

# Provo Bench Camp



DAUGHTERS OF UTAH PIONEERS

LESSON FOR APRIL 2002

HISTORY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY

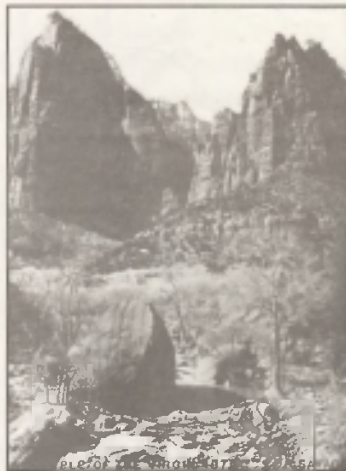
Compiled by Anne Miller Eckman

## INTRODUCTION

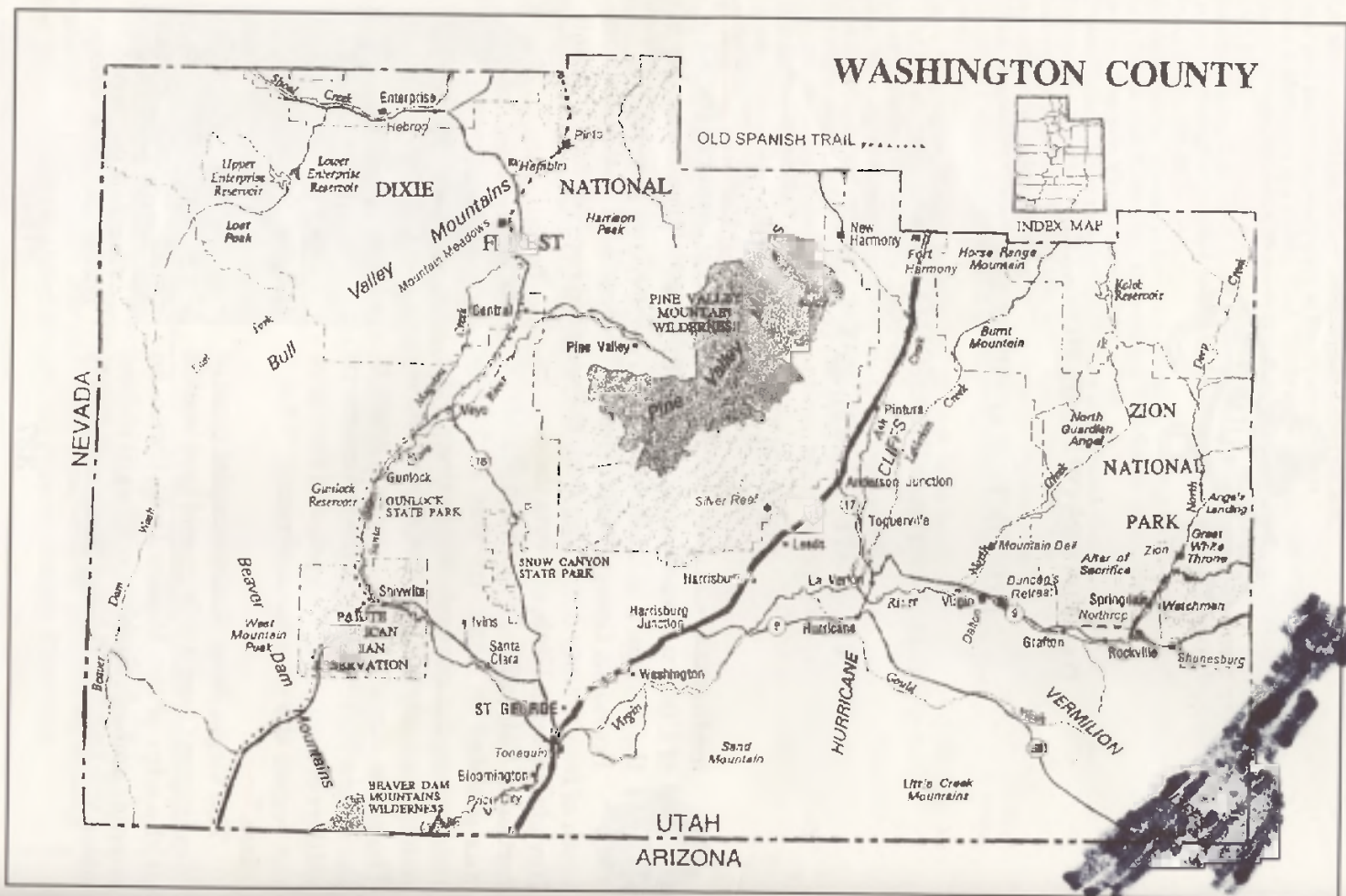


Washington County, located in the southwest corner of the state of Utah, was created by an act of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah on March 3, 1852, and was named for President George Washington. It included all of the territory south of Iron County extending from the western border of what is now Nevada, through Utah, and into the eastern portion of Colorado. By the time statehood was granted in 1896, its size had been reduced to its current dimensions. The county has a total area of 2,245 square miles. The warm climate in the low-lying areas of the Virgin River Basin reminded southern settlers of their former homes, and they gave the region the popular nickname, "Utah's Dixie."

The Virgin River Basin occupies most of Washington County. It is an arid land located at the edge of the Mojave Desert with an average annual rainfall of only eight inches. Most Washington County settlements rely



"Temple of the Virgin"  
photograph by C.R. Savage.



on the water of the Virgin River and its tributaries—the Santa Clara River, Ash Creek, and Quail Creek. The Virgin River is part of the Colorado River drainage and joins the Colorado River at Lake Mead.

The Hurricane Cliffs rise above the Hurricane Fault and divide the county from east to west. East of the fault the land rises several hundred feet higher than the area to the west and consists of mesas and plateaus, including the world-renowned scenery of Zion National Park and the Vermilion Cliffs. As the Virgin River flows west from the Hurricane Fault, the elevation gradually decreases and drops to a level of 2,800 feet. This contrasts with an elevation of 10,300 feet



Lava flow in Snow Canyon.

on the highest peak of the Pine Valley Mountains to the north. Volcanic cones and lava flows can be observed in a wide area of the western part of the county, including Snow Canyon State Park and the lava-topped sandstone cliffs that surround Saint George.

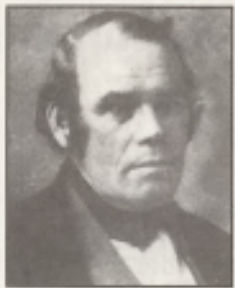
#### PIONEER EXPEDITIONS TO WASHINGTON COUNTY

There were several reasons why leaders of the LDS Church wished to extend colonization into the area that became Washington County. First, the warm climate would enable the Saints to produce cotton and other agricultural products that would contribute to the establishment of a self-sufficient society. Second, the Indians were their “Lamanite brothers,” and it was an important part of their religion to convert them and teach them ways to improve their standard of living. There was also a need to protect settlers from Indian depredations. Third, with the expansion of the territory and with new converts arriving in large numbers each season, it was desirable to establish an open corridor to the sea. Way stations were needed along the Old Spanish Trail to protect travelers and to secure supplies from California.

