

# Cedar City Chapter of Sons of the Utah Pioneers



## SUP Monument #265 OST & Jefferson Hunt Monument 5 miles south of Newcastle

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Longitude: -113.61; Latitude: 37.605; Elevation 5500'; SUP\_265; OST & Jefferson Hunt Newcastle



5 miles south on Bench Road from Main Street in Newcastle, then turn on dirt road to 5' x 3' rock monument with a concrete stamped plaque of Spanish Trail.

### Jefferson Hunt and the Old Spanish Trail

Traveling North/East from Enterprise, Utah on Highway 18, about one mile to the right is a paved road called Bench Road heading almost straight east. If you were to travel this road east to the foothills one could see a sign that directs them to a Sons of the Utah Pioneers historical marker, which is about 200 yards off the

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pavement on a dirt side road. The marker is below the new high tension electrical line being built in this area.

The marker, and stone monument that sits next to it, are shown in the attached pictures. These indicate the site where the Old Spanish Trail and a “short cut” road to California split. At this point, in October of 1849, 118 wagons chose to take the short cut route and seven wagons chose to follow Jefferson Hunt on the Spanish Trail route. The short cut route goes straight west and the Spanish Trail Route goes south along the line of the power line being built to Mountain Meadows and beyond.

This location involves a lot of history and intrigue. Some confusion exists regarding the wording on the marker and references made in the Cotton Mission Sons of the Utah Pioneers article found on Google under the name Jefferson Hunt. The article from a Google search under the heading “Jefferson Hunt – Sons of the Utah Pioneers – Cotton Mission is titled Jefferson Hunt, Bad Judgment, the 49er’s and the Mormon Battalion.

The last paragraph on the trail sign states the following regarding Jefferson Hunt:” His error, over-confidently thinking he could easily find the Rockwell shortcut, led to general irritation and cost him the confidence of most of the wagon train”.

The terms ‘over confidently’ and ‘bad judgment’ seem to be somewhat misleading in the light of recorded history. The purpose of this writing is to introduce parts of history that explore a different perspective to the historical events as they transpired at this location.

Jefferson Hunt had made the trip from the Salt Lake Valley to San Diego and back along the Spanish Trail at least twice, so he was familiar with the trail and knew the water locations, areas of trouble, etc. On one of these trips he was accompanied by Porter Rockwell. On the return trip the two split and went different ways. Hunt returning on the Spanish Trail route and Rockwell by a presumed different route, supposed to be shorter, but the location as of this date is not known.

From: <http://www.utahsdixie.info/hs/I03-hunt.html>

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### A Brief History of the Old Spanish Trail (OST)

There was money to be made in transporting serapes and other woolen goods from New Mexico to Los Angeles and in wrangling California-bred horses and mules back to Santa Fe. There was likewise a strong economic incentive to move contraband goods and Indian slaves, over this same route. A viable overland route had to be found, to cross the remote deserts and mountains of Mexico's far northern frontier.

In 1776, during the Spanish period, priests Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante left Santa Fe and explored far and wide through northern New Mexico, western Colorado, and southern Utah. Much of this county would later be part of the Old Spanish Trail. During this same time period, Franciscan priests, the Spanish military, and civilian explorers were beginning to settle various coastal valleys in Alta California. No one, made the trek connecting California and New Mexico.

It took the vision and courage of Mexican trader Antonio Armijo to lead the first commercial caravan from Abiquiú, New Mexico to Los Angeles in late 1829. Following suit over the next twenty years, Mexican and American traders continued to use routes similar to the one he pioneered, frequently trading with Indian tribes along the way. It was from a combination of the indigenous footpaths, early trade and exploration routes, and horse and mule routes that the trail network known collectively as the "Old Spanish Trail" evolved. (The name was a term rooted in John C. Frémont's report of his 1844 journey over the trail for the U.S. Topographical Corps., guided by Kit Carson. While the name acknowledges the fact that parts of the trail had been known to the Spanish since the 16th century, the 700-mile trail was not established until the Mexican period.) Many prominent members of both New Mexican and Californio families traversed this route as part of annual caravans. In one celebrated, well-documented instance, two toddlers made the trip while packed into the mules' saddlebags.

From: <https://www.nps.gov/olsp/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

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