the scooping at Fish Lake and evidence of trail travel that documented caravans and herders.

Lots of people volunteered on projects that Bob espoused. He had a way of expressing sincere appreciation that encouraged volunteerism on his projects, and understood the many volunteers who worked on his projects were “priceless.”

I will miss our discussions and his boyish interest in things he could dig up. He told me on many occasions “if you find an arrowhead, Mayor, and you pick it up, I'll have you arrested,” I think he would have.

FEATURED HISTORIC EVENT:

Ringling of San Salvador Bell

By Sharon Trujillo Kasner and Nancy Melendez 6th generation descendants of the Trujillo Family

Throughout history, the ringing of bells often denotes a momentous event. It was just so in January 1862 when the ringing of the San Salvador de Jurupa parish bell warned La Placita/Agua Mansa residents to flee their homes as the Santa Ana River flood waters were raging down the mountainside.

La Placita de los Trujillos/Agua Mansa was established in 1842 when ten families from Abiquiú, New Mexico, journeyed across the Old Spanish Trail to Rancho San Bernardino in Alta California following their dream of land ownership.

The New Mexican pioneers agreed to move to present-day Inland Southern California when Juan Bandini, the owner of Jurupa land grant, offered the families deeded plots of land along the beautiful Santa Ana River in exchange for protecting his grazing livestock from thieves and bandits.

The pioneers built their homes on the south side of the river (now North Riverside) and named it in honor of their scout and leader, Lorenzo Trujillo, as La Placita de los Trujillos.

As more New Mexicans moved west to La Placita, homes were built on both sides of the river creating Agua Mansa and establishing the twin

communities of La Placita de los Trujillos and Agua Mansa as the largest non-Native community along the Old Spanish Trail from 1842-1848.

Moving forward twenty years

dug irrigation ditches, and planted crops. Once these basic needs were met, the community turned to building a church. A church complete with a bell to call the faithful to services.

Community members donated metal to cast the bell; however, the church had no bell tower so the bell was hung outside the church on a wooden stand.

On the night of January 22, 1862, several weeks of warm rain and melting snow from the San Bernardino mountains culminated in swelling creeks and mudslides flowing downhill to the Santa Ana River. As the creeks raged into the Santa Ana River, a huge wall of water and mud formed and headed towards the sleeping communities of La Placita and Agua Mansa.

In the middle of the night, the parish priest, Father Borgotta, heard the raging river's roar, rushed outside, saw the river rising, and frantically began ringing the church bell.

The church bell ringing unexpectedly in the middle of the night was all the warning the residents of

the twin communities needed. Everyone ran out of their homes, saw the river rising, and knew they needed to run to higher ground. Some even had to swim for their lives!¹

Thanks to Father Borgotta's ringing of the bell, no lives



to 1862, the population of the area had grown to six hundred residents. The twin communities were beautiful and fruitful, and the residents welcomed visitors with open arms.

Under Lorenzo's leadership, the settlers built adobe homes,



were lost; however, the flood washed away everything in the communities—homes, crops, and livestock on both sides of the river. Only the Church, cemetery, and the general store survived because they were built on higher ground. Amazingly, none of the residents moved away! The La Placita/Agua Mansa residents were determined to rebuild their homes and lives on land a bit further from the riverbank retaining the land they had walked over 1,200 miles on the Old Spanish Trail to claim in their agreement with Juan Bandini (the Bandini Donation).

In 1863, Antonino Trujillo, one of Lorenzo's four sons, built the current Trujillo Adobe near what is now the corner of Orange and Center Streets in the northside of Riverside. The Trujillo Adobe is a City of Riverside landmark #130, a County of Riverside landmark #009, a California site of significance #75, and a National Park Service site of high potential along the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

But what happened to the bell that saved all the families? By 1866, the beloved bell was badly cracked and unusable. A new bell was needed. So again, the community joined together and donated any metal they could spare, including jewelry, and along with the old bell, melted all together to cast a new bell in the very sand of the Santa Ana River.

The story reported by Dr. Bruce Harley is that the big, heavy, homemade bell, which

first hung from a crossbar between two trees alongside the original church, had fallen from the crossbar in 1881. The following year, it was hoisted onto a single tree. The new bell wasn't perfect but it served the community until a new church was built in Colton in 1893. The bell was also too heavy to hang in the new church. As part of a fundraising effort, the bell was sold to the Historic Mission Inn where it resides today in the Las Campanas Restaurant in downtown Riverside.² This bell contains the original San Salvador bell.

The new bell was inscribed with the initials S.S.D.A. 1866 N. S. DE GUADALUPE, meaning San Salvador de Agua Mansa 1866 Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. (San Salvador of Agua Mansa 1866 Our Lady of Guadalupe)

It is appropriate that the San Salvador Bell that saved the lives of an entire community in 1862 now sits in a public place dedicated to bells—Las Campanas—meaning the bells. The bell was designated an historic artifact by Jurupa Parlor 296 of the Native Daughters of the Golden West in 1968. During the 1980s the Historic Mission Inn was almost a victim of the redevelopment wrecking ball! The San Salvador Bell

and plaque were separated and stored, and ultimately the Mission Inn survived the wrecking ball. Years later, when the revived Mission Inn owner created Las Campanas Restaurant, the San Salvador Bell was found but the plaque was not. This historic bell now sits on a pedestal inside Las Campanas Restaurant. The OSTA Agua Mansa Chapter has collaborated with Mission Inn Foundation, Spanish Town Heritage Foundation, Native Daughters of the Golden West, the Riverside Woman's Club, and the American Legion to reconstruct the plaque with the 1968 original wording. A rededication ceremony for the plaque and San Salvador Bell will take place in early to mid-summer 2021 at Las Campanas Restaurant.

This bell is highly revered and respected by all the La Placita/Agua Mansa descendants as it should be by all. It is indeed the bell that saved over six hundred lives!



TREASURE TALE:

The Old Spanish “Steer Hole”

By Alva Matheson

A cold chill had fallen upon the small group of settlers in Salt Lake City as they gathered their courage and their meager belongings to challenge the California Trail. They were to be an advance party dispatched by Brigham Young to secure a defensive corridor for the beleaguered pioneers seeking sanctuary in the desert Southwest. The only information they had of their destination was a general description by Parley P. Pratt, leader of an earlier exploration party to the region north of the Colorado River.

For most of the settlers, Salt Lake City and the Utah Territory had been their home for only a short while, barely enough time for anyone to feel comfortable with their new surroundings. But then, who knew what was over the next hill? The only thing they could be sure of was that they would need to be ready for spring planting, regardless of where they found themselves at the time.

Their destination had generally been described as... “a wide and fertile valley of abundant streams, wild game and a large lake that is teeming with fish.” George A. Smith was selected as the leader of the wagon train, having been assured that everything they needed would be provided “in abundance” for their trek to the Pah-ro-wan (Parowan) valley of the Great Basin. Jefferson Hunt, an earlier traveler of the



Lane Lamoreaux, photographer and pilot

Old Spanish Trail, suggested to him that they proceed to the Beaver River before diverting easterly to the Old Spanish Trail, which they would intersect at Little Creek Canyon. Perhaps someone should have asked what the Pah-ro-wahn signified. The answer, moot in the face of actually seeing the Little Salt Lake, approximated something like “Evil Water” in the Paiute language.

But hopes were high, and everything was new to the group. Their first stop in the new valley was at a large artesian spring just to the west of the Old Spanish Trail. They named the spring “Buck Horn Spring” after a large set of deer or elk antlers they found hanging on a small tree, or, as some said, it was named after a very close encounter with a yucca cactus that simply had the appearance of antlers. But either way, the place became known as

“Buckhorn City,” with some thirty-five families living there (including Philo T. Farnsworth, inventor of television).

Some of the party were disposed to stay at the Buckhorn Flat and refused to 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 across the valley on the Old Spanish Trail to eventually settle at Center Spring, now known as Parowan, Utah. It was January of 1851, and yes, it was still cold.

As exploration of the Parowan Valley continued, winter slowly abated. Some of the settlers 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 onto the flat for grazing and



Little Salt Lake Looking West to the Parowan Gap

forage. The flat was far enough away from the Old Spanish Trail that those traveling east on the trail to Santa Fe, New Mexico, or west to San Bernardino, California, would not likely see or notice either cattle herds or camp sites.

Another advantage of Buckhorn Flat was that the Little Salt Lake formed an east-west barrier nearly ten miles long over which the cattle could not cross. Buckhorn Flat was bounded on the west by the cliffs of the Parowan Gap; on the north side by the piedmont of Black Mountain and forests of pinion and juniper trees; and on the south by the waters of the Little Salt Lake. Together the natural barriers created an ideal box that could limit the range of free-roaming cattle herds. Such circumstances limited the resources necessary to guard the herds and freed the men for building homes and working the farms.

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 for breeding stock. Eventually a willing bull with an evident bloodline was purchased from out of state and transported by rail to Lund, Utah, where 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 prized bull did not return from his 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 on the following Sunday. It was not an “ox in the mire” this time, but the “where-did-the-ox-go” issue that drew their attention, and the search was on.

Buckhorn Spring was a half-day ride to the north of Parowan, necessitating a camp at the spring overnight before

an organizational meeting could be convened the following morning. The group was divided into several search parties for an initial sweep of the pasturage, with a decision to meet at the far west end of the lake by noon. A signal was arranged: one shot for communicating their location, two shots a call for assembly, and three shots for finding the bull or any emergency.

Many hours passed without any shots being heard. No trace of the bull, no tracks, no carcass, and no odor. It was decided that the group would ride eastward in a line abreast this time, traveling from the west to east along the foothills to ensure the area had been fully searched.

It was nearly sunset before the first of two shots were heard, coming from the north ridge of hills. When the group assembled it was not to visit the lost bull as they hoped, but to help locate a faint odor of death that was wafting in the wind. The local search soon resulted in another two shots. When the group gathered a second time, questioning glances were shared with no response. Then one of the mounted posse directed their attention downward.

There below the assembled horsemen was a square hole, some four feet on a side, from which the odor of decay was emanating. A lariat was thrown into the hole and one of the men was lowered into the maw of the opening, there to find the missing bull... long deceased! Amid some consternation the

group returned to the Buckhorn camp. The following morning they returned to inspect the situation in the daylight. What they found was the carcass of the bull where he had fallen, most likely from inadvertent wandering through the sagebrush, into a nonvisible opening. What captivated their imagination, however, was the excavation itself.

The entry was a hand-excavated shaft some 16-20 ft straight down. Within sight it ended in a flared opening below which was an underground domed room. The excavated chamber at the bottom was nearly flat except for evident rock fall and talus. The spoil from the excavation had been scattered around the area such that no evident pile or talus was visible on the surface, and there was no sign of a windless or other means to remove the spoil. Against the wall of the chamber



Buckhorn Spring Looking West

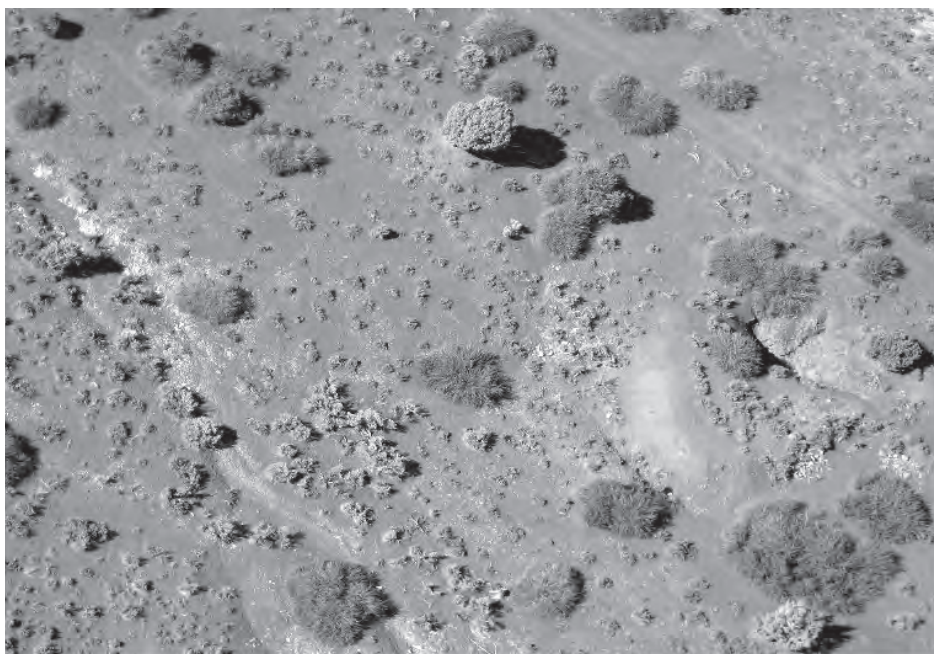
lay three rawhide packs and an assortment of wooden handles. The two-pronged picks were each made of forged iron that had been lashed on to a short handle with rawhide thongs. The searchers eventually removed the objects for inspection, and promptly declared that they were of Spanish origin.