In November 1848 the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sent an expedition of sixteen men to southern California to open a trade route and purchase seed grain, tree cuttings, and livestock. The company, including Captain Jefferson Hunt of the Mormon Battalion and Orrin Porter Rockwell, traveled south along the Old Spanish Trail, wintered in California, and returned in the spring of 1848. They made



extensive improvements to the pack route, enabling twenty-five returning members of the Mormon Battalion to drive the first wagons over the Spanish Trail that spring.



Parley P. Pratt.

In 1849 Governor Brigham Young and the legislative assembly commissioned an expedition of fifty men to explore southern Utah and locate sites that would sustain a population. The company, under the direction of Parley P. Pratt, reached Little Salt Lake on December 2. The main body camped on the meadows at Red Creek (Paragonah), while Elder Pratt and twenty men explored farther south. They traveled down Ash Creek to the Virgin River and continued to the mouth of the Santa Clara where they camped on

New Year's Day, 1850. Parley P. Pratt recorded the following discouraging impressions of the Virgin River Basin from a location on Ash Creek:

The great Wasatch range along which we traveled our whole journey here terminates in several abrupt promontories [Kolob, La Verkin, and Zion], the country southward for eighty miles showing no signs of water or fertility. . . . A wide expanse of chaotic matter presented itself; huge hills, sandy deserts, cheerless grassless plains, perpendicular rocks, loose barren clay, [and] dissolving beds of sandstone . . . lying in inconceivable confusion.<sup>1</sup>

His description of the fertile bottomland of the Virgin River was more encouraging:

The bottoms now expanded about a mile in width and several miles in length [with] loose sandy soil, very pleasant for farming, extremely fertile and easily watered, and sometimes subject to overflow. No timber in the country except large cottonwoods along the stream, sufficient for temporary building and fuel.<sup>2</sup>

Elder Pratt's group traveled up the Santa Clara River where they met members of the Paiute tribe who were engaged in primitive agriculture. After accepting the Paiutes' friendly invitation to return, they continued up the Santa Clara River and traveled to the main camp along the road that had been made by the Jefferson Hunt party.

