

OCTA 36th Convention, Ogden, Utah

August 2018

Recommended Reading List

Rails and Trails: Confluence and Consequences at the Crossroads of the West – Jay Buckley

The auto tour route interpretive guide for Utah provides a brief history of the three national historic trails in northern Utah, directions for getting around, and a listing of interpretive sites on the trails. Other guides for nearby states include Nevada, Idaho, & Wyoming. Chuck Milliken

GENERAL HISTORIES OF UTAH AND HER TRAILS

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NATIVE POPULATIONS, including pre-Fremont, Fremont, Shoshones, Utes

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Application of Historic Documents and Geomorphology to the Understanding of Nineteenth Century Landscape Change of the Bear River Valley, Franklin County, Idaho, <https://www.researchgate.net/> Ken Cannon

Prehistory of Echo Canyon, Summit County Utah. This unwritten history has been documented by over 25 known prehistoric sites in the Echo Canyon area. By Mark Stuart

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Prehistory of Echo Canyon, Summit County Utah

By Mark Stuart

Salt Lake Valley has often been called the "Cross Roads of the West" and rightly so. It is a place where people and cultures of all Nations and have come together and mingled. If Salt Lake is the Cross Roads of the West then Echo Canyon is the "Gate way to the West" as most who came to the Valley traversed it's path. Echo Canyon has a long and fascinating history beginning with the Fur trade, The Immigrants, the Pony Express, the Telegraph, the Railroad and finally the modern Interstate Highway. It still plays an important transportation and communications route today (Figure 1).

Most people believe that the history of Echo Canyon begins with the coming of the Anglo-Europeans in the 1820's but long before the Canyon was used by animals and people as corridor between the Great Basin and the Northwestern Plains of Wyoming for thousands of years before written history. This unwritten history has been documented by over 25 known prehistoric sites in the Echo Canyon area. Many of these are multi-component sites meaning they are good places to camp and were intermittently occupied for thousands of years.

This story begins ca. 12,000 years ago at the end of the Pleistocene Ice age as ancient Lake Bonneville was slowly shrinking to become the modern Great Salt Lake. Herds of Woolly Mammoths, Giant Bison, Musk Ox, Saber Tooth Tigers, Camels and Horses regularly moved between Lake Bonneville and the Wyoming Plains via Echo Canyon. Following these animals were nomadic Paleo Indians who hunted these animals for food. Only one Paleo-Archaic site has been recorded in Echo Canyon. It is a small scatter of lithic flakes containing a biface knife and a large Great Basin Stemmed Projectile point (Figure 2 top row). Paleo Indian sites are identified by large un-notched fluted and/or stemmed lanceolate projectile points used as spears and knives. The Paleo period lasts from ca. 11,000 to 8,000 BC. Numerous Paleo sites are known along the Old River Bed and the Gilbert shoreline of Lake Bonneville 50 miles to the west.

By 10,000 years ago all of the mega fauna of the Ice Age had become extinct and the climate was much like today's. This led to major adaptive shifts in settlement, subsistence and technology of the Native Americans. Food choices expanded as seeds become important indicated by the presence of grinding stones. Fluted and Stemmed projectile points are replaced with large side-notched (early) and corner-notched dart points. Baskets used for containers also are common. This time is known as the Archaic which lasts from ca. 8,000 BC to 200 AD. Seven Archaic sites have been found in Echo Canyon and are marked by the presence of grinding stones, roasting hearths and large side-notched (Figure 2 middle row) and corner-notched (Figure 2 bottom row) projectile points used with an Atlatl or throwing stick. Many of the large butchering tools (Figure 4) made of local quartzite may belong to this period. Archaic sites in Echo Canyon have been found in both rock shelters and open sites.