The artifacts from the Spanish "Steer Hole," as it was soon to be named, were taken by the searchers on their return to Parowan and placed

on public display. Eventually the artifacts found their way to the rotunda of the Utah State Capitol building and placed in a historical display heralding the Spanish history of Iron County. The current disposition of the artifacts is unknown (2021), presumably they are in storage in Salt Lake City archives, but no record of their location has been found. Because of the apparent age and condition of both tools and rawhide packs, their proximity to the Old Spanish Trail and the absence of any other residents in the region who might have been responsible for such an excavation, speculation ran rampant.

A search continues for answers.

The history of the Steer Hole has become legend in several families, and as early as 1950 I was introduced to the Steer Hole in the company of several Spanish Trail enthusiasts. The Steer Hole was nearly as difficult to locate as it had been for the original searchers. The general observation was that the persons who excavated the Steer Hole were careful to leave no evidence of their effort: there was no



Spanish Trail Steer Hole



Steer Hole Aerial Looking South

berm and no evidence of spoil. Moreover, it is not in a mineral area nor is it in any location that would suggest a well or assessment work for a mineral claim.

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 Steer Hole. With a resurgence of interest stemming from the designation of The Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail, my interest was renewed, but I found myself unable to find the site again. Eventually in preparation for an Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA) Symposium at Southern Utah University, I made another effort. A successful one this time.

Resorting to the air in a spotter airplane, with an OSTA member, Jim Guyman, as observer, we winged our way along the Old Spanish Trail through Iron County. Eventually we detoured over the Little Salt Lake. I navigated an expanding search pattern from the best location I could remember and found that I was not too far off.

It was just that it was 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 Lamoreaux. AND THERE IT WAS... just as I remembered it! Someone had done some exploratory digging and left their detritus, but otherwise it was unchanged from my visits in earlier years. The mysteries remain, however.

Who, when, why, how?

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 the searchers found, the clean and flat floor, domed ceiling and its proximity to the Old Spanish Trail. It would be easy enough to lower a rope or pole for use as a holding chamber. But nothing else seems to make any sense to me...

Does Anyone have a better idea?



Steer Hole Aerial Photo

BOOK REVIEW:

A Trail of Many Tales: The Discovery of the Fish Lake Cutoff along the Old Spanish Trail, by Robert Leonard Jr., 2020; 163pp, colored, soft covered, self-published.

Reviewed by Jeff Roberts, Bachelor of History & Native American Studies, Brigham Young University, Fish Lake Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail, URARA & USAS member.

The author, Robert Leonard Jr., passed away shortly after his book was published and our condolences go to his sweet wife, Sharon Glen, and to his family, which always included some Golden Labs. Bob had a storied career as a Forest Service archaeologist, winning National awards for his “*Passport in Time*” Projects. This book was the “icing on the cake” for a very dedicated public servant.

I worked with Bob on many diverse projects; including Backhoe Village II, an all-voluntary Fremont Indian excavation in Richfield, Utah, in which Bob shouldered the ethical challenge of conducting this dig without public resources and leading a ragtag team of members of the Utah Statewide Archaeological Society. I worked additionally with Bob as a site steward, on a Paiute Tribe Restoration Project, and as a participant on the Fish Lake BYU excavation. Bob had contacted me twice during the week of his passing concerning his commitment to finishing the “*Backhoe Village II Project*.”

My task here is to review the historical component of *A Trail of many Tales*. Bob had two goals: 1) To demonstrate through historical and scientific data that the Fish Lake Cut Off (FLCO) was a legitimate integral part of the Old Spanish Trail (OST), and 2) To have the FLCO nationally



Spanish period and OST/FLCO features are illustrated in Red Creek Canyon

recognized, “...we nominated to the National Register of Historic Places a segment of the Old Spanish National Historic Trails and the Fish Lake Cutoff. Both were listed by the Keeper of the National Register.” This is a technical report with dense data, and does not read like a story. The most readable parts are the firsthand accounts that relate to the FLCO and the OST, and these are the best evidence that the FLCO was part of the OST. Leaders of various governmental agencies may exclude the FLCO from some artificial designation, but in real life the FLCO was a living breathing part of the OST.

The author documents well the FLCO with well-known accounts. He also throws in a plethora of Red Creek-related accounts. Some of these also point to a known branch pointing their way to Fish Lake. The lake is the hinge point.

I can verify the veracity of some of the science used on the FLCO to gain knowledge of a site’s context or place in time. Tree-ring dating, used extensively to date sites and yields climate data, have a few issues for potential error when the problem of old wood is used in a particular manmade construct, but the author uses an expert in this particular analysis: Dr. Stan Kitchen, research botanist

at the USDA Rocky Mountain Research Station. The book's findings include evidence of Spanish period trail usage (1795-1818), evidence of trail usage during the FLCO/OST (1836-1848), and evidence of green peels usually used as a food source for Native peoples all dating to (1836).

The author packs the Introduction with a myriad of accounts and data then unpacks them in the chapters. Between the cairns, peels and swales, hang on with the complex analysis. The reader is then compelled to determine if Bob's analysis collectively supports his supposition of a Trail.

In reality the OST was not a single-track trail but a corridor, particularly at Red Creek where the topography was complex as well as the fork for the Cut-Off. There is growing evidence of a third option. The trail may have also wended through today's Wayne County then across the Parker Mountain before it descended into Grass Valley. The explorer Fremont used this route. Too much snow in Salina Canyon or Fish Lake would have made this route optimal. Fremont followed this path. It may have

served as a slaver's route as well (Jones 2000). The diversity of trail riders, engaged animals, wagon use, seasonal conditions, presence of Native peoples, and available wildlife and water all lend to this "corridor" argument. The author's own data and analysis supports this complexity at Red Creek.

The author goes into great detail with animal herding practices in general and the grazing history of the area. The purpose being to demonstrate that domestic and wild animals both denigrate traces of historic trails. The issue being that qualifications for federal trail status depends on the classification of trail traces. I would imagine much of the OST to have been denigrated by historic animal management. Bob makes the point that when sheep were introduced to the area that severe environmental damage was well documented.



Bob Leonard with his students at Fish Lake

The chapter labelled "Archeological Features" is primarily focused on culturally modified trees, blazes, cairns, and dendrochronology. The data collected is extensive. The argument for a corridor through Red Creek is extensive.

"The Cutoff is a well-marked corridor with blazes and a system of cairns that guided the travelers from the mouth of Red Creek along the East Bench Corridor to the open country on the south side of Sheep Valley Ridge." (p90)

Sheep Valley is on the Fish Lake Plateau leading to the Lake itself. Bob's extensive documentation is so extensive and compelling that I would think it to be difficult to refute to any great extent. The cairns and blazes on the FLCO are linear. The handy craft of men is at

work here. Starvation peels are not. Cairns follow the trail to the forest plateau. Cairns can be controversial. It is difficult to place cairns in any absolute time segment. Important here is the nature of hidden trails and canyons. Cairns and blazes were used to point travelers to important trail features or segments. Another

"The Cut off is a well-marked corridor with blazes and a system of airns that guided the travelers from the mouth of Red Creek along the East Bench Corridor to the open country on the south side of Sheep Valley Ridge."



Bob with one of his silhouettes, which he started designing over fifteen years ago



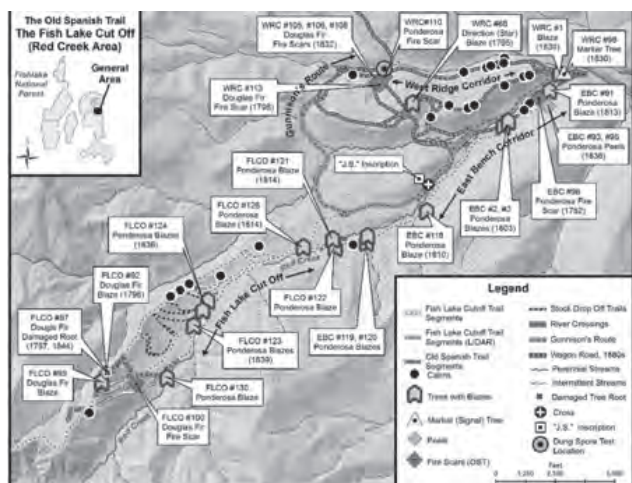
Pictograph at Red Creek Junction. Reference to this site have been noted in numerous historical diaries

giant cairn was found on the OST at Antelope Range overlooking the trail.

For the interested readers, Bob enriches the book with adding related history, characters and topics: such as area rock art and archeological sites, the San Pitche Utes, the Sivareechee Utes, the Sheberetch

Utes, Chief Walkara, the slave trade, horse thievery; the Spanish intrusion into Utah, the fur trade, Jed Smith, "Peg Leg" Smith, the military and government expeditions; area ranching, railroads, mining, and, lastly, the pioneers: missionaries, roads, freighting histories of the area.

In summary, this book belongs in your library if you are a connoisseur of the Old Spanish Trail. It may be the best intensive documentation of a trail segment. Although partially a technical report, the history alone is worth reading. An excellent bibliography and index is provided along with chapters on Conclusions, Appendices, Maps, and a List of Figures. The Appendix is comprehensive with GLO plats, protein residue analysis, GIS/LIDAR data, geomorphology, pollen analysis, and trail classification. The historical documentation is rock solid, and the science data and analysis a thumbs up. Those with specialized knowledge would be more qualified to evaluate this aspect of the book. Bob does not go into the political weeds. There was a Fish Lake alternative trail route as part of the Old Spanish Trail. Why there is no official designation is of concern. It, however, does not change the reality that is on the ground nor the well documented history of the Trail.



A Trail of Many Tales

The Discovery of the Fish Lake Cutoff Along the Old Spanish Trail



A TRAIL OF MANY TALES:

The Discovery of the Fish Lake Cutoff Along the Old Spanish Trail

by Robert W. Leonard, Jr.

Trail of Many Tales relates the history of the trail in south central Utah by combining first hand accounts, tribal lore, works of history, archaeology and state of the art scientific methods.

Bob Leonard is a Fish Lake Chapter member. For each book sold, \$5 will be donated to the Old Spanish Trail Association.

Books can be ordered on the Old Spanish Trail website, oldspanishtrail.org

IN THE FOOTSTEPS of the JOHN N. MACOMB 1859 EXPEDITION TO THE CANYONLANDS of the COLORADO

By David Fallowfield

At the OSTA Annual Conference in May 2010, held in Fredonia AZ and Kanab, Utah I was one of the large group of members who attended the presentation on the 1859 Macomb Expedition given by historian Steven K. Madsen. His lecture, illustrated with photographs, touched very much on my own personal areas of interest, namely, history, geology, landscape and photography (and earlier forms of graphic illustration).

