

## **History of LaVerkin**

Victor Hall

Essay written by Victor Hall

# **The History of LaVerkin**

## **Writer's Preface**

I attempted to interview a broad cross section of LaVerkin residents and ex-residents but important omissions have no doubt been made. I can only hope that the accounts given are reasonably representative of all families and I apologize to those who have been shortchanged. I thank all those who shared information with me and those who grubbed out errors. Finally, I hope and trust that the reader will find the same pleasure in reading the book that I had in writing it.

## **LaVerkin's Background**

LaVerkin's birth differed somewhat from other towns in the area. It was conceived as a company farming operation rather than as a city of homes and families. Only when difficulties with the new canal tunnel nearly drove the stock company into bankruptcy, were parcels of land offered for sale and settlers welcomed. It's first religious leader, a man who was to have a huge impact on the town, hadn't planned to move in. His intention was to settle in the new city of Hurricane. But he answered the call to become LaVerkin's first bishop. Finally, the name for the new city has no meaning. It probably started out as some other term entirely. Spelling of the city's name has also undergone a small change. In early documents, it's always spelled "La Verkin". Current maps show the name as just one word. From this inauspicious beginning though, a remarkable little city has developed; one whose community spirit is in some ways unequaled by that of other towns in the area, and that has had a strong positive impact on the lives of LaVerkin residents.

LaVerkin's development in the last quarter-century more closely parallels that of its neighbors. Gone is the canal and the network of irrigation ditches that once loomed large in every resident's consciousness and that claimed the lives of at least two children. Gone are the dirt lanes, the sorghum cane fields, the orchards, the commercial turkey and chicken operations, the milk cows grazing along ditch banks tended by barefoot children. Gone is self sufficiency. A typical family of 1930 might have gone thirty days without suffering serious shortages if all transportation to and from the town were cut off. Three days on their own would severely deplete the larder of many current families. Grocery stores spew out more food in a day than the one little store of 1925 may have done in a year. Homes now occupy what was once precious farmland. Commuting to work in St. George or Cedar City is a common practice. The summer night air hums with the sound of air conditioners and automobiles rather than the chopping of wood, the bleating, mooing, clucking, or neighing of farm animals. Gone is the sound of children playing some other now dimly remembered game in the empty dark streets.

The objectives of this book are to present the history of the city's development, the emergence of the quite unique social bonds the community afforded, and to provide interesting glimpses into the lives and activities of those who lived there.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

### *Geological Foundation*

LaVerkin, Utah, occupies an alluvial, or waterborne, bench that abuts the Hurricane Hill to the east and that drops off to LaVerkin Creek and its neighbor, Ash Creek, on the west. The hill is the scarp-face of the Hurricane Fault and is composed of very old Paleozoic Era Kaibab limestone that, as the early canal builders learned to their dismay, is riddled with gypsum and other easily dissolvable components. The same Kaibab limestone is encountered at the rim of the Grand Canyon and along the freeway where it enters the Virgin River Gorge.

Traveling eastward from the LaVerkin Bench, one sees the colorful layers of Mesozoic, dinosaur-age strata, including those that make up the Zion ledges. The Triassic period is represented by layers making up the Hurricane Mesa and on up into the main Navaho Sandstone cliffs of Zion. The upper Zion ledges date from the Jurassic Period, while the first Mesozoic Period, the Cretaceous, is encountered on upper Kolob. The layers or strata of rock tilt gently upward towards the west. The tilting began after the current streams were in place and caused the streams to cut the dramatic narrow canyons that we now enjoy. Had the tilting to the west been downward, there would be no dramatic cliffs; Zion National Park today would just be somebody's cattle ranch.

Going westward from LaVerkin, one encounters these same layers of rock now thousands of feet lower than their counterparts-- dramatic evidence of the Hurricane Fault's large vertical displacement.

Immediately south of the LaVerkin bench, is the Timpoweap canyon and the hot springs just upstream from where the canyon emerges from the Hurricane Hill. Close by the town are volcanic outcroppings that resulted from recent geological eruptions.

Dominating the north by northwest horizon is the Pine Valley Mountain, a huge block of igneous porphyry rock that, like the lava, is of recent geological origin. In the winter, an ominous serpent-like cloud along its top announces that fierce north winds will blow. In summer it provides a cool alpine beacon to the hot, thirsty, sweaty youth hoeing an endless row of young sorghum cane. For everyone, the mountain is an orientation point that creates a sense of place. Whisk a LaVerkin lad or lass to some less favored flat place such as Kansas and he or she will feel disoriented, and a little sorry for those who must endure such a bland featureless environment.

The soil by which LaVerkin is nurtured was deposited probably by both LaVerkin Creek and by the Virgin River in an earlier time before the river cut down below the level of the Hurricane and the LaVerkin benches. The LaVerkin Bench and the LaVerkin Creek bottomlands together provide approximately six hundred acres of arable land.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

### *Prehistory*

The LaVerkin area has long been the scene of human habitation. An Anasazi site downstream from the confluence of Ash Creek, the Virgin River and LaVerkin Creek was restored and studied some years ago by a team from Southern Utah University.

The area was rich with Indian artifacts when white settlers arrived. During the 1930's, a children's outing wasn't complete unless a couple of arrow or spear points were found. A metate, or grinding stone, that was exposed when ploughing, served as a cat dish in the writer's backyard. Caves yielded the greatest treasures. A shallow cave a few yards above the east entrance to the LaVerkin Canal tunnel gave up its contents early. A cave of unknown depth above the hot springs contained two pots in perfect condition and a broken bowl. A cave located downstream from the springs on the north side of the river, contained the most varied trove, including a war club with two stone points cemented to the wood handle. There was also a wood-handled dagger, a "tump strap" or head band made of braided hair and rawhide for carrying loads, a digging stick used for gardening, lots of bone awls, and a "duck jar" made by hollowing out a sandstone rock.

The above items are in possession of the *University Of Utah*. The hot springs were considered sacred by Indians and were a neutral zone. If enemies met there, they avoided conflict while together. Presumably, Navajos respected the sacredness, and wouldn't steal a child if they encountered a Paiute family.

The confluence of the three streams, Ash Creek, LaVerkin Creek, and The Virgin River, coincides with other topographic features to create a natural passageway from north to south. It was a stopping point of the Old Spanish Trail.<sup>10</sup> The Dominguez-Escalante party went through in 1776. They recorded the first historical account of Indians utilizing irrigation to grow food and named the river, "Rio Sulfureo". Jedediah Smith stopped by in 1826, and other trappers and explorers followed him. Mormons led by Parley P. Pratt first visited December 31, 1849. Pratt's journal states:

*"From the Basin rim thirteen miles of rapid descent brought us to milder climate and first cultivation. (Indian) A mile or so farther brought us to the bank of the Virgin."*

John D. Lee led an exploring party through in the late winter of 1852. Lee along with J.C.L. Smith and John Steele visited again that summer. Steele reported that:

*"We then got some Indian guides, who brought us to the jerks (confluence) of the Virgin, Levier Skin (LaVerkin) and Ash Creek where we found a number of Indians raising grain. Their corn was waist high: squashes, beans, potatoes, etc. looked well."*

He also mentions looking for the Indians' farming tools but finding none. Obviously, they depended on digging sticks and their bare hands.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

Toquerville was settled in 1858 and cattlemen soon began using the LaVerkin and Hurricane benches as part of their winter cattle range. All travel between Toquerville and the Hurricane Bench continued to use the confluence as the crossing point.

### *Name*

The name "LaVerkin", as mentioned earlier, doesn't mean anything in English or, as one might suppose, in Spanish or French. One theory is that it is derived from "The Virgin". If that term is spoken in Spanish it comes out sounding quite like "LaVerkin". A problem is that no Spanish or French speakers other than those of the Dominguez-Escalante party are known to have been in the area who might have influenced place names. The Escalante party apparently didn't use the term. They called the Virgin River, "Rio Sulfureo". Note also that had they bothered to name what is now the LaVerkin Creek, they would have said "Rio Virgin" or possibly "a quebrada de Virgin", not "La Virgin". Another difficulty stems from the improbability of switching the name of the main river with one of its minor tributaries. Had there been a continued Spanish presence in the area though, the theory could be quite compelling.

One theory that at first appears far-fetched actually carries more weight. Keeping in mind that the stream had a name long before the city was founded, and that the new community took its name from the creek, this second theory holds that it started out as "Beaver Skin Creek." Note that John Steele recorded it as "Levier Skin Creek". Far back in the dark days prior to computers, word processors or even typewriters, people wrote in longhand. Anyone who has puzzled through old handwritten material will agree that a capital "B" could easily be interpreted as a capital "L", and that, within a word, it's frequently difficult to identify an "s" when it follows an "r". Spelling skill wasn't a prerequisite for wilderness pathfinding. Some harried map maker may have puzzled through alternate spellings left by these fellows and chose the one that looked best to him: "LaVerkin". Placement of a name on a map carries great weight, particularly when there is no local opposition. Some of the various spellings taken from 1856 Washington County Court Records, and from John D. Lee's and John Steele's diaries are: Leaverskin, Levier Skin, Leaversking and Lavinskind. There is no proof, of course, that the name started out as "Beaver Skin". The DUP monument in front of the old white chapel states that LaVerkin is Indian for "beautiful valley". The subject remains open for debate by those who are so inclined. The door remains open for a totally new theory.

### *LaVerkin or Pah Tempe Hot Springs*

The LaVerkin, or Pah Tempe, hot springs are the southernmost of approximately twenty-four similar springs in Utah that are associated with the Hurricane, the Wasatch, and other faults. The LaVerkin springs are about 110 degrees Fahrenheit. Some Utah hot springs are more than double that.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Judd, the first owner of the hot springs, acquired them about 1889.<sup>1</sup> No attempt to exploit the springs commercially was made at first, but they were frequently utilized by early settlers of the area for recreation and for performing baptisms. Baptismal fonts were far in the future.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

The springs were a real boon to builders of the Hurricane Canal both for soaking sore muscles at days end and for frolicking, when wives came to visit on weekends. The early settlers of LaVerkin made frequent use of them. Rosalba (Gubler) Fuller recounted that:

*"The men made a little cement wall, damming up the springs enough so people could bathe, but mostly the water fanned out from there over the mineral formation, sort of like an umbrella and splashing into the river, formed a little pool. That's where we like to swim and play. Since we had no bathtubs in those days, we really loved the sulfur springs. A tarp was hung in front of the springs so people had a private place to dress."*

Sheep were also beneficiaries of the springs. They were doused in the sulfur water to prevent scabies.

Hundreds of baptisms were performed there from about 1915 until into the 1940's. Annie Isom whose birthday fell in January is the first known person to have that honor. Her thoughtful family brought her down from Virgin to the only warm water in the area. Early baptisms such as Annie's, as well as the first two children born in LaVerkin, Rosalba Gubler and Moroni Sanders, took place in the river where it is warmed by the hot water. Later, after bathing and swimming facilities were in place, many baptisms were performed on Sunday mornings in the main enclosed pool. Sometimes the young person got to swim for a few minutes afterward. There is additional zest to the pleasure of swimming when it's done at a time that's normally forbidden.

A swimming pool fifteen feet wide and forty-five feet long was completed in 1918 by the LaVerkin Sanitarium and Resort Company that had been organized for that purpose. Morris Wilson and Joseph Gubler were then president and vice president of the company.

Two immediate tasks were to sell additional company stock and to establish a code of decency for bathing suits. Bishop Wilson involved the bishops of Hurricane and Toquerville in reaching a decision. The code for ladies, called for elastic in sleeves and legs that reached below elbows and knees, plus a skirt. Men's suits could be sleeveless, but legs were to fit snugly and reach below the knee.

George Judd, who was put in charge of procuring the women's suits, purchased cloth and paid a local seamstress fifteen cents a piece to make two dozen suits. They were sold for \$1.50 each, or rented for 25cents. Rubber caps and ladies' stockings were purchased from ZCMI. Rules of conduct prohibited naked bathing, dunking, throwing water, and diving from the walls. The pool was closed on Sunday.

In 1918, the pool's LaVerkin developers were startled to learn that the budding resort was actually part of Hurricane. Morris Wilson met with the Hurricane town board and got them to release the property.

The pool was a popular attraction for individuals, families, school, scout and church groups. A wagonload of young people might set out from Toquerville. They would sing all the way over, swim, then sing all the way home; arriving home at one or two in the morning.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

In 1924, a permanent house was built for the pool manager, and small bathing enclosures were built east of the pool. Later, the pool was enclosed.

The pool was more of a public service than a cash cow. Stockholders' passes meant lots of business but no revenue. Pay for the manager was also meager. Even such perks as switching the lights on late at night to surprise some nubile skinny-dippers, didn't buy groceries. The LaVerkin Canal Company helped out by giving the job of "canal-walker" to Winferd Gubler, the pool manager. Morris Wilson bought the other shareholders out in 1936 and since then, the pool has been in private hands. Elias Smith gained ownership in 1952 and gave it the name, "Pah Tempe Hot Mineral Springs".

The Springs suffered major dislocations during construction of the Quail Lake project. Repairs restored regular flow, but the earthquake of 1992 caused the hot water to again discharge directly into the river channel. The second problem appears related to the first, but nothing has yet been proven.

The current owner, Ken Anderson, has restored much of the flow to its original outlets. He has created an inviting tree-lined spa that offers camping and bed-and-breakfast facilities, that welcome day-use visitors. It features a swimming pool, both natural and indoor hot tubs, and various services based on the therapeutic qualities of the hot sulfur water. The Springs appear to be better known internationally than they are locally. There were eighteen thousand guests from thirty-five countries during 1997. Future plans call for a four hundred acre resort zone with multiple-accommodations for long-term, and temporary guests.

### ***Thomas Judd: The Canal And The Tunnel***

The rich but dry soil of the LaVerkin Bench was admired as potential farmland for many years but it took Thomas Judd to make it bloom. We are indebted to his daughter-in-law, Maude MacFarlane Judd,<sup>8</sup> for the bulk of our knowledge about the town's early development.

Thomas, an LDS convert, was eighteen when he helped his family move from England to St. George in 1864. Toquerville had been established in 1858 and the birth of Virgin and the other up-river towns soon followed. As the Virgin River's floods were eating away half of the available up-river farmland, discouraged farmers dreamed of a way to bring water out onto the Hurricane and LaVerkin benches. An early visitor was Erastus Snow who noted the LaVerkin Bench's potential, perhaps on the same trip in which he gave "Hurricane Hill" its name.

The feasibility of a canal and tunnel to bring water on the bench was discussed at a meeting of Washington County officials at the then-county seat of Washington City, but no action was taken. When Thomas Judd became interested in it, he didn't wait for government or group involvement. He organized a company and brought the bench under cultivation. In 1888, he stopped off on a business trip to the Canaan cattle headquarters to study its potential. Next, he hired engineer I.C. MacFarlane of St. George to do survey work. Following MacFarlane's favorable report and recommendations, Thomas organized a stock land company named The

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

LaVerkin Fruit and Nursery Company. The company was incorporated in June 1889 with a capital stock of \$25,000.00.

The company acquired land, the value of which was appraised at twenty-five to thirty-five dollars an acre, and water rights. It then assembled crews to dig a canal and an 840 foot tunnel. Work commenced in the spring of 1889 with three main crews at work and with MacFarlane retained as chief surveyor for both the canal work, the tunnel work, and for laying out streets and property lines on the bench. Workers were paid a dollar a day at first, but that was increased to a dollar fifty in deference to the hazardous duties the men had to perform. (Another version has it that they were paid \$2.00 per day: half being paid in cotton mill scrip; the other half in company stock.)

One crew excavated the canal while the other two bored into the hillside from either end of the new 840-foot tunnel. Candles were set in place as markers when taking transit readings. After nearly two years of work, the crews were just six inches off from a perfect union when they met each other. At least two caverns were encountered while boring the tunnel. One was quite large and had an extensive network of stalactites and stalagmites. A St. George stonemason who made grave markers and sandstone wheels for foot-operated grinders, broke many of the larger ones off, and hauled them home to use for making headstones. (It's unknown if families paid extra to have their loved ones buried under monuments of such exotic origins.) The other cavern was narrow, perhaps fifteen feet wide, but it had a high ceiling and was quite deep. Initially, wooden flumes were constructed to conduct water through these caverns.

