

Volcanic rock from the hills above St. George were quarried for the foundation of the St. George Temple. Visitors can still walk the trail and see evidence of the pioneers' grit and determination.

Reprinted from the Church News, March 2008

A path still trod

Temple Quarry Trail endures as legacy of pioneer faith

BY SHAWN D. STABLE Church News staff writer

ST. GEORGE, UTAH

Early settlers in the harsh valleys of southern Utah faced a grave challenge in the 1870s; how to build a sturdy foundation that was capable of supporting a large temple constructed in swampy land.

President Brigham Young had conceived the design of the temple. When local leaders could not choose a site, he took them on a wagon ride and designated a place to the southwest of St. George.

The leaders protested, saying, "The land is boggy. . . . There is no place to build a foundation."

President Young countered, "We will make a foundation."

A solution to such a foundation was found in the volcanic rock located in the black ridge situated immediately west of the temple site. A road, or

dugway, was constructed along the ridge to a quarry of large volcanic slabs located on the back side.

Two kinds of lava rock were quarried. For the first year and a half, wagonloads of small lava rocks were hauled to the temple site and pounded into the hole where the swamp had been drained, a tedious task that provided a deep, firm foundation.

Large lava stones about the size of a coffin were then carved out. Extremely heavy, they could not be lifted onto wagons, but were chained beneath and hauled a few inches from the ground. The slabs were slid onto the bed of lava rock to form the foundation stones.

In recent years, St. George and surrounding areas have been among the fastest growing locales in the country. Homes and roads have been built to accommodate a burgeoning population.

Preserving the pioneer heritage that has long charmed the area has been the focus of many, including Mark H. Greene, who, in the 1970s began acquiring old pioneer homes for restoration. He and his wife, Barbara, preserved many in the ensuing 30 years.

Brother Greene felt the Temple Quarry Trail was an enduring legacy of pioneer times, a gentle reminder of how grit, love and faith tamed



Etching in large slab of volcanic rock marks years of 1871-1874 when rocks from area were quarried for foundation of St. George Temple.

Utah's harsh southwest deserts.

With development encroaching on the area, Brother Greene felt a determination to preserve the trail. By the year 2000, he had organized the creation of a red sandstone archway to mark access to the trail. Soon after, an Eagle Scout project installed a wrought iron fence.

More recently, the City of St. George added to the pleasant setting by creating a trail head park with landscaping and parking.

Today, the park, complete with sandstone benches and vegetation, marks a symbolic passage through which outdoor enthusiasts from a modern era connect with a rich pioneer past.

During dedicatory services held Nov. 9, 2007, Brother Greene's son, Mark Greene III, in memory of his father, noted how a once dusty and forgotten trail had become a "path to higher ground."

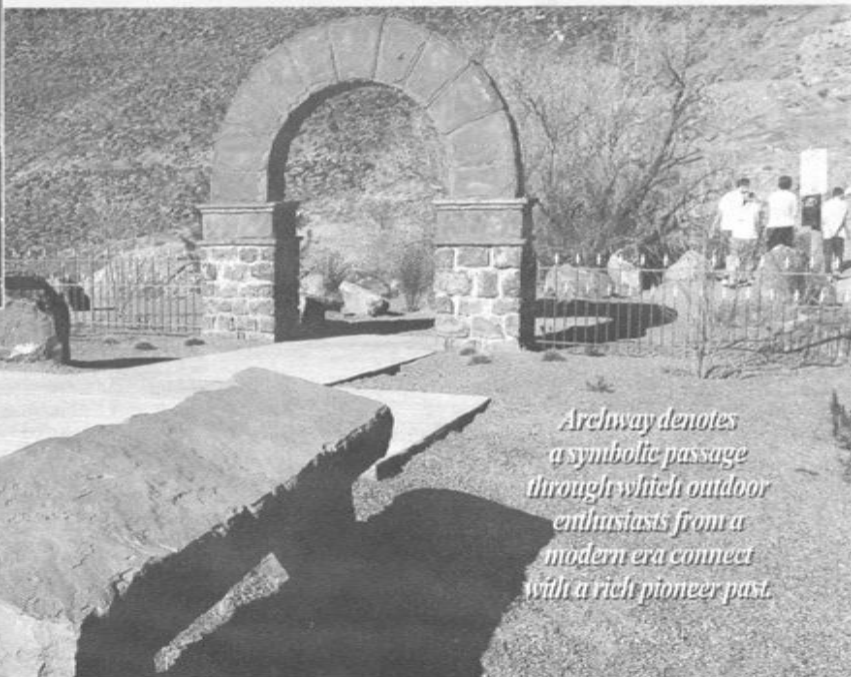
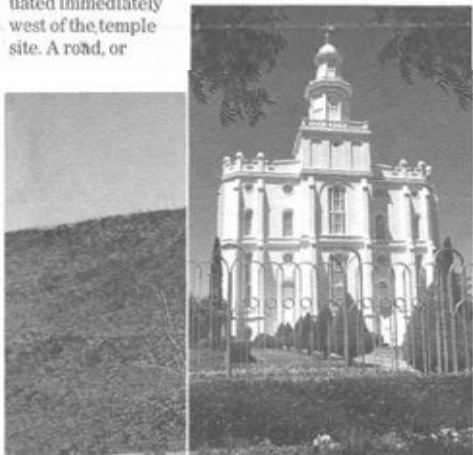
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Photos by Shaun D. Stable

The Temple Quarry Trail can be found by following Airport Road in St. George, Utah, to the top of the bluff and watching for signs.

TRAIL HEAD

New trail head park, with sandstone benches and landscaping, marks beginning of Temple Quarry Trail, used by early settlers to move volcanic rock to build foundation of St. George temple, inset.



Archway denotes a symbolic passage through which outdoor enthusiasts from a modern era connect with a rich pioneer past.