On January 27, 1852, John D. Lee led a group of young men on an expedition to locate a site for a possible new settlement south of Parowan. They traveled down Ash Creek and explored the Virgin and Santa Clara rivers, returning on February 18. Lee was familiar with crops grown in the southern states, as he had served a Church mission to Tennessee in 1842. He wrote an enthusiastic report to Brigham Young, describing trees in bud and herbs ready to bloom, although it was mid-winter. He was convinced that the rich soil could produce cotton and flax, and grapes,

figs, and other fruits, and he expressed a desire to return. President Brigham Young and the territorial legislature evaluated the positive reports from the exploration parties, and they began to implement plans for the settlement of Washington County.

### FORT HARMONY AND NEW HARMONY



John Doyle Lee.

In general conference in Salt Lake City on October 6, 1851, John D. Lee's name was read from the pulpit as one to found a new community south of Parowan and Cedar City. Lee was pleased that he was to be father of a new community. In the spring of 1852, he led a group of fifteen men to establish a settlement on Ash Creek. Apostle George A. Smith visited all of the southern settlements that fall and wrote the following report to the *Deseret News* on December 8, 1852: "On the first water south of the rim of the Great Basin in Washington County, John D. Lee, Elisha Groves, and company are building a fort on Ash Creek called Harmony. . . . Fifty-one loads of lumber have been taken there from Parowan. . . . Ten men and several Indians are constantly employed building the fort; one of the first rooms erected is intended for a school-house. The point is well selected as a military point and commands the springs and about 160 acres of farm land on the creek."<sup>3</sup>

In April 1854, President Brigham Young called twenty-three young men under the direction of Rufus P. Allen to serve as missionaries to the Indians. The young frontiersmen were skilled, resourceful, and fearless. They were to raise food, share it with the Indians, convert them, and teach them how to live. Soon after their arrival on May 2, John D. Lee put the missionaries to work clearing land, building fences, and growing crops to support the settlement during the coming winter. President Brigham Young arrived about two weeks later with a party of one hundred. After counseling the men to organize themselves for more efficiency, President Young appointed Rufus C. Allen as president of the Indian Mission.

Heber C. Kimball prophesied that if the elders would labor faithfully with the Indians at New Harmony, peace would abide there. He also prophesied that a wagon road would be built over the Black Ridge and a temple would be built in that vicinity. He further stated that the Indians would come from across the Colorado River and get their endowments in the temple.<sup>4</sup>

The next day President Young, Parley P. Pratt, and others rode up onto the broad tableland and selected a more permanent site for Fort



Harmony, where water from Kanarra and Harmony creeks could be used to irrigate additional acres. After President Young's departure, Lee and the other residents of Harmony began work on the new fort. It was built on rock footings one hundred yards square and three feet wide with gates on the north and south. A well was dug in the center to supply culinary water. Thousands of red adobe bricks were used to build the walls, which formed one side of the houses within.

The missionaries went about three miles up Ash Creek where New Harmony now stands, and established a farm for the Indians. Augustus P. Hardy, Thales Haskell, and Jacob Hamblin assisted with the work. An Indian school was opened with an initial enrollment of ten pupils.

On January 1, 1855, John D. Lee was placed in charge of the government Indian agency at a salary of \$50 per month. He was to distribute seeds, tools, and other supplies to the Indians and help them to farm. On January 4, 1856, in answer to a petition of the total male population of thirty-two men, Fort Harmony was set up as the Washington County seat. John D. Lee was appointed probate judge and assessor.



John D. Lee with two of his wives, Rachel Woolsey Lee and Caroline Williams Lee.

