

## Peter Harrison

Peter Harrison was born about 1830 in Canada. He married Frances B McComb in 1858<sup>1</sup> and they had four children together. The family was living in Auburn, Placer, California in 1860, where Peter was a blacksmith<sup>2</sup> and one of the first in the area to manufacture wagons.<sup>3</sup> They moved to Nevada in 1867,<sup>4</sup> and in 1870, the family is living in Hamilton, White Pine, Nevada, where Peter owned a furniture store.<sup>5</sup>

In 1875, the family was living in Pioche, Lincoln, Nevada. They moved to Silver Reef, Washington, Utah, before February 1877, when he advertised in the first edition of the *Silver Reef Echo*.<sup>6</sup> Anticipating the upcoming market, he had shipped a load of single beds to Silver Reef.<sup>7</sup>

Peter built a large building that served as a grocery store, furniture store, and a first-class lodging house.<sup>8</sup> The two-story hotel, named Harrison House, boasted a covered porch, balcony, and cellar, and offered lodging, food, and even an organ.<sup>9</sup> The hotel was on the northwest corner of Main & Central Streets. It was directly north of the Cosmopolitan Restaurant, across Center Street. It was described as one of the best in Southern Utah.<sup>10</sup>

In May 1879, the hotel succumbed to the great fire and burned to the ground. Furniture stored in the cellar was badly damaged, but a few pieces were rescued.<sup>11</sup> Peter subsequently served on the fire committee.<sup>12</sup> On the 1880 census, Peter, his wife, and four children are living in Silver Reef.<sup>13</sup> In March 1881, Peter was on the list of grand jurors for the Second Judicial District of Utah Territory.<sup>14</sup> He was also paid \$14.75 for furnishing chairs for the public schoolhouse.<sup>15</sup>

In January 1882, a sudden change of weather caused many severe colds and croup. Only one person died, and it was Peter's youngest child, a daughter named Frankie. She "died within ten hours of the attack and was buried amid great lamentation and sorrow. The girl, about 7 years old, was a universal favorite with every denizen of the camp"<sup>16</sup>.

The Harrison House hotel operated throughout most of the 1880s. By 1884, only two mining companies were still operating in Silver Reef, but the hotel remained in business. By 1887, only one mining company was left, and Peter was deep in debt. He had purchased the Bailey, Nesbit and

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<sup>1</sup> *Sacramento Daily Union*, 16 February 1858.

<sup>2</sup> United States Census, 1860.

<sup>3</sup> [A History of Montana](#), by Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, Vol 3.

<sup>4</sup> [Treasure City Death and Burial Research Notes](#), by Sue Silver, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> United States Census, 1870.

<sup>6</sup> *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 151.

<sup>8</sup> *Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes*, by W. Paul Reeve, 2007, p. 117.

<sup>9</sup> *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 151.

<sup>10</sup> *Utah Directory and Gazetteer for 1879-80*, pp. 385-386.

<sup>11</sup> *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127.

<sup>13</sup> United States Census, 1880.

<sup>14</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 27 February 1881, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 109.

<sup>16</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 29 January 1882, p. 17.

Company Leaching Works<sup>17</sup> and was president of the board of directors for the Ventura Mining and Reduction Company of Salt Lake City<sup>18</sup> with 19,999 shares.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, on January 4, 1888, he filed for bankruptcy. His bankruptcy statement said: "I, Peter Harrison of Silver Reef...am indebted to divers persons in considerable sums of money which I am at present unable to pay in full, and am desirous to convey all my property not exempt from execution by law for the benefit of my creditors." He went on to list all the people he was indebted to, and stated that Louis Jacobs, a resident of Silver Reef, would be in charge of his holdings and financial obligations.<sup>20</sup>

He sold all of his holdings, including the hotel and his house, and moved his family to Montana.<sup>21</sup> Over the next decade, he was a defendant in several court cases where he owed someone money.<sup>22</sup> In 1894, he was the superintendent of the Moulton Mining company at Barker.<sup>23</sup> In 1900, he was hauling wood and noticed an impressive boulder along the way. He broke it open and found promising float. He sent a sample to the Denver School of Mines, which tested at nearly \$50 in gold and some small values of silver.<sup>24</sup>

Peter died 23 April 1902 in Montana. His wife lived another quarter of a century. Politically, Peter Harrison held to the creed of the Republican party and was always active in its interests. He was a member of the Masons, affiliating with the Great Falls chapter.<sup>25</sup>



(Image from the *Silver Reef Miner*, 5 November 1881)

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<sup>17</sup> Engineering and Mining Journal, Vol 43, 1887, p. 210.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 318.

<sup>19</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 22 April 1887, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 147.

<sup>21</sup> [A History of Montana](#), by Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, Vol 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 7 May 1890, p. 6; 21 August 1900, p. 11; 23 September 1900, p. 4; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 September 1894, p. 3; *Great Falls Weekly Tribune*, 13 March 1896, p. 8; 5 June 1896, p. 5; 1 November 1895, p. 5.

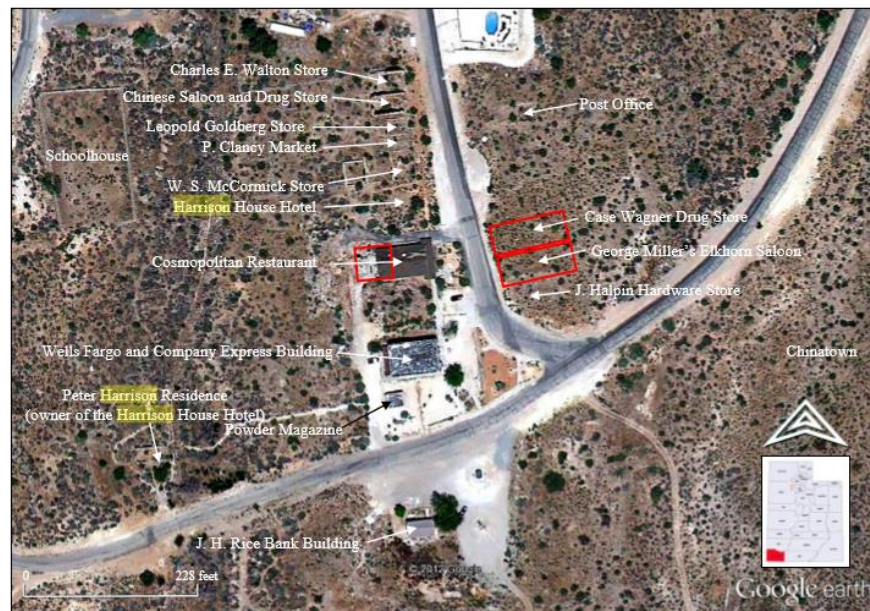
<sup>23</sup> *Great Falls Weekly Tribune*, 13 July 1894, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 17 May 1900, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> [A History of Montana](#), by Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, Vol 3.



Foundation of Harrison House (image from *deviantart.com*)



**Figure 5-87. Location of Various Features within the Silver Reef Town Site Commercial District**  
 Red boxes show the location of Dr. Robert Schuyler's excavations in the 1980s. Modern homes are seen at the top of the image.  
 (Base Image Source, Google Earth 2012)

(Image from *The Archaeology of Abandonment: Ghost Towns of the American West*, 2012, p. 262)