While the tunnel was still quite new, twelve year-old Owen Sanders and two friends enjoyed exploring the caverns. For light, they employed pitch pine torches. They reached the narrow cavern by poling their way upstream in a crude canoe. By sloshing water over the side and listening for it to hit bottom, they knew the cavern was quite deep, but the dim light from their torches revealed little else. Young Owen had an inquiring mind so he tied a rope to a flume crossbar and shinnied down the rope to the cavern floor. That was his intention anyway. It didn't take long hanging from the bottom of the rope in the darkness and kicking nothing but air to end his inquiry.

Work on the canal kept pace with that of the tunnel, and sections of it took on identifying names. There were Cottam Headgate, Riding Headgate, Judd Fill, Judd Point, et cetera. The canal's cross-section was seven feet wide at the top, five feet at the bottom and two feet deep. It had a fall of one inch in one hundred sixty feet. Finally, early in 1891 the digging was finished, the diversion dam had been constructed, and wooden flumes were in place to carry water over ravines and across caverns. It was time to welcome the water and an expectant crowd gathered at the tunnel's west end to cheer its arrival. No celebration took place that day though. The water signaled its future intentions by dissolving a gypsum bank and escaping into the bowels of the earth.

Troubles continued throughout the decade. The stock company had no choice but to get crops and orchards started in the early 1890's and hope the water would flow. The land had been divided into ten-acre blocks separated by streets two rods wide (Rod=16 fee feet) with one that

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

was designated "Main Street" four rods wide. Acres of almonds, peaches, apricots and grapes were planted. Fifty acres of cotton were planted among some of the young trees. Thomas Judd had widespread investments, including an interest in the Washington Cotton Mill. The cotton went to the mill, cotton lint came back to be used for caulking cracks in the flumes.

The tunnel seemed determined to thwart the operation. Keeping water flowing was sometimes a literal nightmare. Irrigation was a twenty-four hour a day process. Someone had to sleep just at the mouth of the tunnel with his ears tuned to the soft rustling of the water; like a mother monitoring her baby's breathing. If the rustling stopped, just as if the breathing changed; either sentry must awaken and take action. The water might have eaten a new hole through a weak spot, or more likely, it had cut its way around the head of a flume somewhere in the depths of the tunnel. In any case, the sentry alerted the other workers and they took lint, bagasse left over from making sorghum molasses, planks, etc. , and worked to restore the flow.

A crew of men worked the fields by day and were on call at night to repair breaks. Elizabeth, the wife of John Riding, a member of the crew; cooked for the men in exchange for room and board. She had an infant at the time who must have been a patient, robust child. Elizabeth would fix lunch for the men, put it in a large can with a waterproof lid, then waded up the canal to where the men were working, pulling the can along behind. Meanwhile, strapped in his jumper at the house, Baby Riding looked after things. Later, Mrs. Riding marveled at her negligence--but it had seemed reasonable to her at the time. The men built a lean-to on the main building so Elizabeth and the child could have privacy--and maybe so they wouldn't have to hear the baby cry in the night.

The Dixie villages were isolated from the country at large, but national events did have their impact. An economic panic in 1893 deflated silver prices that severely crippled what was left of mining at Silver Reef, and closed mines in Nevada. This was a severe blow to Dixie farmers who had enjoyed a good market for much of their produce, and it boded ill for the LaVerkin Fruit and Nursery Company. There was some compensation though: skilled unemployed miners worked on the nearby Hurricane canal for little more than room and board. Their skills were vital to the successful boring of some of the canal's tunnels. Good houses were available at Silver Reef at practically no cost. A number of LaVerkin's early homes came from there. They were disassembled and the lumber hauled to the new site.

Poor markets, plus continuing tunnel maintenance costs, spelled the end of the stock company and almost forced Thomas Judd into bankruptcy. But this opened the way for LaVerkin to become a community. The company was effectively dissolved in 1897. Some shares were sold to help meet expenses and shareholders took the remaining property in accordance with their previous holdings. About this same time, Thomas who owned the largest share of the property, mortgaged his St. George home to obtain funds to keep the operation going.

Just as he was adapting to these developments, Thomas received a mission call. On February 20, 1898, President Wilfred Woodruff asked him to take charge of the Whitewater, Nevada, colonization mission. President Woodruff promised Thomas that he would be better off spiritually and financially if he accepted the call. Thomas made preparations to leave; the most



## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

important one being to lease his holdings to good caretakers. In fulfillment of President Woodruff's promise, men who could make the project a success were identified. James Pectol, an employee, was willing to stay on temporarily. He recommended his wife's brothers... Joseph, who had previously worked for Judd; and Henry Gubler of St. George to help out. In addition to being a leasee of the property, Henry Gubler became Thomas' land agent with a charge to sell property to prospective residents.

Henry and Joseph kept the floundering canal operation alive by being two places at once, twenty-four hours a day. They made countless forays up the tunnel and canal to do emergency repair work. They also tended the crops and orchards. When Thomas Judd returned from his mission, Henry and Joseph each bought property for twenty-five dollars an acre and began building their own homes. The fact that they were able to buy land for its original appraised value, indicates the general lack of confidence in the project's success. Had there been no problems with the canal tunnel, land might have sold for three or four times that amount.

### *Settlers*

Henry and Joseph Gubler became LaVerkin's first permanent citizens. They, plus their families, established residence early in 1899. Henry, his wife, Susanna, and their first son arrived January first. Joseph came at the same time as Henry; but his wife, Mary (May, or Aunt Mae), had a new baby, so she waited a couple of months until a home could be made ready. Toward evening of moving day, they pulled up to the south bank of the Virgin River to be greeted by a raging flood. Joe unhitched the team and began waiting patiently for better fording conditions. May though, wasn't to be denied her new home. She gathered up her children, hiked upstream along a primitive trail to the hot springs, groped her way across the flimsy foot bridge that spanned the flood, trudged on up to the townsite, and spent the night in her own bed. Sadly, the baby died some weeks later. It was buried in St. George.

William Hardy, with his wife and children, became the third family to take up residence. Others, such as Arthur Woodbury, Allen Stout, Byse Ashby, George Jones, Marcellus C. Wright, and George Judd, son of Thomas; gradually followed. Although Thomas remained involved with the canal company for some years, he made St. George his permanent home. He and his son, Joseph, established the Judd Store on Tabernacle Street in 1911. Four generations of Woodward School students have now considered the store their home away from home. It stayed in the family until 1998.

Like her sister-in-law, May, Susanna Gubler was not one to wait around for men to get a job done. Even though the new home Henry was building was a simple rock structure, it was preferable to their temporary quarters and when it was near completion, Susanna went into action. She hitched the team to the wagon and moved their belongings by herself. They owned a fine, big, and very heavy, "Home Comfort" wood-burning cook stove that she needed right away. No one was available to help her load it so she cut a broom handle in two to make rollers and proceeded with the task herself. The secret of just how she got it onto the wagon remains a mystery; but it was all two men could do to get the stove off the wagon and into the new home. Nobody picked quarrels with Susanna after word of that got out.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

Canal maintenance problems remained a dominant concern of the budding community for many years. Lining parts of the tunnel and canal with concrete, a procedure that began about 1910, helped greatly to insure steady water flow. It wasn't until 1929 though, when the canal began to be jointly used for irrigation and for producing hydroelectric power, that resources became available to utilize both concrete and pipe to create a relatively trouble-free system.

The Gubler brothers missed a lot of sleep during their first years of running the farms and dealing with the ditch. Adding excitement to their efforts were rattlesnakes that frequented the canal bank and the village itself. Joseph related that many times he raced up the canal bank at night barefoot to divert water back into the river channel before it did further damage to the channel inside the tunnel. Retracing his steps at daybreak, he would encounter rattlesnakes coiled up waiting for the morning warmth, or he would see their trails in the dust. He marveled that none ever attempted to nip his ankles as he went by in the night--at least none of which he was aware. He finally concluded that they were going to leave him alone and that he might as well reciprocate, so he quit killing them. In fact, he developed quite a charming peaceful co-existence with some of them. Later in life, he kept beehives and had the extraction equipment in a little shack on the hillside. Lyman Gubler, a grandson, recalls that a huge rattlesnake called the shack home. It might be stretched out on the floor relaxing and digesting its most recent mouse or rat while Joseph stepped over, or around it as he went about operating the centrifuge that yielded liquid honey. Young Lyman found it a fascinating sight, but one he was content to view from a distance.

What little that was left of the LaVerkin Fruit and Nursery Company ceased to exist in 1902 and from then on the canal was operated by a new organization, the LaVerkin Bench Canal Company with Thomas Judd, President; Henry Gubler, Vice President; Riley Savage, Secretary-treasurer; Allen Stout and James Neagle, Directors. The board did not always agree on how to deal with problems as we learn from reminiscences of Henry Gubler, dated 1935:

My brother and I had farmed and built irrigation ditches all our lives and we believed that it (the canal and tunnel) could be fixed all right. We didn't always agree with Brother Judd on the way to manage the ditch to control the water. I wanted to shoot some rocks at the head of the ditch that were giving us trouble. Sometimes the water hitting against them eddied and filled the head with sand and debris, and again, it would wash out the ditch. I had to get all the owners to vote against Brother Judd once to do this. He didn't think we could control the river. He meant well but he just couldn't see how we could do it; but I guess I knew more about ditches. It, my plan, worked fine, and when the Light Company put more water in the ditch they shot a lot more rock into the river. Brother Judd finally admitted I was right, but first he used to say, 'You'll never succeed'.

Henry was a most affable fellow and we can rest assured that he did not let differences of opinion interfere with positive personal relationships. The reader can learn a little lesson from Henry: "write your life history". That way posterity will learn the "correct" interpretation of events.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

About 1910, Thomas Judd learned of concrete being used to line canals and recognized it as the possible solution to the problems being experienced in the tunnel. Portland cement, the crucial ingredient for concrete was invented in England in 1824 and the reader may wonder why it wasn't used from the beginning. (It was named "Portland" because it resembled Portland stone with which the inventor was acquainted) Costs were the first problem. Cement is a heavy product and wagons had to traverse rudimentary roads; importing it was prohibitively expensive. Getting it to the job site high up on the side of the canyon or deep into the tunnel was another daunting problem. By 1910, though, railroad freight came as far south as Lund. A crude but passable road skirted the east side of Ash Creek and conveyed traffic over the Black Ridge, one of the worst barriers to transportation in Southern Utah. By 1914, thanks to convict labor, a good graveled highway led directly north from Toquerville that stayed just to the west of Ash Creek until it reached Pintura. Also bridges now spanned Ash Creek and LaVerkin Creek, as well as the Virgin River, so that vehicles no longer had to ford the streams. From Pintura the road went over the Black Ridge in about the same route the freeway now occupies. Options for solving problems were thus opening up that were unavailable in previous years.

Although installed sparingly because of limited resources, concrete lining gradually changed the canal from a capricious, demanding, washout prone, nightmare-inducing lifeline, to one that was willing to do its job with just a little daily attention. The process of lining the canal deserves comment. You don't just drive a cement truck to a canal perched high on a canyon wall or drive it two hundred yards up into a constricted tunnel. The procedure that soon evolved is as follows:

The three components of the aggregate, gravel, sand and cement, were hauled by a horse-drawn wagon, (and later by motor truck), as close as possible to the work site. This might be at the west mouth of the tunnel, or a few rods upstream of the tunnel's east end. The desired mix was shoveled into a cart consisting of a metal box riding on iron wheels that held nearly a yard of dry aggregate and that was pulled by a small horse or a donkey. Getting the cart and animal turned around for the return trip in the narrow channel for the return trip was a bit tricky. The six or eight man crew would mix water with the aggregate right in the channel, first creating a concrete bottom for the ditch. The solid bottom now became the mixing pan for doing the sides. A ten to twelve-foot swath of aggregate would be laid down and just enough water added to moisten all the particles. Excess water weakens the resulting concrete and the fresh mix had to be firm enough to hold onto the canal walls. No supporting forms were used. Three to four men on each side would now work the mix with their shovels, moving along the swath as they worked. When two passes had been made, it was ready and the men pasted it to the sides of the channel with their shovels. A wooden tool called a "darby" was used to smooth the fresh mix out. Finally the surface was sprinkled with water and gone over with a wood "float" to seal the concrete. By the time the finisher had completed his work with the darby and float, a new batch was being readied.

### *The New Community*

The little town slowly grew, and by 1904, there were about seventy inhabitants (one account says 65, another 73) and at least two babies had been born, Rosalba, the daughter of Susannah and Henry Gubler, on October 12, 1903; and Moroni, on October 18, 1903, to William and Sarah (Wilson) Sanders.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

Morris Wilson had spent the previous twelve winters working on the Hurricane Canal from his home in Mountain Dell. His labors had earned him twenty acres of farmland plus a building lot. He, along with a half-dozen others, lived temporarily in LaVerkin for convenience while finishing the Hurricane Canal, and then started to build their own farms and homes in the new townsite. One of these, John Sanders, moved his family from Virgin into a converted barn in which they lived for five years until their home in Hurricane was finished. His wife, Fanny, joked that she lived in a stable and that two of her children were born in a manger. Parallels between the babies' lives and that of the Christ Child tapered off as the children got older.

Morris dug a cellar for storage on his sloping lot and built a two-room house for his family over it. One thing he hadn't bothered to do prior to his family moving in on January 28, 1904, was to insulate the house. No insulation was ever used in those days, but the walls of this house were only one-board thick and there were cracks between the boards. A cold north wind howled through the cracks the day after their move making the interior frigid; it also managed to cause smoke from the stove to pour out into the house. The only warmth and fresh air the Wilsons found that day was to huddle outside against the south wall so they could catch the sun's rays and where the wind couldn't reach them.

Morris soon had the house somewhat more weatherproof and had positioned a covered wagon box by the house to serve as a bedroom for the two older children, Afton and Thora.<sup>12</sup> When Church leaders such as Joseph F. Smith visited, Morris and Minnie gave up their bed in the lean-to and slept out in the main kitchen-living room.

Morris didn't leave LaVerkin of course. He was called to be bishop of the new ward and eventually sold his Hurricane property. Any lingering thoughts of moving were long gone by 1928 when his twenty-four year tenure as bishop came to an end.

After a few years, Morris was able to move his family into a more substantial home where he and Minnie could sleep in their own bed when Church leaders visited. Heber J. Grant, who became Church President in 1918, no doubt stayed in the Wilson home. He is known to have visited the ward at least twice. Each time, at the end of the service, President Grant stood at the door and shook hands with every man, woman and child as they left. Those were two of young Owen Sanders' most memorable experiences.

Primitive living conditions were shared by all early families, of course. Susanna Gubler told of how cloth was tacked to ceilings in lieu of plasterboard. Her day might be enlivened by watching a mouse scurrying across the ceiling on the upper surface of the cloth. A bonus would be getting to watch a snake slithering along, also on the upper side of the cloth, in pursuit of the mouse.

Maude Judd provides a brief glimpse of early homebuilding procedures:

Robert P. Woodbury of St. George was teaching school in Virgin in 1903 when he became interested in the LaVerkin area and bought fourteen acres of farm land and a city lot there. His wife and their three children were in St. George, but he was unable to visit with them often due

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

to poor roads and lack of transportation. Since there were still few homes in LaVerkin, and none for rent, he moved his family to Toquerville for the winter. In the spring he moved his family to a tent he had set up on their LaVerkin lot. He, Will Hardy and Sam Webb had made adobes from the white clay on the hillside for building their homes. First, he built a two-room cellar of lava rock and when this was finished he hurried and moved his family into it, as the tent was in the process of being wrecked by fierce spring winds. While he was in the process of laying up the adobe walls, a terrible storm hit. Rain fell in sheets and water ran down the hillside, through their lot and into the cellar. Their neighbors, Joseph and May Gubler, shared their home until the cellar could be cleaned and dried out. The rain almost washed the adobe walls away and they had to be rebuilt.

Maude also provides a brief glimpse into settlers' personalities. She tells of Benjamin DeMille who moved his family from Rockville in 1903. Their first home was a log cabin Ben purchased in Shunsburg and hauled to his lot in LaVerkin. He was quiet and shy but had a good sense of humor that became apparent when he was relaxed. He would dress up as Santa late Christmas Eve and go around peeking in windows to alert children that it was time to be in bed and ready for Santa's visit. His harmonica playing while accompanying himself on the guitar was much in demand at Ward entertainments.