With the capable assistance of his wives, Lee established a thriving business providing meals and provisions for travelers. On May 21, 1857, twenty-one wagons passed through Fort Harmony on their way to settle Washington. Most of the wagon trains going to California also stopped at Lee's place in Harmony. At thirty-one cents per person per meal, Lee often took in from \$20 to \$75, depending on the size of the train. One large train stayed so long that Lee took in \$175, requiring his

wives to cook night and day. John D. Lee enjoyed entertaining prominent visitors of church and state. Once he hosted 125 Church officials and served them three meals during their stay. He butchered two beeves and two sheep for the occasion.<sup>5</sup>

Early in 1861, President Brigham Young visited Fort Harmony. He praised the industry of the settlers and stated that it was the best fort in the territory. On December 22, 1861, the Saints met in the family hall of John D. Lee's home and organized a branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. John D. Lee was chosen to serve as presiding elder. Lee gave a public dinner and party for the entire branch on December 25. Before dinner was finished, rain began to fall and the guests hurried

home. Author Stephen L. Carr gives this graphic description of the terrible forty-day storm of the winter of 1861-62 and its impact on Fort Harmony:

Heavy winds came up turning the falling rain into millions of tiny chisels biting into the adobe walls, and soon the residents knew they were in for the fiercest storm ever known in southern Utah, only they didn't know how long the storm would last. On New Year's Day 1862, the temperature cooled enough so that the rain turned to snow which, instead of running off, piled up against the walls. During a warming spell in the next few days the rain continued, the snow melted, and the heavy standing water penetrated the walls. The underground rooms became flooded, and the fort walls began crumbling away under the driving relentless rain. . . . By the middle of January, there were many large, gaping holes in the walls and roofs. . . .

Finally, on January 18th with no end of the storm and destruction in sight, all the families except the Lees were moved from the fort and did the best they could in their wagons placed against any windbreak they could find. Sarah Caroline Lee was in a fairly dry area and had been in the middle of some spinning, and so stayed with her family.<sup>6</sup>

James G. Bleak, clerk and historian of the Southern Utah Mission, recorded the following account:

*Saturday, 18th January (1862):* John D. Lee, through the kindness of William and Harvey A. Pace and George Sevey, moved all families from the fort except Sarah C. Lee and family. Her house was considered safe. Lee was eight nights without undressing or putting on dry clothes.

*Friday, 7th February:* While the last of J. D. Lee's family were preparing to leave Fort Harmony, and his wife Sarah Caroline was in the act of making up a bed, a sudden gust of wind blew down a partition wall, which in the fall broke through the lower floor, killing two of the children, George A. and Margaret Ann.<sup>7</sup>

Fort Harmony was abandoned following the storm. Some of the settlers moved five miles to the west where they founded New Harmony in the spring of 1862. The first houses were small, crowded dugouts made in the creek banks. During the spring floods, some of the dugouts filled with water, and the settlers were forced to move out. As soon as possible, they built log cabins and adobe and brick houses. Among the settlers who located in New Harmony in 1862 were Wilson D. Pace, Lemuel H. Redd, Richard Woolsey, John D. Lee, Henry Darrow, James and William Pace, Harvey A. Pace, George Sevey, and their families.

The New Harmony Ward was organized by President Erastus Snow on August 20, 1867. Wilson D. Pace was ordained bishop, and Ann Moriah





Ann Moriah Redd Pace,  
first Relief Society  
President of New Harmony.

Redd Pace became the first Relief Society President.

In 1884 a group of Swiss and German families arrived in New Harmony. Among them were the Naegle, Schmutz, Barlocher, Bruppbocher, Wanger, and Mathis families.

The following is Alice Redd Rich's description of pioneer life in New Harmony:

There were no doctors in Harmony in pioneer days. Lemuel H. Redd kept Dr. Gunn's medical book in his home and studied it carefully for instructions for setting broken bones and controlling diseases. He also owned three pairs

of dental forceps and extracted teeth free of charge for all who needed such work done. Sulfur and molasses served as a spring tonic. Poultices of bacon and black pepper were used for sore throat, and warm olive oil was used for earache. A salve made from mutton tallow and turpentine was a good standby for soothing bruises.

The preparation of starch was an important fall activity. A tin can was perforated with a nail and served as a grater. The small potatoes were washed, grated, and dropped in cold water. The starch would settle at the bottom of the vessel. When dried it made excellent starch for the family wash.

