

Yesterday



The Old Spanish Trail began to be used in 1829 as a commercial merchant route from Santa Fe to Los Angeles. Early Spanish traders and explorers used the trails that had been blazed by Native Americans for hundreds of years; parts of the routes taken by the famed Dominguez-Escalante Expedition of 1776 were also used. Three "branches" would eventually be established, and were used until the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848 when more wagon-friendly routes were established.

These early travelers – and others who followed them – didn't settle in our area, but passed through on the way to search for gold, silver and other riches. They were not "city folk." They were trappers, prospectors, fortune hunters, explorers and, yes, slave traders. They left their marks in our area's "old wagon road" of what we now know is the legendary Old Spanish Trail.

The Northern Branch – the trail that makes its way through Mesa County - begins north of Santa Fe, to the Great Sand Dunes, then north and west to Saguache and Curecanti National Recreation Area before coming through our area. The Northern Branch was basically a trade route: early explorers, trappers and traders used it to trade with and exploit the native Ute tribes of Colorado, who saw this area as their hunting grounds. This branch rejoins the Main Branch at Green River, Utah.

Interest and study of the Old Spanish Trail began in 1921; the National Old Spanish Trail Association was organized in 1946.

A few years ago, several Grand Junction residents focused attention on the Northern Branch of the trail and its importance to the region. These Grand Junction trail enthusiasts – led by James Robb, William Chenoweth, Earl Heusser, Jack and Kathryn Nelson, and Carlos Savage – developed a strategy for National Historic Trail designation.

The Old Spanish Trail Recognition Act was passed unanimously by Congress in 2002, making the Old Spanish Trail the 15th nationally recognized trail.

For more, visit www.oldspanishtrail.org

Today

Today, the Sister Trails - the Old Spanish Trail and the Gunnison River Bluffs - span hundreds of acres from Orchard Mesa to Whitewater.

Only minutes from Downtown Grand Junction.

Thousands of mountain bikers, horseback riders, hikers and outdoor enthusiasts enjoy this quiet scenery each year. The Old Spanish Trail is more than 7 miles long; the Gunnison River Bluffs is more than 12 miles. The two form "The Loop" and intersect in several places.



While you're on the Sister Trails, look for wildlife and the many types of desert flowers. Please honor No Trespassing signs and stay off the Railroad Tracks. Motorized vehicles of any kind are not allowed.

Be a Good Citizen of the Sister Trails! Please remember:

- Keep dogs on leash or within voice command range
- Camping and fires are not allowed
- Bring lots of drinking water
- Carry out your trash
- Be mindful of the weather: flash flooding can occur
- Dress appropriately for extreme hot or cold weather
- Bring a cell phone and let others know you're on the Trails
- Do not trample wildflowers or harass wildlife
- Do not remove evidence of Archaeological importance

Want more info & more maps? Visit www.sistertrails.org

Tomorrow

The Future of The Sister Trails.

