

# Trek on the Honeymoon Trail

Arizona youth follow ancestors' footsteps to St. George temple

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In an effort to motivate their youth to go to the temple, the Page Arizona Stake held a youth conference trek with the theme, "What Are You Seeking?" On June 2-4 youth traveled a short portion of the Honeymoon Trail to the St. George Utah Temple just like their ancestors before them.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s the trail was a 400-mile trek from Mormon settlements in northeastern Arizona to St. George, Utah, that was traveled by brides and grooms in order to receive their endowments and be sealed in the temple, thus landing it with its name.

For the brides and grooms, the journey required several weeks and most of the young couples spent many nights on the trail under the stars, often sleeping on the ground or in wagon boxes. The young couples and their families faced harsh desert conditions, low food rations, stale water, rattlesnakes, coyotes, bobcats, desert foxes and Indian attacks. In spite of these harsh conditions, many traveled the trail to attend the temple.

Instead of the six weeks it took their ancestors to travel along the trail to the temple, the youth trek was a three-day day adventure over rough dry terrain ending with a fast and testimony meeting in their individual sacrament meetings on Sunday.

Stake President Mack McAllister called Tom and Vicki Jensen to head up this year's stake youth conference and gave them the theme. The overall point they were trying to get across to the youth was that the path they choose in life is ultimately where they will end up, that when they choose their path they, essentially, choose their destiny. The theme is based on a quote from President [Thomas S. Monson](#) who said, "Decisions determine destiny" (CES Fireside for young adults, [Brigham Young University](#), Nov. 5, 2005).

The leaders felt the best example of Latter-day Saints making sacrifices to go to the temple were the early settlers of northeastern Arizona and the Little Colorado River of 1870 to 1929 who embarked on the six-week journey, traveling through some of the roughest and driest country to go to the St. George temple.

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The youth were transported to a location near the Navajo Bridge where they were then shuttled down a dusty road to the beginning of the hike of Lee's Backbone. The trip took the youth up and over Lee's Backbone and down to the Colorado River. President [Wilford Woodruff](#) once stated this stretch in the trail was the worst he had ever traveled on.

The youth were met several times throughout the trek by volunteers who were dressed in time period clothing and shared true stories of settlers in first-person vignettes to give the youth a feel for what it would have been like to travel the trail and what life was like during that time. According to Brother Roundtree, the presentations were "miraculous and faith-promoting stories" as well as "heart-breaking experiences of sacrifice."

"I love history and I learned things about the early Saints that I did not know," said Paul Worthen, the stake patriarch. "Walking in the footsteps of those who sacrificed to go to the temple was helpful to me. I was impressed with the faith of those pioneers."

Throughout the trip, the youth had experiences with learning about ancestors and meeting descendants of people who had made the long journey and had named the landmarks by which they passed. Once the youth reached the Colorado River, they were ferried over to the same site where Mormons of an earlier time headed for the temple were ferried.

At a camp, leaders load tables with a meal for the youth during their trek from Arizona to the St. George Utah Temple; the trek's theme was "What Are You Seeking?"

One night the youth camped at Utah's Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park, which was not on the original Honeymoon Trail but was the nearest site along the trail that offered showers for the 240 people headed for the St. George Utah Temple the next morning. At camp, each ward feasted and held its own fireside addressed by their bishops.

After they had rested, they awoke early Friday morning and were greeted with another vignette to prepare them for their temple experience. The youth took turns attending the temple for baptisms throughout the day, while those who waited their turn visited sites such as Jacob Hamblin's home, the museum of the Daughters of the Pioneers, the stone quarry where stone was prepared for the temple and the St. George temple grounds. The youth also wrote in their journals while they waited their turn to do temple work.

"There were so many of our youth going to the temple (for baptisms) that some groups had to wait in the chapel. It turned out to be a wonderful experience. We sang hymns together in the chapel and it was so uplifting," said Bishop Ted Jensen of the Page 5th Ward, Page Arizona Stake.

Each youth was baptized and confirmed for at least five names, which came to approximately 600 names. Many of the youth found and prepared their own ancestors' names as well as using names the stake had gathered for temple work. Those who did not do temple work, including the non-LDS participants on the trek, took a tour of the temple's visitors center.

"I was most impressed with our temple experience," said President McAllister. "I was especially touched as I watched our [descendants of father Lehi] youth be baptized and confirmed for all those Anglo names. The next time we go to the temple, I'd like to see us be baptized for names ending in Begay, Tsinigini or Tsosie."

The trip ended at Yellowstone Ridge near a historic Mormon settlement at Pipe Springs, Ariz. There they celebrated with a square dance and a chuck wagon dinner. After dark they participated in a stake fireside and testimony meeting.

"It was obvious from the testimonies that the conference was a success," Brother Roundtree said. "The Spirit was so strong and the testimonies and stories shared were very touching."

The next morning the youth were provided horses for trail riding and wagon teams then participated in steer roping, stick pulling contests and other games. Afterwards, 140 tired and dirty youth were taken home to reflect on their experience.

The next day was fast and testimony meeting in each ward's sacrament meeting. According to Brother Roundtree, most of the young people commented that the temple was a major part of their experience.

Hannah Larson, one of the youth, expressed how much she had learned on the trek and what a spiritual experience it had been for her. She said, "While hiking, I thought a lot about the legacy of the pioneers and how almost 200 years later people still respect and revere these brave individuals. I am determined to leave that great sort of legacy behind for my children and future generations."