Arthur and Samuel Webb, two young men who apparently didn't stay in LaVerkin long, contributed to the community while pursuing their own pleasures. They were courting Toquerville lasses and thus making frequent trips back and forth between the two communities. They would stop by the Toquerville post office and bring the LaVerkin mail. In 1903 though, LaVerkin got its own service, with Henry Gubler as postmaster. The post office and little store were down the street north from the present city office building.

### Getting Organized

Either 1903, or 1904 can be named the year of LaVerkin's birth as a community. Most of the families who were to shape its development over the next fifty years, were in place by then. Those years saw the culmination of important community-wide decisions. According to Maude Judd, in March 1903, the Canal Company Stockholders moved to secure a post office, school district and a cemetery. A bowery was built the summer of 1903 and the first official Sunday School was held August 2, 1903. Prior to that, May Gubler had conducted Sunday School in her home. The following year, streets were closed off that were not needed, so land could be put into production. The defining event of 1904 and the main basis for designating that year over 1903 as the town's birth date, was the creation of the LaVerkin Ward. There was no city government until 1927. The bishopric, the school board, the stockholders and the canal board, who all tended to be the same people, no doubt were able to solve most civic problems. Voting was administered at first by the Toquerville Precinct. Washington County made certain everyone knew where taxes were to be paid. Main Street was also part of the Utah highway system and the state kept it graveled and graded. In its citizens minds, the LaVerkin ward was synonymous with the community.

The LaVerkin Ward of the St. George Stake was organized Thursday, June 23, 1904 with Morris Wilson, as bishop, and Henry Gubler and Allen J. Stout, as counselors. There were thirteen

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

families. Bishops at that time were frequently called upon to provide spiritual, and secular leadership. LaVerkin, being too small to have a city government, needed both. Morris Wilson was the right man for the job. Along with all the virtues we hope for in our leaders, Morris had energy, stamina, a strong desire to improve himself and a confidence inspiring demeanor. Light from his kitchen in the early morning would indicate that he was studying scriptures or a book on some subject he wished to know more about. If his reading were interrupted, he'd put a finger on the sentence he was reading, then give the intruder his full attention. When entering the sick room as bishop, his mere presence gave hope and strength to those present.

One of the bishop's first tasks was to prepare for day-to-day duties such as receiving, accounting for, and caring for tithing. People didn't fill out a little form, then put it and a check in an envelope. Practically all tithing was paid in the form of goods and produce. Bishop Wilson had to get a tithing barn built, where tithing hay could be accepted; a large coop for housing tithing chickens; a granary for keeping tithing grain; a pantry to hold tithing eggs, tithing butter, and barrels of tithing vinegar or pickles. The Wilson children almost became part of the bishopric. It was they who took care of the chickens or other animals, who took care of the commodities, and who delivered foodstuffs from the tithing stores to needy families. In winter, they helped bale tithing hay that had accumulated over the summer so that it could be sold to sheepmen and cattlemen.

A necessary offshoot of the bishop's role in accepting goods rather than cash for tithing was that of setting prices. Ultimately, a monetary value had to be assigned with the bishop as the final arbitrator. He had to adhere as closely as possible to "street values", of course, but his decisions in turn helped establish the value of things being traded on the street. Since practically all local commerce was by barter, the bishop's judgment was most important to the community. Morris' son, Reed, is certain that not everyone totally agreed with the bishop's calls, but apparently no serious quarrels developed.

The practice of paying in produce died out slowly. Bishop Loren Squire reported receiving during the year 1945, 320 quarts of molasses, 2,906 pounds of cherries, 175 bushels of peaches, 145 bushels of pears, and 38 bushels of tomatoes. Bishop Squire then had to find a market for most of these items. Members were encouraged more and more to pay tithing with cash because adequate utilization of perishable produce was so much trouble and extra work for the bishopric.

With just two Sundays under its belt on July Fourth, 1904, the new LaVerkin Ward held its first celebration. It is probably indicative of the new bishopric's organizational and promotional skills that people from all the surrounding towns attended the event. There were games and races for both old and young, but ice cream was the main attraction; over a hundred gallons of it were sold that day.

A wonderful tradition was born that day, that of having home-made ice cream and saltine crackers at every social occasion. The ice cream was made in hand-cranked freezers that held a gallon of mix. Ice had been cut from frozen ponds the previous winter and stored under sawdust. Local cows got a surprise early in the afternoon; cream supplies for the ice cream ran out, but somebody remembered that there was plenty more out in the pastures.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

A singular feature of Bishop Wilson's twenty four-year tenure as bishop was something that didn't happen. He never called on anyone in advance to speak in church. Speaking assignments were made right during meeting. It kept people on their toes and fostered skill at extemporaneous speaking. Loren Squires reported that he always went to church with a talk prepared, and that he often needed it. One downside of off-the-cuff speaking is that a speaker, being forced to rely on his immediate memory, tended to recall the same experiences and spiritual message time after time. Sacrament meeting ran for a minimum of two hours and with a small speaker pool, the same messages got frequent workouts. "Sabbath squirm" became the juvenile norm. Owen Sanders reports that kids got so they could give a verbatim preview of what most of the brethren were going to say. Sometimes repetitiveness carried over to ward teaching, (now home teaching). As one good fellow, who apparently figured that if your message is good, don't change it, was being ushered into their home, Owen's older brother, Bill, whispered, "He will start with 'The proposition. The matter of fact--is this.'" When it happened, the children broke out into uncontrollable sniggers, and William Senior, got busy twisting little ears.

### School And Multipurpose Building

Public buildings for church and for school were an immediate priority. There were no unified county school districts then; each community had its own. A school board was chosen in July of 1904 and work on a schoolhouse was begun. Two loans were floated in November to cover construction costs, and the building was completed in December so that school could commence in January of 1905. The building, located on what is now the City Hall parking lot had walls of limestone rock quarried from near the hilltop north and east of town and featured just one large room. A bell, housed in a little tower on top, summoned scholars to school on weekdays and gave one-half hour, plus five-minute, reminders on Sundays. Clocks and watches were scarce, so this was a valuable community service. Later, a wooden addition was built onto the rear of the building, and a covered front porch made of lumber was added.

Joseph Gubler was called on a mission to the southern states soon after the building was completed, and May, needing to support herself, hired on as school janitor for \$2.50 per month. In her personal history she states, "I had to ring the bell, keep the building warm and clean, sweep, dust, wash windows, chop wood and carry it in, and keep the fire burning."<sup>5</sup>

Emma Woodbury McTaggart and Gladys Woodbury Isom provide glimpses of how the school day began. "The teacher, Emma's father, R.P., rang a bell and all the students would stand in line. Then he came out to the front entry and played a lively march on his harmonica. The students marched in to the music and took their seats."

For twenty-two years until a chapel was completed in 1926, the little rock building served for all community functions, whether educational, religious, or social. Today, lawyers of the ACLU warn that such a combination is injurious to people's mental and spiritual health, but the townspeople who enjoyed the hundreds of gatherings in the little building for church, Christmas celebrations, dramas, and public meetings, would testify otherwise.

The building's death in 1938 was caused by the same medium that made its construction

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

possible-- irrigation water. Untended water softened the soil on which the foundation rested. Parts of the building settled causing jagged fractures in the walls. There was no choice but to tear it down. The elementary school children still being taught in it, were bused to Hurricane. It was a sad moment for the students; they had loved their little school and didn't want to leave it.

### Utilities

Two other major concerns for the new town were culinary water and electricity. At first, water for drinking and for household use was taken from the canal or hauled up from the river; some homes had cisterns for storing the water. Canal water was fine for those who didn't mind inconvenience, an occasional muddy taste, and perhaps seeing a dead animal floating down the stream. Toquerville had springs of pure water available, but LaVerkin had no city government and no way of financing a water system.

Unable to get the county's cooperation, along about 1915, Joseph and Henry Gubler and Morris Wilson brought water from the Toquerville springs on their own. In a true demonstration of civic responsibility, they took out mortgages on their own property to obtain money for a LaVerkin culinary system. The first pipes were made of long redwood boards, their edges tapered so that a round pipe could be formed. A heavy wire that spiraled around the outside held them together.

Having culinary water available didn't necessarily mean indoor plumbing. Some homes just had a faucet in the front yard. Others might have a single cold-water tap in the kitchen. Water for washing or bathing was heated on top of the wood-burning kitchen stove. Kitchen stoves were available with pipes installed through which water could circulate, and with these, heating was somewhat more automatic.

Bathing took place every Saturday night in a #3 washtub on the kitchen floor. Fresh bath water for each bather was a luxury few families could afford. Usually the first batch of water was heated, then bathing could begin. Additional water that had been heating in the teakettle might be added after each bather to freshen the next-in-line's bath.

The system's wooden pipes sprung leaks. Young Reed Wilson saw numerous wood plugs that had been inserted along the pipe where it ran above ground to staunch the flow. You could chart the course of buried pipe by little springs that welled up. After LaVerkin was incorporated, the city took over responsibility for the water system, and the three benefactors were freed of their mortgages.

Electricity from hydroelectric plants near Veyo and, possibly one other location, became available about 1917. Coal oil lamps gradually became obsolete. They were kept at the ready though, since frequent electrical outages were a way of life for many years. Lamps, candles and later, flashlights were always kept handy.

LaVerkin hosted a hydroelectric plant for about twenty-five years. An account of it follows:

The hydroelectric plant that was in operation from 1929 until 1983, utilized water diverted from the expanded and strengthened LaVerkin irrigation canal. By combining their resources, the



## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

LaVerkin Canal Company and the Dixie Power Company were able solve the major problems that had bedeviled the canal and the tunnel. The channel was greatly enlarged so it could serve the needs of both organizations. Firm concrete lining tamed the tunnel. Unfortunately for adventuresome youth, the caverns were also sealed off. Now, as water was diverted from the river, it first went into a settling pond that allowed silt to settle out. A sluice gate facilitated flushing the settling pond as necessary. (The settling pond also made a fine "suits-optional" swimming pool. The structure over the sluice gate was a more than adequate diving platform.) Downstream from the settling pond, the canal clung to the Virgin River canyon wall, then went through the tunnel before emerging out onto the LaVerkin bench. From this point, a pipe of about forty inches in diameter conducted water to the hydroelectric plant.

Washington County News files, provide information about the plant's birth. The first item, dated February 16, 1928, relates that the Dixie Power Company was in the process of obtaining water rights from the LaVerkin Bench Canal Company for the purpose of producing hydro-electricity. An item of July 12, 1928 states that the Dixie Power Company was applying for a permit to build an 899 kilowatt capacity hydroelectric plant at an estimated cost of \$90,000.00. The laying of one thousand feet of forty-two inch wood pipe and the starting of concrete work above the tunnel made news December 12, 1928. On April 12, 1929, the paper reported that operation of the plant had begun, that full capacity awaited minor adjustments, and that Fred Brooks, whose family was then living at the plant, would be in charge.

Changes took place over the years. The wood pipe was replaced with metal, power-plant machinery was upgraded, and the plant was finally semi-automated so that it became unnecessary for someone to live on the premises.

Output of the plant was about the same as the small generator at Hoover Dam that generates power for use at the dam. It was the largest of a network of four hydroelectric plants. If all four plants were down, the LaVerkin facility had to be started first. Electricity was generated when water under high pressure was fed over a Pelton wheel (patented in 1889 by American engineer, Lester Allen Pelton) which was connected to a generator. In shape, a Pelton wheel resembles an old fashioned water wheel rather than the turbines used at Hoover Dam. Unlike the old fashioned wheels though, Pelton wheels were made of cast iron. After years of use, cracks would develop in the wheels. Victor King and, later, Winston Stratton of Hurricane had the welding skill necessary to keep the cast iron mended. They had to crawl inside the wheel to do the welding. They more than earned their pay.

If no water was running over the wheel, but electricity was coming in from other sources, the generator would act as an electric motor. The Pelton wheel was designed to run within a specific RPM range; if allowed to run too fast, it could literally throw itself to pieces. When the generator was producing electricity, the resultant friction kept the Pelton wheel at a safe speed. If, however, the generator were turned off, the Pelton wheel would soon reach catastrophic speeds. To prevent this from happening, a shunt was designed to automatically drop down when the power went off and divert the water out into the river channel.

Water flow to the wheel was sometimes interrupted by leaks in the canal. Obstructions in the pipe, or more silt than could be settled out at the settling pond, were the most common

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

problems. During the colder winters, ice was a problem.. Particularly at night, it would form in the canal, then pile up on the intake grill. A father and his sons would work through the night pulling ice from the grill. A burning automobile tire would warm them when they had time for a break.

Sand abrasion would quickly wear out the wheel paddles. If the river was flooding, the settling pond might need to be drained three times a day, or in extreme conditions, to be shut down. The canal had to be constantly monitored for leaks. Small leaks soon became cascades that, if unchecked, could rip out hundreds of yards of canal bank. When flow was being restored, water had to be slowly ushered into the pipe. If an air bubble were allowed to form, it could seriously impede water flow.

Thunder showers were a double threat. If they happened upstream, they could load the river with silt. If they happened locally, avalanches of rock and water might tear down the canyon-side and would rip out whole sections of canal. The last major break apparently began as a small leak that grew to gargantuan proportions. By the time the problem was discovered and the water diverted, fifty feet of canal was gone. To restore it, the crew first had to rebuild forty feet of supporting bank.

Kay McMullin was chief operator of the plant from 1958 until it closed. Ordinarily, he worked alone. Maintaining flow through the canal and through the pipe was his constant year-round concern, and he got to know the canal bank well. It was no more than six inches wide in many places. Falling off the bank one way meant getting wet, falling the other meant landing on rocks ten to twenty feet below.

Walking such a bank, even on a nice day, takes getting used to. Kay walked it at night and at times he had to kick snow off to see where to step. Once he was making his way along the bank after an eight-inch snowfall. He slipped. His shovel flew out into the canyon. He dropped into the icy water. Fortunately, he had stashed emergency supplies at intervals along the canal. He retrieved some matches, got a fire going, and lived.

The plant met a sudden end in 1983. Kay returned from a vacation to find the Pelton wheel and other machinery in shambles. Lightning may have caused a power shut-off and the deflector plate may have failed to fall in place. The Pelton wheel had spun out of control to its doom. Rebuilding was economically unfeasible. The machinery and pipe were sold as scrap metal.

The Quail Lake project was underway at the time of the plant's demise and the project's master plan called for an alternative system to produce electric power. The machinery flew to pieces at a convenient time. Water from the Quail Lake Project pipe began flowing into the canal at the west end of the tunnel May 17, 1985, and Bud Iverson, the last ditch rider, had no further duties. He could only reflect with nostalgia on the passing of an era.

### Village Life Prior to World War II

Vast changes have taken place since the late 1930's in how people made a living, in how they conducted their household affairs, in their games and recreation, in the utilization of children's

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

labor for family survival, and in how they dealt with health problems and with death. The list could go on. This section will focus on life of that era. A time machine trip going back sixty, seventy, eighty or ninety years to LaVerkin or any other village in Utah's Dixie would unveil one major condition--that of poverty. The people you visited wouldn't consider themselves as impoverished of course, and would be insulted, or would laugh at you if you suggested they were. Comparing their incomes with those of people living to the north in most other Utah cities, or with typical incomes of today, you would come back to the same conclusion. They got by on very little, and everybody; adults, children and old people, put in long hours to insure survival.

The long narrow town clung to Main Street. Gravel or dirt were the favored street surfaces. Irrigation ditches, running along the streets, watered rows of poplar trees. Motor vehicles were rarely encountered on the streets nor were there parked vehicles along the sides. Automobiles might be encountered on Main Street because, until 1936, it was also the highway; otherwise, iron-tired wagons constituted the main traffic. As of 1916 there were reported to be four automobiles in town; Model T's owned by Morris, Henry and Joe; and a Maxwell driven by Arthur Woodbury. (If Joe did own a car, May was likely the driver. Joe said he wanted nothing to do with a machine that couldn't follow a few simple directions such as "whoa!" and "giddyup!")

