



Discover America

Newsletter of the American Discovery Trail Society

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ADT Featured Trail

Pony Express National Historic Trail



Few remnants exist along the Pony Express National Historic Trail, but the Simpson Springs station in Utah has been reconstructed.
Photo courtesy National Park Service

Few enterprises capture the can-do mindset of the Old West like the Pony Express postal service. In an era before electronic communication, the Pony Express was the thread that tied East and West together at the incredible speed of 1,800 miles in 10 days.

Stretching from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento, Calif., the Pony Express connected the miners, Mormons, and thousands who had moved west via the Oregon Trail to family and loved ones in the East. The American Discovery Trail uses parts of the Pony Express National Historic Trail along some of its most remote route in Nevada. In doing so, it connects 21st-century adventurers to a part of our nation's history and people that helped to define the spirit of who we are.

The Pony Express was the creation of three men, William H. Russell, Alexander

Majors, and William B. Waddell. In only two months time, beginning in January 1860, they were able to assemble over 100 stations, 400–500 horses, and enough riders to complete their deliveries for an estimated cost of \$70,000.

The system was set up to provide a fresh horse every 10–15 miles and a fresh rider every 75–100 miles. Their average speed was ten miles per hour.

The first official delivery left St. Joseph on April 3, 1860. Amid fanfare, dignitaries, and cannon fire, the rider bolted off with a mail pouch, called a mochila, thrown over his saddle. The mochila contained 49 letters, five telegrams, and miscellaneous papers. Nine days later, the mochila arrived in Carson City, Nev., and two days after that in Sacramento and San Francisco.

(Continued on page 5, column 2)

Carrying the Mail

Ever thought you might like to send a letter via the Pony Express? Well, you can. Each year in the month of June the National Pony Express Association oversees a re-enactment ride that covers the length of the trail between Sacramento, Calif., and St. Joseph, Mo. Riders furnish their own horses and wear period clothing. On even-numbered years, the riders and mail go west to east and on odd-numbered years they ride in the opposite direction.

This year's re-enactment was scheduled to leave Old Town Sacramento on June 18 and arrive in St. Joseph on June 28. Letters cost \$10.00 to mail and the needed forms and information can be found on the Nevada Pony Express Association website at www.nevadaponyexpress.org. The forms for next year's ride should be available after Jan. 1, 2009.



Eight Mile Flat in Nevada
Photo courtesy of the National Park Service



Wright State staff members dressed to represent and provide information on three of the many outdoor activities represented at the Adventure Summit. Photo courtesy of Pat Hayes

Adventure Summit

By Pat Hayes

The American Discovery Trail Society joined a myriad of other local, regional, and national outfitters; clubs; retail shops; and advocacy groups at the third annual Adventure Summit held on the campus of Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Over 5,200 visitors enjoyed a full weekend of activities related to the spirit and culture of the outdoors, including inspiring presentations, instructional programs in a variety of outdoor sports, and inaugural competitions including a Snowboard Rail Jam, Bouldering Competition, and Kayak Championships.

The American Discovery Trail display was sandwiched between two other trail organizations, the Buckeye Trail Association and the North Country Trail Association. Since we all share a good portion of trail in Ohio it was like “old home week.” All three trail groups handed out lots of brochures and answered many questions about their respective trails.

With nearly 70 presentations over two days, it was difficult to decide which ones to attend. Because I was alone at the ADT Society display, I was unable to attend

any presentation except the beer-tasting session. I just couldn’t pass that one up.

New “Easy Buttons”

The American Discovery Trail Society website now offers a new feature that makes supporting the Society even easier. “Join” and “Donate” buttons that take you to a secure credit card site have been added to pages throughout the website. In addition, you can now order merchandise and charge it to your credit card. Previously you had to print out a PDF and order by phone or mail. Also, the page for joining the Society has been upgraded to offer different levels of membership.

The new functions “went live” in mid-March and have already resulted in a number of web orders and new memberships. Early results from this upgrade have been in a fivefold increase in orders.

Making Connections...

Coast to Coast

800-663-2387

Fax: 703-754-9008

info@discoverytrail.org

www.discoverytrail.org

Annual Membership Meeting And First ADT Hiker Reunion

Members of the American Discovery Trail Society and their families are cordially invited to enjoy a weekend of fun in Colorado, September 18–21. The annual membership meeting and board of directors meeting this year will be expanded to four days of activities and the first annual ADT Hiker Reunion.

Thursday will be free time to explore the wonders of the Pikes Peak area such as the Air Force Academy and Olympic Training Center or to hike and bike over 100 miles of trails (www.pikes-peak.com). Friday features Pikes Peak with a hike or cog railway ride to the summit and a chuckwagon supper and cowboy stage show at the Flying W Ranch.

On Saturday, the annual membership meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m. at the Garden of the Gods Trading Post, 324 Beckers Lane, Manitou Springs, Colo. It will be followed immediately by the annual board of directors meeting at the same location. The meetings will be followed in turn by an ADT “Alumni” Hiker Reunion and dinner and melodrama at the Iron Springs Chateau.

