

# Cedar City Chapter of Sons of the Utah Pioneers



## SUP Monument # OST-10 West Side of Highway 91 at top of Utah Hill

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Longitude: -114.0688007; Latitude: 36.804165; Elevation 1590'; nv-1 Virgin Valley Heritage Museum



Virgin Valley Heritage Museum

## Museum History

The Virgin Valley Heritage Museum sits as a tribute to the early pioneer settlers of the Virgin Valley. Rich with a deep pioneer heritage full of strength, devotion, hardships, sacrifice, and hope, the museum helps visitors to not only understand the pioneer way of life but helps them to connect with the very pioneers that settled this great valley.

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The original purpose of the building was to serve the community as a library and museum. It served as the Mesquite branch of the Clark County Library for about a year. The town then made the decision that a medical facility was needed more than a library. With the \$35 donation from each family in town, Dr. Gilbert and Bertha Howe, a registered nurse, went to Las Vegas and bought the medical supplies necessary to open the hospital. The library building was then converted and used as the hospital and only medical facility in town until 1977. After being closed for a few years, it was used as a Boy Scout meeting hall. In 1984, the newly incorporated City of Mesquite reclaimed it and designated it a museum to house the historical treasures of the Virgin Valley.

Please visit the Virgin Valley Heritage Museum to experience a taste of the rich pioneer heritage that makes up this great area. Much of the Museum's collection is also searchable [online](https://www.mesquitenv.gov/departments/museum).

<https://www.mesquitenv.gov/departments/museum>



Inside Virgin Valley Heritage Museum



The Old Spanish Trail Marker outside Virgin Valley Heritage Museum

1829-1850

Stretching for 130 miles across Clark County, this historic horse trail became Nevada's first route of commerce in 1829 when trade was initiated between Santa Fe and Los Angeles. The trail was later used by the wagons of the "49ers" and Mormon Pioneers. Concrete Posts marking the trail were erected in 1965.

Nevada Historical Marker No. 91

### **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, though, 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, however, made the trek connecting California and New Mexico.



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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.

Thanks in part to the Old Spanish Trail, Santa Fe emerged as the hub of the overland continental trade network linking Mexico and United States markets—a network that included not only this trail, but also the **Santa Fe Trail** and **El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro**. After the United States took control of the Southwest in 1848, other routes to California emerged, a wagon route was opened to southern California, and use of the Old Spanish Trail sharply declined. From:

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

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