At night, a single light at the city center served more as a beacon than a source of illumination. Otherwise, darkness reigned and only infrequent clouds interfered with the heavens' nightly show. The Milky Way, the Pleiades, the Big Dipper seemed almost close enough to touch. Bats and swallows flew intricate maneuvers through the evening sky while frogs, toads and crickets serenaded. English sparrows and houseflies found LaVerkin a congenial place to call home. Dense flocks of sparrows visited barnyards to pick up after the animals. Flies were constant summer companions. Before meals, a family might combine efforts to whoosh as many as possible out the door. The hot sun, peach fuzz and flies combined to make cutting peaches for drying a task to be remembered. The busy hand-fans that were the sole source of air movement during two-hour Sunday afternoon Sacramento Meetings did double duty as fly swatters.

Morris Wilson exerted leadership in the spiritual life of the Ward, and in town projects, such as the culinary water system. He created a sense of community belonging, insomuch that, LaVerkin became an extended family to a degree unequaled by few other communities. Perhaps his most dramatic action was to establish Saturday afternoons as the city recreation period. The modern reader, who is used to five-day work weeks, must remember that in those days there was barely time in six days to do the work necessary for family survival; leaving vital work undone so as to observe the Sabbath was frequently a stern test of will. When Bishop Wilson began pushing the idea of knocking off work early on Saturday afternoons so everybody could play or watch baseball, some folks such as Arthur Woodbury gave full support. He loved the game, and his boys were born athletes who became star players for the team. Henry Gubler, though, may have taken Exodus 20:9 literally, and wasn't about to test the Lord's patience by doing his labor in just five and one-half days rather than the full six. To Henry, who was a staunch Republican, Morris' cockamamie plan was probably just another example of how being a Democrat can jar your mind askew.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

The burden of knowing that his good friend was a Democrat wasn't his only affliction; Henry's wife, being a Pickett, was similarly misguided, and would not listen to reason. He and Susanna were barely on speaking terms during a typical election campaign, a cause for merriment among the locals

Joseph and his family did support the Saturday games. When possible, Joseph shied away from leadership roles readily assumed by Morris and Henry, but he was loved and respected in the community, and his support was most important to the plan's success. Probably, May was more comfortable in positions of stern authority than was Joseph, and she wasn't one to just turn the other cheek. If she saw one of her boys in a fight she would command them to get in there and duke it out. She was "mush" where Joe was concerned though.

Winferd and Alice Gubler invited Joseph and May to ride to the Temple one day in their cramped Chevy. When they stopped for a fifth rider, May just pulled Joe up on her lap to provide additional seat room and hugged him all the way to St. George. They were both more than happy with the arrangement.

Morris was no doubt motivated to create the Saturday afternoon games by his love for baseball. As a young man in Mountain Dell, he cheerfully rode horseback the four miles to Virgin so he could play on the Virgin team. He also must have recognized the value to each citizen of a shared sense of community, because under his leadership it became customary for the entire populace to gather frequently during the year and have a great time together. These events will be described more fully in subsequent sections.

### The Early Home

The home of early settler, William Sanders, will serve to provide a glimpse of home and family life. William, or "Will", and his wife, Amelia Wilson Sanders, had moved to LaVerkin from Mountain Dell and lived in a two-room shack for about fifteen years, where the older of their nine children grew up until they could afford to build something better. It's unlikely that Will borrowed money to build their new home. The easy mortgages of today were unknown then. They occupied the new house in 1921, and Amelia soon had a rose arbor that extended from the front door to the gate. The house was wired for electricity but had no plumbing; that was added a little later. It was a brick two-story structure. The second level was left unfinished and was used as a sleeping room in winter. Children, and sometimes adults, slept outside in the summer, scurrying back inside only when thunder storms were impending. Downstairs there was a kitchen, a pantry, that always had wonderful smells coming from it; a living room, and two bedrooms. The pantry had a small pass-through door to facilitate sending food into the living room when meals were served there. The floors were covered with linoleum, a precursor of vinyl flooring. It didn't wear well and had to be replaced frequently. The distinctive odor of new linoleum, while not quite matching that of a new car smell, did give an ambiance of clean freshness to a home.

Open windows served as air conditioning in the summer. Two wood-burning stoves kept winter's cold at bay. The kitchen stove was the primary source of warmth. A "heater" in the living room would have a fire going at least part of the time, but supplying wood for full-time

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

fires in both stoves wasn't feasible. Cold winter nights usually found the family gathered near the kitchen stove. It got a particularly good workout on Saturdays throughout the year. Amelia cooked Sunday's food a day ahead so she could better observe the Sabbath. Water for Saturday night baths was heated on the stove, and a stove lid was turned upside down to provide a ready supply of soot. With a layer of fresh soot and some vigorous polishing, shoes looked almost good as new and were ready for Sunday.

Two standard pieces of kitchen equipment were the cream separator and the butter churn. Separating milk from cream was a nightly chore. The distinctive whirr of cream separators came from every home. Separators have hundreds of parts, each of which had to be carefully cleaned after every use--something akin to overhauling a car every night. Delma, the youngest of the Sanders' children, reports that she took the brunt of the separator cleaning chores.

Many families put the cream in one, two and one-half, or five-gallon cans and sent it north to a creamery. The Sanders family consumed theirs or made it into butter. The butter, properly molded into one-pound bricks and wrapped in special paper on which Amelia's name was printed, could be traded at the store. Sales of butter and eggs were the main source of cash for purchasing necessary staples.

Cream constituted the one big luxury of that era. Cracked-wheat breakfast cereal without cream would have been indigestible. You would spread a slice of bread with jam, put it in a bowl, and poured cream over it. Cream had dozens of wonderful uses, and best of all, it was non-fattening--at least nobody worried about it. Most of the skim milk was fed to calves, lambs and pigs; nothing edible was ever wasted. The family owned a cheese press for making plenty of cheese to satisfy their own needs.

Commercial refrigeration which used toxic ammonia as the refrigerant had been in use since 1859. Home refrigerators awaited the invention of a safe product. DuPont's Freon, came into use about 1930. For LaVerkin, home refrigerators awaited the ability to afford them. Most homes had one by the late 1930's. Prior to that, a homemade evaporative cabinet warded off some of summer's heat. A typical cooling cabinet might be five feet high and thirty inches square, made of a wood frame to which open mesh wire was attached. Burlap went over that.

A system for allowing water to keep the burlap soaked was then installed. It was better than nothing. By the late 1940's, no one in LaVerkin used evaporative cooling.

Near the Sanders' main house was a granary and underneath it, a cellar for storing potatoes and other foodstuff. A platform suspended by wires provided a mouse-free zone. Will might trade fruit or molasses for a year's supply of flour that would be stored in the cellar. On one peddling trip, he traded for both flour and kerosene, (for lanterns). Unfortunately, some kerosene leaked down into the flour. The Sanders family ate uniquely flavored bread that winter; throwing out the flour and buying more was out of the question.

Beyond the granary, was the barnyard with a corral, a hay barn, chicken coops, pigpens and an "out house" stocked with old Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalogs. Both Sears and Wards mailed inch-thick catalogs to every home twice a year, and after providing months of

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

intense study, these catalogs became toilet paper. Thankfully, they were printed on coarse paper for many years.

The lot was enclosed with a combination woven and barbed wire fence, necessary to keep the Sanders' animals in, and stray animals out. On the lot were a garden, a small orchard, and a large shady grape arbor.

Some homes weren't as substantial as the example being used. Adrien Squire describes the LaVerkin home his family lived in through the thirties as follows:

Our home was lumber with lapboard siding, I believe, and with a pine sub floor (cracks, knotholes, and all). Some of the knotholes were covered by nailing jar lids over them. That reminds me of a story of the relief society sisters discussing mouse-in-the house problems. When asked how to keep mice out of the house, one of the ladies said, 'I stuff steel wool in their little holes.' One of the others said, 'Well, who holds their little feet?'

Planting big posts in the ground on which to install the floor joists leveled the house. That left the north side of the house two or three feet off the ground, which accomplished two things: It provided a good place to store onions for the winter, and it also allowed the north wind to get a good run on the under side of the floor. The added pressure build-up allowed the wind to REALLY squirt up through all the cracks and holes in the floor. This was especially noticeable on winter Saturday evenings when all of us took our weekly turn in the #3 tub for our bath. More than one fanny was scorched when backed too close to the wood-burning stove.

Our living room carpet was home-made by sewing 3 foot wide strips of fabric together (which looked like pencil sized rolls of cloth held together with strings woven over and under each of these cloth strips). I don't remember the time intervals, but I think it was once a year, the carpet was pulled up, taken outside to the clothesline, and beaten soundly to remove dust and dirt. The straw used as cushioning and insulation for the floor was cleaned up and new, sweet smelling straw put in its place, and then the carpet was re-installed and held in place by carpet tacks around the edges. We loved rolling around on the soft, aromatic floor.

The Sanders family ate breakfast the same as they would now, but the modern world has gotten confused concerning noon and evening meals. At noon in those days the family ate dinner, the main meal of the day. ("lunch" was something you carried along on a hike or to a job out of town) Supper, a lighter meal, was eaten in the evening. Breakfast typically consisted of cracked wheat mush. Most homes had a hand-grinder and it would be one of the childrens' chores to grind some wheat each day or two. Bread and milk was the typical supper menu item. Fresh green onions, added to the pleasure of bread and milk in the spring, and grapes livened it in the summer and fall.

Simple fare was the rule. The family ate what was available. The greatest menu variety came with the seasons. Peas, corn, tomatoes, new potatoes, watermelons, etc., fresh from the garden made for true gourmet dining. Strawberries began ripening the middle of May, followed by cherries, apricots, Red Ashtrakan apples, Greensborough peaches, and so on, until the last grapes, pears, apples, and pomegranates were eaten in November and December.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

Will extended the life of fresh Tokay grapes by packing them in sawdust and storing them in the cool cellar. They were great for school lunches, particularly after they had time to develop a little “bite”.

A hog was butchered in the fall and Amelia rendered out lard for making soap and for cooking. Anything that needed preserving was salted, bottled, canned or dried. Five gallons of chili sauce were sealed in the can by soldering the lid shut.

The modern reader will have difficulty grasping how much work was demanded of everybody; adults and children, just to insure survival. It was a labor-intensive life both at home and at the workplace. Children’s labor was vital for getting it all done. Families raised practically everything they ate, and eating during the winter depended on preserving and storing during the summer.

There was one dependable source of fresh meat, of course, the chicken coop. A teenage boy or girl thought nothing of taking a chicken to the wood pile, laying its neck out over the chopping block and whacking off its head with the ax. Barnyard chores were a three-times-a-day responsibility 365 days a year. Animals were a sacred trust; they ate before you ate. The Sanders children knew they were due home at sundown to begin evening chores. They became expert in judging just how long they could play and still get home while a sliver of sun remained on the horizon.

There was always machinery to be repaired; harnesses and other equipment to be mended; soap to be made by boiling lard, mutton tallow or beef fat in lye; clothes to be washed; clothes to be made; and clothes to be mended. The list could go on and on. When a tool broke, or a bucket wore through and began leaking, they weren’t thrown away. Pretty soon a “tinker” would pass through who would have ingenious ways of mending things. He was usually on foot and would carry his tools plus eyeglasses and pocketknives for sale on his back. Tinkers were known to mutter as they worked, about the most trivial and frivolous problems, rather than saving their cussing for important frustrations. Thus, the phrase, “Not worth a tinker’s damn” came to be.

Amelia bought black sateen cloth to make little girls’ panties--playgrounds always had a dirt surface and black sateen, a cotton fabric woven and polished to resemble satin, was tough and forgiving. Many mothers used the fifty-pound flour sacks that were commonly available. It was never possible to totally bleach out the company logo, so when a small girl leaned way over she became a poster child for some flourmill.

Amelia made most of the clothes the family wore; which was just fine with the wearer, as she was a skilled seamstress. Some cloth might begin life as a woman’s dress, be cut and altered to clothe two or three successive small bodies, and spend its twilight years as part of a quilt. Socks and stockings were made of cotton or wool, neither of which is a match for big toes; the mending basket was never empty. A gourd or an old light bulb pushed into the toe made it possible to weave a patch over the sock’s hole that the toe accepted as part of the original fabric.

Anyone who lived in that era can relate many stories of long hard work. What you will never

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

hear though are complaints about all that labor. The work made their lives more interesting and meaningful.

The Sanders family didn't spend every minute in toil. They acquired a radio in the early 1930's and a hand-cranked Victrola sometime before that. KSUB in Cedar City was the one radio station that could be picked up in the daytime. Many stations could be heard at night, depending on atmospheric conditions, sunspot activities, etc.. Radio programming in that pre-TV era was more akin to today's TV fare, and the family might gather around to hear "The Lux Radio Theater", "Abie's Irish Rose" or a host of others programs. Sometimes just as the hero was in a tight spot, the signal would fade and another station's might come in instead. A neighbor, who frequently came to the Sanders' home to listen, could not understand such poor manners, "Don't they know they're butt'n in?" he would demand.

There were other breaks from daily toil. Amelia was very good with the harmonica and enjoyed playing it. Will Senior would sing, particularly when on peddling trips. Bill Junior, besides being a great singer, was a saxophonist who was in demand at dances. Silent movies were also shown once a week in LaVerkin during the 1920's.

Handmade quilts, made up of layers of whatever cloth might be available, kept you warm in winter. Surviving a January night in an unheated attic with the north wind finding every chink in the house's armor, was a real achievement. You groped your way through the darkness, then burrowed between the flannel sheets under three or four heavy quilts where it was warm and safe. Then while marveling that you had again escaped the ghostly apparitions that inhabit dark attics, you fell into a child's peaceful sleep. Store-bought blankets were available, but they cost unattainable money.

LaVerkin offered an elementary education for its children; but prior to 1914, if they wanted to attend high school they went to Cedar City. St. George began graduating high school seniors in 1914 and offered a closer alternative. Finally in 1919, the students could attend at least two years at Hurricane High School. There was no bus service though, until about 1937. Owen and the next younger sibling, Lucille, would drive to Hurricane each day in the family buggy.

Like most others in LaVerkin, Will Sanders and his family, ran an integrated farm business. They raised crops, then processed them to get them ready for market; they peddled the finished product directly to the public. Will raised plenty of alfalfa hay to provide feed for cows and horses but his main "money" crops were strawberries, apricots, peaches and sorghum cane. Children were involved with irrigating the crops; piling, hauling and storing the hay; pruning trees; thinning, then picking the fruit; cutting and drying fruit, or later sorting and packing it; cultivating the sorghum cane; cutting the tassels off; hauling the cane to the molasses mill; and helping with peddling.

Distance from potential markets, plus poor roads, particularly until the late 1920's; meant that everything for sale had to be dried or, in the case of molasses, put up in barrels or cans. The experience of Loren Squire, (who later married one of the Sanders girls), and four other young men, as they journeyed from Manti to Hurricane in 1917, illustrates the point. Driving a Model T Ford they arrived at Beaver about midnight. They left Beaver at eight o'clock the next



## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

morning and arrived in Hurricane at nine that night--13 hours later.

The present road between Toquerville and Andersons Junction was completed in 1931. About 1929, Will purchased a Model A Ford truck that made it possible to haul fresh fruit to the consumers. No longer did the family have to spend so

much time drying fruit. He could be away from home for just a night or two instead of a week at a time, as he might when using a team and wagon.

Delma recalls as a young girl, going with her dad on peddling trips in the Model A truck. Both outfitted in bib overalls, they worked their way up and down the village streets of the towns along highway 89, past Circleville and Marysville. A housewife might complain that the fruit was too small, lacked color, was too this or too that, but Will was always pleasant and patient and the sale would eventually be made. He was also rigorously honest and people got to know he would treat them fairly. When night came, they would obtain permission to set up their cots in a barnyard. The farmer would readily agree once he determined that neither of them used tobacco. Will, as an ex-chef, had been a cook for the Hurricane Canal crew--so the meals he cooked on the road were always first rate.

Will had plenty of company on the road. Peddling was the way Dixie farmers sold most of their crops. Even his mother had gone peddling. After her husband became somewhat incapacitated, she would take along one of the children and go as far north as Salt Lake, peddling among other things, pickles and chow-chow that she had expertly made. On the way home she would visit family members in Sanpete County.