Sunday will be a day in historic Cripple Creek, “The World’s Greatest Gold Camp,” with tours of colorful aspens and mines and a hike on the ADT.

Official lodging is at the Best Western SkyWay, within walking distance of Garden of the Gods park. To reserve at our group rate, you must call 1-800-938-5991 and request the American Discovery Trail rate (www.BestWesternSkyWayInnandSuites.com).

For more information, send an e-mail to: trails007@aol.com

Volunteer Driver

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge in Maryland has always presented a challenge to American Discovery Trail travelers. The bridge is closed to pedestrian and bicycle traffic except one day a year. The local taxi service hikers have used to cross the bridge has gone out of business. Recently, a driver called the ADTS office to offer his volunteer services. Pete Nelson is willing to provide hikers and bicyclists a ride across the bridge if they call him beforehand: 410-643-9064.

A Walk on the Slow Side

By Jim Shaner

On the evening of March 18, 2005, my wife and I had just finished eating a meal at a fast-food joint in the town of Philippi, W. Va. As we drove south to our motel for the night, I spotted a grey-bearded man and a woman walking into town along the road. I waved to them and then questioned my wife, Nadine, if they were wearing backpacks. She replied yes and asked if I wanted her to turn around so we could meet them. Since I did not think that there was anyone else hiking the American Discovery Trail at that time, I answered no. On Oct. 15, 2005, that couple, Ken and Marcia Powers, reached the Pacific Ocean, hiking across America in 231 days. By October 2005, I had reached Belpre, Ohio.

It is now 2008 and I am still walking through Ohio. During the past several years, more American Discovery Trail hikers crossed our nation and I am not one of them. The tortoise of the ADT, I am taking a walk on the slow side and having the time of my life.

My slow pace is the product of two things. First I started by driving from my home in Pennsylvania to the trail and doing day hikes. Presently I take one-week vacations to continue walking slowly westward. Although there were some 20-mile days, most are in the 10- to 15-mile range because I spend time at local historical or nature sites and chat with the locals at their places of employment, at their homes, and in their places of worship. The following are some examples of places and people we met.

The Philippi Covered Bridge, built in 1852, is the best-known of West Virginia's 17 covered bridges. During its early days,



The Philippi covered bridge

Photo courtesy of Jim Shaner



The Columbus Washboard Co. is the only washboard company remaining in America.

Photo courtesy of Jim Shaner

a toll was paid to cross the bridge: a horse and rider – 10 cents, carriage with two horses – 35 cents, and a score of sheep – 5 cents. In June 1861, Col. George Porterfield led a Union attack on Confederate troops to secure the bridge. The Confederates retreated, giving the Union its first victory in the first land battle of the Civil War. Later West Virginia seceded from Virginia to rejoin the Union.

Alongside the bridge is an old railroad station, which is now a museum with artifacts from the battle. There we had our first conversation with a person from Philippi. Susie is not only the town's historian, she is also an artist who has written and illustrated a children's story, *The Firefly and the Jar*.

Only four miles off the trail is one place of employment that we visited, the Columbus Washboard Co. in downtown Logan, Ohio, the only washboard company that remains in America. Lisa, a worker, gave Nadine and me an enlightening tour of the factory while also telling us about the history of the washboard. Nowadays, a washboard is not necessarily a washboard. They are made for decorative pieces, cabinet doors, and musical instruments. On Father's Day weekend, Logan holds a Washboard Music Festival. Most years, more than 10,000 people from throughout America attend this unique event.

Who still washes with a washboard? People

living in third world nations, the Amish, campers, and soldiers all use washboards. Columbus Washboard Co. is now sending kits containing a washboard, a wash-tub, clothesline, clothespins, and lye soap to servicemen and servicewomen deployed overseas.

Along the C&O Canal are a series of locks to raise or lower the canal boats as the elevation changes along the Potomac River. At most locks there is a lock house, a house for the keeper of that lock. At any time, day or night, as canal boats traveled up or down the canal, the lock keeper would open and close the lock gates. At Lock 29 near the village of Lauder, Md., there is a lock house that has just recently been restored. On the Saturday that I walked by, it was open house time with descendants of the last family to live in the lock house providing the free tour. Inside were antiques and some old newspaper articles, one showing a photo of a very exhausted Bobby Kennedy completing a 50-mile-walk on the C&O Canal trail in 17 hours.

Our society promotes those who are fast. Perhaps we should slow down a little and enjoy the world around us.

