



Rosetta Stone, the world's leading manufacturer of language-learning software, recently released its first Navajo language program. The software program will be available at the San Juan School District Media Center. School officials are hopeful that local residents, including students, parents and business owners, will use the intuitive software. Courtesy photo

The Escalante-Dominguez Expedition of 1776: The first known expedition of Europeans into Utah

Two hundred and thirty four years ago this week, in the same year the Declaration of Independence was signed, a group of Spanish explorers entered present-day Utah Valley.

Led by two Franciscan friars named Silvestre Velez de Escalante and Francisco Dominguez, the expedition was launched to find a northern path from New Mexico to one of Spain's newest colonies, California.

Dominguez and Escalante left Santa Fe in July 1776, traveling north. By the time they reached what is now Colorado, they'd recruited twelve other Spaniards and two Ute men, members of the Timpanogots band that lived on the shores of Utah Lake, to join them.

The two Native Americans agreed to guide the Spanish to Utah Valley. Their trail from Colorado

took them near what is now Dinosaur National Monument, up the Strawberry River, and down Spanish Fork Canyon. On September 23, they climbed a hill near the present-day Spanish Oaks Golf Course, and were treated to a panoramic view of the pristine valley below them, with its sparkling emerald lake and ring of steep mountains. Intending to push on to California, the Spaniards recruited a new Timpanogots guide and turned southwest. But their guide didn't stick around for long and by October they were marching through snow, so they revised their plans and headed back to New Mexico.

The Dominguez-Escalante expedition illuminates the competing claims people made to the land we now know as Utah. The territory remained on the fringes of the Spanish

Empire even after word of the expedition got out. Occasional trading, trapping, and slaving expeditions made their way through the region, but few if any Spaniards chose to settle here.

Still, the Spanish and the Mexicans—who won independence from Spain in 1821—claimed the area as theirs. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war between the United States and Mexico in 1848, legally turned the region over to the American government, but older traditions and claims still remain.

When Mexican immigrants talk about crossing the border into the United States, they often don't refer to the name of the nation they're moving into. Instead they call the land "El Norte"—the North—or the piece of the American West that was once part of

the old Spanish and Mexican empires.

The Utah Humanities Council is a nonprofit organization that provides lifelong learning across the state through programs that explore diverse traditions, values, and ideas.

Each year, the Council underwrites hundreds of educational and cultural programs throughout Utah. For more information, visit www.utahhumanities.org or www.facebook.com/utahhumanitiescouncil.

Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council. Sources consulted in the creation of the Beehive Archive and past episodes may be found at www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm.

The *San Juan Record* will run stories from the archive on an occasional basis.

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