A peddler did more bartering than selling. He might return with flour, potatoes, farm tools and machinery, or clothing, some of which he hoped to sell along the way or after he returned. When Will's son, Clarence, got married he left to peddle molasses and dried fruit. In Salina, he traded for a bed, a stove and some salt rock. South of Panguitch on his return, he made a nice profit on the salt rock by trading it for a winter's supply of flour. Even a Bishop's duties might include peddling. When the tithing bins bulged, Morris would hitch up his team and head north hoping to turn the produce into cash.

### LaVerkin And The Great Depression

The Great Depression got a lock on the country in 1929 and it engulfed the rest of the world soon after. Prices of farm commodities plummeted, the stock market lost eighty percent of its value, millions were unemployed, most college degrees were worthless, and eleven thousand of the nation's twenty-five thousand banks went under. Faith in democracy and in the free-market system was severely tested. Dictators who grabbed power in the Soviet Union, Italy and Germany, were looked upon with approval by those who saw only chaos in the democracies. Communism was viewed by many misguided idealists in this country and around the world as the way to relieve economic suffering, and to achieve a degree of equality.

In neighboring towns, ranchers who had borrowed money to build sheep and Angora goat operations, went bankrupt and lost their homes. Amazingly, the State Bank of Hurricane

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

survived. In LaVerkin, no one appears to have been caught with large debts. As old-timers joke, "Economic depression is all we ever knew. This one was just more of the same." Reasons why this was basically true have been mentioned--LaVerkin and its neighbors were isolated from possible markets by both distance and by miserable terrain, and there were no lucrative markets in the area such as the ones Silver Reef had provided fifty years earlier.

Another reason was that small farmers had wallowed in depression from the end of World War I. Ironically, the success of agriculture in general meant that food prices remained low and that unless a farmer had a highly efficient operation, he couldn't stay in business. America had millions of family farmers, including thousands in Utah, attempting to live out hopeless dreams of being one's own boss on one's own farm. The family farmers are mostly gone now, except for those who farm as a hobby or as a sideline.

Herbert Hoover was president when The Depression started and got the blame for it. Franklin D. Roosevelt was president from 1932 on. His social and economic experiments organized under the "New Deal" aimed at getting the country out of The Depression evoked either gratitude and praise, or fear and loathing. Relief projects that gave federal money to needy individuals caused some of the greatest controversies. Republicans generally favored letting private charities provide relief, fearing that people would lose their self-sufficiency, their self-responsibility and their self-respect if the government offered succor. Democrats maintained that with nearly a third of the workers unemployed, there was no choice but for the government to provide aid. Both sides were right, of course. Individuals, and groups now routinely look to the Federal Government for aid in a manner unheard of in 1930. On the other hand, even the most lavish New Deal spending made only a small dent in The Depression. It was only when the greatest government make-work project in the world's history (World War II) came along, that prosperity came to stay-- as of this writing, at least. The fact that Joseph and Henry Gubler, who were staunch Republicans, and Morris Wilson, a staunch Democrat, could work well together during that period of intense political feeling, tells us much about their qualities of character.

Various projects were set up to keep people busy. The Civilian Conservation Corps, or CC's, and the W.P.A. were two examples. The construction of up-to-date outdoor privies was a major W.P.A. project, which employed an average of 2,100,000 workers nationwide. The dispirited men who signed up didn't get suddenly motivated when engaged in a make-work project. Those of us who were young then carry the mental image of W.P.A. workers standing around leaning on their shovels.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was founded in 1933, and disbanded in 1942 shortly after the United States entered World War II. The object was to provide employment for unmarried young men, doing conservation work such as planting trees, building flood barriers, fighting forest fires and maintaining forest roads and trails. Recruits lived in work camps under a semi-military regime. Monthly cash allowances of thirty dollars were supplemented by provision of food, medical care, and other necessities. It employed 500,000 men at its peak and provided work for a total of three million.

Locally, there were camps at Leeds, Zion Park, LaVerkin and Hurricane. The LaVerkin camp was located just north of Highway 9, more-or-less across from the LDS Stake Center. Evidence

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

of the Corp's reclamation work can be seen to the right of the highway on Kolob as it climbs toward Kolob reservoir. A couple of charming meadows betray evidence of wooden dams now buried underneath the sod. In 1936, the writer observed CC boys building the dams in the jagged little canyons that had been cut because of overgrazing.

The good work done for local soils did not carry over to the enhancement of local souls. The men assigned to the Hurricane camp were from the Midwest; probably every one of them "used alcohol and tobacco". There have always been a few black sheep among Mormon youth of course, but playing host to dozens of such fellows every evening in a small town was a continuing crisis. Inevitably there were marriages, with attendant hand wringing by concerned family members. Enlistees from LaVerkin were mostly assigned to the Zion camp. They express fond memories of their experiences and appreciation for having employment during such austere times.

### A Family Copes

Victims of personal or of natural disasters can currently expect assistance from various Church and governmental agencies. That wasn't the case in the 1930's, and before. Death and debilitating illnesses involving both children and adults were far more common then, and survivors learned to scratch out a living. Edward (Ed) Gubler, son of Joseph, is a case in point. He was born in 1895, so was old enough to shoulder farming duties by the time LaVerkin was established. He became a skilled carpenter and worked on such projects as building the Zion lodge and the lodge at the North Rim. He was married by then to Thora Wilson, daughter of Morris. When their first LaVerkin house burned down, Ed built a solid brick one that even featured indoor plumbing. He suffered some kind of heart attack while working at the Grand Canyon lodge. It didn't kill him; he lived another forty six years. Medical science offered nothing then. The doctor could only suggest a year's rest. He was feeling better when construction of the "new" two hundred-foot high bridge began about 1934. He and another worker were high on a scaffold when a cable broke, plunging them to their deaths--or so they assumed. They both clung on until they were rescued, but the shock induced another heart attack. For the rest of his life, Ed was a semi-invalid. He was able to supervise and direct the children's work but could never again do significant labor. There was no workman's compensation, or food stamps. The only known welfare program provided a few dollars a month for a widow and her family. Even if help were available, it's doubtful that Ed and Thora would have accepted any.

Every family member in the Ed Gubler household, was enlisted to help scratch out a living. Their house was on a five-acre plot where most of the family's food could be raised, including alfalfa hay to feed the milk cow. Surplus fruit could be traded for flour and potatoes. Thora made most of the clothing. Her skill was such that no one could tell that the clothes were homemade. She also took in washing. The oldest child, Lyman, was twelve. He began working two hours every evening for the Sanders Brothers, isolating turkey hens whose mothering instincts were interfering with the functions their owners had in mind. He turned the pay over to his mother for household expenses. Not before tithing was paid on it though. Thora saw to that.

Both Thora's and Ed's family members shared with them in many ways and Thora was

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

determined to keep things equal. Son, Thell, recounts how one of his Wilson uncles might come by in the morning needing some labor. As the uncle would return with Thell in the evening, he would ask how much he owed. To Thell's dismay, his mother would state, "Not a thing. He was glad to help out."

When something from the store was absolutely needed, Thora would charge it. At the end of one month, Ed was shocked to see that the family owed a whole five dollars!

In 1941 they sold their home and acreage and put the money towards the purchase of the little LaVerkin store-post office. This enabled Thora, who did most of the work, to earn cash income and it enabled Ed to carry out many tasks appropriate to his condition. Emil Graff, who sold them the store, told someone that he expected to repossess it within the year; he hadn't reckoned with the Gubler determination.

The store's front window was an important source of local news. For a wedding reception, you needed to make just one invitation; post it on the window, and the whole town would show up.

A bane to the Gublers, and to every other small business, was that of credit. Incredible as it may seem to the modern shopper, there were no Visa Cards then. It was the custom to extend credit for thirty days at a time. Some families like that of a widow who received a few dollars of aid from the county each month, promptly paid their bills before considering any new purchases. Others weren't quite so trustworthy. They might succumb to the temptation of letting a bill go for a few months. Soon they were avoiding the Gubler store altogether and going to Hurricane for their shopping needs-- and paying cash.

### Firewood

Wood, as indicated earlier, provided almost all the fuel used for heating, cooking and molasses making. Trips, usually to Little Creek Mesa for juniper wood--known as "cedar", were made in the fall. Probably every farmer owned a standard fourteen-foot long, iron-tired wagon pulled by two large workhorses. For wood hauling, the wide hayrack that facilitated hauling alfalfa hay, was removed and high stakes were installed on either side to hold the logs in place. A chain was taken along for pulling dead juniper trees over, and for securing the load once it was on. Shorter chains, just under four feet in length with rings at either end, would serve to keep the load from shifting from side to side.

Reed Wilson reports that usually he or Wayne, but not both on the same trip, would accompany Morris on such an expedition. With a large bedroll and a wooden grub box filled with a three-day supply of food, man and boy set out. Their route would be down across the old bridge over the river, up the old Hurricane Hill road and on out to Rattlesnake. Reed was not content to sit on the slow-moving wagon. He spent most of his time attempting to chase down rabbits or other unfortunate wild life that he spotted along the way. After giving the horses a lengthy break, they would follow the barely passable Troughs road (now part of Apple Valley) onto Little Creek.

Assuming some daylight was left, they set to work. First, they used the horses to pull trees over. Next they trimmed the branches with axes, and cut the logs that remained so that none was

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

longer than fourteen feet. Logs were loaded with the butt end of one going to the front of the wagon and the butt end of the next log going to the back--and so on. Oversized logs were split in two using sledgehammers and wedges, or sometimes, an inclined plane was set up and the logs were hoisted on board. During the second day, as the wagons were about half filled, the loops of the short chains would be placed over stakes on either side of the wagon to ensure that the logs stayed in place. The chains automatically became firmly anchored as additional logs were put over them. The approximately two cords of wood aboard the wagon were secured in place by placing chains over the top, and the initial and most frightening segment of the trip home was begun.

Going down the primitive Troughs dugway was not for the faint-hearted. Every trip he made, Reed was convinced that this one would be the last; that the wagonload of logs would go crashing into the gully. He always walked along behind down this stretch, ready to pull his father from the carnage. With the nastiest part of the trip behind them, they made camp.

A report of the conversations between father and son during the long fall evening would make a charming paragraph; except that they didn't happen. By the time they had finished their work, taken care of the horses, and had their supper, their only thoughts were of sleep.

Reed was eager to go on these expeditions the first few times. Gradually the amount of work involved dawned on him and he quit volunteering. He always went cheerfully, though, when asked..

When they reached the crest of the Hurricane Hill the next day, and started down the old dugway, the horses had little to do but guide the wagon and hope for good brakes so they wouldn't be rammed to their deaths. (Horses are able to provide only minimal braking power for a wagon.) Amazingly, only one accident fatal to man and beast is known to have occurred during the old road's existence. Frank Isom Jr., of Hurricane, died when the brakes failed on his wagon.

Braking was accomplished by forcing brake-blocks made of green pitch-pine wood directly against the iron tires of the rear wheels. The blocks had previously been shaped to make maximum contact with the wheels. They were attached to sturdy poles, the bottoms of which were bolted to the undercarriage. A rope tied to the upper ends enabled the driver to engage the brakes from his seat at the front. The brakes had one final test as they descended the road toward the hot springs, and the horses got their final test pulling the load up the hill after crossing the bridge.

The real work, in Reed's mind, began after they got home. The logs had to be chopped into usable lengths--about eighteen inches for home firewood use, and about forty inches for heating the molasses boilers. Fortunately, it's almost fun to chop juniper wood when you're young, have a sharp ax, and you can send the chips flying.

### Games, Recreation And Social Events

Children's labor was vital to family survival in LaVerkin from its inception until, dependence on the family farm ended, sometime after World War II. They worked long and hard, but they did

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

find time for play. Commercial games and toys were almost non-existent, they utilized what was available.

During the LaVerkin early years, there was a common town pasture on the hillside along under the canal bank. On Sundays there was a two-hour break between Sunday school and sacrament meeting. It was a window of opportunity for restless young wranglers. The boys discovered that they could ride yearling steers, or whatever other animal they could catch, and not get caught themselves because the adults were home observing the Sabbath. The terrain was rough and the animals were not particularly cooperative. A deacon who showed up for sacrament meeting with a fresh set of scratches and bruises could have elicited concern and suspicion, but the adults must have had more important things on their minds.

The canal and the river were important to the summer recreation program. The canal was wide enough and deep enough just as it emerged from the tunnel for a swimming hole. The river also had a spot or two that was adequate. These were great places to sluice off the fuzz after a morning of peach picking. Both areas were "suits-optional". In other words, nobody (boys) wore them, and girls stayed away. Don Squires recalls an afternoon when some boys were lounging about on the riverbank and a group of girls came along. The boys in or near the water immersed themselves to a discreet depth but the best the boys further out could do was lie on their stomachs until the crises was over.

Spelunking appealed to the adventurous few. Three interesting caves have been mentioned that offered varying degrees of challenge: one is above the east entrance of the canal tunnel; another is above the hot springs but below the Hurricane Canal; and the other is somewhat downstream on the north side of the river. Also, there was the canal tunnel itself that opened out into a couple of caverns.

The cave above the springs, that has since been sealed off, was the scene of young Owen Sanders' "Tom Sawyer" type experience that nearly became his tomb. It was formed by water dissolving the limestone rock and its passageways and caverns extend hundreds of yards in various directions. One day after school Owen obtained some matches and went exploring. He told no one because adults would have thwarted his plans. Shortly after entering the cave, he noted that water was dripping from a certain area of the ceiling and making a distinct "plop" as it dropped into a little pool below. That observation saved his life. He spent considerable time wandering through passageways, being thrifty as possible with his matches. Also near the cave's mouth, he found three pieces of pottery, two jugs in perfect condition and a broken bowl. After placing the jugs where he could easily get them as he left, he went on his way. By the time he got down to two matches, he realized that he had no clue as to his location. It was totally black and he was totally lost. When chore-time came in a couple of hours, he would be missed, but there wouldn't be the slightest clue as to where to look for him. The fact that the pottery had been sitting in plain sight was proof that no one else knew of the cave's existence. After his initial panic subsided, he recalled the dripping water. He quietly groped about in the darkness, listening for the delivering sounds. Finally, he began hearing them, by moving back and forth among the passageways, while noting if the sound became fainter or sharper, he was able to move closer and closer. At last he saw daylight, now diminished because the sun was close to setting, but it was all he needed. He was so pleased to be out in the world again that he stopped at the hot springs and gave the caretaker one of the jugs he had brought out. The fate of the jugs

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

is unknown, but sometime later Owen led Park Service people to where the pieces of the bowl lay. They glued them together and put the bowl on display at the Zion Park Visitor center where it remained for many years.

As mentioned earlier, toys and games were scarce and used available materials. Small girls felt blessed if they owned a doll in good condition and a scaled down version of the four-wheeled baby buggies their mothers used. If they had younger siblings, the skills they developed playing with dolls were soon put to practical use. During fruit harvest season, for example, nine-year old Afton Wilson's mother spent full time working in the packing shed. Afton took care of the baby and prepared dinner (the noon meal) for the family. Her friend, Quinta Nielson, would come over just as soon as she completed her own chores, and the two of them turned the work into the happiest of play.

As teenagers, the girls had equally great times working together packing fruit. Perhaps girls are better than boys at having fun in whatever situation they find themselves. Girls felt free to hike down by the creek, or up to the Hot Springs without concern for their safety. Up around the hill, they always kept an eye out for Montezuma's treasure that was known to be hidden somewhere in the area.

A mother's safety zone for her children tended to include the entire area of LaVerkin, rather than just the house and lot as is often the case today.

There were a few yards of concrete walkway around the church and that was a good place to play jacks and to roller skate. The skates in those days, had small iron wheels and clamped onto regular shoes.

Hopscotch was another popular girls' game. The game was played on a "board" drawn on the sidewalk by charcoal or chalk or anything that would leave a mark. Then a taw was thrown into one of the numbered squares on the board. By jumps and hops, the person whose turn it was, would move through the board, skipping the square that was marked with the taw. On the way back down the board, the taw would be retrieved. If you stepped on a line, or, when the taw was thrown, it landed on a line, the next person would have a turn.