Afterwards I was able to purchase Madsen's book *Exploring Desert Stone* and Steven very kindly endorsed and signed it with the following comment "For David, All the best as you explore the story of the Macomb Expedition, Steven K. Madsen". (At the OSTA Annual Conference in June 2006 held at Green River, Utah I had also acquired from the author a copy of his book *In Search of the Spanish Trail* co-authored with C. Gregory Crampton).

This article is not a review of the *Exploring Desert Stone* book and there is no need for an updated review as this was ably conducted for Spanish Traces by my good friend Dr Doug Knudson and appeared in the Vol 16, Summer 2010, No 2 issue. Suffice it to say the book is a wonderful read and brimming with facts. The purpose behind the 1859 expedition was to conduct a scientific survey of the little-known region between Santa Fe, New Mexico and the confluence of the Colorado and Green Rivers in the Canyonlands area of Utah. The obvious route towards the objective was the Old Spanish

Trail and directions could almost have been given thus; "follow the Old Spanish Trail into eastern Utah and turn left at Church Rock."

So, I had heard the lecture and proceeded to read the book. Among Macomb's party was cartographer Charles H. Dimmock who produced a series of drawings which are reproduced in the book. These are simple pencil sketches of the landscape features and main landmarks along the route. Having personally travelled the main northern route of the OST, first in 1997, and then subsequently returned to sections of it several times over the years I was very familiar with the landmarks drawn by Dimmock. These included "Scotchman" (today's Camel Rock), "Cachucha" (today's Orphan Rock) in New Mexico, "Piedra Parada" (today's Chimney Rock) in Colorado, and Casa Colorado and Church Rock in Utah. These sketches are remarkably accurate even after the passage of something like 160 years.

It now became my desire to complete the section of the Macomb Expedition's journey by visiting the Canyonlands region where they had almost gained a view of the confluence of the two most important rivers of the Colorado Plateau. In 2015, I passed through Moab but time only permitted a second visit to Arches National Park before stopping the night in Green River and then moving on. I had to give a U.S. trip a miss in 2016. In 2017 with the OSTA Annual Conference being held in Barstow, I decided to concentrate



Steven K. Madsen. Author of *Exploring Desert Stone* and co-author of *In Search of the Spanish Trail*

most of my two-week vacation in California. Therefore, when planning my trip for 2018 and with the likelihood that it could be my last visit to the USA, I made the decision to plan to do those parts of Utah I hadn't seen and re-visit some I had been to before. I would get the opportunity at last to "turn left at Church Rock".

In September 2018, and once again accompanied by Bill Ramsay, we flew into Las Vegas, NV and spent the first night there. Next day we headed NE and after St. George, UT, followed much of the Armijo route in Arizona and spent our second night in Page where we had arranged a rendezvous with Armijo Chapter President George Hardeen. The following day we proceeded further east and like Armijo passed thru Marsh Pass before we turned north at Kayenta and negotiated Monument Valley which incidentally members of the Macomb party had visited while surveying the San Juan River watershed.

At Mexican Hat we stopped for more photographs but we had no need to visit the nearby features of “the Goosenecks”, “Moki Dugway” and “Muley Point” because we had seen them before on previous visits. We had lunch at ‘Yaks’ restaurant in Blanding. Continuing north on US 191, the next major landmark was Abajo Peak (11,360ft) off to our left. I recalled from our 1997 excursion along the OST that when we approached this mountain from the east on US 491 it was in view directly ahead of us for a very long time viewed from our elevation on the plateau. After Monticello, eventually Church Rock came into view just as it had done 21 years earlier. It had not changed and was still impressive.

From Church Rock to the Needles section of Canyonlands National Park using US 211 is a not insignificant 35 miles, but the highway is well maintained. In my opinion the journey is comparable to Rossini’s “William Tell Overture” in that it starts calmly but then builds in a resounding crescendo to the finale. In landscape terms, the road begins on the flat plateau, after a few miles it descends into the canyon of Indian Creek where the predominant features are the cliffs and domes characteristic of the Navajo sandstone. The creek provides water for trees and shrubs, adding lots of greenery to the scene. After 12 miles the famous “Newspaper Rock” can be seen alongside the highway. Further on the vista opens up more and there are

a multitude of impressive large buttes (such as Supercrack Butte) in every direction and as far as the eye can see. One butte even displaying three layers of the different aged formations; Navajo, Kayenta and Wingate.

After more miles the famous “Six Shooter” peaks come into view in an even wider landscape and the whole aspect has some resemblance to a miniature Monument Valley. Eventually, the entrance to the National Park is reached and ahead, on the skyline, is the fragmented outline of the Cedar Mesa sandstone hoodoos which gained the section the title “Needles”. I could only contemplate that the soldiers and scientists of the Macomb party must have concluded that this place was special, a sort of “lost world” that they were a privileged few to witness. All due to the complex geology, aeons of sedimentary deposition combined with uplift and erosion. To quote soldier geologist, Clarence Dutton (1841-1912), colleague of John Wesley Powell: “The lover of nature whose perceptions have been trained in the Alps, in Italy, Germany, or New England would enter this strange region with a shock.....and be simply bewildered” 1882.



Church Rock along the highway between Monticello and Moab, Utah

We then set about recording the various vistas of the National Park and started with the Wooden Shoe Arch. At Pothole Point I looked back in the direction we had travelled and took two photographs which mirrored drawings by Charles Dimmock.

One of the Six Shooter peaks and one towards the La Sal Mountains. We moved on to where the highway terminates at Big Spring Canyon overlook. Although this location is almost 5,000 ft in elevation, due to the topography it is not possible to see the confluence of the Colorado and Green Rivers which lies entrenched 4 miles to the west. It would have necessitated a time-consuming rigorous hike through a maze of canyons to achieve that objective and so like John Macomb and his party back in 1859 we failed to see the confluence of those great desert streams. However, we did enjoy the visit to the Needles and I was extremely pleased I had set out to do it and prepared for it by reading Steven Madsen’s *Exploring Desert Stone*. The journey back to Church Rock on US 191 was equally thrilling, seeing all the sights in a different direction.

Soon, we were in Moab where we stayed three nights. The following day was spent hiking Fisher Towers in Professor Valley. The next day a return to Arches National Park. This was followed by a day in the Island in the Sky section of Canyonlands NP commencing with a visit to Dead Horse Point which was the only part of the vast



View west toward the confluence of the Green and Colorado rivers

Canyonlands we had done previously (as long ago as 1997). We spent the night in Green River and next day went thru Capitol Reef NP for the first time, then Grand Staircase-Escalante Nat. Mon. and Kodachrome Basin to overnight in Panguitch. Next day it was Bryce Canyon National Park, followed by Cedar Breaks National Monument, including a trip to Brian

Head Peak for the view at 11,307ft. Then on to Cedar City for two nights stay.

The following day was a real treat for us as we were given a 200-mile jeep tour by Al and Barbara Matheson with whom we had become close friends through contact at several OSTA conferences since 2006. The tour included the OSNHT traces in

the Parowan Valley where Bill and I were impressed with the silhouettes placed strategically along the trail. We also visited the Cedar Mountain overlook where the route of the trail can be visualised, we went into Zion National Park by the “back door” of Kolob Terrace Road dropping down off Smith Mesa to the town of Hurricane.

Later we visited the 13th October 1776 Dominguez-Escalante campsite southeast of Exit 33 on Interstate 15. Al Matheson’s impeccable local knowledge and legendary presentation skills made this part of the visit a memorable occasion and was considered the “icing on the cake”.

The final full day was first spent visiting the Jefferson Hunt Monument near Newcastle and then traveling south to Snow Canyon State Park and then to St George and thus back to Las Vegas and enroute studying the terrain of the whole length of Mormon Mesa. The next day we flew home to Manchester, England.

TRAIL NEWS

Let's Stay Connected!

We are committed to staying connected with you, which is why we started our eNewsletter “Trail News.” Now that it has been launched we want to hear from you.

SEND US YOUR NEWS!

Please give us updates on your Chapter, stories on the trail, and events and activities taking place soon.

We will continue to inform you on updates on OSTA's threats to the trail, as well as news of signage and what's happening along the trail.

Our eNewsletter is produced in email form, with no print costs.

Not getting it? Check you spam or junk mail.

Please send your stories to: Earl Fosdick's email: ekfosstorm@netzero.com



FEATURED HISTORIC SITE: Westwater Camp: Water, Wood and Grass

By MIKE MILLIGAN



Westwater launch site looking upstream in the direction of Ruby Canyon. Upstream view includes where early Westwater residents crossed the Colorado River when it was low, and may have been where Loring in 1858 observed "numerous Indian trails, leading to Salt (La Sal) mountain and the San Miguel and Dolores rivers". Traveling westerly along the North Branch of the OST, Westwater is the first access to the Colorado River after leaving Salt Creek. Photo by author.

In *Utah Place Names*, John W. Van Cott states that the name of Westwater derived from "where the railroad exits into the valley at the west end of Ruby Canyon."¹ The railroad tracks, however, didn't always follow along the Colorado River and exit from Ruby Canyon. Furthermore, when the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad (D&RGW RR) was established in Utah in 1881, they chose the more economical narrow-gauge tracks that were spiked down further inland in 1883. Perhaps, instead, the name that was assigned to the original railroad station derived from an earlier era when the area was a common camp used by explorers, surveyors, trappers, merchants, settlers, likely Native Americans, and others as they prepared themselves and their mules, horses, and other stock with water, grass for grazing, and wood that could be used for fire, roads, and wagon repairs before heading west over the Cisco desert to converge with the main Old Spanish Trail near Green River.

In 1883, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) of Colorado spiked down narrow-gauge tracks through northern Grand County that con-

nected Salt Lake City with the recently settled town at Grand Junction (1881). To upkeep the tracks and provide fuel for the steam locomotive engines, there were a number of stations or sidings established throughout the train route over the Cisco desert and Grand Valley. West Water along with Cisco and Thompson was one of the original stations. According to Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad (D&RGW) historian Jackson Thode, the name Westwater first appeared in 1883 as two words, West Water.² The original location was approximately twelve miles inland from the Colorado River, near Exit 220 off of I-70, where a dirt road veers to the northeast and some remnants of the station can be found next to Westwater Creek. The 1883 narrow gauge tracks completely bypassed Ruby Canyon.³

By avoiding Ruby Canyon and the Colorado River, the financially struggling yet newly incorporated D&RGW Railroad chose to build around the Canyon atop the Mancos shale using the most economical and easiest constructed narrow-gauge track. One source described the result over the Cisco desert as a "frightful combination of curves and roller

1 Utah Place Names: A Comprehensive Guide To the Origins of Geographic Names, comp. John W. Van Cott (Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 1990), 394–95.

2 Letter, Jackson C. Thode to Mike Milligan, October 2, 1987, in the author's possession. "The original narrow gauge line out over the uplands west of Grand Junction was spiked down during January, February and March of 1883. The main line and siding at what became West Water (two words), 48.4 miles west of Grand Junction and 25.2 miles east of White House, was laid January 9, 1883. In the handwritten record the place does not show a name for the siding, but the name West Water had been assigned by the end of the year." "The water supply did not see much use because the water was alkali."

3 Lloyd Pierson and Lyle E. Jamison, "The Denver and Rio Grande Narrow Gauge Railroad across Grand County," Canyon Legacy 42 (Summer 2001): 14–18.