A pioneer history would not be complete without mentioning the yearly housecleaning and the two important activities it included. The inside walls of every home, whether log, lumber, or plaster lined, must have a yearly coat of whitewash. Mixing quick lime with water made the wash. This was spread over walls and ceilings with a long handled brush. It was a sanitary and beautiful covering, refreshing and fragrant. The highlight of spring housecleaning was the untacking, dusting, and turning of the homemade rag carpets, a wonderful luxury of most homes. The year-old wheat straw that had been used as a mat was swept out. Fresh straw from the threshing stacks was spread over the scrubbed floors, and the stretching and tacking of the carpet became a major operation.<sup>8</sup>

#### TONAQUINT, FORT CLARA, AND SANTA CLARA

On June 7, 1854, the missionaries from the Indian Mission at Fort Harmony decided that the time had come for some of them to travel south to the Indian settlement on the Santa Clara River and begin to teach the natives. Parley P. Pratt had instructed them in a sermon in May:

Give them a shirt, pants, and petticoats. Say not only, "Be ye fed and clothed." Language neither feeds their stomachs nor covers their nakedness, nor can words convince them of your friendship. Feed, clothe, and instruct them, and in a year they will more than repay you for your outlay. . . . Win their hearts [and] their affections; teach them, baptize them, wash, cleanse, and clothe them. I would always have clean garments ready and clothe every one I should baptize.<sup>9</sup>

The missionaries traveled south, reaching the wickiups of Chief Toquer on Ash Creek where they received a cordial reception and spent the night. The next day they camped near the present city of Washington where the timid natives trembled as they shook hands with the missionaries. On Wednesday, June 7, 1854, they arrived at the Santa Clara River where Chief Tutsagavit and his band lived. Thomas D. Brown recorded, "We have now seen upwards of 150 Indians during the past few days; all saying they were often very hungry and are now nearly naked; they work hard and accomplish very little. 'O Lord!' my spirit exclaims, 'When will their salvation begin?'"<sup>10</sup>

These Indians were Shivwits of the Paiute tribe. The early settlers referred to them as "Piedes," and they lived in wickiups made from the straight white willows that grew along the moist creek banks. They gathered pine nuts, berries, and roots and hunted for small game with bows and arrows. The Paiutes did a little farming, using pointed sticks as farm implements. They raised corn, squash, melons, and wheat, but the crop yields were not generally sufficient to meet their needs. They had been terrorized by Utes from Chief Walker's band who sold their children to Mexican slave traders.

After the missionaries had established a permanent location for the Indian mission on the Santa Clara in December of 1854, they built a cabin of cottonwood logs for themselves and two cabins for the use of the natives. They called their new settlement Tonaquint Station because Tonaquint was the Indian name for the Santa Clara River. Then the elders began to preach the gospel and soon baptized eleven Indians. In January and February of 1855, the missionaries and Indians cooperated to construct a rock dam across the creek for irrigation purposes. The dam, one hundred feet long and fourteen feet high, was used to irrigate a one-hundred-acre farm.

The hard work and exposure made Jacob Hamblin ill, and Augustus Hardy was sent to Fort Harmony for medicine and better food. After obtaining help for Hamblin, Hardy continued on to Parowan where he met Nancy Pace Anderson, a pioneer from South Carolina. She gave him a quart of cotton seed, which he took back to the settlement on the Santa





David H. Cannon baptizes members of the Shivwits Tribe on the Santa Clara River.

Clara. The missionaries planted and cultivated the cotton seed with care. The cotton crop yielded enough lint to produce thirty yards of cloth. A bountiful food crop was also harvested that fall, and Jacob Hamblin recorded that he especially enjoyed the melons.

Apostle George A. Smith brought a letter of instruction from President Young in July 1856, directing the Saints to construct a fort for the protection of the settlers. Fort Clara was located about one-half mile above the present town of Santa Clara and was built of hammer-faced rock with walls one hundred feet square, two feet thick, and twelve feet high. Stone masons Elias Morris and Zadok K. Judd came to direct the

construction. The Paiutes assisted the settlers, and the work was completed in about three weeks. The early settlers of Santa Clara, all under thirty-five years of age, included Jacob Hamblin, Judd Hamblin, Dudley Leavitt, and Zadok K. Judd.

Water-shortage was a continual problem. The water in the river frequently dried up in the heat of summer. Jacob Hamblin recorded the following experience in his journal:

The crops were watered once in the spring of 1856 and seemed to be doing well, and then the creek began to dry up. The Indians said, "You promised us water if we would help build a dam and plant corn. What about the promise? Now the creek is dry. What will we do for something to eat next winter?" The chief saw that I was troubled in my mind over the matter and said, "We have one medicine man; I will send him to the Big Mountain to make rain medicine, and you do the best you can and maybe the rain will come, but it will take strong medicine, as I never knew it to rain this moon." I went up the creek and found it dry for twelve miles.

