

Cedar City Chapter of Sons of the Utah Pioneers



SUP Monument CC-5 Casting of the Lots on Highway 56

QR to get to this Location:



QR to List of SUP Monuments: QR to get to this page:



Longitude: -113.143333; Latitude: 37.685278; Elevation 5520'; SUP CC-5 Casting of the Lots Hwy 56



Front of Casting of the Lots Monument on Highway 56



The Casting of the Lots

On July 29, 1776, Father Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante led an exploration party of ten horsemen from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to establish an overland route to Monterey, California, while spreading the Catholic faith to the native people they hoped to meet along the way.

As the Padres traveled along the Beaver River in early October, they became increasingly discouraged about reaching Monterey. Their Indian guide had been frightened and had deserted them to return home. Left alone they were unable to find passage through the mountains. Their supplies were already low and as they realized they were now at the mercy of the severe winter storms, the Fathers despaired of reaching their original destination and decided to return to Santa Fe. However, the other members of the party were reluctant to give up their hopes of reaching California. On October 11, Escalante recorded in his diary, "We had already disclosed to them at Santa Brigida the reason for our new resolve, and instead of paying heed to their validity were setting their views against ours... (having) conceived grandiose dreams if honors and profit from solely reaching Monterey."

The Padres, knowing something must be done to restore the unity of the group, asked the men "to search anew God's will by casting lots putting "Monterey" in one and "Cosnina" on the other and to follow the route which came out." The lot drawn was Cosnina. As the expedition continued the journey southward "quickenig our pace as much as possible," Escalante rejoiced that "this we all heartily accepted now, thanks be to God."

That night they camped in a pasture eleven miles north of present day Cedar City, calling it Valley Rio de San Jose. Escalante was greatly impressed with the possibility of settlements in Cedar Valley.

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“It greatly abounds in pasturelands, has large meadows and middling marshes, and very fine land for a good settlement for dry farming. Very close to its circumference there is a great source of timber and firewood of ponderosa pine and pinon, and good sites for raising large and small livestock.”

Although the explorers never reached California, they covered some 2,000 miles of challenging terrain now called the American Southwest, adding greatly to the knowledge of the area geographically, potential for settlement, and native inhabitants.



Back of Casting of the Lots Monument on Highway 56

Dominguez Escalante Expedition 1776 – 1976

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