

Zion National Park Historic Trail System,
Grotto Trail
Zion National Park
Springdale vicinity
Washington County
Utah

HAER No. UT-40-E

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Zion National Park Historic Trails System, Grotto Trail

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Location: Zion National Park
Springdale vicinity, Washington County, Utah

Date of Construction: 1932

Architect/Designer: Harry Langley

Present Owner: National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior

Present Use: Access footpath/hiking trail

Significance: Sections of the trail are part of the old floor of the valley associated with Mormon pioneer transportation in Zion. Landscape and rock work constructed on the trail by National Park Service personnel was aimed at establishing a rustic appearance.

Researcher: James Jurale
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In August 1931, Zion Park Superintendent Allen requested that a trail be constructed from the Zion Lodge to the Grotto Campground Museum. It was his intention that lodge patrons would use this trail for the short hike to the museum and that campers would use it for going to and from the lodge for supplies and mail. Work began on May 9, 1932. Location and construction were inspected by a landscape representative and written approval was made to Superintendent Allen. Cost of the 0.2 mile trail section was \$155.74.

The Grotto Trail begins just north of Zion Lodge and parallels the canyon floor on the east side to the Grotto picnic area--a total of 0.5 mile. Part of the original floor of the canyon road, it allows visitors to travel from the Grotto picnic area to Zion lodge and vice versa, without walking on the highway. As the face of the stone walls on this trail are exposed to view from the highway, a deliberate effort was made during construction (1932) to have them look well from a landscape perspective. Weathered rocks were used and grapevines planted along the face of the walls, "giving the walls a rustic appearance, which was the result desired." These features, along with sandstone retaining walls and a 4x6-foot square culvert, are well preserved at present.

The ruling grade on this trail is very light, averaging 3%. At the south end, however, it was necessary to introduce a 15% grade for a distance of 75 feet, which avoided a high wall and the blasting out of a large rock. No switchbacks were needed in the construction of the Grotto Trail. The average trail crew consisted of a foreman who was paid \$5.00 per day and six laborers who were paid \$3.50 each. Only small tools were used in the construction of this trail, which averaged four feet in width.

Ironically, the Grotto Campground Museum was remodeled and converted into a private dwelling in 1932, the same year that the Grotto Trail was completed. While Zion Lodge patrons no longer used the trail for the short walk to the museum, Grotto campers continued to hike it to and from the lodge for supplies and mail.

Bibliography

Parker, Thomas C. "Final Construction Report on Miscellaneous Trail Construction, Account 502.1, 1932."

Zion National Park. "Encyclopedia," Part I, 1935.