The following morning at daybreak, I saw the smoke of the medicine man ascending from the side of the Big Mountain, as the Indians called what is now known as the Pine Valley Mountains. I went aside by myself and prayed to the God of Abraham to forgive me if I had been unwise in promising the Indians water for their crops. . . .

It was a clear cloudless morning, but while still on my knees, heavy drops of rain fell on my back for about three seconds, and I knew it to be a sign that my prayers were answered. . . . The next morning a gentle rain commenced falling. The water rose to its ordinary stage in the creek and, what was unusual, it was clear. We watered our crops all we wished, and both whites and Indians acknowledged the event to be a special providence.<sup>11</sup>

The crops flourished during the 1856 season. They planted five acres of cotton and harvested two hundred pounds of lint. Zadok Judd invented a crude cotton gin to separate the seed from the lint.

With the threat of Johnston's Army preparing to enter the Salt Lake Valley in the spring of 1858, Brigham Young called the settlers in San Bernardino, California, to return to Utah. Some of them settled in Santa Clara, including William Crosby who became the first postmaster. The new arrivals assisted in building a schoolhouse outside of the fort. Brigham Young visited Fort Clara in 1860 and advised the residents to move the settlement to higher ground in order to avoid possible flooding.



*In 1939 Nellie McArthur Gubler wrote the following history of the Swiss Colony at Santa Clara:*

At the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held in Salt Lake City in October 1861, 309 families were called to locate in southern Utah. Included in this number was a group designated as the Swiss Company. Daniel Bonelli was appointed as their leader because he could speak both English and German. Many of these pioneers had experience in raising grapes in Switzerland. When they arrived at the adobe yards in Saint George, they were assigned to go to Santa Clara to raise grapes and cotton.

Israel Ivins, father of President Anthony W. Ivins, drove one outfit from Saint George to Santa Clara to bring some of the Swiss Company. Tony was a boy of ten years and came with his father. Tony, not seeing much but sagebrush, 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 has!

Preliminary arrangements had been made by Apostle George A. Smith and Erastus Snow with the original settlers to relinquish their claims in favor of those recently arrived. After the lots had been platted, corresponding numbers were written on slips of paper and placed in a hat. Brother Bonelli drew the numbers from the hat and allotted them to the various families. Three different pieces were given to each family—first, a piece of ground in town big enough for a home and garden; next, a piece a little farther away to be used for vineyards and farming; third, a piece still farther away (out past the black rocks to the east) to be used for farming.

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 by Christmas Eve and was the occasion for a celebration. It had cost \$1,030 in labor with work valued at \$2 a day. The very day this task was completed, rain began to fall. The old-timers spoke of it as the "forty days rain." The dugouts and other shelters gave poor protection. Clothes and bedding could not be dried, and food molded. At the same time, it was snowing on the Pine Valley Mountains. A warm south wind came up which must have melted the snow. The earth was heavily soaked, and the creek rose until it was many times its normal size. The fort had been built well back on higher ground, but now it was plain that it was in danger.

A rope was stretched from the fort gate to a tree to be used as a lifeline for the people trying to move to safety with whatever possessions they could carry. The business of moving continued all night. Just as day was breaking it was discovered that Sophia Staheli, who was confined to her bed with her week-old baby, was still in the fort with her

other five children. The children were taken out first, and then Jacob Hamblin took Mrs. Staheli on his back. He had nearly reached safety when part of the fort wall gave way and tore the rope loose. Someone quickly grabbed Mrs. Staheli, but Brother Hamblin went down with the flood. Finally, an Indian threw in a rope, which Hamblin caught hold of, and his life was saved.



Jacob Hamblin's home in Santa Clara. It was built in 1862.

When daylight came, the river was slashing into the bank, carving out pieces as big as a house. Jacob Hamblin, wishing to see if the water was receding, ventured too near the edge, and the piece of ground on which he was standing caved in. He hallooed for the rope. It was thrown over the bank and, fortunately, he was still there to seize it. He put it around his waist and under his arms, and his friends above began to raise him just as the soil on which he stood dissolved into the water. Once more, his life was spared. The people were not able to save much of their belongings except a little bedding. Jacob Hamblin's gristmill, the newly completed dam and canal, and all other buildings went down in the flood. They must now begin anew. They set to their task with vigor so that by March 16 they had again completed the reconstruction of the dam and the canal.



