



CITY OF TUCSON

PUBLIC NOTICE

This notice is posted to inform the public that the [Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission \(TPCHC\)](#) is invited to the following event.

Tucson Event: [The Butterfield National Historic Trail Planning Meetings & Organizational Meeting](#)

Date: [January 24, 2024](#)

Time: [11:00 AM – 2:15 PM](#)

Location: [Quincie Douglas Center, 1575 E 36th St, Tucson, AZ 85713](#)

YUMA Event: [National Park Service Informational Meeting](#)

Date: [Tucson - January 25, 2024](#)

Time: [11:00 AM – 1:00 PM](#)

Location: [Yuma Civic Center – 1440 W. Desert Hills Dr. Yuma AZ 85365](#)

Note: A quorum of the [Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission](#) may be in attendance. However, no items of business are scheduled to be discussed. No legal actions, proceedings or deliberations which foreseeably could lead to legal action shall be taken at this gathering.



Arizona Chapter, Butterfield National Historic Trail Association

January 9, 2024

The Butterfield National Historic Trail Planning Meetings to be held on January 24th in Tucson

The National Park Service will present information about the planning process for the Butterfield National Historic Trail, which was signed into law in January 2023. This information session will be followed by a meeting of the Arizona Chapter of the Butterfield National Historic Trail Association. Interested members of the public are invited to attend both meetings.

A second Arizona meeting will be held in Yuma on January 25th.

Meeting Times and Locations

Tucson - January 24, 2024

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM National Park Service Informational Meeting

1:15 PM - 2:15 PM Arizona Chapter of the Butterfield National Historic Trail Association
Organizational Meeting (light lunch available)
Quincie Douglas Center, 1575 E 36th St, Tucson, AZ 85713

Yuma – January 25, 2024

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM National Park Service Informational Meeting
Yuma Civic Center

The Butterfield Overland Trail

In 1858 John Butterfield of Syracuse New York won a Federal contract to provide a cross continental mail service. Active between 1858 and 1861, the historic Butterfield Trail was constructed to serve his project, predating the railroad in connecting the eastern and western United States at an unsettled time in American history. The Overland Mail Company started with 2,000 employees, 100 coaches, several hundred wagons, 1,800 horses and mules, and 175 stage stations spaced along its 2,800-mile route. Linking the east with San Francisco through St Louis and Memphis, the trail ran across southern Arizona.



A string of stage stations across the country provided an opportunity to change teams without delay to keep the stages on their tight schedule. The trip to San Francisco was guaranteed to take only twenty-five days, and there was a penalty for stages arriving late.

Although the Butterfield Trail as a managed physical entity lasted only three years (1858-61), its footprint reveals the routes followed both before and after this brief period. Today it pulls together the long history of the place now called Arizona.

The route of the trail across Arizona had grown organically. In centuries past, indigenous tribes of the Southwest followed animal trails to life-giving water sources where they established their villages. Eventually these villages were linked to one another by foot paths, and in turn emigrants from the east, west and south followed these paths and converted them into wagon roads. Many of these wagon roads were integrated into the Butterfield Overland Trail to maintain communication between the eastern and western United States just before the Civil War.

With the onset of the Civil War, the integrity of the trail in maintaining communication with California was disrupted by Confederate forces as the trail passed through southern states. The route of the Overland Mail was shifted to a more northern route. One of the goals of the California Volunteers was to take back the trail, and as they marched into Arizona, the trail provided a road for Union forces to follow. After the war it remained the most important transportation and trade route through southern Arizona until the coming of the railroad in the 1880s. Today Routes I-10, I-8 and SR-238 follow the general outlines of the Butterfield Trail.

The Butterfield National Historic Trail Association (BNHTA)

In 2004, Marilyn Heifner of Fayetteville, Arkansas, and the other members of the Heritage Trail Partners submitted a request for the designation of the Butterfield Overland Trail as a national historic trail to Arkansas Senator John Boozman. He agreed to sponsor the bill. On March 30, 2009, President Barack Obama signed a bill to authorize a special resource study to assess the feasibility and suitability of its designation.

Kirby Sanders of Fayetteville, Arkansas, was assigned to complete the study. His first step was to reach out to the Butterfield historians in each state to gather together their research.

In 2020, Senator Boozman, a Republican, introduced the bill to award national trail status. He was joined by many others, including Democratic Senator Sinema from Arizona, and in time the bill was passed and signed into law by President Biden on January 5, 2023.

Following the designation Heifner and the Heritage Trails Partners chartered the Butterfield National Historic Trail Association (**BNHTA**) with chapters in Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. This umbrella organization will coordinate the work of the state chapters.

The Arizona Chapter of the Butterfield National Historic Trail Association

With funding from the Southwestern Foundation for Education and Historic Preservation, the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Area, Arizona Humanities, and Arizona Preservation Foundation, and with in-kind support from the Arizona Geographic Information Council, the University of Arizona and the Vail Preservation Society are working together to provide digital and virtual documentation of the trail.

During the past four months historian and author Gerald T. Ahnert and University of Arizona student Mary Todd, with assistance from Jenna Leveille (Arizona Deputy State Cartographer) and Helen Erickson (University of Arizona), have been collaborating on the development of a [story map](#) to provide an in-depth history of the trail and the Butterfield organization in Arizona. Future versions will feature drone videography of the trail today and virtual reality opportunities to remotely experience the trail and its stations in Arizona. A list of sites where the trail may be visited today is included [here](#).

The goal of the Arizona Chapter meeting on January 24th is to begin work (in collaboration with participants in the Yuma meeting on January 25th) on the bylaws and organization of the Arizona Chapter of the BNHTA.

More Information and Contacts

Websites: [Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, National Park Service](#)
[An introduction to the Butterfield National Historic Trail in Arizona](#)

Story Map: [The Historic Butterfield Overland Trail in Arizona](#)

Webinar: Arizona Preservation Foundation (July 21, 2023)
[Exploring the Butterfield Trail: Unveiling Arizona's Historic Connection](#)

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