

I R O N   M I N I N G   I N   U T A H

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## Iron Mining In Utah

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In 1847 the Mormons entered the Salt Lake Valley with two primary concerns--first, how and where they would put the thousands of people pouring into the Salt Lake Valley, and secondly, how to make the "Kingdom" self-sufficient.

In order to deal effectively with these two questions, Brigham Young sent Parley P. Pratt with an exploring expedition. This group left Salt Lake City in 1849 exploring streams, mountains, and valleys as they moved south. They noted the possible location for settlements and recorded the available resources.

While Pratt's group was journeying through the Utah area, Brigham Young directed that a foundry be established in Salt Lake City to convert the available scrap iron into useful items. He also sent instructions to Erastus Snow and Franklin D. Richards in England to visit the important iron works. They were to contact the wealthier Mormon converts in the hope of interesting them in financing an iron company to be located in Utah. As a result of their efforts the Deseret Iron Company was created. The Company was capitalized at \$4,840,000. They were able to raise \$19,360. at the first meeting. Thomas Tennant was responsible for \$10,000 and became the treasurer. Erastus Snow was made president with Franklin D. Richards as secretary.

In the mean time Pratt's group had discovered rich iron deposits west of what is today Cedar City. They returned to Salt Lake City in February 1850 and reported the find to Brigham Young. By December the territorial legislature had created Iron County and 120 men, 30 women and 18 children had been "called" to journey south to establish an "Iron Mission". George A. Smith led the group which arrived in what is today Parowan on January 13, 1851. They established Parowan as home

base and concentrated on building on its agricultural possibilities to insure an adequate food supply for those engaged in mining. The town was also to serve as a supply station on the road to California. In November Henry Lunt took 34 men and 11 of the 101 wagons to Coal Creek where the immigrants from England, Scotland, and Wales established Cedar City. They found all of the customary ingredients for making iron. They brought iron ore from the west, coal from the east, and with their experienced labor and accumulated knowledge set about to produce iron. The men organized several committees to build a town with a fort for protection and to construct the necessary canals, roads, and structures for the manufacture of iron. They organized the Pioneer Iron Company and were able to produce a small quantity of iron in September of 1852. A sample was sent to Brigham Young and the remainder was used to make andirons and horseshoe nails. The amount produced was not sufficient to replace the iron tires from their wagons used to carry out the experiment.

The project proved to be an education from the start. The coal wouldn't coke properly so they substituted pitch pine. They had to sledge the coal in and keep the furnace warm with sagebrush. The location was hazardous and unsatisfactory to Brigham Young. Acres of trees had to be cut for coke which added to the expense and stretched the labor supply which was already dangerously low in the agriculture area.

In November 1852 Erastus Snow arrived in Cedar City. He and Richards had returned from England after having purchased several kinds of machinery for making iron and arranging for its shipment to Utah. Snow arranged for the Deseret Iron Company to buy out the original Pioneer Company for \$2,865.64. The holdings included the small blast



furnace, water rights, roads, coal deposits, iron ore deposits and large sections of land to the west of Cedar City.

The new company invested another \$40,000 in improvements and new equipment. They surveyed the land to efficiently gather the raw materials, appointed John C. L. Smith to be superintendent, and built a new furnace. The new company produced some iron in 1852 but found it to be very expensive and subject to many of the same problems the original settlers had experienced.

Brigham Young influenced the territorial legislature to incorporate the Deseret Iron Company and aid its financing with a \$5,000. grant to improve roads and develop coal deposits.

In the spring of 1853 the company employed 70 people and was producing iron about once per week. Twenty-five hundred pounds of iron was produced. It took 600 bushels of charcoal made from wood.

The operation was stopped to deal with Indian troubles. The local food supply was threatened and the fort had to be strengthened. While these problems were being resolved, a flash flood and accompanying windstorm came down Coal Creek and destroyed or damaged the roads, furnace and other improvements. Some settlers decided to settle elsewhere and were excommunicated.

Isaac C. Haight was sent by Brigham Young to rebuild and run the operation. The legislature contributed another \$4,840 which the LDS Church matched. The furnace was repaired at a cost of \$3,782.45 and 6 coke ovens were built. The blowing devise was powered by a water-wheel.

By 1855 the colony was infused with 150 new settlers and the operation was going again. A larger furnace was built which produced about 1000 pounds of pig iron in 24 hours. It could produce as much

as 1700 pounds. Most of this iron was used for domestic and agricultural purposes; however, enough was spared for a church bell which still survives.