"Bonies" were important toys recalled by Gladys Woodbury. They were dried animal bones, particularly cows' vertebrae and "knuckle" bones. "What an imaginative child couldn't do with the right assortment of those dry bones, sticks and strings to create a "farm" or a "ranch".

Streets were also convenient playgrounds. In the daytime, a softball game might be going on. On a summer night, a bonfire might be burning with potatoes roasting in the coals. Perhaps, children would be playing run-sheepy-run. At a signal from their stomachs, they would pull the charred potatoes from the coals and happily dine.

Small boys have enough excess energy that they can enjoy games that seem absurd in retrospect. Wayne Wilson recalled, as a six-year old, having great fun riding his stick horse into the thick of battle or to round up stampeding cattle. Another odd activity was the hoop roll. This was just a

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

matter of rolling an iron hoop along the ground with a “scooter” a slender board that had a flattened, slightly cupped can attached to it. The best hoops came from wagon wheel hubs and were prized possessions. To start the hoop in motion, the board is held at an angle and the hoop is allowed to roll down it. With practice, you could roll the hoop over and around obstacles. It is far more fun than it sounds. Today, visitors to the Cove Fort Museum have the opportunity to become acquainted with the sport and to roll hoops about the barnyard. Wayne also told of making bows from the branches of ash trees, and arrows from willow trees, with which he imperiled the abundant rabbits, doves, and quail of the area.

Concrete, asphalt and grass have obliterated the dirt playing fields of probably the most important boyhood--and sometimes girlhood--sport of the twenties and thirties, that of marbles. Various games involving marbles existed. And you could play “for keeps”. Usually, a boy who was a very good shot would try to keep his mother from knowing about his winnings. Mothers impose a moral discipline that is foreign to a small boy’s psyche. A bag of sparkling new glass marbles brought sure joy to any lucky youth that had just acquired some. Everyone had an oversized special marble (taw) that was prized above all the other marbles in their sack. If the taw were a flint, it was like having a precious jewel. A taw-sized steel ball bearing known as a “steelie” was also valuable. Games could always be seen going on at recess and after school. Various sets of rules applied. One involved making a large circle and shooting from the perimeter, another called for a small oval that contained the marbles, with players tossing their taws from a lag line, hoping to land near the oval. Recalling the mindset of sixty years ago and how important the game of marbles was, one feels pity for today’s small boys; of their restricted lives bereft of marbles.

Piggy was another game that required a dirt surface. Assuming five players, four small holes would be dug in a six-foot circle and one center hole would be dug. Each player would be armed with a stick. The object was for whoever was "it" to knock or push a mashed up can into the center hole with his stick. When this happened, everyone had to change holes and "it" had an opportunity to get a hole of his own. Bruised shins were part of the fun. Condensed milk cans were favored for piggy and for street hockey. When just two little holes were punched in the top to get at the contents, the can held up much better than cans that had the entire top missing.

Rubber guns were built by all the kids as the main weapons for war games. They were made of wood but used rubber as both the missile and the propellant. Tubeless tires hadn’t been developed. All tires required inner tubes until the 1960’s, so there was a plentiful supply of rubber. Strips of the desired length and width were cut from these tubes. Probably the most popular model utilized clothespins requisitioned from the family clothesline. These were attached to the guns' handles, and the bands cut from the inner tubes were stretched over the end of the barrel and inserted into the jaws of the clothespins. Skilled builders would attach four or more clothespins to a gun allowing for multiple firings. Another approach called for cutting a continuous band from the tube’s cross-section. You could stretch three or four of these along the barrel then, using your thumb, roll off the rear end of the band when firing. Boys were the main participants in the above games but girls were always welcomed. During war games, if you got hit with a rubber missile you were supposed to acknowledge it. One youth who was playing shirtless kept claiming that he hadn’t been hit, “I didn’t feel it,” he would insist. Finally, one of his friends sneaked up and zapped him on his bare back at point blank range. “Did you feel



## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

that?" the friend asked.

Boys seem to be born wanting to drive cars and shoot guns. Obtaining these necessities was rather difficult in the early days when you might earn ten cents an hour picking fruit. A single-shot twenty-two-caliber rifle cost just a few dollars and thus were within reach of a few youth, much to the chagrin of local jackrabbits and cottontails. However, a weapon available to every boy, was the "flipper," a sling shot made from the forks of a tree branch and utilizing bands of rubber from an inner tube. The leather sling was cut from the uppers of an old shoe. Flipper in hand, a lad was ready to wage war on the thousands of English sparrows that swarmed through every barnyard, and the peach birds that were the bane of fruit farmers.

Possession of an automobile was the supreme act of ownership for a teenage boy, that only a blessed few achieved. Don Squire yearned for his own wheels as he approached driving age during the 1930's. He faced one hurdle that most teenagers didn't--his father was the area's Utah Highway Patrolman, and Loren Squire had old-fashioned ideas about obeying the law. At their father's bidding, the older boys, DeLance and Phil, waited until they were eighteen to get their driving licenses. That would be an impossibly long wait for fifteen year-old Don.

About this same time, two Hurricane youths traded a donkey for an old car. Neither they nor the car were licensed, nor were they concerned about the law as they coaxed their old Essex around town, feeding it a quart or so of gasoline at a time.

Total automobile traffic was very small in both towns, and automotive rules were enforced in a relaxed manner--except at the Squire household. Don did manage to get in some under-age driving practice in borrowed cars on farm roads, so that by age sixteen he was ready to pass the driving test. He even got his dad to sign for him to take the test at that early age. His father then loaned him most of the \$96.00, so that in 1938, he paid for a 1931 Model A Ford.

After the US entered World War II in late 1941, gasoline was severely rationed and Don would have had difficulty meeting the important social obligations of a car owner, were it not that farmers were allotted generous quantities of gasoline. By then, Don was a valued part-time employee in his uncle's turkey business, and could obtain farm gas rationing coupons. It fell easily within his persuasive powers to convince gas station attendants that the car he was driving was actually a farm implement, probably a tractor.

Poaching was a leisure-time activity in which you could have fun while doing good--for your family at least. It combined a number of elements that made it satisfying. It was an inexpensive way of getting out into the great outdoors, and it meant firing guns. It was more exciting than ordinary hunting because it brought into play one's full stealth capabilities, both in obtaining prey and in avoiding the game warden. It was in the grand frontier tradition of obtaining your meat as you needed it, wherever you found it. Teenage and young adult males were its main adherents, but it had more-or-less general approval.

During The Depression, poaching was sometimes a necessity, if the family were to have meat. Farmers and ranchers, unintentionally and unwillingly, provided feed for deer and for game birds. It seemed only proper that they should reap a few benefits. Plus, there wasn't the overall

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

hunting pressure that has developed since World War II. Like driving around town without a license of any kind--it wasn't a big deal.

One of the "sport of poaching's" most dedicated, skillful and, until now, unsung practitioners was young Jack Eves. The open spaces of the Uintah Basin were his initial training grounds. Eight year old Jack would stop by a neighbor's house and borrow the shotgun that belonged to the two old ladies who lived there. Frequently he would bring a duck or two home. By the time his family had moved to LaVerkin when he was about ten, he was a pro. He soon knew the trail habits of deer down along LaVerkin Creek in the winter or on the Pine Valley slopes in summer. In the nearby fields, a plentiful supply of pheasants that had been introduced to the area in the previous century, provided diversions closer to home. He never went hunting, though, unless the family needed the meat. Also, nothing was wasted. They ate just about all of the deer that was edible. They had no refrigeration, so preservation was mainly by smoking and drying. A piece of dried venison, or "Kaibab buckskin", required a lot of chewing. For cooking, his mother would grind the dried meat.

As human population increased, as game became scarcer, and as the area became more organized; poaching became more of a crime than a sport. When effective game wardens became more in demand, a skilled pool of talent awaited the call-- the ex-poachers.

A poem, "Escapades" written by Owen Sanders seems appropriate at this point:

Escapades of vibrant youth  
Bewilder and perplex,  
And antics that disturb the old  
Can often stir and vex.  
Should Age in vivid retrospect,  
Review ITS youthful years,  
The vision it would recollect  
Should calm some frantic fears.

(By permission of author)

Baseball was by far the most important team sport in the area during the early part of the century. Football was not played by local high schools until about 1940. Basketball, baseball and track events were the varsity sports. Touch football was played on the streets. In fact, because streets weren't cluttered up with automobiles, young people could establish a game along just about any street in town. Baseball games, as previously mentioned, were the big community sporting events for young adults during the twenties and thirties, and nowhere more so than in LaVerkin where almost the entire town turned out for Saturday afternoon games. Girls, who otherwise had little or no interest in baseball, got caught up in the excitement and tended to be loyal fans. Reed Wilson, born in 1910, got into baseball early and stayed late. The Wilsons were athletic, and young Reed watched his older brother, Wayne, play until, at age fifteen, he also made the team. They started him at center field, the safest spot for a rookie, but he was a natural athlete and over the years he played every position except catcher. The last position he played was first base, the best position for an old guy. Home runs were Reed's forte. The writer recalls, as a loyal Hurricane child, watching in dismay, as Reed Wilson would step up

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

to the plate and slam the ball over the head of Hurricane's left fielder.

The Hurricane games were played on the "square", a dirt playing field now occupied by the Hurricane Elementary school. Home plate was at the corner of First West and First South. Poplar trees lined the north edge of the square along State Street. When Reed connected, the ball was usually still flying when it reached the poplars. He hit one during a game at LaVerkin that carried over the poplars that lined the west end of the "square" and to the basement window of Winferd Gubler's house. It struck the frame and took out the entire assembly. The incident provoked awe rather than sympathy, "You should have built your house further away," Winferd was told; the town had its priorities.

Sometimes players were enjoyable to watch for reasons other than just their skill. As anyone who has played knows, you put a man who demonstrates the fairest judgment and the clearest vision in an umpire's vest, and he becomes a blind partisan of whomever you are playing against. The Woodbury boys made up about half of the team, and one of the team's big guns, Glen, sometimes fell victim to inept calls. As Adrien Squire recalls, "He had a temper and would often throw a fit when calls didn't go his way. I've seen him throw his cap down and stomp on it, throw his bat, and gesticulate all over the place to convince all he really meant the cuss words he was using."

As various leagues were formed, LaVerkin and Hurricane were always the core teams. Sometimes the other villages, such as Toquerville and Rockville, could field a team and would join. The teams traveled far afield in their attempts to have a game every Saturday during the summer. LaVerkin frequently played Beaver, for example. The players had to cover all expenses, no easy task for men who were barely eking out a living. When the Civilian Conservation Corps (CC's) was created in 1933, there were soon camps at LaVerkin, Hurricane, Zion and Leeds. Teams from these camps were warmly welcomed into anybody's league, if for no other reason than that they had endless supplies of government issue baseballs. Now, during a game at LaVerkin, if a foul ball went over into Joseph Gubler's pear orchard, a new ball from the CCs' ample larder was tossed out, and the game resumed. In the meantime, younger boys would be searching for the ball. Once found, three options presented themselves. One, the ball could be returned to the CC's for a nickel reward; two, the ball could be retained for use in boys' games; or three, it could be given to the LaVerkin team. Reed received enough balls in this manner that he no longer had to take baseballs home and re-stitch them so they would last through another game or two.

Interest in baseball waned as the thirties drew to a close, partly because young men were more and more seeking their fortunes elsewhere. Reed and his younger brother, Paul, then played for St. George teams. Reed also became much in demand as a team manager.

LaVerkin teenagers attended school in Hurricane, and Reed was also on the Hurricane High School basketball team, in spite of having to miss the first month each fall to help his father make sorghum molasses. He also played basketball for Dixie College. But, baseball was his favorite sport. The highlight of his baseball career came at a State Amateur tournament; he got a home run off an ex White Sox pitcher.

Drama

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

Television appears to have killed off one of the most endearing features of village life; drama. Maude Judd had the following to say about early LaVerkin theatrics: From the first, LaVerkin has been known all over the county for its dramatic talent. The first play, name unknown, was played in one of the homes and required most of the adults of the town for the cast. When county fairs were held in St. George the committees asked LaVerkin to bring some plays for evening entertainment; they always played to packed houses. In the fall of 1905, the first play produced in the schoolhouse was "Tony the Convict" under the direction of Robert Dean. The cast included Mr. Dean, George and Louise Judd, Wilford Thompson, Pearl Webb and Maude MacFarlane. Proceeds went for the purchase of the first organ owned by the ward. Later plays included; In the Toils, Nugget Nell, Moonshiner's Daughter, The Lightning Rod Agent and others. Besides the ones already mentioned, those taking part in later plays were John and James Judd, Robert Arthur, Harriet Hartley, Camilla Hartley, Annie Hartley, Glen Woodbury, Hazel Woodbury, Ezoë Woodbury, Mary Stratton, Atkin Hinton, Samuel Webb, Arthur Webb, Pearl Webb, Jed Fawcett, William Savage, Alberta Savage, Mary Naegle, Lamar Stout, Allen Stout, E.J. Graff, Linda Fletcher, Marge Gubler and Rhea Wakeling. The scenes behind the scenes furnished much amusement for the players. This good clean entertainment kept the community alive and furnished funds for ward and community affairs.

Chautauqua productions were eagerly awaited. They brought drama, music, humor, and information on various subjects. The original Chautauqua began after the Civil War in upstate New York for the purpose of training Sunday school teachers. As it broadened its scope to education, music and some drama, it grew in popularity and chautauqua groups were formed throughout the United States many of which lasted into the 1930's. Lecturers and acts were booked into villages as small as LaVerkin. A few children's tickets would be scattered around the playing field so the lucky finders could attend.

Drama took on new life in the 1930's when Luther Fuller and his wife, Rosalba (Gubler) became residents. Luther was talented, strict, and kind. Under his direction, actors gave professional performances. He and Rosalba could build and paint any required backdrop. Productions were taken to neighboring towns of course. The writer recalls, as a young boy, sitting entranced through LaVerkin plays presented on the Hurricane High School stage. He yearned to give assistance to the heroine played by Ardella Gubler in whatever quandary she found herself. He was shocked when, some weeks later, he saw an accomplished actor, Wilford Thompson--whose character takes the rap when he realizes that the culprit is his long lost son,--out leading an ordinary life.

The LaVerkin players were convincing indeed. Drama came naturally to Wilford. He was wearing a brand new shirt while umpiring a Saturday afternoon baseball game. A fouled ball beamed him, sending him down for the count. His apparently, lifeless form lay sprawled on the ground for so long it was decided to give emergency aid. A bucket of water was sent for. Just as the aid was to be administered, Wilford opened one eye and said, "Don't get any on my new shirt."

Drama was an important segment of radio programming and high quality plays could be heard each week on the Lux Radio Theater. Radio did not compete with stage performances though.

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

In fact, it probably enhanced interest in live productions. Listening to a radio, you could visualize the action in your mind. You enjoyed comparing your responses to those of the actors on stage when you saw a play. Television though, has been the great destroyer of imagination. By the 1960's, the stage was dark.

### Dances

A prophet might have addressed LaVerkin residents in 1938 and said, "Fifty years hence live drama will be gone from here; and there will be no dances at the chapel every Saturday night." After their initial shock and disbelief, the citizens would express pity for the poor folks whose lives were to be deprived of two of mankind's greatest social inventions. Saturday nights, the benches of the White Chapel were pushed back; the live orchestra, consisting of piano, sax and drums, tuned up; and the townspeople began dancing. Shut-ins were the only non-attenders. Babies were laid end to end along the benches where their dancing parents could monitor them. Almost everybody danced, and with numerous partners. A young couple in love, could manage to get back together frequently, but otherwise variety ruled.

Winferd Gubler, who had the Church calling of dance manager, looked after everything from hauling the drums to the chapel to inspecting the lavatories. Young Bill Sanders played a mean sax, but probably the star of the band was his sister-in-law, Millie Sanders. She could make the piano "stand up". She didn't need sheet music; her hands knew all the tunes. Even while Millie was greeting someone, making them happy to be there, or just watching the fun, her lively playing never stopped. Other star players came along later of course.

Dances were also held on holidays, particularly New Year's, and on special occasions, such as the cleanup day in 1947, when poplar trees were dispatched. At these events, homemade ice cream and, of course, salted crackers, were served. Any true gourmet knows that the two were made for each other.

