

## George Leroy “Roy” Bemis

George Leroy Bemis was born 5 November 1854 in Bannock, Maine. He was the oldest of ten children of George Henry Bemis and Eleanor Merrick (his father’s second wife; Roy also had one half-sister). On the 1857 and 1860 censuses, the family lived in Mower, Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> By 1870, the family had moved to Bingham Canyon, Salt Lake, Utah Territory.<sup>2</sup> Roy married Sarah Ann “Sadie” Allred in 1878 in Sanpete, Utah Territory.<sup>3</sup> They had one child who died before 1900. On the 1880 census, Roy was a miner, living in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory.<sup>4</sup> It is not known were Sadie was living that year.

The first justice of the peace in Silver Reef [Paddock, 1880?] was not popular with the miners, so Roy staged a humiliation. He had the miners vote for John Hill, known as Johnny the Shiner, a local bootblack. When the votes were counted, Johnny won, two to one. The camp went wild, and Johnny spent all his savings to treat the “boys” as they went from one saloon to another, getting gloriously drunk. But Johnny could not qualify for the position and had to return to shoe shining. His hand was sore from hand shaking, his pocketbook almost empty, but the boys tipped generously and Johnny was smiling once more.<sup>5</sup>

By 1895, Roy was mining at Bingham, Salt Lake, Utah Territory. One of the mines was called the Damphool, because of the way the original discoverer felt about the hike he took to find it.<sup>6</sup> In 1897, he spent some time traveling to Meadow Lake, Nevada, California, and a large portion of the Southern country where he examined mining properties. He did not find anything to rival the Bingham mines, and predicted that under favorable conditions, all records will be excelled in 1898.<sup>7</sup> He also started the Swan-Bemis mill in June 1898, the thirteenth mill in the famous old camp. It was full of ore from the Niagara Mining Company at Bingham.<sup>8</sup>

On the 1900 census, Roy was a mining operator, living with his wife in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah.<sup>9</sup> He was one of the principal holders of the ore strike at Bingham that year. He also managed the Dixon group of mines at Bingham.<sup>10</sup> Although they were living in Salt Lake City, Roy was often in the camps and even Sadie visited now and then.<sup>11</sup> Roy inspected the Cactus mines of the Newhouse Mines & Smelters Company of Beaver, Utah, in 1908, and was converted to the merits and value of those mines as one of the biggest copper bonanzas in the region.<sup>12</sup>

In 1910, Roy was still involved in mining, living with his wife and nephew (who they adopted) in Salt Lake City.<sup>13</sup> In 1918, he bet \$1,500 that the stock of Walker Mining would sell at \$5 before the first of

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Territorial Census, 1857; United States Census, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> United States Census, 1870.

<sup>3</sup> *Familysearch.org*

<sup>4</sup> United States Census, 1880.

<sup>5</sup> *Silver Reef Personalities Legends*, by Mark A. Pendleton, 1940, p. 14B-15B.

<sup>6</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 13 October 1895, p. 8; 4 July 1896, p. 3; 30 August 1896, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 May 1897, p. 3; 21 June 1897, p. 3; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 November 1897, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 June 1898, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> United States Census. 1900.

<sup>10</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 22 January 1900, p. 6; 6 September 1900, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 17 April 1904, p. 11; 21 August 1904, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 14 April 1908, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> United States Census, 1910.

the year.<sup>14</sup> He continued living in Salt Lake City with his wife, his son, and his daughter-in-law, and then just his wife, until 1934.<sup>15</sup> They were living at 563 East Third South in Salt Lake,<sup>16</sup> until Sadie died in 1934 and was buried in the Salt Lake Memorial Mausoleum.<sup>17</sup> Roy was still involved in mining, such as inspecting the Walker mine in Plumas, California, in 1936.<sup>18</sup> He died of carcinoma which had spread from his right hand, on 24 December 1944 in Salt Lake City. He was buried in the Salt Lake Memorial Mausoleum.<sup>19</sup> Roy was recognized as “one of the best miners in Utah and his judgment is worth something”.<sup>20</sup>

Research by Elaine Young, Silver Reef Foundation historian, 2017  
Please email [eyoung@youngzones.org](mailto:eyoung@youngzones.org) for additions and corrections

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<sup>14</sup> *Goodwin's Weekly*, 14 December 1918, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> United States Census, 1920, 1930.

<sup>16</sup> US City Directories, 1822-1995.

<sup>17</sup> Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964.

<sup>18</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 16 May 1936, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964; Utah Death Registers, 1847-1966; Salt Lake County Utah Death Records, 1908-1949.

<sup>20</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 14 April 1908, p. 9.