HISTORY OF SANTA CLARA, UTAH

Snuggled peacefully in a narrow valley along the lower end of the Santa Clara Creek is a small town resting like an oasis in the desert and known as Santa Clara, Utah. This small city, of around 300 inhabitants, is located in the extreme southwest corner of the state about five miles west of St. George and is bordered on the south by the creek and the south Hills and on the north by a clay and gravel hill which is topped by red sand from the sandstone formations further north. This makes a very picturesque setting. The site where the village is located is only three quarters of a mile wide and a little over a mile long but is very fertile. U. S. Highway 91, the shortest route from coast to coast--runs through Santa Clara and carries heavy traffic, which increases yearly. This highway, running east and west, is the principal street, but branching off from this and running north and south are short streets, called lanes, leading to the various homes.

The principal occupations are farming, cattle raising, trucking, and fruit stands.

This small town boasts of the well-preserved Jacob Hamblin home, surrounded by a small State Park, an L.D.S. chapel, a general store, a post office, one service station, an apartment house, an auto court and cafe, a state checking station, eleven fruit stands, a plant nursery, and seventy-nine homes. Most of these homes are beautiful and well kept for the people are thrifty and industrious and take a great pride in the appearance of this neat little city.

The farming land, lying above and below the settlement, is very limited indeed, but cultivated carefully by the farmers. When the Dixie Project is completed and more water made available, the acres of farming land will increase considerably.

The citizens of Santa Clara are very education-minded and from the very first have supported education to the utmost. Elementary grade schools are held in the town, and when these are completed the boys and girls attend at Woodward, Dixie High School and Dixie Junior College in St. George and then go on to higher education elsewhere. Today the boys and girls are actively engaged in many various positions of trust throughout the nation and are very outstanding citizens, but the greater percent of the college graduates have been, and still are, school teachers and have gone out to teach in many different states but mostly in the West. Santa Clara has furnished more school teachers than any other town of its size in Utah. For instance: In 1932-33 this town furnished 18% of the teachers in Washington County alone, while their population of three percent was the total of this country. These teachers taught school in the winter, farmed in the summer, and many of them took care of their cattle in between times. They are never idle.

In years gone by this section of country was, for white men, a place to get over as soon as possible but not a place to live. Before the arrival of the Mormons in the late 1840's and early 1850's only a few white men had ever been through it. The first was the party of two Spanish padres, Father Escalante and Father Dominquez and seven others, who were trying to find a land route between Santa Fe', New Mexico and Monterey, California. They set out in July 1776. Fifty years passed before another white man, Jededih Strong Smith found his way into the territory in 1826 and again in 1827. During the next years occasional fur traders and trappers followed the same trails but it remained for John C. Fremont in 1844

to make careful notes, then draw some rough maps and write a report of his explorations. Then, in mid-November 1847, the leaders in Utah sent sixteen men to make a journey to California to open up a route for trade. Among them were Captain Jefferson Hunt of the Mormon Battalion and O. Porter Rockwell. Theirs was a hard task but they left trails so well marked that they could easily be followed later.

Now that the southern trail was more clearly marked, Brigham Young and the Council sent Parley P. Pratt with fifty young men known as "The Southern Exploring Company" to go south in the fall of 1849 for the purpose of looking for future town sites. The supplies were loaded into twelve large wagons, drawn by twenty-four yoke cattle. Thirty-eight horses and mules were ridden by members of the party. An odometer to measure distance, a brass field piece, and their guns were also taken along. On November 25 the fifty explorers passed the summit from which they obtained a fine view of the Salt Lake and Utah valleys, and their beautiful lakes. They traveled from Salt Lake to the Upper Sevier River region, over the Wasatch Mountains (which were almost impassable-expecially in the winter when the snow lay deep and the winds howled and nearly tore off the wagon covers) and finally, on December 21, they camped on the northern end of Little Salt Lake Valley, with joy in their hearts for having been able to succeed in passing over the mountain range. They continued their journey to Red Creek and here, on December 23, decided to rest awhile as their cattle had become so reduced by pulling the wagons over such rough terrain and without sufficient feed. Here they divided the party. David Fullmer was appointed head over the remaining camp of thirty men and Parley P. Pratt was put in charge of the twenty men on horseback, with pack animals, who left the camp on December 26 and headed South. They passed Big Creek or Center Creek--the present site of Parowan, and from thence to Muddy Creek (now Cedar City) and on southward over the rim of the Great Basin to the junction of the Santa Clara Creek and Rio Virgin where the elevation had dropped 3,000 feet. They arrived here on New Year's Day in 1850. Here the climate was completely changed and the country was later to be known as "Utah's Dixie." It looked so dry and desolate that the scouts were not very pleased with its appearance. They had traveled down the Virgin, past a small, desereted Indian farm where a few stalks of corn and some squash and grape vines were planted. When they reached the Indian village on the Santa Clara they found good irrigated crops of corn, pumpkins and other squash. The village was composed of mostly men for the women and children had been sold to or stolen by the Spaniards, Mexicans and Utes who had repeatedly made raids on them to obtain slaves. From here they traveled northward up the Santa Clara and a few days later reached Fullmer's camp which had moved from Red Creek to Center Creek (Parowan). The next day they headed back to Salt Lake City, encountering snow, ice, and lack of sufficient food, but arrived back home on February 2, 1850 without the loss of any life. The reports of this trip were of the most vital significance in helping to determine where colonies should be established.