As the writer can attest, having two left feet, no sense of rhythm, inborn shyness and palms that sweated profusely when grasping a girl, were distinct disadvantages in that era. For many such awkward youth, ballroom dexterity and social courage were just a jug away. The vintners of Dixie's past still furtively plied their craft, and a swig or two from a fruit jar retrieved from its hiding place in the shrubbery, enabled the veriest klutz to launch himself into the social swing. A lack of moderation though, meant an escorted exit. Inability to dance was no excuse in the late 1930's or early 40's. Elwin Slack would teach you.

The main problems at the dances were young men from neighboring towns who were attracted to the fun. A chance to get wild while out of their families' sight was a strong motive for coming, and LaVerkin got the name "Little Tijuana" for that reason. Winferd could count on the support of other adults as needed, such as the time some Hurricane rowdies brought cockle burrs and tossed them into ladies' hair.

A few older women whose opportunities for such excesses had long since passed might complain to Winferd about certain young couples dancing too close; they wanted to see daylight at least somewhere up and down the line of contact. Winferd never pried anybody apart though. He left

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

the setting of such standards to the Sunday school and the young men's and women's programs.

As with other social activities, it's difficult to distinguish between those of city and church. The MIA (Mutual Improvement Association) used to have church-wide ballroom dance competitions. Bill Sanders and his young friend, Norma Stout, were selected to represent the LaVerkin Ward in the St. George Stake dance festival. They then were chosen to represent the Stake at the main event in Saltaire. Norma figured if Bill could stay off her toes on the dance floor he was probably okay in other ways, so she married him.

### Holidays

Christmas was, if anything, more exciting to a boy or girl in 1930 than now, even though the meager toys that thrilled them might be ignored by today's surfeited child. A new dress for her old doll and new shoes for herself were cause for a little girl's eyes to sparkle in pleasure; it's the contrast that counts. There was so little of anything during the year, that Christmas was, relatively speaking, a bounteous occasion.

It was a magical time for little Delma Sanders. Nothing tangible happened until the day before Christmas, but that didn't dampen the anticipation. In the afternoon, a tree that had been brought in from the mesas to the east, by Will Senior, or one of the older boys was set up in the Sanders home and trimmed with strings of popcorn. Donuts and apples were hung from the branches. A huge community tree was set up at the church, and on Christmas Eve, the entire populace gathered there to enjoy the program and to greet Santa Claus. Amazingly, he always remembered to arrive right on time. And even more amazingly, he came with exactly enough gifts for every child and each one with a name on it. Delma's happy illusions about Santa remained intact for quite a while. One year stands out in her memory. Sarah gave Delma her present early, a red sweater, so she could wear it to the program.

Christmas day was usually spent nibbling on the home-made Christmas tree ornaments; the tree was usually bare by evening. The next day the tree was removed and Delma installed it in her "play house"--whatever nook of the yard she so designated. Then it had a second career as a tool for Delma's imagination.

We can lament that a tree had such a short life as a Christmas symbol, but living rooms were small and families were large.

The following, entitled "LaVerkin's First Christmas" was recounted some years ago by Delma's mother, Sarah (Wilson) Sanders:

The LaVerkin LDS Ward was organized on June 22, 1904, with Morris Wilson, Jr., as bishop. A rock schoolhouse, built in 1905, also served as a recreation hall and church building. A committee composed of Bishop, Morris Wilson; Relief Society President, Hattie Woodbury; Primary President, Sarah A. Sanders; and MIA President, Minnie Wilson; planned the first LaVerkin Christmas party and program in 1905. Bishop Wilson hauled a cedar tree from the foothills. The butt of the tree was thrust into the hub of a wagon wheel, which served as a stand. The committee decorated the Christmas tree with threaded popcorn, popcorn balls, colorful

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

homemade paper chains, and wax candles. They brought mosquito netting from the Isom store in Virgin City and made bags that were crammed with nuts and candy as presents for the children. They invited Jim Cornelius of Virgin City to ride down and act as old Santa. The people attending the first Christmas party were the families of Bishop Morris Wilson, Joseph Gubler, Henry Gubler, William Sanders, George Jones, William Hardy, Arthur Woodbury, George Judd, and Allen Stout.

The eyes of the children sparkled when the candles were lit and the program was presented. Then Santa appeared to distribute the sacks of candy and nuts. His beard caught fire while he was removing the candy from the tree. Mrs. Joseph Gubler began to claw the burning cotton from Old Santa and scratched his face. Although Santa lost his disguise, no serious injury was caused, and everyone enjoyed the party like one big happy family.

Either they chose accident-prone Santas, or the burning beard story took on a life of its own. Emma, daughter of R.P. Woodbury, recalled a Christmas Eve when Santa got too close to a candle that adorned the big tree, and her own illusions about Santa were shattered. His whiskers ignited and in the rush to extinguish the blaze, they were jerked off. "That's not Santa. That's Powell Stratton!" some urchin exclaimed. Powell, who was a little younger than the earliest settlers, was often in demand as a Santa and for providing musical numbers. He could accompany himself on the guitar while he either sang, or he played the harmonica.

The Fourth of July always opened with a bang; you were awakened at dawn by a small explosion. One morning in about 1921, Owen Sanders recalls that the awakening seemed more like an ending. The blast shook the whole town. At ground zero in the playing field there was a hole about six feet deep and six feet across, and leaves were shredded from the nearby row of trees. Windows were blown out from the little rock schoolhouse and from neighboring homes. Although some teenage and young adult males were interviewed, all evaded blame or censure.

Foot races were important on both the Fourth and Twenty-fourth. For years, Vernon Church took on all comers of any age in a special race, and always beat them. Finally when his son Karl became a teenager, a new champ reigned. The most important ingredient for assuring success of these holidays was the homemade ice cream and the crackers.

Frequently on the Twenty-fourth there would be a community camp-out at the Square. Everybody would try to dress as pioneers and drive over in covered wagons. An evening program would help everyone relive their ancestors' trials and triumphs. Sometimes savage Indians would attack the camp early in the morning. It could be so real that even afterward a kid wasn't quite sure the tomahawk used in his "scalping" was made of foam rubber.

May Day, with the braiding of the maypole, was an important community holiday that has since totally disappeared. It was usually held at the town square, but some years, it was at somebody's farm. As Alice Stratton recalls, "The pretty colors were artistically arranged. The braiding was precise-- over and under, over and under--as the children marched, alternately facing each other. Little girls, dressed in rainbow colored mosquito netting dresses, looked like butterflies braiding the maypole. I know. I was one of them and I remember the elegance of it." A couple of years, Duncan's Flat was the site. Besides braiding the maypole with colorful streamers, there would

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

be swings and teeter-totters set up for the children, and softball and horseshoe games would be played.

Valentine's Day brought a quaint custom involving the "snatch-grab". The perpetrator obtained the most elaborate and fancy valentine possible. He or she would place it at someone's door step, then knock. Just as the supposed recipient went to pick it up, it would fly back to its owner via the attached string.

Halloween was more a time for mischief. The current custom of children going about soliciting treats was unknown. It was a time for pushing over outhouses, dismantling someone's wagon and rebuilding it in some awkward location, and tick-tacking windows. A tick-tack was made by cutting little notches around the rims of a wooden thread-spool then mounting it on an axle and attaching a string. After winding the string around the spool, the tick-tack was placed against some unsuspecting householder's window. The racket produced when you pulled the string was either jarring, or satisfying depending on one's point of view.

Actually, mischief enjoyed an open season. A WPA project was the construction of outdoor privies. Twenty or so had been delivered to various homeowners and put in place. Before they could be bolted down though, a mixed group of teens "borrowed" a trailer and hauled all of them to the town square, where their owners had to retrieve them the next day. Another time, some of the same group swiped a pair of long underwear from a clothes line, stuffed them with straw and ran them up the flagpole by the church.

Memorial Day called for shovels and hoes. Desert shrubs grew over the cemetery during the year; but for that one day, it was spic and span. Various organizations may have taken turns doing the clean up. Muriel Church recalls that the Primary did it for many years.

### Medicine

A medical revolution, still in progress, has taken place since the mid 1930's. Other than a few procedures such as surgery and setting broken bones, a doctor had nothing more to offer a patient than did a gifted home practitioner. In 1935, the druggist's arsenal for combating infection consisted mainly of Mercurochrome, tincture of iodine, hydrogen peroxide, and Epsom's Salts. Aspirin, of course, has been available for pain relief since the late 1800's. About the only prescription drugs a pharmacy carried were narcotic based painkillers. Mumps, measles and whooping cough were assumed to be standard childhood experiences. Blood transfusions were still in the developmental stage. Antibiotics, heart surgery and transplants were far in the future. The medical revolution resulted in at least two things not being done. Mothers are no longer required to remain in bed for two weeks following a baby's birth; and tonsils are no longer routinely removed. It is rare indeed to find someone born prior to 1935 who still has his or her tonsils. They were seen as the culprit in all manner of childhood problems. A reason why their removal seemed so prudent was that when they did become infected and abscessed, the patient's life was in danger. Acute tonsillitis could lead to quinsy, a revolting, acutely painful and dangerous pus-filled swelling in the throat, that seriously interfered with swallowing and talking, and might even impair breathing.



## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

The heartbreak of losing a child to disease or infection blighted the lives of far more families in that earlier time. When Loren Squires moved to LaVerkin in 1919, he recorded some grim statistics from the LaVerkin cemetery. There were twelve graves. Six of the occupants had died prior to their first birthday, one, at age eight; one, at age seventeen; one, at twenty-eight; one, at thirty-one; one, at forty and the eldest, at age forty-seven. Keep in mind that the cemetery had been in use less than twenty years and that the total population of LaVerkin was only about one hundred. Children weren't the only victims. Among the writer's 1937 Hurricane fifth grade class that included the LaVerkin children, at least six students had lost a father, a mother, or, in one case, both.

Goiters were common. Women were about five times more likely to get them than men. They are a swelling around the thyroid gland caused by iodine deficiency that tends to occur in mountainous regions, such as the mountains and uplands of the American west, and Switzerland. The luckier ones just had a swelling at the front of the neck, but some had a large glob that hung from the neck like an apple in a plastic bag. One poor Hurricane woman had one that encircled her neck and kept her in a constant state of choking. When the cause of goiters was discovered, school children in the area were issued iodine pills on a regular basis, probably once a week. They were quite tasty, and most students downed them without any fuss. Adding iodine to table salt solved the problem for good.

There was never a doctor in LaVerkin. The closest one would be in Hurricane, although there were times when Hurricane was also without professional medical services. Even if doctors had been readily available, money was required for their services. There was never enough of that to go around. Mothers had to develop healing skills and had to utilize whatever healing aids nature provided. Pine gum salve was one such mainstay.

Sarah Sanders, wife of William, succeeded two particular times that have been recorded. From Maude Judd's account: "While William was at work, his wife, Sarah, and small son, Clarence, grubbed brush from their lot so it could be plowed and planted. While grubbing one day, Clarence accidentally struck his little sister, Amelia, with his hoe, cutting a deep gash in her head. There was no doctor, so Sarah took care of the wound the best she could, and the girl recovered completely." A daughter, Delma, attests to her mother's healing skills. On a cold winter day when the wood-fired living room heater was nearly red hot, little Delma tripped while playing and her cheek smacked against the stove's rounded belly. She jerked away, but much of her cheek stayed behind. Sarah treated it with daily applications of castor oil and some weeks later no trace of the problem remained.

It was Mary Gubler, or "Aunt May", that most people sought out for help with their ills, and that everybody obeyed when she proclaimed a quarantine. Town board minutes of May 17, 1928 announce her appointment as Health Officer. It was probably more of a "calling" than a paying job; there was nothing in the Board minutes about a salary. She was twice reimbursed for expenses however-- once for \$3.75, the other for \$11.05. She may have had a similar charge from the county prior to the city appointment.

If a communicable disease such as measles or whooping cough visited a home, Aunt May would soon follow. A red flag on the front gate meant, "Nobody comes in, and nobody leaves". This

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

was particularly true for school, church and shopping. If the father wasn't sick, he usually carried on his work as usual.

Aunt May commanded respect because of her skills and because of her caring, but it was her voice that demanded immediate attention. There were no telephones, but Aunt May didn't really need one. She possessed a strong voice. Her children were within reach of her summons anywhere on the bench. If a family was foolish enough to ignore the quarantine on their home and Aunt May saw one of them out in public, besides having a commanding physical presence, her expostulations would be heard by the entire populace. It was a risk no one ever took. It could be that everybody trained their voices to carry long distances then. If Henry, who lived nearly two blocks from his brother, had business to conduct some morning, he would go out on the front porch and call, "Oh, Jo-oe!" Joseph would soon answer back and they would have their discussion.

May's expertise wasn't confined to medical lore, she had useful advice on numerous subjects. Washday, for example, meant standing about all day scrubbing clothes, tending boiling tubs of water, et cetera. To avoid miserably cold feet on a nasty January washday, she advised sprinkling a little cayenne pepper in one's shoes.

Farming is a dangerous occupation and people had to learn to patch themselves up. Sometimes the accidents were more serious. In 1921, Henry Gubler nearly died when he stepped off into a gully one dark night while coming in from his homestead at the Canaan Gap. The pony he was riding had been picking its way along in the dark when it suddenly stopped and refused to budge. Henry should have taken a lesson from Balaam of the Old Testament, but instead he dismounted and began to walk forward. He stepped off the precipice that had halted his mount. He lit on his feet, but the impact shattered the bones in his feet, legs and hips. His son, Ovando, eventually found him. He used pillows as splints to ready his father for the agonizing trip home in their wagon. Henry was more than lucky to be alive, but there was absolutely no hope that he would ever walk again. The bones in his legs were too thoroughly pulverized. At least that's what the doctors said. Henry thought otherwise. He devised his own therapy program that included hours of daily exercise over a two-year period seated on a sawhorse, plus daily workouts at the hot sulfur springs. Ovando faithfully carried his father piggyback down into the water for each hydrotherapy session. Throughout the ordeal, Henry maintained his resolve, and he did walk again.

A document in possession of Henry's daughter, Ruth, indicates that Henry's neighbors were willing to share their meager resources on his behalf. It reads: "Henry Gubler one of our honorable citizens had the sad misfortune during early spring to break both of his legs, and thus became incapable for several months to come. We the undersigned esteem it a privilege and a pleasure to give the amount placed opposite our names, to assist our brother to carry the great burden that rests so heavily upon him". Twenty-three people donated. The amounts ranged from one to twenty five dollars for a total of \$115.00. The money didn't go for Henry's personal expenses. One of the boys was on a Mission at the time; the hundred and fifteen dollars was just the amount needed to keep him out there. Henry wasn't a large man to begin with and because he had difficulty standing or sitting erectly afterwards, he appeared to be even smaller.

After World War II, he purchased a new Kaiser-Frazier automobile. It was a large car that Henry

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

found he could best aim by peering just under the top of the steering wheel. When folks round-about saw a car in motion being driven by a hat, they knew Henry was on the road again. Henry didn't let a physical impairment interfere with a lifetime of church, business and community service.

Dentistry has undergone its own revolution in technology, services and in the number of dentists available. Throbbing pain from decaying teeth was a way of life. Abscessed teeth could be a cause of death. Will Sanders owned some dental pliers and was skilled at pulling rotting teeth. He didn't charge anything, he pulled teeth just to alleviate suffering. But when a St. George dentist heard about him and threatened to sue, Will quit. Ervil took the pliers over and did a few emergency extractions.

Owen Sanders' first underwent the torture of a dentist's office in Hurricane during the mid twenties. The dentist used a foot-operated treadle powered drill. The pain he inflicted far overshadowed that of his successor, Dr. Gibson, who had electrically powered equipment. Even so, Dr. Gibson's office is synonymous with "torture chamber" in the minds of many older local residents. His drills were far slower than modern models and caused far more pain. His needles were re-usable and thus had to be much larger so they could be properly cleaned. Needles required frequent sharpening, but certificates attesting to his sharpening skills were conspicuously absent from the office walls. He punched the needles in rather than inserted them.