A small Westwater railroad town existed in the vicinity of where the parked van is. Beyond the van is Westwater Ranch, which historically is some of the most valued real estate in Grand County, Utah. Photo by author.

coaster grades.”⁴ A major drawback using narrow gauge tracks was the engines were smaller, which meant they ran slower than the wider standard gauge tracks and hauled less freight. There were also considerable maintenance issues. Along with these drawbacks the D&RG based in Colorado primarily used a standard gauge track, which ultimately influenced the D&RGW to upgrade their tracks to standard gauge by 1890. It was during this change to a standard gauge track that the train route was moved nearer the Colorado River and emerged from Ruby Canyon at Westwater (by this time, one word). The new Westwater train station and water stop was located approximately one mile northeast of the Westwater Ranger Station, where there is a pull over with sidings along the main dirt road.

On April 10, 1889, while Frank C. Kendrick conducted a railroad survey for the Denver, Colorado Canon, and Pacific Railroad (DCC&P) he wrote in his journal when surveying Westwater, “This is a very fine valley.”⁵ The area was also described as “a wooded country filled with game.”⁶ The Westwater valley may have been settled as early as 1880.⁷ In 1884, a small community sprung up from what was considered some of the most fertile land in what would later be Grand County. And by 1887, Westwater Ranch was already established in the valley under the name Bar X Ranch. More settlers and squatters followed after the railroad converted to the standard gauge.⁸ The community not only had access to the railroad, but

also to an already established road that was used for travel between Salt Lake City and Colorado. Most of the “Old Salt Lake Wagon road” follows a much older, forgotten North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail.

In early July 1860, one hundred prospectors left Denver for two months to explore Western Colorado and portions of Eastern Utah “over a region of country that has hardly ever been penetrated ... and never fully described by any one.” D.C. Collier Esq. was designated as a guide, historian, and secretary for the party and he provided details of their explorations in Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News*. The prospectors went as far north as the confluence of the White and Green Rivers in Utah. There, the party split up. Some chose to prospect further northeast, others returned to Denver, and the remainder followed the original plan and headed southeast to the Grand (Colorado) River where, once reached, a few more men headed back to Denver. The remaining sixteen prospectors continued exploring south and southeast until they reached the Rio Grande River. Based on Collier’s comments it appears that the party avoided contact with Utes and other prospectors until it was necessary toward the end of the expedition when,



A 1916 photo by Westwater resident Beatrix Simpson of a farm and Westwater Ranch courtesy of D&RG Railroad. The road in the lower right corner running from left to right is part of the Salt Lake Wagon Road. The photo appeared in a 1917 Railroad Red Book and in Moab’s Grand Valley Times on February 9, 1917. Parts of the road still exist running parallel to the railroad tracks.

4 Bill Wolverton, “Ruby Canyon The Railroad Through It A Brief History,” *Canyon Legacy* 42 (Summer 2001): 9.

5 Helen J. Stiles, “Down the Colorado,” *The Colorado Magazine* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1964): 235.

6 “Is Nearly Ended. Defendants Are on the Stand,” *The Daily Enquirer* (Provo), 9, no. 105 (April 5, 1894).

7 “Court Filings,” *Provo Daily Enquirer*, Provo, Utah, April 30, 1895, 4. Ed Price claimed in a dispute with George H. Darrow that in “1880, he legally settled upon and improved a tract of land in Westwater valley.”

8 Mike Milligan, *Westwater Lost and Found* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004), 29–74.

with their supplies diminished, they sought help at Fort Garland, formerly in New Mexico territory. In Collier's notes to the newspaper, he wrote that several times during their travels the trails they followed intersected with the "Fort Garland and Salt Lake wagon road." Interestingly, because the Fort's supplies were also low it was required that their party apply for assistance from the Quartermaster. When they approached the Quartermaster for assistance, he was with Colonel Edward R.S. Canby, who just recently arrived at Fort Garland on the Salt Lake wagon road. Colonel Canby with his troops were asked to try to locate a shorter route to New Mexico, and to improve the existing road along the way from Camp Floyd, near Salt Lake City, to Fort Garland.⁹

Historically the Fort Garland and Salt Lake wagon road went by several other names, including the great Fort Garland and Salt Lake City wagon road, Salt Lake Wagon Road, old Salt Lake wagon road, road to Colorado, Road to Salt Lake, and Loren's (Loring's) trail. It was the "first named road which carried wheeled vehicles" through what eventually would be Grand County.¹⁰

Until 1990 the Salt Lake Wagon Road appeared to be historically ignored or forgotten when retired uranium geologist and Western Colorado historian William L. Chenoweth and Judge James M. Robb, a for-

mer Colorado state legislator and member of Colorado State Parks Board, questioned the road's existence when it appeared on an 1875 map by Henry Gannett of the Ferdinand V. Hayden Surveys of Colorado and eastern Utah Territory. A few years earlier, in 1987 or 1988, Chenoweth wrote and delivered a three-page memo titled "Historic Crossing of the Colorado River in the Grand Valley" to the Grand Junction/Mesa County Riverfront Commission. In 1990, Chenoweth's paper about the Salt Lake Wagon Road paralleling the Colorado River and an historic crossing at Grand Junction fortuitously coincided with a project Robb, as a founding co-chair of the commission, was involved with developing a trail and park system to help clean up a 26-mile corridor area along the Colorado River in Mesa County. It was the rediscovery of the Salt Lake Wagon Road and its history that helped Chenoweth and Robb to establish many historical coordinates of the road through northern Grand County, Grand Junction, and western Colorado. More importantly, they



Map of Westwater area by Hayden Survey, 1875-1876. F.V. Hayden, Geological and Geographical Atlas of Colorado and Portions of Adjacent Territory (New York: Julius Bien, lith., 1877). Bitter Water Creek refers to what today is named Westwater Creek.

9 D.C. Collier, "Recent Explorations," Rocky Mountain News, September 21, 1860, 2; September 22, 1860, 2; September 28, 1860, 2; September 29, 1860, 2; October 2, 1860, 2; October 4, 1860, 2; October 5, 1860, 2; October 11, 1860, 2; October 12, 1860, 2; October 17, 1860, 2.

10 Lloyd M. Pierson, "The Salt Lake Wagon Road Across Grand County," Canyon Legacy 47 (Spring 2003): 1-8.

11 James M. Robb and William L. Chenoweth, "We Rode the Legislation Trail - from OST to NHT," Spanish Traces 9, no. 1 (Winter 2003) 6-7.

discovered that the Salt Lake Wagon Road followed a much older, sparsely documented North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail.¹¹

Independent of each other Chenoweth and Robb became interested in the Old Spanish Trail (OST) in 1987. Learning that the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail traversed their city made the investigation more personal. Not only would their research benefit the Colorado River corridor through the town of Grand Junction, it was important for them to bring to light the colorful history of the Old Spanish Trail and its North Branch and have it recognized as an historical trail under the National Historic Trails Act of 1968. By 1992, a committee was formed in Grand Junction to work on having the trail nationally recognized and, in 1994, they merged with the newly founded Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA). Their combined efforts resulted in the Old Spanish Trail and its North Branch being federally recognized as the 15th historic trail in the United States when President George W. Bush signed into law Senate Bill 1946 on December 4, 2002. Along with the thorough research found in Leroy R. and Ann W. Hafens' *Old Spanish Trail* (1954), Chenoweth, Robb, Jack Nelson, also of Grand Junction, and Lloyd Pierson of Moab, documented the paths of the *Forgotten Pathfinders* and the ruts of the Salt Lake Wagon Road, making a huge contribution to our understanding of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail through Colorado and Utah.¹²

The Hafens described the Old Spanish Trail as the "longest, crookedest, most arduous pack mule route in the history of America."¹³ For a short time in history the trail played a vital role in developing the Southwest. New Spanish territories of California and New Mexico were separated by the Grand Canyon and other obstacles that prevented commerce between them by land. It wasn't until late into the eighteenth century that Spain sanctioned expeditions to explore a route linking the two settlements. Los Angeles sits at a slightly lower latitude than Santa Fe and currently there is approximately 850 road miles between them. Because of the terrain and other difficulties, a 1,200-mile parabolic shaped Old Spanish Trail eventually evolved beginning at Santa Fe, or Taos, heading northwest into central Utah then

turned southwest to eventually reach Los Angeles.

The 1,450-mile-long Colorado River was a formidable obstacle for the Spanish, Mexicans, trappers, surveyors, merchants, and others who worked their way from New Mexico to California. Some early reports indicate that Native Americans often appeared reluctant to disclose the locations of river crossings to the intruders. There are four identified crossings of the Colorado River that eventually were located and used by early Spanish and Anglo travelers, merchants, and traders between New Mexico and California on what became known as the Old Spanish Trail and its North Branch. Most are familiar with the main Spanish Trail crossing at Moab and with the Crossing of the Fathers, which the party led by Fathers Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante crossed in 1776 and which is now buried beneath the waters of Lake Powell in Glen Canyon. There was a lesser-used crossing near the Dolores River confluence with the Colorado River. However, the primary crossing for the North Branch on the Grand/Colorado River was at Grand Junction and identified as the "Crossing of the Grand." Prior to 1921, the Colorado River between Grand Junction and the Confluence with the Green River was previously known as the Grand River.¹⁴ Sections of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail may possibly predate the main branch. As early as 1686, Spanish Friar Alonso de Posada was aware of Utes coming from as far north as Utah Lake to New Mexico. The routes they travelled likely were preexisting game trails that were developed and enlarged by Utes, Navajos, and other Native Americans as they hunted, sought out water sources, migrated, and developed trade among other tribes and eventually the Spanish. Subsequently, sections of Native American trails were used by the first explorers and trappers out of New Mexico as they headed north into Colorado and Utah. It wasn't until 1826 that an overland route from the Salt Lake area to California was pieced together by Jedediah Smith. He returned again to California in 1827, which opened up a route that would lead to finally piecing together the Old Spanish Trail and linking New Mexico with California. The commonly used main Old Spanish Trail route coming through Spanish Valley was first transited

12 Jack William Nelson, *Forgotten Pathfinders: Along the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail 1650-1850*, ed. Jon M. Nelson (Grand Junction, Colorado: self-published, 2016),

Edited pdf found at <http://northbranchost.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Forgotten-Pathfinders-new-A.pdf>; Lloyd M. Pierson, "The Salt Lake Wagon Road Across Grand County," 2-8;

William L. Chenoweth, "A Portion of the North Branch Became the Salt Lake Wagon Road," *Spanish Traces* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 10-13.

13 LeRoy R. Hafens and Ann W. Hafens, *Old Spanish Trail Santa Fe to Los Angeles* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 19.

14 William L. Chenoweth, "Rivers of the Grand Valley," *Spanish Traces* 12 (Spring 2006): 24-26.

in 1830-1831 by William Wolfskill, George C. Young, and a number of other trappers. Two years earlier, in 1828-1829, merchant Antonio Armijo with sixty men and one hundred mules followed a more southerly route starting at Abiquiú, New Mexico, to become the first party to travel between the two settlements.

Except for the expeditions led by Juan Maria Antonio Rivera in 1865 and by Father Dominguez and Father Escalante in 1776, little is known about other Spanish explorers or traders because without proper authorization it was illegal to enter Ute lands and trade with them. Beginning at Abiquiú and Santa Fe, respectively, the three known expeditions travelled northward following the Dolores River then east of it nearer to the North Branch OST, and in some instances touched upon it while in Colorado along the Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers. After

lands were eased slightly and by 1824 an influx of French and Anglo-American trappers had entered their country. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, American and French trappers moved north and west at first trapping the rivers connected with the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Mexican territory was off limits without obtaining a license and paying fees for beaver and other hides. Eventually a number of French and American trappers entered New Mexico and settled or established headquarters at Taos including Kit Carson, The Robidoux brothers (Antoine, Michel/Miguel, Francois, and Louis), Antoine Leroux, Jean Baptiste Chalifoux, Old Bill Williams, "Peg Leg" Smith, James Ohio Pattie, William Wolfskill, Etienne Provost, and others. It is possible that the mysterious Denis Julien may have briefly resided at Taos in 1827.¹⁵

Before the Old Spanish Trail to California was fully established in 1830-1831, other trails made their way into the Rocky Mountains by trappers headed out of Taos to the Colorado and Green Rivers. Those traveling from Santa Fe followed the Old Spanish Trail to San Juan Pueblo where the trail split. The main trail continued northwest and the other headed east toward Taos or the western fork of the North Branch OST. Antoine Leroux explained that this route generally was used "when there was much snow in the mountains on the Abiquiú [main] route."