In 1853 several men under the leadership of Rufus C. Allen were called on missions to this southland to organize some outposts. They spent some time organizing Parowan and Harmony and then came on south, arriving on the Santa Clara

in June 1854 . Here they found a camp of Indians numbering two hundred souls. These Indians were quite friendly to the missionaries who commenced assisting them in sowing and planting and otherwise instructing them in civilized ways. In December 1854 Jacob Hamblin, Thales H. Haskell, Ira Hatch, and Samuel Knight, and Agustus P. Hardy were selected by President Allen to settle permanently on the Santa Clara. These men started immediately from Fort Harmony and arriving at their destination, began their temporal duties by cutting some large house logs and erecting a cabin on the upper end of the present town site. They also began a dam to take out water for irrigation from the creek. In this labor they were aided by the Indians who by this time (according to James G. Bleak's record) were estimated to number about 800 under Chief Tut-se-gab-it. The Indians were rather reluctant to help for they believed that The "Tonaquint"--their name for the Santa Clara Creek--would dry up the coming season as there was but little snow in the mountains. However, Jacob Hamblin promised them that if they would work with the missionaries they should both have enough water to irrigate their crops.

Hard labor and exposure brought a sickness to Jacob Hamblin so A.P. Hardy was sent to Ft. Harmony with word of the sickness and saying that Jacob needed more nourishment than the camp could furnish . He then went on to Parowan to obtain supplies and in addition obtained about a quart of cotten seed from Sister Nancy Pace Anderson from South Carolina. Brother Hardy returned to Santa Clara and took Jacob back to Fort Harmony until such time as his health permitted him to return to Santa Clara.

The dam 100ft. long and 14 ft. high was completed and the water taken out onto the 100 acre farm cultivated jointly by the missionaries and Indians. In the season of 1855 very good crops were raised. The cotten seeds were carefully planted, one to a hill, and did well. All the seed was saved for replanting. This was the first cotten grown in Utah Territory and a sample was sent to Brigham Young, who was very pleased with it.

In the late summer of 1855 Jacob Hamblin went north to Tooele Balley for his family, beginning the return trip on September 11 in company with his brother Oscar and Dudley Leavitt and their families, arriving at Santa Clara on October 18. They were kindly recieved by the Lamanites who were almost overjoyed to see the woman and children. Most of the Indians were friendly but Jacob Hamblin says: "In the winter of 1855-56 we were instructed to build a fort for our protection." (The site was selected half a mile above the present town of Santa Clara northwest of Gates cabins or about a quarter of a mile above the log cabin formerly built by the missionaries. "There were at times on the Santa Clara, ten missionaries and four stone masons from Cedar City. We employed Indian help and everything we put our hands to prospered so that in less than ten days we built a fort 100 ft. square, of hammer-faced rock, the wall 2 ft. thick and 12 ft. high. It was afterward said by Brigham Young to be the best fort then in the territory." It was completed in three weeks time.

All of the cotton seed raised the first year was planted in 1856 and 200 pounds of cotton resulted. Picking the seeds out was

such a hard job that Zadoc K. Judd (one of the missionaries) and the first Bishops) made a cotton gin. The women made stockings for the men from the first cotton raised. They saved the rest of the lint and added it to the next year's crop and from this they wove thirty yards of blue and white striped hickory shirting, which was finished in November 1856. The hand spinning wheel and treadle loom were of the most primitive make, but served their purpose. Jacob Hamblin made a girst mill and molasses mill with the help of the other men.