The Formative period (200-1350 AD) is marked by the widespread adoption by Archaic peoples of corn horticulture, pottery and bow and arrow technology. The adoption of horticulture led to a more sedentary life style with pit house villages occupying good agricultural lands on the eastern shores of the Great Salt Lake. The Formative or Fremont as it is called in Northern Utah also marks an increase in long distance trade with Pacific Ocean shells and lithic materials being widely circulated. Large amounts of obsidian from Southeast Idaho and Wyoming are found on Great Salt Lake Fremont sites west of the Wasatch Mountains. It appears from archaeological evidence that much of this chert was obtained via Echo Canyon. The Great Salt Lake Fremont also marks an increase in buffalo hunting. The only known Buffalo Jump in the State of Utah is just over the ridge from the head of Echo Canyon. This site known as the Woodruff Buffalo Jump is a 30' foot cliff

with an additional fall of 45 of talus slope. At least 85 buffalo were killed and butchered at the site. No diagnostic artifacts were recovered from scientific excavations but hide scrapers of Wyoming tiger chert were found. A radio carbon date of 1335 +/- 90 BP. (615 AD) was obtained from a sample of buffalo bone which places the site in the Fremont period. A second date of 1137 AD. was recently reported by Cannon (2015). Only a small portion of this important site has been excavated with much scientific information remaining (Shields 1978). A second Buffalo Jump is rumored to be in Echo Canyon or one of its tributaries but has not yet been located and awaits confirmation. A total of 11 Fremont sites have been located in the Echo Canyon area in rock shelters and open sites. In addition to diagnostic Fremont arrow points (Figure 3 top) 3 sites contained Great Salt Lake Gray pottery. Four Fremont rock art sites have been also identified in the area.

One site near Echo Canyon contains diagnostic Promontory pottery mixed with Fremont Great Salt Lake gray. The Promontory complex represents an Athabascan (Apache/Navaho) group of Buffalo hunters who occupied portions of Northern Utah from ca.1200-1500 AD. corresponding to the end of the Fremont period and the beginning of the Late Prehistoric period (1400-1800 AD). Although animal bone is rare on surface sites, not surprisingly the site Promontory contains buffalo remains.

The Late Prehistoric period marks the end of farming and a return to a nomadic Archaic subsistence pattern of hunting and gathering. It is also the time of the historic Shoshoni peoples who occupied the area at the arrival of Anglo-Europeans. The Late prehistoric period is defined by diagnostic Desert Side-notched and Cottonwood Triangular arrow points (Figure 3 bottom) and Intermountain Brown ware pottery. Sometime after 1680 AD the introduction of the horse to Native peoples in the area from the Spanish southwest marks another cultural change. The adoption of the horse facilitated easier movement of Native Americans and an increase use of the well- worn trail in Echo Canyon between the Great Salt Lake and the plains of Wyoming. This led to the adoption of many Plains cultural features by the local Shoshoni. Although Echo Canyon is Shoshoni territory, it is known that other Indian groups such as Ute, Crow, Flathead, Arapaho, Sioux, Cheyenne, Blackfeet, Goshute and Bannock were frequent users of the Echo Canyon trail. David Hampshire (1998:118) describes a battle between Shoshoni and Ute near the head of Echo Canyon indicating that tribal interactions were not always peaceful. Twelve Late Prehistoric sites have been documented in the Echo Canyon area. Most are small lithic scatters although 4 sites contained Intermountain Brown ware pottery marking temporary campsites. One Late Prehistoric site has been professionally excavated. Known as the Parsnip Canyon site, it is a small open kill of 3-4 buffalo containing butchering tools and small side notched arrow points. A radio carbon date of 550 +/- 80 years (1400 AD) was obtained placing occupation of the site at the Promontory/Numic transition. Obsidian at the site was sourced to Malad and Browns Bench sources in southeastern Idaho. Parsnip Canyon was excavated by Western Wyoming College in advance of pipe line construction (Darlington 2000). One Late Prehistoric line and Groove Plains style rock art site is in the Echo area and is of probable Shoshoni origin.

In summary, Echo Canyon has been used as a transportation corridor for thousands of years beginning with the trails of large Pleistocene mega fauna and then by the Paleo Indians who hunted them. Next the Archaic peoples used the Echo corridor and hunted game in its numerous tributary side canyons. About the time of Christ, the Formative Fremont peoples were frequent visitors to the canyon using it as a passage way between their farming villages on the eastern shore of the Great Salt Lake and the Buffalo plains of Wyoming. Fremont and Late Prehistoric sites in Echo Canyon show both Great Basin and Plains cultural features. The greatest use of Echo Canyon was during the Late Prehistoric period as both Great Basin and Plains tribes used the corridor. Most of the prehistoric sites in Echo Canyon are lithic scatters and short-term hunting camps used during Native American movement through the canyon. Beginning in the 1820's Anglo Europeans simply followed what was then a well -used trail through the canyon.

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