There was a west and east fork of the North Branch through the seventy-four-mile wide San Luis Valley. The two forks converged at Saguache, Colorado, then the trail continued a northwesterly route over the Cochetopa Pass. Variant trails spread out after passing over the Continental Divide at the Pass due to the difficult terrain, however, they eventually converged again near the confluence of the Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers. It was near the confluence that Fort Uncompahgre trading post was established by Antoine Robidoux possibly as early as 1827.

After crossing the Gunnison River shortly below its confluence with the Uncompahgre, the trail continued through nearly forty miles of desert bypassing steep and difficult terrain where the Gunnison River flowed nearby but was not accessible. Shortly after the Gunnison River emerges from



Antoine Robidoux inscription is found along an early trapper trail entering into the Book Cliffs that led to the Salt Lake, Green River and Rendezvous areas. After this photo was taken a section of the lower left side of the panel has broken off. Photo by the author.

the Dominguez and Escalante Expedition reached the confluence of the Uncompahgre and Gunnison River, they took an easterly direction along the northern branch of the Gunnison River then headed north, which placed them east of the North Branch OST as they took a longer route to reach Utah Lake. They returned on trails that were closer in proximity to the main Old Spanish Trail and crossed the Colorado River at the Crossing of the Fathers.

In 1821, when Mexico gained its independence, restrictions from Spanish rule against entering Ute

15 James H. Knipmeyer, *The Life and Times of Denis Julien: Fur Trader* (Chula Vista, CA: Aventine Press, 2018), 80; David J. Weber, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982) 85-87.

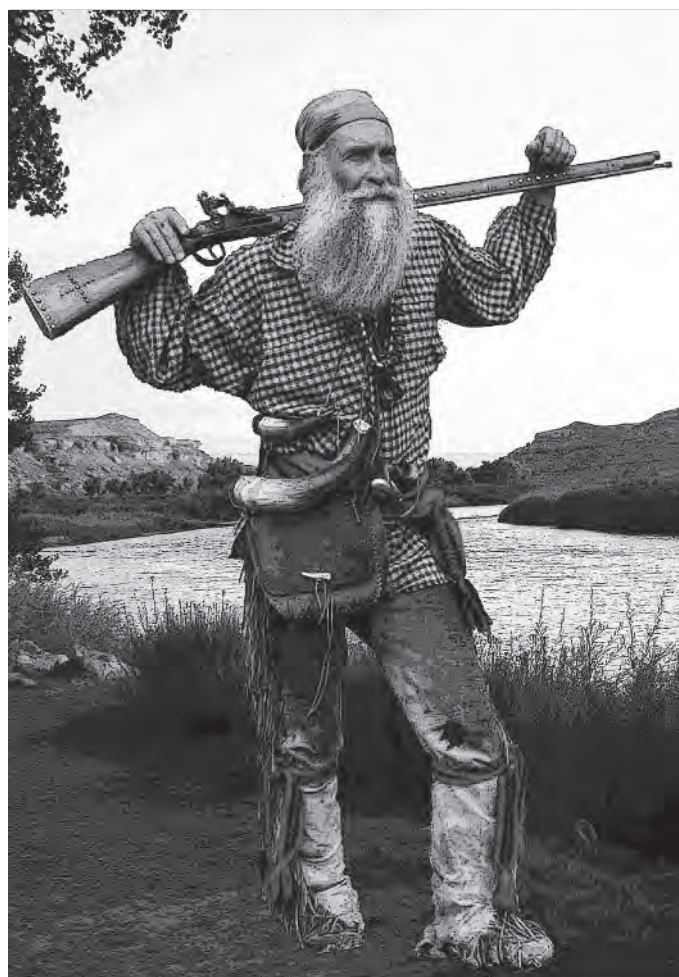
16 Jack W. Nelson, "North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail: The Trapper Variant," *Canyon Legacy* 53 (Spring 2005): 36-38.

17 Established originally as the William Reed Trading Post in 1828, with William's young nephew James and Denis Julien. It was later purchased by Antoine Robidoux in the spring of 1832. James H. Knipmeyer, *The Life and Times of Denis Julien Fur Trader*, 92-96; A. Reed Morrill, "The Site of Fort Robidoux," *Utah State Historical Society* 9, no 1-2 (January-April 1941): 1-11.

the canyons, it converges with the Colorado River at Grand Junction, Colorado. It was shortly before the rivers merge that the “Grand River Crossing” was used by parties to continue north into the Book Cliffs to the Winty and Salt Lake areas, or northwest to merge with the main Old Spanish Trail. The older trapper trail left the River at Salt Creek and went northwest to one of the only entries into the Book Cliffs/Roan Mountains at Westwater Creek where the Antoine Robidoux inscription is located.¹⁶ During the fur trade from about 1824 to 1840 this variant of the trail was travelled extensively by numerous brigades of trappers as they made their way north to trap the Green River and Uinta Basin regions. The primary trail through the Book Cliffs likely entered Hay Canyon and exited Willow Creek Canyon to the Winty or Uintah area where another Robidoux trading post was located.¹⁷ The trail was also used by trappers and traders going to the annual mountain man rendezvous that lasted from 1825 to 1840, and the Salt Lake area. Along the Hay Canyon and Willow Creek route, there are inscriptions from Denis Julien (183?), Louis Robidoux (1841), Antoine Leroux (1835), and B. Chalifou (probably Juan Baptiste Chalifoux – 1835).¹⁸

The westerly North Branch trail from Salt Creek followed closer to the Colorado River where Westwater, and sometimes Cisco and McGraw Bottom, were recognized as camps along the route to the main trail. The most promising camps included water, grass for grazing, and wood. These resources were available at Westwater for trappers, surveyors, and travelers of the North Branch OST through northern Grand County as the trail headed west to merge with the main Old Spanish Trail near Green River. Of the three known camps along the Colorado River, Westwater was identified by William Chenoweth and Lloyd Pierson as the only camp used by all of the early documented parties.

A central figure in our understanding of the Westwater campsite and a number of other locations identified as part of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail was the renowned trapper and guide Antoine Leroux. Mostly unknown today, Leroux was renowned in his day, especially as a guide. Because he lacked the credentials of surviving a grizzly bear mauling or guiding any of the five highly publicized



Antoine Leroux – the image of the trapper comes from a photo taken by painter Chauncey Homer from Tucson. He gave permission to use the image but retains copyright for it. The background is at Westwater near the current boat launch for Colorado River trips.

expeditions led by John C. Fremont, there is little biographical information written about Antoine Leroux.¹⁹ A Kit Carson biographer, DeWitt C. Peters wrote that, “Leroux was an old and famous trapper and mountaineer whose reputation and skill as a guide in the Far West, was second only to Kit Carson’s. A few of his warm partisans ... at one time considered him superior even to Kit Carson.”²⁰

Perhaps destined to be a mountain man and trapper in the Southwest, Joaquin Antoine Leroux, aka Watkins Leroux, was born in St. Louis in 1801, two

18 Jack William Nelson, *Forgotten Pathfinders: Along the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail 1650-1850*, 47-51; James H. Knipmeyer,

“Denis Julien: New Inscription Discovery,” *Canyon Legacy* 71 (Winter 2011–2012): 15–17.

19 Forbes Parkhill, *The Blazed Trail of Antoine Leroux* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1965).

20 DeWitt C. Peters M.D., *The Life and Adventures of Kit Carson, Nestor of the Rocky Mountains* (New York: W.R.C. Clark & Co., 1858), 334.

years prior to the Louisiana Purchase. Founded as a trading post in 1764, St. Louis was the home of many mountain men and trappers, including the Robidoux brothers, who would find their way to New Mexico about the same time as Leroux around 1824. Leroux's roots in the Southwest were established long before his birth. In 1748 his maternal grandmother Maria Roselia Jacques while residing in Taos, New Mexico, survived the slaughter of most of her household and neighboring citizens by Comanches. Surviving the Taos massacre, she was captured by the Comanches, who held her for ransom. She was later sold to Pawnees where she was eventually ransomed by a French merchant, who married her and brought her to St. Louis. Leroux would eventually return to Taos where his grandmother was raised and make it his home.²¹

Living among his friends and trappers who traded at the trading posts in St. Louis, tales of rivers, mountains, beaver, and Native Americans must have had a huge influence on him. At the age of twenty-one, Leroux answered an employment ad for "enterprising young men" to join the Rocky Mountain Fur Company (RMFC) led by William Henry Ashley and Andrew Henry in 1822. Listed as one of the original RMFC employees known as "Ashley's Hundred," Leroux spent nearly two years learning to trap, hunt, and survive with the likes of Jedediah Smith, Tom Fitzpatrick, Hugh Glass, Jim Bridger, and William Sublette in the wilderness along the upper Missouri River. By 1824, three years after Mexico gained its independence from Spain and lightened trapping requirements in their country, Leroux, the Robidoux brothers, and a number of other Anglo and French-Canadian trappers made their way to New Mexico where most of them either settled or began trapping enterprises based in Taos where it was easier to avoid paying fees for their pelts.

Antoine Leroux worked as a free trapper for thirty years among many of the legendary trappers. He was neighbor and close friend to Kit Carson. Until he was named lead guide for the Mormon Battalion in 1847, his activities were obscure and mostly unwritten. Many of the mountain men and trappers were illiterate and their stories died with them. Jim Bridger was unable to sign his name but benefited from others writings. Antoine Leroux was educated

and spoke English, French, Spanish, and a number of Native American dialects and sign languages. There is no evidence that Leroux kept a journal; however, we have some written material of his activities from letters he wrote describing the Southwest that were printed in major newspapers throughout the country and military reports from expeditions that he guided. By 1840, the beaver market declined and, as silk hats replaced the need of pelts for top hats, mountain men pursued other interests or settled down. Because of their vast knowledge of the West, some old trappers became military guides. Three of the prominent guides were Leroux, Kit Carson, and Tom Fitzpatrick. Leroux was a guide in demand because of his vast knowledge of the Southwest and was sought out by a number of early military expeditions, surveyors, and caravans throughout the 1840s and 50s. He was also a successful rancher and likely didn't need to work as a guide. Of him, Baldwin Mollhausen, Topographical Draughtsman and Naturalist for Lieutenant Whipple's survey, wrote in his journal of securing Leroux as their guide that "the confidence which he inspired, - a confidence that had been earned by thirty years' toll in primeval wildernesses - made us all rejoice not a little at having secured his services." Mollhausen was also impressed with Leroux's "very minute detail" when one night, as they slept alongside each other, he told the graphic story of Fremont's 1848 failed attempt at surveying the 38th parallel during a severe winter.²²

Leading into 1853 there was considerable interest in building a transcontinental railroad across the country to the Pacific Ocean. Several routes were proposed and to resolve the issue money was appropriated for the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers to determine the most practical and economic route for a railroad from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean. Beginning in 1853, several surveys took place along the proposed routes including one that followed closely along the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail. The route was strongly advocated by John C. Fremont's father-in-law, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. Late in 1848, Fremont attempted a survey for a year-round railroad route along the same general route of the 38th and 39th parallel being proposed by Senator Benton.

Unfortunately, Fremont was not successful as he

21 Forbes Parkhill, *The Blazed Trail of Antoine Leroux*, 13–28

22 Baldwin Mollhausen, *Diary of a journey from the Mississippi to the Coasts of the Pacific With a United States Government Expedition Vol II*, Trans. Mrs. Percy Sinnett (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1858), 23–25, 190.