The John Gubler family on a trip to sell their fruits and vegetables.

The first peach trees were grown from pits gotten from the Moquis Indians. As soon as the settlers had enough money to buy trees and shrubs, they drove all the way to California to buy young fruit trees and grapevine cuttings. In the mild climate of southern Utah, they were



soon raising peaches, apples, and grapes. Over the years, the families' food supply and standard of living improved steadily.

Clothing was scarce in the early years. As the clothing brought with them wore out, it was replaced with clothing made from wagon covers and tent cloth. These were very stiff and made quite a rustling sound when the children ran. They were not very comfortable, especially when there was nothing underneath to keep the rough seams from scratching the body.

Hats were made from ripe wheat straws. They would lay the straw in water until it became soft. Then they braided it, using three to thirteen straws. When the braid was about eight yards long, it was sewed round and round and shaped into a hat. The crown was shaped over a little bucket, and the top, sides, and rim were pressed with a hot flat-iron. The Sunday hats were bleached in this manner: The hats were placed inside of a barrel. A plate of sulfur was lighted, and the barrel was covered tightly. The hats came out pure white.

A favorite substitute for soap was the root of the "oose" or yucca, sometimes called soaproot. This root looked like a sugar beet. Cut up and left in water, it made fluffy suds. Colored clothes came out fresh and bright because this cleanser did not harm the dyes. White clothes, however, turned slightly yellow and were not generally washed with oose. Hair washed in oose suds was soft, fluffy, and sweet smelling. When mopping wooden floors, the oose root served not only as soap but as a scrubbing brush as well.

After the Swiss settlers had been in Santa Clara about three years, John R. Itten inherited a set of band instruments from an estate in the old country and gave them to the town. The first band was organized under the leadership of George Staheli. He wrote the scores for music that he had played in Switzerland and donated hours of time teaching the music to the band members. Eventually, they had a repertoire of 108 selections, and they played in Saint George for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Saint George Temple. One time when Brigham Young came to Santa Clara, the people made a big arch of shrubs and flowers for him to pass under. Staheli and his band were there to welcome him.<sup>12</sup>

### PINE VALLEY

Pine Valley was settled because of a lost cow. The animal wandered away from the Fort Harmony herd during the summer of 1855, and herdsman Isaac Riddle followed it to Pine Valley. He described the beauty of the giant pine-cloaked mountains, the stream-watered meadows, and the tall grass that swept his saddle stirrups as "the most beautiful sight I had ever beheld on God's green earth!" Riddle recognized the valley's potential

as a source of much-needed lumber for the southern Utah settlements. That autumn he journeyed to Salt Lake City with Jehu Blackburn and Robert Richey. They returned with a small sawmill which they placed into production in early 1856. This mill furnished lumber to towns along the Santa Clara and Virgin rivers, as well as to settlements in Nevada and northern Arizona.

By the summer of 1856, several families had moved into the valley, including Jacob Hamblin and his wife Rachel. Some families from the community of Washington moved to Pine Valley in 1859. Among these were John and George Hawley, William R. Slade, Robert L. Lloyd, Joseph I. Hadfield, and Umpstead Rencher. John Hawley built the first real house in the valley. He made it from sawed logs and finished the inside walls with plaster.

Pine Valley's first meetinghouse was erected in 1859. It was a log building with a dirt roof and was used for both church and school. The first school teacher was Daniel Tyler of the Mormon Battalion. That same year the first post office was established with Samuel Hamilton serving as postmaster. About thirty families from the group called to southern Utah in 1861 settled in Pine Valley.

The following year, three sawmills were operating in the valley, and Sam Burgess and Ebenezer Bryce soon built the fourth. These mills, operated by water power, were equipped with the cumbersome up-and-down saws known as "muleys." The fifth mill, owned by Robert Gardner and his son William, was quite different. People from miles around gathered to watch the new steam-driven circular saw which they dubbed "the elephant." Eventually, there were as many as seven sawmills operating in Pine Valley, producing lumber for virtually every early building in Washington County. John Thomas said that there was a time that he could walk for blocks and blocks in the streets of Saint George and know that he had sawed the lumber in every fence he passed.<sup>13</sup>

On July 6, 1867, William Snow was ordained bishop by his brother, Erastus Snow, and was set apart to preside over the Pine Valley Ward. These church leaders assigned Ebenezer Bryce to design and build a meetinghouse in Pine Valley. Bryce (now known for his discovery of Bryce Canyon) was a ship builder who had emigrated from Australia. When asked if he thought he could build a church, he said, "If they will be satisfied to have it look like an upside-down ship, I'd be willing to try it." The two and one-half story building was thirty-two feet long and fifty-two feet wide. Huge granite boulders were placed at the corners of the foundation and at intervals along the sides. Timbers for the chapel, mainly ponderosa pine, were hauled from the Pine Valley Mountains.



