



FRIENDS OF ALTA HISTORY

In 1979, a large time-sharing company acquired land on the Bypass Road between Alta and Snowbird. The company had plans to build 400 time-share units, with tentative approval from Salt Lake County. The proposed development was within half a mile of the boundary of the Town of Alta and as the closest municipality, the Town had the obligation to provide services to the area (fire, police, sewer, water, and communications). The Town of Alta thus claimed jurisdiction which required that the proposed development be subject to their more restrictive zoning ordinances. As a result, the time-share company sued the Town and their lawyer informed then Mayor Bill Levitt that they would keep them in court until the Town went bankrupt. The Town lost the first round in court.

When some winter guests heard about the situation, they suggested forming a defense fund to help the Town pay for lawyers, and thus on an informal basis the Alta Defense Fund began. In 1981, Mayor Levitt, his wife Mimi and friend Pat Shea incorporated the Alta Defense Fund, and in 1983 applied for and received Federal 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation.

To fight the time-share company, The Town of Alta hired one of the top law firms in Salt Lake City and after a lengthy legal battle, won by a unanimous decision of the Utah Supreme Court. The time-share company twice appealed that decision to the Utah Supreme Court, losing each time. Financial relief from the Alta Defense Fund helped the Town afford the legal battle.

In 1985 the Board decided that the name Alta Defense Fund no longer fully represented what we stood for, so we changed our name to Friends of Alta to better reflect our Mission. Friends of Alta began acquiring and conserving private undeveloped land in Albion Basin in the 1980's. By the mid 80's FOA was supporting Alta's Interim School, Alta Community Enrichment (ACE), the Avalanche Forecast Center, and the Alta Historical Society. FOA also helped fund the Town's first General Plan, as well as different wetlands studies. Friends of Alta continues to allocate resources towards a better understanding and protection of Alta's natural environment.