More information on Jim Shaner's walk can be found on his website: www.walkacrossamericainfo

2008 Long-Distance ADT Travelers As of May 28

The list of people tackling the whole American Discovery Trail continues to grow. This year's hikers include some who are continuing from previous years and others who are just starting out. For more up-to-date information, the ADT Society website (www.discoverytrail.org) has links to many of their journals.

| Traveler | Start Date | Mode | Heading | ADT Miles | Last Location |
|--|------------|------|---------|-----------|---------------------|
| Michael Daniel | 6/17/07 | Hike | W | 4,143 | Georgetown, Colo. |
| Jim Hopson | 4/30/07 | Hike | W | 2,023 | Kansas City, Kan. |
| Josh James | 4/12/07 | Hike | W | 2,842 | Georgetown, Colo. |
| Trey Cristen | 3/13/07 | Hike | W | 996 | Cincinnati, Ohio |
| Jim Shaner | 2002 | Walk | W | 825 | Pike Lake, Ohio |
| Jodi Harrington & Josh Howell | 3/1/08 | Hike | W | 1,519 | Holbrook, Iowa |
| Ron Kessler | 3/1/08 | Hike | W | 1,504 | Lexington, Mo. |
| Lory Mitchell & John Wingate | 3/31/08 | Hike | W | 847 | Elizabethtown, Ohio |
| Ken Foley | 4/14/08 | Hike | W | 120 | Delaware |

Memberships and Donations

A membership in the American Discovery Trail Society helps to promote and sustain America's only cross-country non-motorized trail. It also makes a great gift!

Did you know that the American Discovery Trail Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and your membership and donations are tax-deductible?

New members receive an ADT decal, patch, lapel pin, member I.D. card, and the quarterly *Discover America* newsletter. Discovery and Life members also receive the book, *American Discoveries* (the adventures of the team that scouted the original trail route), and an ADT T-shirt. Life members also receive a membership certificate suitable for framing and a hiking stick with ADT medallion.

Yes, I want to be a part of this American adventure!

Explorer Member - \$30

Corporate Member - \$250

Family - \$50

Life Member - \$1,000

Discovery Member - \$100

Here's my additional contribution of: \$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 \$500 Other: _____

Enclosed is my check (made payable to ADTS)

Please charge my MC VISA AMEX Discover

Card# _____ Exp ____ \ ____ Sign: _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Mail to: American Discovery Trail Society
PO Box 20155, Washington, DC 20041

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Randy and Sheri Propster share trail tips and stories at an outdoors store in Lynchburg, Va., as Backpacker Magazine's Get Out More couple. The Propsters thru-hiked the American Discovery Trail in 2006 and include information on the ADT as part of their presentation.

Pony Express Trail

(Continued from page 1)

Despite its successes, the Pony Express had its share of problems. The cost of maintaining the extensive network of people, stations, and horses was burdensome. The Pyramid Lake War ensued when white mineral seekers discovered silver in the Washoe Hills of Nevada and encroached on Paiute Indian land and the Pony Express Company took over critical traditional Indian water sources. The resulting skirmishes interrupted some of the deliveries in Utah and Nevada and even resulted in the death of one of the station keepers.

But the decisive blow came about ten weeks after the company began operations. Congress authorized a bill to subsidize the building of the transcontinental telegraph line. The Pony Express remained in operation only 18 months until Oct. 26, 1861, the day the telegraph wires were joined and San Francisco was in contact with New York City.

Today, most of the original trail, aside from a few station ruins, has been obliterated by time, winds, and human activities. A limited number of horses don't leave as much of a hoofprint as the thousands of wagons that grooved the dirt along the Oregon Trail. In the western states, the majority of the trail has been

converted to double-track dirt roads. But a different kind of impression from the Pony Express still remains—of the character and determination to dream big dreams and see them to fruition.

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Josh Howell and Jodi Harrington on the American Discovery Trail in Ohio. Photo courtesy of Josh Howell

Experiences along the Trail

Two hikers on the ADT this year are hiking the northern leg in the middle of the country. Jodi “Ladybug” Harrington and Josh “Bamboo” Howell spoke from the I&M Canal in Illinois on day 76 of their journey. Jodi said their trip has been “amazing. It is so neat to go through both cities and rural areas.”

After a visit with friends off-trail, Jodi’s journal notes: “Josh and I both referred to the trail as ‘home’! It isn’t even a physical location! We weren’t referring to Chicago, but the actual act of getting back on the trail. How odd.”

“I keep saying this, but here I go again. I

don’t think words can express all that I’m thinking and feeling so my only attempt to express my thoughts seems to come by repetition. Maybe if I say the same thing enough times, others can get a feel of what I mean. I can’t tell you about all that I experienced and about how many people I met that were such an inspiration to me.”

Legislation Effort Progress

The American Discovery Trail Society continues to pursue passage of U.S. House bill, H.R. 74, the National Discovery Trails Act. In the past few months, the ADT Society has secured the support of important congressional members of the Natural Resources Committee, including Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah), ranking Republican mem-

ber of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands.

Other members of the committee who have promised their support are Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), Rep. Wayne Gilchrest (R-Md.), Rep. Mark Udall (D-Colo.), Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.), and Rep. Dean Heller (R-Nev.).

ADT Society members are encouraged to contact their own House members and ask them to become cosponsors of H.R. 74. Sample letters are on the Society website (www.discoverytrail.org). Details of this bill and any legislation can be found at this Library of Congress website: <http://thomas.loc.gov>.



**Many thanks to
The Coleman Company
for its continued
support of the
American Discovery
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