23 "Congressional: Speech of Hon. W.H. Seward, of New York," *The Daily Union* (Washington, D.C.), February 12, 1853, 2.

started too late in the year and was hampered by winter snows that cost ten men in his company their lives and others were maimed for life from frostbite. It was not one of Fremont's proudest moments.

In the early spring of 1853, Senator Benton invited the legendary trapper and guide Antoine Leroux to Washington, D.C., to appear before Congress regarding the proposed 38th and 39th parallel route. Leroux also wrote an extensive letter that appeared in a number of newspapers throughout the East expounding on four routes from New Mexico to California that he personally travelled and the country between them. He wrote, "I have trapped on nearly every stream between Cooke's route (Mormon Battalion, Northern New Mexico followed the Gila and Colorado Rivers to San Diego) and the Great Salt Lake, and am well acquainted with the region of country between them."²³ Additionally, Lieutenant Thomas W. Sweeny wrote, "Antoine Leroux was perhaps as well informed about the little known spaces of the unexplored West as any man of his time."²⁴

In 1847-1848, Leroux was lead guide for Colonel P. St. George Cooke and the Mormon Battalion during the Mexican War, where they built a road from New Mexico to California. He was also guide to Captain Lorenzo Sitgreaves, who in 1851 lead a small crew of topographers, naturalists, artists, and support personnel and thirty infantrymen along the Zuni, Little Colorado, and Colorado Rivers to map and explore a shorter route to California. Their party was also instructed to evaluate the navigability of the three rivers. Leroux was already familiar with the navigability of the Colorado River from the Virgin River to the Gulf of California, having trapped it by boat in 1837.²⁵ He concurred with Senator Benton that, when coming from the East, the route over Cochetopa Pass was the better route. In 1853, Antoine Leroux wound up guiding two of the four proposed railroad surveys along southerly routes from New Mexico to California. One of these was the survey of Captain John W. Gunnison along the 38th and 39th parallel, which he guided as far as Westwater camp before returning to Taos to meet a prior commitment with

Lieutenant Amiel Weeks Whipple, whose regiment he guided along the 35th parallel. Before Leroux's departure from Captain Gunnison's Survey at Westwater, he provided them with detailed directions to reach the main Old Spanish Trail and the Green River crossing.²⁶

Prior to guiding Captain Gunnison and Lieutenant Whipple, Leroux met Lieutenant Edward F. Beale on the Santa Fe Trail on his way to California to be the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. At the time of their meeting, Leroux was guiding another outfit and committed afterwards to guide Lieutenant Beale to ²³ "Congressional: Speech of Hon. W.H. Seward, of New York," *The Daily Union* (Washington, D.C.), February 12, 1853, 2. ²⁴ Parkhill, *The Blazed Trail of Antoine Leroux*, 207. ²⁵ "Navigability of the Colorado River," *Daily Alta California*, May 31, 1857, 5. Regarding the possibility of getting a steamboat up the Colorado as far as the Virgin, in a letter Antoine Leroux writes: "I know that the river Colorado is navigable from the mouth of the Virgin down. From the mouth of the Virgin, in 1837, I constructed skin canoes until I had reached the place where timber was to be had; then I made seven wooden canoes, and continued trapping as far as the tide-waters, in which place I met with the Co-ca-pah Indians;" ²⁶ Jacob H. Schiel, *Journey Through the Rocky Mountains and the Humboldt Mountains to the Pacific Ocean* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 59; Frank Schubert, "Vanguard of Expansion: Army Engineers in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1819-1879," Washington D.C., Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government (August 1980), 103. According to botanist Frederick Kreutzfeldt, Leroux provided "topog directions to the Great Salt Lake." California when they reached Taos. According to Gwinn Harris Heaps, they "considered ourselves fortunate in securing the services of so experienced a guide." Unfortunately, Leroux became seriously ill before arriving at Taos and was unable to guide them. Similar to Captain Gunnison it seems likely that Leroux would have provided Beale with directions and landmarks to follow the North Branch OST as far as the main Old Spanish Trail. Heaps's journal

24 Parkhill, *The Blazed Trail of Antoine Leroux*, 207.

25 "Navigability of the Colorado River," *Daily Alta California*, May 31, 1857, 5. Regarding the possibility of getting a steamboat up the Colorado as far as the Virgin, in a letter Antoine Leroux writes: "I know that the river Colorado is navigable from the mouth of the Virgin down. From the mouth of the Virgin, in 1837, I constructed skin canoes until I had reached the place where timber was to be had; then I made seven wooden canoes, and continued trapping as far as the tide-waters, in which place I met with the Co-ca-pah Indians;"

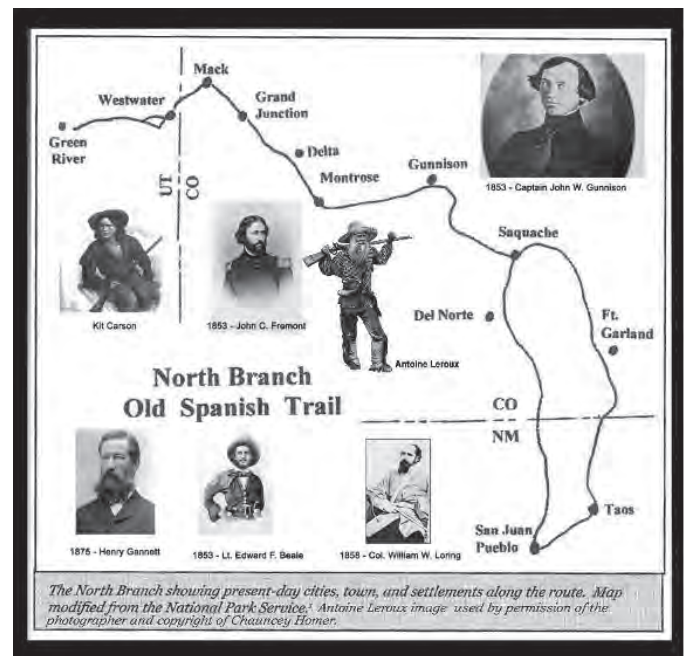
26 Jacob H. Schiel, *Journey Through the Rocky Mountains and the Humboldt Mountains to the Pacific Ocean* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 59; Frank Schubert, "Vanguard of Expansion: Army Engineers in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1819-1879," Washington D.C., Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government (August 1980), 103. According to botanist Frederick Kreutzfeldt, Leroux provided "topog directions to the Great Salt Lake."

27 Gwinn Harris Heaps, *Central Route to the Pacific, From the Valley of the Mississippi to California: Journal of the Expedition of E.F. Beale, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in California, and Gwinn Harris Heaps, from Missouri to California in 1853* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co., 1854) 17.

was the first to describe the entire trail along with recording the mileage between camps.²⁷

In addition, Leroux guided Captain Randolph B. Marcy's northerly return trip in 1857 from Fort Union, New Mexico, to Camp Scott, Wyoming, with supplies for Colonel Albert Sydney Johnston's army during the short-lived Utah War. Captain Marcy started out with his soldiers when he was ordered to wait for Colonel William Wing Loring and his troops. Colonel Loring hired Leroux in Taos and together they traveled eastern Colorado where they combined their troops and completed the journey to Camp Scott. After the Utah War ended in 1858, Colonel William Wing Loring was ordered to return with his troops to New Mexico and take a more southerly route than the one he traveled with Marcy the previous year. It was a large contingent of military that included fifty wagons and three hundred men who were assigned to repair existing roads and build their own when needed. Leaving Camp Floyd on July 19, 1858, Loring kept a journal that included descriptions of their camps, landmarks, existing roads, and, most important, the daily mileage. Colonel Loring provided the most thorough record in existence of the trail that helped Chenoweth, Robb, and Lloyd to reconstruct their route through Grand County and Western Colorado. Unbeknown to them, the 2nd Lieutenant John Van Deusen Du Bois also kept a journal which helped identify their camp at Westwater.²⁸ Colonel Loring's guide was Antoine/ Watkins Leroux.

Along the route Colonel Loring at one point wrote that they were "marching slowly to make a good road for the train (wagons)". Throughout his journal he reported attributes of grass, wood, and water at stops and camps. Both Loring and Du Bose indicate that there was an existing road (NBOST) between the Green River and Grand River that they generally followed or made improvements to avoid sandy areas or difficult terrain for their wagons. After exiting the main Old Spanish Trail to avoid long distances of a dearth of water the party followed the existing trail south of Captain Gunnison's that reached the Grand River sooner.



Modified map of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail by the National Park Service. Historical figures along the trail added by author.

Loring's party reached the Grand River at McGraw Bottom, then traveled to Cisco, and on August 12th their party camped for several days at Westwater, where there was water, grass, and wood (and trout), while they worked on a road near the Utah-Colorado border. Colonel Loring described the Westwater camp, where "the valley we are in is some six miles in length and two or three in width, surrounded on all sides by high mural precipices. Soil good and covered with large cottonwood trees and sage bush, grass abundant and numerous fish in the river."²⁹ Lieutenant Du Bois said, "this camp is a pretty good one."³⁰

Interestingly, Loring reported at this location "numerous Indian trails, leading to Salt (La Sal) mountain and the San Miguel and Dolores rivers."³¹ Upriver of the Westwater Ranger Station there reportedly was a Colorado River crossing used by early resident ranchers during low water. The Westwater camp as described by Captain Gunnison in his 1853 report had a "narrow bottom of fine grass two or three miles in length, with shady groves of

28 LeRoy R. Hafen, "Colonel Loring's Expedition Across Colorado in 1858," *The Colorado Magazine* XXIII, No. 2 (March 1946) 59-62; Campaigns in the West 1856-1861; John Van Deusen Du Bois and Joseph Heger, *The Journal & Letters of Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois*, Foreword by Durwood Ball (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 2003) 73. 2nd Lieutenant Du Bois may have provided the mileage to Colonel Loring. He claims in his journal that he used an odometer and Schmalcalder compass for his measurements, and is likely Westwater (then called Bitter Water Creek), where there were good camps and "plenty of wood, water and grass every night during the whole trip." Both creeks are laden with alkali, which suggests the campsites near the Grand River were the sources for water. Wooten also reported that the following year an emigrant party with "two thousand sheep, and from three to four hundred head of cattle" followed behind Captain Gunnison and that Leroux ran into them on his return to Taos.³⁵ With so much traffic in 1853, there appeared clearly a bias to promote the North Branch trail for the building of a Pacific Railway.

29 Hafen, "Colonel Loring's Expedition Across Colorado in 1858," 61.

30 Campaigns in the West 1856-1861; *The Journal & Letters of Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois*, 78

cotton-wood on the banks of the stream. The red sandstone canon walls are nearly vertical and two hundred feet high; beyond which smaller ledges rise above each other, terrace-like, for some miles towards Salt Mountain (La Sal), which bears south from our camps, some twenty miles beyond the river. The canon narrows to the width of the river below the groves of cotton-wood." They remained at the camp for three days..."keeping our animals at the river to graze."³²

It seems evident that Antoine Leroux knew his way throughout the Southwest. Regarding the area between Taos and the Green and Colorado Rivers, he claimed to have made semi-annual trips to Salt Lake before it was settled. According to two sources, there existed a Mount Leroux in the vicinity of Green River that was named for him.³³

Prior to 1853, there is little to no detailed descriptions given of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail.

During the period from 1853 to 1858, the only known detailed accounts of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail or Salt Lake Wagon Road come from the Beale, Gunnison, and Loring parties that were either guided or consulted by Antoine Leroux. Later in 1875, Henry Gannett further documented the route by identifying the Salt Lake Wagon Road on his map for the F. V. Hayden Survey. Of the known parties, only Captain Gunnison took a different northerly route after leaving Westwater camp. It was a comparison of the more detailed notes from Loring and Gannett that helped Chenoweth and Robb locate the Grand River Crossing at Grand Junction, Westwater camp, and

other historical sites along the road/trail through Utah and Colorado. Leroux was familiar with the camps and with where water, grass, and wood could be found.