The community was made up of young people--Jacob Hamblin was 34 and his wife, Rachel Judd Hamblin was 32; his wives, Mary Huntsman Leavitt, 20 and had one daughter, and Maria (Mary's sister), 16; Jadoc Judd, 29; his wife, Minerva Dart Judd was only 18 and already the mother of two children. The Judds had one son, an adopted Indian boy. In June 1859 the Santa Clara Ward was organized and by May 1861 Santa Clara had twenty families. In 1860 Brigham Young visited the Saints in Southern Utah and organized a branch of the church at Pine Valley, to be under the jurisdiction of the Santa Clara Ward. It was at this time that he advised the Missionaries to move to higher ground where they would be safe in case of floods.

At the general conference of the church held in Salt Lake City in October 1861 three hundred and nine families were called from the northern settlements to locate in Southern Utah. President Young knew that this was a hard mission with many unpleasant conditions, so, in order that the mission might prosper he selected some of the most stalwart pioneers who had never known defeat. Mechanics of all kinds as well as farmers were included in the company, for it was expected that a permanent settlement should be made. Apostles Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow were in direct command.

At the call south Brigham Young, knowing the conditions they would be under, advised as many of the unmarried people as could possibly find mates to do so and marry before leaving Salt Lake, and this they did.

Included in this number who were called south was what was designated as the Swiss Company. Daniel Bonneli of Salt Lake City was appointed as their leader for he could speak both Swiss and English. Some of the people had their own outfits but for those who didn't, teams were provided by the church to take them south. These teams relayed at various stations along the way. The route they followed was practically that of State Highway 91 of today. The group evidently came in good spirits for George Albert Smith, when writing to the Millenial Star said,--"We met a company of fourteen wagons led by Daniel Bonneli, at Kanarra Creek.
They excited much curiosity through the country by their singing and good cheer. They expected to settle at Santa Clara village where there is a reservation of land selected for them that is considered highly adaptable to grape culture. Six of their wagons were furnished by the church." (Millenial Star. 24: 41-42).
There were eighty-five members of this company.

George Staheli, a member of this group, who had been the bugler for the company across the plains, had a very sad experience as they crossed the Harrisburg Bench (part way between Cedar City and St. George). His beloved cornet which he had brought from Switzerland was tied to the bows on the top of the wagon and, and the roads being terribly rough, somehow was loosed from its

moorings and went tumbling into the wheel track, to be rescued only after it was mashed "flat as a pancake" by the heavy wheels which ran over it. This was a serious loss to all for it could not be fixed and it was many years before he could get another.

This company arrived on November 28, 1861 and drove directly to the Fort, where they made camp around the adobe meeting house. Israel Ivins, father of President Anthony W. Ivans, was driving one of the relay teams and Tony was with them. As they were unloading the emigrants under a large cottonwood tree Tony surveyed the country, and not seeing much but sage brush asked, "Father, how will those poor people live?" His father answered, "I don't know, my son, but the Lord will provide." And so He did but sometimes it was the scantiest fare that they could possibly survive on.

Rude shelters were put up while the people got their bearings. The George Staheli family was housed in an upper room in the fort since Mrs. Staheli was soon to give birth to a daughter (Barbara, born on Christmas Day). Those who had covered wagons used them but those who did not built willow wigwams. Here they remained for about three weeks until further arrangements could be made. It was decided to make the permanent townsite below the point of the hill as the homes would be safer from flood waters. Preliminary arrangements had been made by Apostle George A. Smith and Erastus Snow with the Missionaries to relinquish their claims on the "Big Bond" in favor of those recently arrived. This was later carried out and Santa Clara had a new beginning. As soon as the land was divided up people began to move away from the Fort site onto their own claims and went immediately to work to provide housing. Soon all sorts of shelter sprang up among the dry, dead sunflowers and the gray rabbit brush. Here is a description of Samuel Stucki's dugout as given by his daughter Mary Ann:

"It was about six feet deep and twelve feet square, with a slanting roof. Crevices between the roof poles were filled with small compact bundles of reshes held in place by a weaving of young willows. About a six inch layer of dirt, which had been excaveted from the cellar, was put on the roof. There were no windows. The front and only door had one small pane of glass to light up the cool, cozy room within. Beds were made by driving corner posts into the dirt floor. Black-willow poles, split, were nailed close together to serve as slats on the bed and fresh straw was suitably used for mattresses. Comfortable pillows were made from the fluff of the cat-tails which were gathered from the sloughs along the creek. To save space in this little room-of-all-purposes, an improvised table was made by laying a large plank on top of the posts of one of the beds. Two benches made of boards, a shelf cupboard, and a small sheet iron stove with two holes and a tiny oven completed the furnishings. All in all the little primitive shelter was quite comfortable for it was pleasantly cool in the suffocating heat of summer, and was warm in the winter months when light snow fell, rain drizzled, or ice coated the water ditches."

Later on these crude shelters were replaced with adobe, or rock homes and still later by brick or cinder block and today everyone had most of the modern conveniences of modern day life.

As soon as the first rude shelters were made the settlers began making a dam in the creek and a ditch to the new townsite. This was completed on December 24 and the very next day rain began to fall and continued for over a month. Then came the Big Flood on New Year's Day. People at the Fort began to move out and everyone tried to save the supplies stored therin but most of them went down in the flood and Jacob Hamblin almost lost his life while trying to rescue Mrs. Staheli and her new baby. His life was saved by an Indian who threw a rope to him and dragged him to shore. The orchards and fields went down the creek piece by piece. All day long the Missionaries watched the fruits of their six years' labor go into the ragging torrent. The men frantically tried to save supplies and the Fort but without avail. One corner and part of the wall went down. By nightfall the whole little colony was washed away and the people stood shivering and shelterless on top of the hill, their few household effects piled in confusion about them. Mothers tried to comfort their crying children and bring solace to them and their menfolk. The flood was receding, but somewhere away down the stream was the worst flood the people of Santa Clara have ever known but there have been and still are some big floods.

The first months for these people would have meant near starvation had it not been for the assistance they gave each other. The Missionaries divided their own meager supplies with the Swiss and the people of St. George, who themselves had only recently arrived in early December, took over to Santa Clara a large Sibley tent owned by Asa Calkins and which the St. George people had been using for public gatherings. They let the people use this until such time as they could get something better. Dudley Leavitt and others several times brought beef from the herd that ran wild in Bull Balley, and distributed it among the families according to the number of children in each. The fact is, that for several years because of grasshopper plagues, drowth, and floods, the people were barely able to exist. As John S. Stucki said: "There were some spring seasons when we did not have a thing to eat except pig-weeds cooked in a little water without anything more nourishing to go with them as we had no cow, no flour, and no seasonings of any kind, not even a bit of bread for the little children. When they would cry for bread it seemed awfully hard for mother, suffering from the pangs of hunger herself to have to hear her little children cry for bread and have none to give them. Every day when I had to gather the pig weeds it seemed to me I could not stand it much longer and live." During the second and third years even the pig-weeds got scarce. But these people lived on faith and were industrious and thrifty and twelve years later (1873) the Deseret News reported: "The Santa Clara settlement consisting of 20 families, 12 of whom are Swiss and were sent by the Perpetual Emigration Fund without a dollar hav got houses, land, vineyards, horses, wagons and cattle and are sending 100 children to school, besides having a number too small to go. The donations they handed in to Bishop Bunker he sent to the poor in St. George, they having no poor in Santa Clara."

These people did not raise much cotten but specialized in fruits, vegetables and molasses made from sugarcane. They dried fruit and peddled it in the fall to the surrounding settlements for potatoes and flour. They also hauled their produce by team and wagon to such places as Salt Lake City, Milford, Cedar City, Silver Reef, Pioche, Caliente, Ely, and Delamar, to mention only a few. However, with the coming of the motor vehicles, dried fruit went out of the picture except for their own use. In the late 20's and throughout the 30's Model T Fords replaced the team and wagon. Later on the "peddlers", as they were called, progressed to pick-ups, three-quarter ton trucks, ton trucks, ton-and-a-half trucks,

and so on until today the "truckers" run diesel engines pulling sets of doubles hauling up to twenty-five ton loads. Today most of the produce sold is shipped in for re-distribution either by railroad or trucks from California, Arizona, Mexico, Idaho, Washington, Maine, or anywhere this produce is grown.

