

“Petroglyphs along the Old Spanish Trail”

By

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Al began his talk with a history of the Old Spanish Trail.

The trail or corridor began in Santa Fe New Mexico with the goal of reaching Los Angeles California. The route goes roughly from Santa Fe to Moab where it crosses the Colorado River and then to Green River where it crosses the Green River. It then goes west to Little Creek Canyon where it goes through the Wasatch Mountains (following essentially highway 20) and enters the Great Basin at Paragonah. It then turns southwest through Cedar City and down what would become route 18 through Mountain Meadows and then old highway 91, basically staying on the rim of the Great Basin before crossing the desert to Las Vegas and then into California.

The Spanish wanted a shorter land route to its colonies in California. The sea route was long, around the tip of South America to the Philippines and then to California. The other land route from Vera Cruz Mexico to California needed to cover over 300 miles of desert, where the proposed new land route would need to cover only 100 miles of desert.

The first travelers were an expedition lead by Dominguez and Escalante that began in July, 1776. Their primary purpose was to visit the Laguna Indians near Provo and to then go onto California if possible. This expedition new the general route and they had coordinates of where they needed to go. After arriving at their first destination in northern Utah, they determined that they could not make it to California and they turned back, going south from Provo to St George and then the Grand Canyon and east through the Arizona Strip. Their diaries recorded the essential route information.

In 1829, the first commercial round trip expedition lead by Armijo, took a different route through the Arizona Strip and St. George to Las Vegas and then California. This route was too proven to be too difficult and was never used again. Following expeditions used the northern route.

Commerce was limited because up to 1829 the land was controlled by Spain who limited travel through their territory. However in 1829, Mexico defeated Spain and gained control of the land. Mexico wanted the commerce and pushed the trade routes.

The commercial traders carried wool and woolen goods and later iron to California and returned with horses. The round trip journey took one year, beginning in the fall and returning in the spring.

The Old Spanish Trail was used until 1853 when the Mormons settled in Parowan. They did not want the trade route going through their territory.

Al then showed numerous photos of the Old Spanish Trail and the many petroglyph sites along the trail. His photos were primarily from Iron County.

The Old Spanish Trail Association has chapters in both Cedar City and St. George.

References:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Spanish_Trail_\(trade_route\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Spanish_Trail_(trade_route))

<http://www.oldspanishtrail.org/>

<http://www.museumtrail.org/OldSpanishTrail.asp>

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