The winter freeze shut off the coal and water supply. Two 30-horsepower steam engines were brought in to run the blower. The year 1856 was to be plagued with equipment failure and a severe drought. The unfrozen water dried up and forced the miners to turn their attention to securing food for survival. A herd ground was created at Summit to handle the animals for both towns.

More floods came in 1857 and forced the removal of the iron works to safer ground. A new townsite was chosen and layed out for an industrial community. The lots were long and narrow for compact living free of agriculture. The plan was later modified to 8 x 12 rod city lots with 18 to the block, still a bit unusual in "Mormon Country".

As the workers settled into their new community, Brigham Young sent word to forget the iron operation and prepare to fight the United States Government. Johnston's army was approaching Utah and before the year was over some of the community's leading citizens had stained their hands at the Mountain Meadows.

The army came and brought with it a supply of iron some of which was later melted down for reuse at the iron works.

A new furnace was built in 1858 but operating difficulties forced a shut down by October. Many of the discouraged miners left the area or turned to agriculture. About 25 tons of pig iron had been produced at a cost of approximately \$150,000.

From 1859 to 1869 the operation was closed. St. George was settled in 1861 and much of the usable material at the old foundry followed Erastus Snow to that community.

The transcontinental railroad came to Utah in 1869 and brought a renewed interest in the iron of Iron County. The Union Iron Works, a co-operative supported by the Mormon Church, built a furnace and kilns about 25 miles southwest of Cedar City. The town of Iron City was built on Pinto Creek to house the operation. Some iron was produced there and marketed in the mining towns of Nevada. In 1873 the company was reorganized as the Great Western Iron Mining and Manufacturing Company. After installing new equipment the operation produced about five tons of iron per day. The product was sold in Salt Lake City and to the mining operations in western Nevada. By 1874 about 400 tons of iron had been produced at a cost of about \$200,000. The properties were sold. After some reorganization and litigation over conflicting claims, the Iron Manufacturing Company of Utah, backed by the Mormon Church, took over in 1884. This company brought in a 20-mile railroad from Nevada to transport coal to Iron City and rebuilt the works. However, before the operation could get underway, the Church leaders had second thoughts and the polygamy raids forced the project to be abandoned.

Eastern money interests and Salt Lake City investors bought out Mormon Church's interests in Iron County.

Columbia Steel Corporation built a plant at Irontown (near Provo) in 1924. It used iron ore from Iron County. This was the beginning of the first successful iron operation in Utah. By 1941 Irontown was producing 500,000 tons each year.

Other companies opened mines in Iron County. Three open-pit mines began to supply much of the iron needs of the West.

With the outbreak of World War II the U.S. Government built the



Geneva Steel plant at a cost of \$200 million (1942-44). The plant was built to produce 1.15 million tons of pig iron, 1,283,400 tons of steel ingots, 700,000 tons of plates, and 250,000 tons of structural shapes per year.