Santa Clara cradled the silk industry in Dixie for the silk culture was begun there during the 60's. To quote Leonora Woodbury Worthen: "I Sister Knight was the first to raise silk worms in Santa Clara. It was in the 60's. Some skeins of silk she had made, also some nets and mitts made from silk, were sent to Philadelphia to the Centennial Exposition in 1876. It was said that the silk in the skeins was so nice and smooth and the coloring as nice as any imported silk." However, the silk industry did not prove successful, so, after twenty years, was abandoned.

The adage "Waste not, Want not" was evident in every home and the people made their contributions to the general cause in "Tithing Labor" on the St. George Tabernacle and later on the St. George Temple, often walking the six to eight miles over and back. The women saved their "Sunday Eggs" to apply on the building of the Manti Temple and both men and women helped with the upkeep after they were built. They donated to the Missionary Fund, the Emigration Fund, the Building Fund, and whatever else they were called upon to do. Their donations were in labor, dried fruits, flour, eggs, butter, calico, factory, thread, carpets, cotten, wine, wheat, quilts, etc.--whatever they had. This meant quite a sacrifice but they were glad to help in the "Building Up of Zion" here upon the earth. Through the years they have sent out seventy-four missionaries with another booked to go out in less than a month.

Santa Clara has also contributed her share to freedom in every way, whether it was going over the top in a bond drive, contributing to the Red Cross, knitting for the soldier boys, or anything else she has been called upon to help with. She has also contributed her share of soldier boys. In World War I there were twenty boys in uniform--two of them paying the supreme sacrifice, while one was gassed and shell shocked. In World War II there were forty-four boys in the service with one being killed in action in France. Several of our boys served in the army during the Korean War and today a number of our boys are in the National Gaurd.

Not all was work and sorrow for the people danced, played games, went on outings, held quilting bees and rag bees and had molasses pulls. Most of their activities have been centered around the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the activities it has afforded for most of the inhabitants have been, and still are, L.D.S. The citizens of early days boasted of a brass band--known far and wide as the Staheli Band--and two choirs, and and English and a Swiss, which vied with each other in the melody of their song. The band came into being in the following manner:

After the Swiss settlers had been in Santa Clara about three years, John R. Itten, one of the original Swiss Group, recieved word that there was due him a portion of an estate in the old country. The word of this came to him from New York and the information also brought with it a request that he accept in settlement a set of second-hand band instrumants in place of the money. This he consented to do, allowing the value of eighty dollars for the ten wind instruments which included a tuba, two B-flat cornets, a tenor horn, an alto, a bass and a valve trombone. There was much musical talent in Santa Clara

We could have held our Centennial Celebration in 1954 but we chose to wait until 1961 and hold it in conjunction with St. George, as at that time there would be more people in attendance. August 27, 28, and 29 were the chosen dates and invitations were sent out to everyone who had ever lived here and were still living. The ringing of the town bell preceeded each event and brought back memories of other days. On Sunday the celebration began as people attended church services and began registering and visiting. An exhibit of pioneer articles was desplayed for three days and on Monday and Tuesday mornings there were relays, sports and ball games while a variety of home-made refreshments were dispensed from a bowery at the norheast corner of the chapel. The afternoons were spent in visiting and catching up on happenings through long intervals of separation in the various families. But the crowning event was the Centennial Pageant written by LaRue Leavitt Christian and Eva Leavitt Miles, both granddaughters of original pioneers. This pageant beautifully protrayed the early history of Santa Clara and on down through the years. The original Staheli Band drum and George Staheli's cornet added interest to each performance, held Monday and Tuesday evenings and again, by special request, on Sunday evening, September, 3 to overflow crowds. This was a glorious occasion and every person in twon was given a chance to participate in the pageant and 117 responded. It was a celebration to long be remembered.

All in all and taking everything into consideration, the thrifty little city of Santa Clara, Utah has most everything to be desired to make one happy--most of the basic necessities of life. However, it is rumored that soon Highway 91 will follow another course and this thrifty little city, being off the beaten trail, will deteriorate. This has been debated pro and con but the pros have it and it is hoped that the citizenry will still follow the footsteps of their forefathers and keep this community a place of progress, a place to be desired by old and young--a haven of retreat after a long day's toil, and a place where the Saints of God may dwell peacefully together.

Written by Nellie M. Gubler--December 14, 1965.