

Lauritz Hansen “Louis” Hassell

Lauritz Hansen “Louis” Hassell was born 2 April 1846 in Eiker, Buskerud, Norway. He was the youngest of ten children of Hans Nilsen Hassel and Mari Olsdatter. His father died when he was seven years old. Louis immigrated to America in 1860 and was naturalized a citizen in 1878.¹ In 1875, he was a miner, living in White Pine, Nevada.²

On the 1880 census, Louis was a blacksmith, living in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory. He and Henry Freudenthal were two of the chloriders working on the Thompson & McNally mine. They brought a specimen of ore to the *Silver Reef Miner* newspaper office. It might, at first glance, looked to be “a chip off an ordinary grindstone, but a closer scrutiny brings to sight a crust of horn silver fully an eight [sic] of an inch thick, which covers the surface of the whole specimen. Were this chloride scraped off it would probably assay something like \$20,000 a ton, but as it is, it is one of the richest and prettiest pieces of sand rock we have yet seen in the district, and forms a welcome addition to the *Miner’s* cabinet.”³

In 1881, Louis was involved in one of the legends about Silver Reef. The story goes this way: Louis and Henry Freudenthal were chloriders in the Thompson & McNally on the White Reef. They put a hole into unusually hard rock, and suddenly the entire face of the drift gave way with a booming sound into a black abyss 200 feet deep. Louis, turning the drill, sprang backward and saved himself. They saw an immense cave with a domed ceiling 200 feet overhead. Two hundred feet below stood a forest of huge trees. Ropes were procured and they descended into the forest, which turned out to be petrified, with strange characters inscribed, and petrified mosses covering the ground. All the petrifications carried silver, some assaying as high as \$200 per ton.⁴

The next week, the newspaper carried the rest of the story: “In a second cave ... was found a beautiful Indian maiden reclining on a couch of furs in front of a lodge of skins. Close beside her knelt an Indian taking a drink of water from a silvery stream. All were petrified—stream, Indian and maiden. Yet, before we go any further, we owe an explanation in regard to the great discovery. On Christmas night we went to bed with Egg Nog ... [which] had something to do with the construction of the cave of our dream ... So excited were we at the time of writing the discovery that we forgot to mention it as a dream.”⁵ It seems the legend of the petrified forest came from the first account and ignored the second. Another clue was that the story reported in the Pioche paper was not found in the Silver Reef paper.⁶

Louis married Marguretta Rhymer Mann about 1885 in Silver Reef.⁷ She had been the wife of Henry J Mann in Silver Reef just five years before. It is not known what happened to their marriage. Louis worked at the Tintic⁸ and Mammoth mining areas, showing up on the 1900 census as a blacksmith, living with his wife in Mammoth Precinct, Juab, Utah.⁹ Marguretta died in 1905 in Spanish Fork, Utah,

¹ United States Census, 1900, 1920.

² Nevada State Census, 1875.

³ *Salt Lake Herald*, 18 September 1880, p. 3.

⁴ *Pioche Weekly Record*, 1 January 1881; *Oakland Tribune*, 21 February 1881, p. 1.

⁵ *Pioche Weekly Record*, 8 January 1881.

⁶ *Silver Reef’s Petrified Forest: An Eggnog Inspired Tale?* by Jacob Oscarson, 2015.

⁷ Western States Marriage Index, 1809-2011.

⁸ *Salt Lake Herald*, 1 October 1887, p. 5.

⁹ United States Census, 1900.

Utah. Louis married Catherine Anderson in 1906 in Provo, Utah, Utah. They lived near the Northern Spy Mine in Eureka in the Tintic Mining District in 1907.¹⁰ On the 1910 census, Louis was a blacksmith, living with his wife, stepson, and mother-in-law in Springville, Utah, Utah.¹¹

They were still in Springville in 1920¹², then Catherine died of encephalitis in 1925. She was buried in Springville.¹³ Louis fell ill and was in the Utah County Infirmary in Provo, Utah, Utah, for one month before he died of nephritis on 10 April 1930. He was also buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Springville.¹⁴



(Image from *Findagrave.com*)

Research by Elaine Young, 2016

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¹⁰ *Salt Lake Herald*, 24 Nov 1907 p. 18.

¹¹ United States Census, 1910.

¹² United States Census, 1920.

¹³ Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964.

¹⁴ Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964; Utah County Cemetery Index; Utah Death Registers, 1847-1966; Utah Death and Military Death Certificates, 1904-1961; Utah Cemetery Inventory, 1847-2000.