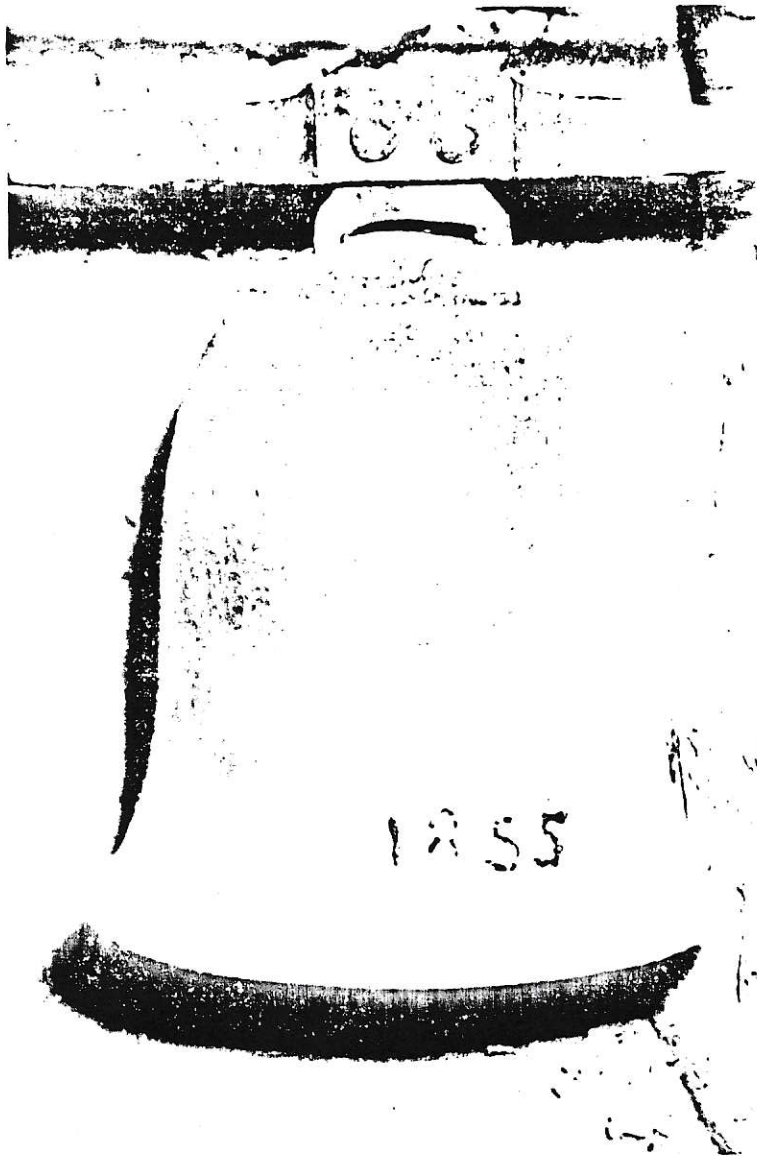
In 1961 Utah produced 3,533,000 gross tons of iron ore with a value of \$25,493,000. About one-half of this was processed in Utah.

Some of the steel used in the U.S. space program was produced from Iron County ore. Geneva still receives ore from the Iron Springs mine and the Comstock mine ships ore to Colorado. Part of the mine at Iron Mountain has been shut down since the 1960's and U.S. Steel has suspended operations at Desert Mound in 1980.

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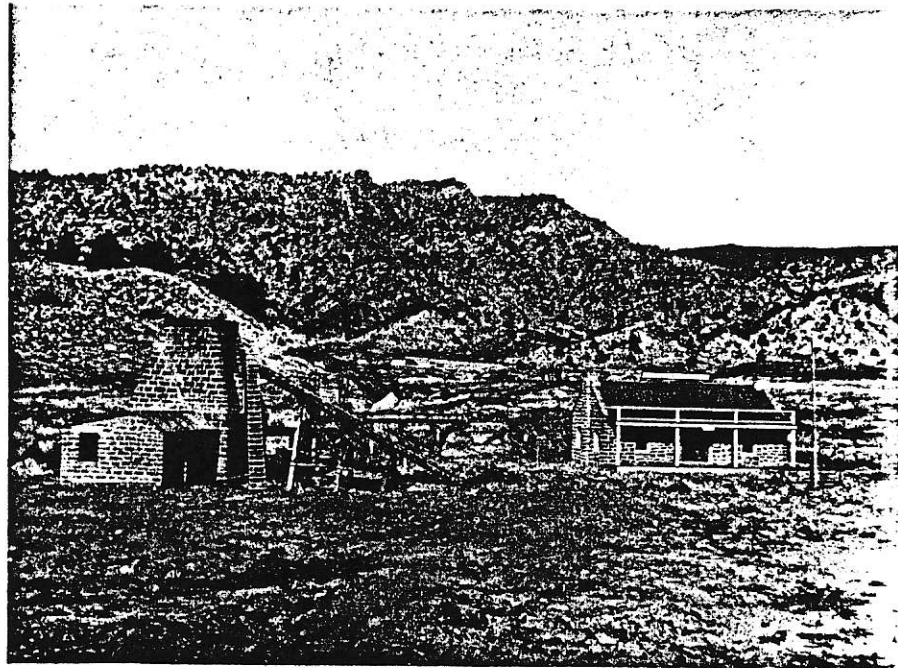
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**THE COMMUNITY BELL, CAST IN 1855**

Thomas Jones worked with the Deseret Iron Company at this time. The bell was hung in a belfry on the Henry Lunt Hotel.



**DESERET IRON COMPANY (Pic. of model)**

The "iron works" was located in the north east section of Cedar City and, was built in 1852 and again in 1854, after a flood swept down Coal Creek on Sept. 3, 1853.