

Old Sandstone Quarry: Open for Visits

BY R. WAYNE PACE, PH.D., COORDINATOR, QUARRY PROJECT

A young salesman was running to catch the morning train to the city. Trotting up to a farmer, he asked, "Say, do you mind if I take a shortcut across your field? I want to catch the 6:45." "Sure, go ahead young feller," the farmer replied. And if my bull sees you, you might be catching the 6:15."

Even without the aid of the bull, you won't want to miss strolling up to the old sandstone quarry in St. George.

In October 2010, the Dixie Encampment Chapter of the Sons of Utah Pioneers met at the entrance to the maintenance area of the Red Hills Golf Course on 700 West and just off of Diagonal Street and trudged through the brush, up onto the rocky plateau leading to the quarry.

The 17 people who completed the trek skirted the rocks and remnants of the old sandstone quarry from where the stones to build the tabernacle, the temple, the Woodward School, the courthouse, and other buildings and structures in the St. George community were taken.

The group paused, gathered together for a photo of the historic moment, and reflected on the significant happenings that occurred on site.

In about 1863, the Salt Lake Herald newspaper reported that "120 hands consisting of quarry stonecutters and fitters, blacksmiths and other helpers were all busy along the one-mile front, with teams hauling fifty tons of rock cut daily. The quarry was a very interesting place to visit, where the fine, smooth seam-face of rock, the sound of the hammer, the thump of the bar, the rattle of drills, and the click of scores of picks and chisels made music in a business way."

From 2010 to 2016, the Dixie Encampment Chapter labored through the mist of meetings and challenges of the multitude of organizations with controlling interests in the property surrounding and abutting the quarry. Eventually, nevertheless, by mid-March 2016, all approvals had been secured



and a lovely pathway constructed, running from a new entrance consisting of two sandstone pillars and a series of plaques mounted on sandstone rocks to the quarry site.

The pathway was constructed to wend its way through foliage, up the low hills, with steps and bridges across eroded areas and up small cliffs to reach the quarry itself.

At the site of quarry activity, a majestic monument overlooks the valley and the golf course, and a series of interpretive plaques point out and comment on the process of quarrying stones. Visitors experience the grandeur of one of the most significant historic sites in the St. George area, and enjoy the serenity and majesty of the quarry itself. The walk is only 1/3 of a mile and can be negotiated by people of all ages.

For the more adventurous, a plaque celebrating the quarry has been mounted at an overlook on the Owens Loop Trail above the city. Those who walk that

trail get an unexcelled view of a part of the quarry from the top-down. By taking both pathways, visitors get an extraordinary experience. Many will want to embrace the combined views.

Many who have already walked the path exclaim that "the trek produces a spiritual response that honors the



Dedication full audience



Quarry Dedication by Mayor John Pike

pioneers who devoted their lives to erecting such magnificent buildings.”

Both the Dixie Encampment Chapter and the City of St. George encourage residents and visitors to walk the path, enjoy the experience, rejoice in the beauties of the quarry, and reflect on the sacrifices of the early pioneers in working the quarry and building the structures that we occupy today.

Visiting the quarry is one way to discover a local significant historic site that may lead to an appreciation of this area and inspire young people to honor the pioneers.

If you have moved into the St. George area from another location, you will not want to miss this experience so that you can share in the spirit that led to the development of this lovely city. Take the whole family and rejoice in this wonderful history. *SGM*

The Dixie Encampment Chapter of the SUP welcomes new members. If you or someone you know would like to affiliate with this chapter, call:

- Derek Rowley, 2016 president, 775-250-0901
- David Peterson, 2017 president, 435-275-2495

The chapter meets on the third Thursday of most months at 6:30 p.m. at the Crystal Inn, 1450 Hilton Dr., in St. George.

A history of the Quarry and the Quarry Project is available from three locations in St. George:

1. Dixie State University bookstore, 2nd floor, Gardner Building.
2. Stapley Pharmacy, 126 E. City Center
3. Dixie-Arizona Strip Interpretive Association, BLM Building, Riverside Dr.

The monograph is called, *Bringing History to Life*, and includes a narrative about the approval and construction processes to complete the Quarry Project. The monograph includes pages of pictures of the entry, pathway, monument, interpretive plaques, and the dedication services.

BELOW: Entry to the Pathway
RIGHT: Pathway steps above Step Over