It is unclear when Westwater was first used as a camp. Between 1822 and 1840, there was significant activity by trappers who shared little to no descriptions of their travels along the Colorado and Green Rivers. The Old Spanish Trail was interchangeably used when describing both the main and North Branch. The well-traveled route heading west at Salt Creek to converge with the main Old Spanish Trail



Undated stereo image of Westwater where Westwater Creek drains into the Colorado River. The name on the image is Nottingham Point. A Dr. D.M. Nottingham's name appears in newspapers reporting Westwater news in Cisco Desert images near Green River, Utah.

32 Lieut. E.G. Beckwith, "Report of Exploration of a Route for the Pacific Railroad Capt. Gunnison, Topography Engineers Near the 38th & 39th Parallels of Latitude, The Mouth of the Kansas River, Mo., To the Sevier Lake, In the Great Basin," Senate Reports: Explorations and Surveys, from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, 1853-4 (Washington, Severley Tucker, Printer, 1855) 58-61.
Hafen, "Colonel Loring's Expedition Across Colorado in 1858," 55; Mumey, Nolie, "John Williams Gunnison: Centenary of His Survey and Tragic Death," Colorado Magazine 31 (January 1954): 26 footnote.

34 William L. Chenoweth, "Rivers of the Grand Valley," Spanish Traces 12, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 24-26.

35 "The Central Route - Additional Testimony," Washington Sentinel, City of Washington, December 8, 1853, 3; Howard L. Conrad, "Uncle Dick" Wooton, (Chicago: W.E. Dibble & Co, 1890), 249-262.

may have been established around 1830 when the trail opened up to California. Sometime in October 1837, Leroux reported that trappers Isaac Slover and William Pope, with their families and two Mexicans, travelled by wagon along the North Branch OST from Taos. Because of the difficult terrain crossing the area below Cochetopa Pass, it is surmised that they used a two-wheeled cart. That same month, John Wolfskill, brother of William Wolfskill, followed the same route with thirty-three Mexicans leaving Taos on October 17, 1837, and arrived in California in February 1838. Perhaps the two parties travelled together? On June 24, 1852, former trapper "Uncle Dick" Wooton departed Taos with nine thousand head of sheep to sell in California for a profit. Most recorded merchants travelled the main Old Spanish Trail; however, Wooton chose to travel the North Branch to California. In a news article he provided a list of water sources along the route and the approximate mileage between them. There were three water sources listed between the Blue or Benikera (Colorado)³⁴ and Green Rivers. Of these, he named the first two water sources Big Salt Creek and Little Salt Creek, respectively. The latter was fifteen miles further west and is likely Westwater (then called Bitter Water Creek), where there were good camps and "plenty of wood, water and grass every night during the whole trip." Both creeks are laden with alkali, which suggests the campsites near the Grand River were the sources for water. Wooton also reported that the following year an emigrant party with "two thousand sheep, and from three to four hundred head of cattle" followed behind Captain Gunnison and that Leroux ran into them on his return to Taos.³⁵ With so much traffic in 1853, there appeared clearly a bias to promote the North Branch trail for the building of a Pacific Railway.

Based on their research, Chenoweth and Pierson identified a number of parties who camped or briefly stopped at Westwater. A chronology of those parties appears below, including any detailed descriptions they left and the mileage (if they provided it) they measured from the Grand River Crossing to West-

water camp.³⁶ Discrepancies in the mileage may be the result of using different methods to make the measurements. Although listed, the other parties are speculative with less historical records to go by.

1848, June 4 or 5, Lieutenant George D. Brewerton and Kit Carson. It is uncertain which of the Old Spanish Trail routes were taken. Brewerton lost his notes while crossing either the Green or Grand River. Because Kit Carson first stopped at his home in Taos, it seems likely that they would have travelled the North Branch before proceeding to Santa Fe. Chenoweth speculated that they camped at Westwater on one of the provided dates.³⁷

1853, July 22/23, (46 miles) Lieutenant Edward F. Beale. According to the journal kept by Lieutenant Beale's cousin, Gwinn Harris Heap, their party "encamped late at night on the Grand River." The only description he gave of Westwater camp involved the mosquitos.³⁸

1853, September 22-26, (46.22 miles) **Captain John W. Gunnison**. After reaching Salt Creek on September 21, 1853, Gunnison was instructed to remain camped until Leroux returned from scouting ahead.³⁹ Because of a previous commitment with Lieutenant Whipple, Leroux took other party members to go with him in advance of the survey team to scout a route to the main Old Spanish Trail, and to instruct them how to reach it. The scouting party was out four days before Gunnison decided to leave camp on his own.

Beckwith wrote, "We left Salt creek without a guide." He continued, "We determined, therefore, to keep up the broad, roaming valley between Roan mountain on our right, and the cañon bluffs of the river on our left. The day was very hot and oppressive, and the soil friable, with the usual amount of sage and an increase of cacti; with numerous gullies to cut and fill. We found no point at which we could approach the river until too late an hour in the afternoon to reach it with our train, for it was impossible to travel at night with wagons without a road."⁴⁰ Gunnison decided to camp where there was a small "intermitting creek of bitter water,"

36 William L. Chenoweth, "Historic Trails Through Grand Valley of Western Colorado," 1998. Prepared for The Colorado Riverfront Foundation: Funded by the State Historical Society Grant No. 94-02-065; Letters, William L. Chenoweth to Mike Milligan, August 8, 2001, November 17, 2004, November 23, 2004, October 27, 2009, all in the possession of the author.

37 George Douglas Brewerton, *Overland with Kit Carson: A Narrative of the Old Spanish Trail in '48* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 113–22; Kit Carson, *Kit Carson's Autobiography*, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 123–12; Correspondence, William L. Chenoweth to Mike Milligan, November 17, 2004, in the possession of the author.

38 Gwinn Harris Heap, *Central Route to the Pacific, From the Valley of the Mississippi to California: Journal of the Expedition of E.F. Beale, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in California, and Gwinn Harris Heap, from Missouri to California in 1853* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co., 1854), 81–82.

39 Frank Schubert, "Vanguard of Expansion: Army Engineers in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1819-1879," 103; In his journal botanist Frederick Kreutzfeldt indicated that an argument broke out over Gunnison ignoring Leroux's instructions to remain camped while he reconnoitered route ahead.

40 Lieut. E.G. Beckwith, "Report of Exploration of a Route for the Pacific Railroad Capt. Gunnison, Topography Engineers Near the 38th & 39th Parallels of Latitude, The Mouth of the Kansas River, Mo., To the Sevier Lake, In the Great Basin," 58–61.

Westwater Creek. He wrote that many of their animals gave out and some didn't make it to camp that night. This might indicate that they did not make it to the Colorado River; however, Beckwith continued, "We were here about four miles from



Cisco Desert images near Green River, Utah. Photos by author.

the river, which, by following the ravine cut through the cañon wall by the creek, was easily reached by horseback, and only obstructed for wagons by a dry channel cut deep in the clay, at a narrow bottom of fine grass two or three miles in length, with shady groves of cotton-wood on the banks of the stream. The red sandstone cañon walls are nearly vertical, and two hundred feet high; beyond which smaller ledges rise above each other, terrace-like, for some miles towards Salt (La Sal) mountains, which bears south from our camp, some twenty miles beyond the river. The cañon narrows to the width of the river below the groves of cotton-wood."⁴¹ Some contend that the last camp on the Colorado River was at Salt Creek, however, it appears that they continued and the next day were camped at Westwater.⁴²

1853-1854, John C. Fremont privately funded 5th and final expedition. No record remains of camps and distances travelled during the winter expedition. Estimates are that Fremont's party arrived in Utah territory sometime the first week of January 1854. Solomon Nunes Carvalho was an artist and produced daguerreotype pictures for the expedition and provided the only information. He indicated several times that they generally followed the trail left by Beale and Gunnison. Regarding the distance between the Grand and Green Rivers he wrote, "at the season that we crossed, there was no water between the two rivers, a distance of about forty miles."⁴⁴ This would imply that they followed Beale's route through Grand County and left the Colorado River at Cisco. 1858, August 12-15, (42 miles) Colonel William W. Loring (see description of

Westwater camp above)

1860, June 24, Colonel Edward R.S. Canby. An important contributor to further establishing the Salt Lake Wagon Road came from Colonel E.R.S Canby. In 1860, when D.C. Collier and the fifteen remaining Denver prospectors applied for assistance from the quartermaster at Fort Garland, they met Colonel Edward R.S. Canby who had just recently arrived from Camp Floyd, Utah, on July 28, 1860.⁴⁵ Similar to Colonel Loring two years earlier, Colonel Canby was commanded to go from Camp



*General Edward R.S. Canby.
Photo from Timothy Hughes
Rare & Early Newspapers website
for April 15, 1865.*

Floyd to Fort Garland where he was ordered to contend with hostile Navajos. His command was additionally assigned to make road repairs along the way and investigate whether a route to Santa Fe via the Dolores River was shorter than the "Loring trail" and practical for development. His command included the 5th Infantry and companies A, F, and H of the 10th Infantry.

Unfortunately, the records detailing Colonel Canby's work, camps, and mileage is lacking. Lloyd

41 Ibid., 58-59.

42 The wagons initially stopped four miles inland at Westwater Creek; however, some or all of the party eventually reached the Grand River at Westwater where they kept their "animals at the river to graze."

43 William L. Chenoweth, "Gunnison's Pacific Railroad Survey," *Spanish Traces* 6, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 26-27; Lloyd M. Pierson, "The Salt Lake Wagon Road Across Grand County," 2-8.

44 Solomon Nunes Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventures in the Far West with Colonel Fremont's Last Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 104.

45 "Recent Explorations," *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, Colo.) 1, no. 41 (October 12, 1860): 2

46 Lloyd M. Pierson, "The Salt Lake Wagon Road Across Grand County," 4-5; Letter, Canby to Assistant Adjutant General, June 24, 1860.

47 Ibid., 4; Daniel W. Jones, *40 Years Among the Indians* (Springville, UT: Council Press, December 1, 2004), 105. Jones records that they were "about thirty miles above the Dolores where it empties into Grand River."