They were squared, tongued and grooved together, and held in place with wooden pins plugged into auger holes. The framework for the four sides of the building was assembled on the ground, then hoisted into place. Strips of green rawhide were used for added support. The front of the building was graced with a



The Pine Valley Chapel, built in 1868.

double staircase which led to a well-proportioned chapel with a floor of white pine planks. In 1868 after the roof was in place and finishing touches were completed, Bryce remarked, "If floods come, it will float; if winds blow, it will roll over, but it will never crash." The Pine Valley chapel is the oldest church still in use in Utah.<sup>14</sup>

Wood from the Pine Valley Mountains was also used for the organ pipes in the Mormon Tabernacle at Salt Lake City, which was under construction at the same time as the Pine Valley Chapel. Joseph Ridges, organ architect, requested ponderosa pine for the organ pipes because long sections of knot-free wood could be obtained from it. Robert Gardner went to the mountain and handpicked the needed trees. At that time, Gardner's daughter Sarah was making preparations to marry William Meeks in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, and the young couple hauled the logs to Salt Lake City on their wedding journey.<sup>15</sup>

The opening of mines in Pioche and the discovery of silver at Silver Reef in 1870 caused an increased demand for lumber products. Teamsters from Pine Valley were paid in gold for loads they hauled to Pioche. Marcellus E. "Cell" Bracken recalled, "Pioche, at that time, was a wild town—possibly the wildest in the West. One night when I was there with a load of lumber, seventeen men were killed in gunfights, and a murder a day was considered about average." A gang of frontier outlaws learned that the teamsters of Pine Valley were paid in gold. They began preying upon the wagons as they returned to the mountains. Lurking in the brush along the trail, the highwaymen would leap up at an approaching wagon, level guns at the driver, and demand the gold he was carrying. The situation eventually became so serious that Wells Fargo established a

local bank so that the freighters could be paid by check. "Pine Valley itself was no nest of angels," recalled Bracken. "As a matter of fact, it was probably one of the wildest of the Mormon towns. With the mills running at capacity, there weren't nearly enough family men to operate them, and many 'drifters' were hired. The town's peak population was about 600 persons, while ward membership never exceeded 275. Many of these drifters were murderers, thieves, and army deserters. . . . There were a number of saloons, and among the more worldly element, gambling flourished."<sup>16</sup>

Because of Pine Valley's cool summer climate, it was always a popular meeting place for summer holidays. The Pioneer Day celebration lasted two or three days, and nearly every home was filled with guests. Tables were stretched to capacity, and beds were made on floors and in the stacks of freshly mowed hay. The day would begin with a pioneer parade early in the morning and would end with a program at the church. The meeting was followed by a mid-day dinner of new potatoes and green peas. Alice Gardner Snow, who was the bishop's wife for forty years and had ten children, lived in a ten-room house with a huge dining room. She said that one July she set her table for twenty-eight people three times a day for an entire month. At the end of that time, she knew how people felt who had a plague of crickets.<sup>17</sup>

## PINTO

In the summer of 1856, some of the missionaries from Fort Harmony, who were working with the Indians who lived along Pinto Creek, decided to establish a settlement in the narrow valley that was crossed by the Old Spanish Trail. Pinto, the Spanish word for speckled, describes the varied colors of the rock formations of the area. Rufus C. Allen led the following men to Pinto: Samuel F. Atwood, Lorenzo W. Roundy, Richard S. Robinson, Amos G. Thornton, Prime T. Coleman, Benjamin Knell, Robert Dixon, and David W. Tullis.

The Pinto Branch was organized in July of 1859 with Richard Robinson as presiding elder. Around 1860 a log meetinghouse was built, and a rock chapel was constructed in 1866. The young people received their education in the old church, and the wife of Benjamin Hulse was the first schoolteacher.

At a meeting held on July 11, 1867, President Erastus Snow organized the Pinto Ward with Richard S. Robinson as the first bishop. Robert Knell was called as bishop in 1877 and served in that capacity for twenty years. His inn, which he operated in a portion of his large home, was popular with travelers.