48 Daniel W. Jones, *40 Years Among the Indians*, 99-108.

Pierson in an article titled, "The Salt Lake Wagon Road Across Grand County," appears to be the first to recognize Colonel Canby and his infantry's contribution to improving the Loring Trail aka Salt Lake Wagon Road.⁴⁶ Pierson places Colonel Canby at Westwater camp on June 24, 1860, where he waited for his lead scout Dan Jones, who was accompanied by a "sergeant and Indian", to scout the road ahead to the Grand River Crossing.⁴⁷ Being the only guide knowledgeable with the area Jones, upon his return, was reassigned to Lieutenant Donald C. Stith and the 5th Infantry to investigate the Dolores River as a possible shorter route to Santa Fe. Colonel Canby then proceeded to Fort Garland without his guide.⁴⁸

1876, (50 miles) Henry Gannett of the F.V. Hayden Geological and Geographical Survey of 1875. Because Gannett's party was attacked by Utes while surveying near the La Sal Mountains in 1875, their work in eastern Utah and the Salt Lake Wagon Road was completed the following year. Gannett's 1875 Map of Colorado and eastern Utah territory brought attention to the Salt Lake Wagon Road through northern Grand County and western Colorado. Gannett did not list dates but instead assigned numbers to stations or camps where he conducted his work; Westwater was assigned number 72. Of the area he wrote in the report, "From the ford (Grand River Crossing) the road follows the Grand pretty closely for 20 miles" to Salt Creek. After Salt Creek he reported that the road continued for thirty miles, bypassing Ruby Canyon before it again reached the Grand River. He wrote, "Where the river can be reached there is plenty of wood and a mile or thereabouts from it good grass, but little or none at the river. Then there is another drive of 15 miles before the river can again be reached (Cisco), and here wood and grass are both scarce. At this point the main wagon-road finally leaves the Grand, striking off in a course generally west toward the Green River...." Of the road, Gannett wrote that he "examined this road from Ouray nearly to the crossing of the Green River."⁴⁹

Two years later in 1878, Rollen J. Reeves, while surveying the Colorado and Utah territory border,

mentioned one of two roads he encountered. Reeves wrote, "The only other road we encountered was what is known as the old Salt Lake wagon road. This is in better condition, has been considerably travelled and worked. It was first built by U.S. Troops, many years ago, and has been much used since. This road is the main thoroughfare between Colorado and Utah."⁵⁰

Today, a small part of the Salt Lake Wagon road survives at Westwater. It followed closely an older North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail. Travel in the Southwest was harsh, and water, wood, and grass were critical for survival. Henry Gannett wrote of the Cisco Desert region, "Between the Grand and Green Rivers there is no permanent water along the route. Still rain-water is found at several points in holes, where it remains for several days. Grass, also, is very scarce along this portion of the route."⁵¹

When traveling beyond the Union Pacific Bridge to the Westwater boat launch, you are traveling on one of the few remaining exposed sections of the Salt Lake Wagon Road and the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail. Initially traveled by foot, pack animal, or horse, a path eventually was worn and later enlarged and developed for wagons by Colonel Loring and Canby's military troops and made into an important well-traveled road between Utah and Colorado. The road was established when Colorado was sparsely settled. It was used for the military, stage coaches, freight wagons hauling supplies coming out of Salina to Utes near Montrose, and for mining activity in the San Juan Mountains. Before the railroad, it was a common route for members and missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) traveling from Utah to settlements in the San Luis Valley, where many converted Saints, coming from the southeast, settled.⁵² There are insufficient records to know how many other parties may have stopped or camped at Westwater. It seems likely that many would stop there for grass, wood, and water.

In December 2011, an Historic Trails Inventory Project was conducted for a number of trails in southern Utah. Part of the report involved archeol-

49 Hayden, F.V., Ninth Annual Report of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories embracing Colorado and parts of Adjacent Territories: being a Report of Progress of the Exploration for the year 1875 (Washington: Washington Printing Office, 1877), 348-49.

50 Lloyd M. Pierson ed., "Rollin J. Reeves and the Boundary Between Utah and Colorado," Utah Historical Quarterly 66, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 112.

51 Ibid., 349

52 Lloyd M. Pierson, "The Salt Lake Wagon Road Across Grand County," 5.; Nicholas G. Morgan, "Miscellaneous Papers Pertaining to John Morgan," Digitized by J. Willard Marriot Library, University of Utah, digital date 2013-04-09, 1-2, Pages are from Hans Jensen Hals journal of an 1878 journey from Manti to San Luis Valley to "establish new settlements and to preside over the Saints from the Southern States that were going to emigrate to san Luis Valley." <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=907246>

53 Jonathan C. Horn, Michael Prouty, Jack E. Pfertsh, and John Zachman, 2011, National Historic Trails Inventory Project, Tasks 4,5, and 6 Memo Report for Utah Main Route, Northern Branch, and Armijo Route of the Old Spanish Trail, Emery, Grand, Kane, Piute, San Juan, and Sevier Counties, Utah. Prepared by Alpine Archeological Consultants, Inc., Montrose, Colorado. Prepared for AECOM, Fort Collins, Colorado.

ogy of Loring's Salt Lake Wagon Road. Of Westwater being a camp, the report feels strongly that Loring's description and other supporting evidence appears to validate what Chenoweth and Pierson concluded from their independent research. The report surmises that Loring's party camped near the confluence of Westwater Creek and the Colorado River (note: this location is now private property).⁵³ When one reads the descriptions from Beckwith's, Loring's, and Gannett's reports, they are similar.

William Chenoweth and James M. Robb's research of the Salt Lake Wagon Road was instrumental with identifying the "Crossing of the Grand" by early travelers along the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail. In 2001, an attractive historical marker designating the Crossing was attached to a boulder that sits off the side of the road along 28 ¼ Road and Unaweep Avenue in Grand Junction. It is one of several markers throughout Colorado that designate historical locations along the North Branch OST. Their work along with Jack and Katherine Nelson, Lloyd Pierson, and others from OSTA contributed tremendously to have the Main and North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail designated as the fifteenth nationally recognized Historic Trail in the United States. Before he passed away on July 23, 2018, William Lyman Chenoweth generously shared his research with interested parties in Utah including the BLM at Moab. He wanted to recognize as much of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail as possible and was certain about Westwater being a primary camp on the trail. There are currently no historical markers of the North



Westwater today is very popular with whitewater enthusiasts. There can be up to ten thousand commercial and private visitors each year who come to raft and kayak Westwater Canyon. Shortly upriver of the launch are camping and parking areas near the Colorado River where a historical marker similar to the one found at the Grand River Crossing in Grand Junction would look aesthetically in its element and educate visitors at Westwater of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail.

Branch of the Old Spanish Trail in Utah. It would be appropriate if posthumously a marker could be placed at Westwater identifying the camp and history of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail on behalf of Chenoweth, Robb, and Pierson for their efforts identifying it. Perhaps the name Westwater was derived from the D&RGW Railroad as it headed west across the Cisco Desert. However, the tracks heading west did not initially emerge from Ruby Canyon as described by the source. The naming of the railroad station was made seven years earlier. Or possibly, the name is derived from an earlier historic source. Perhaps, just maybe, the name was derived from the last good camp with water, wood, and grass before heading west across a desert that is destitute of these critical resources until they reach the next permanent source of water at the Green River. A directive to go west from this camp to the next source of water may have morphed into its being named Westwater.



OLD SPANISH TRAIL ASSOCIATION

National Conference, October 28-31, 2021

Alexis Park All Suite Resort, 375 E Harmon Ave, Las Vegas, Nevada 89169

www.alexispark.com 800-582-2282 or 702-796-3322

Registration Form

Register Online at: www.OldSpanishTrail.org

Or complete this form and mail to: **Old Spanish Trail Association, P.O. Box 629, Corrales, NM 87048**

Inquires email-Ashley Hall- ashleyhall1@cox.net phone-702-592-3953

Name(s) _____

Address _____

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Conference Fees include conference registration, speakers on Friday and Saturday, refreshments, and reception on Thursday evening at the Las Vegas OST Park.

Current Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA) Member Yes _____ No _____

***New Member Conference Discount - \$5.00** New OSTA Membership \$35.00 per person \$ _____

Early Bird Registration: Register by August 15, 2021 Members \$85 per person \$ _____

Non-Members \$100 per person \$ _____

Conference Registration: After August 15, 2021 Members \$100 per person \$ _____

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One day only registration - Friday or Saturday:

OSTA member \$60.00 per person \$ _____ Non-member \$70.00 per person \$ _____

Student rate \$35.00 per person \$ _____

LUNCHES/DINNERS ARE **NOT** INCLUDED IN REGISTRATION – MUST BE ORDERED BY OCT 15TH

Lunch (Optional)

Friday Lunch \$12.50 per person \$ _____

Saturday Lunch: \$12.50 per person \$ _____

Dinners (Optional)

Friday Dinner- Old Mormon Fort State Park, Las Vegas Blvd North \$15 per person \$ _____

BBQ Dinner, refreshments

Saturday Dinner– Blue Diamond Community Center \$30 per person \$ _____

Lasagna (meat or veggie) salad, desert, refreshments

Please make checks payable to: Old Spanish Trail Association

TOTAL FEES \$ _____

OSTA National Conference, October 28 - 31, 2021

Venue: Alexis Park All Suite Resort

Theme: “Builders of the Trail”

The Old Spanish Trail National Association’s Annual Conference is slated to be held in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 28 - 31, 2021. So pack up the mules and head out on the trail to Las Vegas for a really exciting and informative conference. We have a wonderful line-up of speakers who will be presenting a wealth of information on this year’s conference theme, Builders of the Trail, “linking the efforts of Santa Fe traders, Native Americans, explorers, military units and individual families and those who traveled with them to build the Old Spanish Trail!”



John C. Fremont possibly traveled through Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area outside of Las Vegas on his return from California.



Old Mormon Fort

Presentations:

Some of the subjects presented by OSTA members will include: Marking the OST across Nevada, A Family History of the OST, The Story of Resting Springs, OST-related Rock Art, “The Genízaros,” John C. Fremont on the OST, Ancestors on the Trail, Celestial Navigation by the Numbers, 1776 Dominguez/Escalante Inscription, 100 Original Markers of 1950, and OST Signage.



OST Marker above Blue Diamond in the background

ACTIVITIES:

Thursday evening, October 28, we will kick off the 2021 Conference by hosting a Reception at the “Old Spanish Trail Park” located on South Cimarron and Tara, just south of West Sahara Avenue. The reception is free to all Old Spanish Trail Members & Guests.

Friday evening, October 29, you will enjoy a great BBQ dinner on the grounds of the Old Mormon Fort constructed in 1855 when Brigham Young was attempting to colonize a Mormon corridor from Salt Lake City to the California Coast. At this point in time the OST in this area became known as the Mormon Road.

Saturday evening, October 30, you will enjoy a catered dinner in the village of Blue Diamond or better known to Old Spanish Trail travelers as Cottonwood Springs, a watering stop on the Old Spanish Trail and a one-day travel by mule pack train from the springs at Las Vegas. There will be ample time to visit the original spring site still situated in a park-like setting.

Sunday morning, October 31, two optional auto tours are planned to highlight OST points of interest through southern Nevada, one going north and one going south.

North. We will travel to the Mormon Mesa located between the Virgin River and Muddy River where undisturbed traces of the Old Spanish Trail still exist. Travelers leaving the Virgin River had to make the arduous climb to the top of the east side of the Mesa, cross the Mesa, and then descend the west side of the Mesa to ford the Muddy River known as the “California Crossing” and begin the waterless 55-mile “Jornada del Muerte” to Las Vegas Springs. Metal silhouettes of OST Traders are planned to be placed along the Trail at this point where the Trail crosses I-15 toward the Southwest.

South. The tour going south will travel up SR160 towards the Spring Mountains Pass OST trail alignments, Native American roasting pits, and petroglyph sites. The springs at the summit were two days travel from Las Vegas Springs. Also at the summit you will see the new OST cutouts in a wonderfully highlighted setting.

Traveling on toward Pahrump, a stop will be made to view the Mormon Road/Old Spanish Trail alignment and the Eagle Scout re-installed trail monument. The tour will then travel past Stump Springs, which was a marginal water stop on the valley floor and then on to Emigrant Pass where both the Mormon Road and the pack mule trace are still visible running parallel to one another.

At the termination of both tours, attendees may choose to continue home or return to Las Vegas.



Nevada OST Marker where OST ascends Mormon Mesa from the Virgin River

OSTA National Conference, October 28 - 31, 2021

Alexis Park All Suite Resort

ACCOMODATIONS:

Registration information for the hotel will be posted on the Old Spanish Trail Association Website as soon as it is available.

Nicole Dominguez
President, Nevada Chapter

Glenn Shaw
NV Director

Ashley Hall
Conference Host



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☐ New member ☐ Renewal

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____



The National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management co-administer the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. OSTA closely consults with the Co-Administrators and other land managers and landowners.
oldspanishtrail.org



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Emigrant Pass



*Mojave Desert sunset, along the Old
Spanish Trail. Mudd Hills, Tecopa CA.
Photo by Chad Zalunardo*



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