### Death

Mortuaries are a blessing to modern Relief Society Presidencies. Prior to the 1940's, it was they who were responsible for all the tasks necessary to prepare a deceased for burial. This included lining the coffin, making burial clothes, bathing and dressing the body, and tending the body night and day. A local carpenter, usually Bill Nielson, made the casket. Lack of embalming meant funerals were conducted no more than two days following death. At least one person would have stayed with the body throughout the night, applying wet cloths to keep the face from going black.

Sitting up with the dead may also have been done as a show of respect and to just keep an eye on things. When long-time LaVerkin resident Alice (Isom) Gubler Stratton was a Hurricane teenager along in the twenties, a neighbor, old Sister Wilson, passed away and Alice was asked by her mother to sit up one night with the body. The prospect of being with a dead person nearly scared Alice to death and although an obedient maid, she did want a good reason for doing so. "Well, sometimes people think a person's dead, but they're not. Someone needs to be there in case she wakes up" replied her mother. Jittery with fear, she reported that evening to where the body was laid out in the Wilson's living room. A forty-watt light bulb hanging from the ceiling provided little more than an ominous gloom. The empty wooden box for holding the coffin was on the floor near the body. It was a hot summer, night and fruit jars containing ice were packed around the body; spare jars of ice were by the cellar steps. A large electric fan turned on high was positioned near the feet to help keep the body cool.

As she nervously commenced her vigil, she was joined by the deceased's grandson, Clarence Mangum, who decided to help out. Clarence had a fondness for drink, and this situation called

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

for extra portions. Soon, he really needed to lie down and he picked the one comfortable facility to lie in--the coffin box. As Alice was adapting to being with apparently two bodies, the fan caused Sister Wilson's long hair to come loose from the bun into which it had been arranged, and for the rest of the night, it swirled and waved out away from her head as if it were alive. Alice kept telling herself that Sister Wilson's body wasn't also beginning to move, but just as her nerves would calm down and her fears subside, Clarence, in his drunken state would shatter the stillness by letting out a loud groan, or kicking the side of the box.

As midnight passed, Alice was becoming somewhat used to the situation but she was also lonelier now and more attuned to any new night-noise. The windows were open to admit cool air and a cat slipped in through one of them. It announced its presence by dislodging a jar of ice, sending it crashing down the cellar steps. The cat was even more frightened by the racket than was Alice, and it let out a blood-curdling yowl. Giving up on bravery, Alice tensely awaited the dawn expecting each breath to be her last.

### Farming

Crops from apples to strawberries flourish in LaVerkin. The more important money crops upon which local farmers relied are discussed below.

Sorghum cane thrives in the long hot Dixie growing season and it was a boon to the region for years prior to LaVerkin's birth. Sorghum molasses was the sweetener of choice for spreading on bread, for a flavoring and for making candy. It can have gourmet qualities. For example, any cook who has used it for flavoring would choose it over molasses products derived from sugar cane. It is not as intensely sweet as is sugar or even honey and cost and availability were its main attractions. Sugar was prohibitively expensive for most households, and without molasses, meals would have been bland indeed. It was probably LaVerkin's single most important "money" crop. There were as many as seven sorghum mills in operation at one time. Every fall LaVerkin farmers headed north to peddle sorghum molasses. Sometimes they received cash, Sometimes they traded for potatoes or flour. The term "sorghum lappers" was bestowed on Dixie residents by crass individuals who lived in Iron County and points north.

Gallon and half-gallon cans were the favored molasses container later on, but until they were available, it was put up in wood barrels. Marcellus Wright, a carpenter and blacksmith, was important to the early sorghum producers because he made good barrels. These barrels didn't bulge in the middle as wood barrels typically do. Instead they were large at the bottom and sloped to a narrower opening at the top. The inside surface was fired with a blow torch to keep the wood from imparting its own flavor to the molasses, or whatever product, such as pickles, that were to be put in the barrel. Metal for hoops was unavailable, they were made of black willow or ash. Barrel makers such as Marcellus and George Campbell of Hurricane had awesome skill. Each barrel stave had to be cut and planed by hand. The sides had to be tapered perfectly to achieve a watertight fit.

The Seglers also made important contributions early on. They brought superior seed with them when they moved from their sorghum-growing home in the Southern States. Joseph Gubler met the Howell Segler family while on his mission and, later, when learning they wanted to move

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

closer to Church headquarters, convinced them that LaVerkin was just the right distance. The Seglers had nursed Joseph and his companion when illness struck them on their mission. Joseph returned the favor by helping the Seglers make the journey from the Lund railhead, and by sharing his home until they found one of their own. Howell, with the help of Morris Wilson and William Hardy, purchased the first copper pan in which to boil molasses. Apparently, both Howell and his wife had expertise in molasses making that they shared with others.

The Seglers were used to mules in their southern home and they soon had a couple of teams in LaVerkin. It became obvious, though, that horses could outperform mules, and they were gradually replaced. Except for "Old Becky" that is. Young Betty Segler practically lived on Old Becky. The patient mule was also harnessed to pull a small rubber-tired wagon in which the family traveled. As years passed, neighbors noted that Old Becky moved slower and slower while pulling the wagon. Finally, she just stopped moving altogether and died in her harness, surrounded by those who loved her.

Making sorghum molasses is both a science and an art that was typically passed on from father to son. Morris Wilson taught Wayne, Wayne taught Dale, and Dale has taught his sons and grandsons. It is now just a family hobby, but one that is keeping a most important tradition alive. Plus, it enables the current Wilsons to enjoy the product.

Producing sorghum molasses is exhaustingly labor-intensive, only farmers with large families would dare attempt it. Ten acres of sorghum cane represented a huge commitment. Lacking modern fertilizers, only land that had previously been in alfalfa was planted to cane. (Legumes such as alfalfa add nitrogen to the soil.) The ground would be plowed and prepared for seeding in the fall. Seeds were hand sown, preferably, one seed about every twelve inches. After seeding, the field was irrigated lightly, and a horse-drawn drag was pulled crossways over the land to cover the seeds. About ten days later, the shoots would be up enough that a cultivator could be used to create furrows for irrigating. Thinning was the next big job that required every lad big enough to wield a hoe. After that came constant weeding. The rows extended forever if you were a boy riding the cultivator horse, but that was the easy part. Next you followed along with a hoe to get the weeds the cultivator missed. By the fifth weeding, the cane had become high enough that its shade killed all the weeds except morning glory. Morning glory grew up the stalks and unless removed before extracting the juice, it ruined the syrup's flavor.

Harvest time was in October; each acre of cane produced from one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty gallons. First, the stalks were cut off at the ground by use of a hoe and laid in an orderly fashion. Next, the seed tassels were cut off and the seeds stored for use as animal feed. The stalks were then typically loaded onto a sled that was about eight feet long, four feet high, and four feet wide to be taken to the mill. At the mill, the horses were unhitched from the sled, then hooked to an overhead boom to provide power for crushing the stalks between two steel drums. Juice flowed into a barrel and from there into a series of five to seven progressively smaller vats that sat over a primitive wood-fired furnace. Heat caused the moisture to evaporate off and the liquid to gradually turn into the desired product. Applying the proper amount of heat and constant skimming were crucial; as was knowing the exact moment to stop the cooking. Processing the juice when it was still fresh was also essential. Dale worked far into the night when a lot of juice had been extracted. At the end, he would have six gallons of sorghum from each sixty gallons of juice. The crushed stalks, or bagasse, became silage. The skimmings were

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

saved in a barrel, then used as pig feed. It was a nutritious product, and one that developed an alcoholic kick if allowed to sit for just a few days. The pigs never complained.

Dale recalls two ways to enjoy sorghum cane prior to processing it into molasses. The cane's juice is very sweet. You could cut a stalk, then get the juice by twisting an individual section until the section began splitting open and the juice oozed into your mouth. The other was just before the cooking was completed--dip a ladle into the hot syrup, and you have a treat so good it's worth provoking the molasses maker's wrath. There are risks though: twisting the stalks often meant a painfully cut tongue, dipping into the hot syrup often meant a burned one.

Fruit thrives in the LaVerkin sun and soil. Peaches and pears have probably always been the two main commercially grown fruits, with cherries and, then, strawberries also being important. For years, each farmer marketed his crops by peddling. As improved transportation opened up new marketing possibilities that included the sale of fresh, rather than dried fruit, additional orchards were planted. Paved highways made it easier to export fruit and also encouraged tourist travel so that people could come to the fruit. Fruit stands were stationed along the highway in LaVerkin, Hurricane and Santa Clara.

Gretchen Stratton, whose husband, Powell, had orchards, ran a fruit stand at the junction of the highway leading to Zion. Two or more Greyhound buses a week, went by in those days and they would stop at her stand. Gretchen was blind but few strangers became aware of her infirmity. She organized her money so that she could instantly make change. She could identify coins by feel but she had to guess at the denominations of paper money. She just assumed that all bills were in the amount of one dollar unless someone told her otherwise.

LaVerkin farmers took the lead in getting growers organized. The Washington County Fruit Growers Association consisting of farmers from Santa Clara, Leeds, Toquerville, LaVerkin and Hurricane was formed about 1936 with Reed Wilson as its first president. The objectives were to help farmers produce a uniformly high quality product and to receive the best possible return. The Association, which lasted probably twelve years, provided guidance for farmers in quality control; worked closely with State inspectors to insure that only Grade A fruit was shipped; provided baskets for packing and transporting the fruit; and contracted with marketing firms to sell it. Fruit was hauled by truck to the railhead in Cedar City or, sometimes, directly to Salt Lake. During its first year of operation, fifty-five carloads were sent north from Cedar.

What the Association couldn't do was insure profitability. At best there was meager compensation for the labor and cost of pruning, fertilizing, worrying through spring frosts. Countless hours were also spent irrigating, thinning, applying insecticides, and picking and packing fruit. One year there wasn't enough revenue to pay for the baskets. A grower might lay awake during the year worrying about frosts, moisture, insects and prices. Not at harvest time though. For about ten days and nights he rarely got to bed.

Availability of labor at harvest time wasn't a serious problem during the thirties when the Depression was in full swing. Junior and senior high school boys and girls and young adults were happy to work for the going orchard wage. In fact, fruit picking and packing was an important element of teen culture. Quinta Neilson and Afton Wilson took pride in how rapidly

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

and artfully they could pack pears and “ring-face” the top layer. Afton Stratton was usually the fastest cherry picker of the crew with which she worked. Being fastest yielded more than prestige; the one who picked the most usually got a little bonus at the end of the day.

Wayne Wilson could usually get enough workers to pick and process his pears. Reed Wilson raised fuzzy peaches, though, and he had to do more hustling. He coached a boys' baseball team, and somehow, teenagers such as DeLance and Phil Squire found that picking peaches for Reed was part of the baseball conditioning program.

The available local labor pool shrunk as the War progressed, but a new source emerged. War-induced hysteria caused the Federal Government to uproot thousands of loyal Americans of Japanese descent from their homes and send them to internment camps. They were a ready source of high quality labor until the war ended. After the war, local youth found more lucrative pursuits than picking peaches and pears. (Bulldozers were called in.)

LaVerkin was once known for chickens. E.J. Graff of Hurricane developed a huge chicken growing operation that lasted for a number of years, until 1980. For a time he was the largest chicken grower anywhere in the West. A mishap, that befell E.J.'s chickens, also illustrates how LaVerkin and Hurricane have frequently cooperated in services, such as fire fighting. As Hurricane resident, Willard Webb, who was chief of the volunteer fire department at the time recalled:

A call came from LaVerkin one winter night when the north wind was howling. Graff's chicken coops were ablaze. The coops that housed approximately 100,000 chickens consisted of two long units just a few feet apart oriented in a north-south direction. The fire, probably the result of arson, had started at the north end of the east unit. A single fire hydrant was about 500 feet away, but fortunately close enough for the hoses to reach. Two factors made the situation grim. The wind was whipping the flames toward the south. The other was that when flames entered an individual coop, the hens would all fly up in unison. The flapping of their wings whipped up the flammable chicken dung, which would literally explode. The explosions probably brought a mercifully quick death to the hens, but they also hastened the fire's progress, and they made the spread of fire to the west wing inevitable. Willard's crew quickly got one hose over the east wing well down-wind from the fire so they could fight the fire from both sides as well as hose down the west wing. Within minutes they had tamed what had appeared to be the makings of a total disaster. Afterwards, E.J. expressed his gratitude for what they had accomplished. When he first arrived at the scene, he assumed his entire operation was lost and was amazed at the speed and efficiency in which the crew completed its task.

Dairying also had its day. Vernon Church's meager teaching salary wasn't enough to support his family. Early on, he discovered he could gain a little extra revenue by selling milk. Almost every family kept at least one milk cow, but Vernon always maintained enough to have a marketable surplus. When he hired Bill Nielson to build a home for him in the 1930's, he paid Bill partly in milk at a rate of six cents per quart, that Walter or Warren delivered each morning.

In the early 1940's, LaFell Iverson, principal of the Hurricane Elementary school, asked Vernon to provide milk for the school lunch program. This meant increasing the herd and becoming

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

certified as producing Grade A milk, the first dairy south of Provo to be so designated. Arden Dairy began offering milk in paper cartons, and to compete, the Church dairy purchased similar equipment. By now they were also producing cottage cheese and chocolate milk and they had begun providing dairy products to Zion Lodge and cafes in the east end of the County. There was also a brisk business in selling raw whole milk to walk-in customers. A new blow was dealt by a law requiring that all commercial dairies sell only pasteurized milk. It meant going into debt, and it meant that they had to charge more for the milk they sold. As a result, they lost most of their walk-in customers to dairies in Hurricane that didn't have to be designated as "commercial".

Other markets, such as Las Vegas, kept growing, though, and in 1948, Church's purchased purebred Holsteins and were milking forty cows at a time. In 1958 Hi-Land Dairy began buying up small dairies around the State, including the Church Dairy. Within a year, the cows were gone.

Turkeys were raised, since the 1930's by the Sanders brothers, Ervil, Moroni and Bill. They began by buying poults and raising them to adults. As they gained experience, they expanded into a fully integrated turkey operation. They acquired incubators for hatching baby turkeys, they sold poults, and they raised turkeys for market. They operated a feed store that purchased raw materials for turkey feed and then they mixed ingredients to create desired products. One was a mix for laying hens, another was for turkeys being prepared for market, and so on. E.J. Graff, Reed and Wayne Wilson, Joe Gubler and his son, Lyman, and possibly others, also became turkey growers.

For a few years, turkeys were LaVerkin's main business and LaVerkin became one of the West's leading turkey producers. LaVerkin has a good winter climate for turkeys but it is too hot for them in the summer, so growers would have part of their operations located in Iron County where it is cooler.

Before disastrous turkey diseases struck in the late 1950's, the growers made enough from year to year to at least keep hope alive, and they provided reasonably steady and diverse employment for many people who otherwise couldn't have remained in LaVerkin. "Turkey sexer" was one such job. Anna (Stratton) Slack could pick up a turkey chick, peer into its rectum with a special loupe she wore at her eye, determine the sex, and segregate it appropriately, all in a second or two. The males and females went to separate feeding pens.

Mature turkeys were kept as breeding stock by the Sanders Brothers. Owen Sanders, who was the purchasing agent for the feed store, received an order from his brother, Ervil, for 2,000 turkey saddles. As Owen had many times learned, Ervil was a dedicated prankster. Before tossing out the order though, Owen double checked and was surprised to learn that turkey saddles were indeed legitimate. It seems that amorous toms lack both finesse and consideration, and that hens frequently suffer severe wounds during love making. The saddles insure safer sex. Artificial insemination eventually eliminated romance from the coops entirely.

Turkey growing adheres closely to Murphy's Law: "What can go wrong, will". Cecil and Delma (Sanders) Dutton were tending about 10,000 of the Sanders turkeys near Cedar City one winter when a violent wind came up late in the night. It overturned most of the coops, killing hundreds



## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

of turkeys. While Cecil worked to restore order, Delma drove to summon help from her brothers. No one slept any more that night. Another time, a sudden summer thunderstorm caused a thousand or so deaths simply because the turkeys all decided to run down into a depression that was in the process of being filled with flood waters. Arthur Woodbury declared turkeys to be the “dumbest critters on the farm”.

Disease brought a dramatic end to the turkey business. Within a few months, millions of dollars worth of healthy turkeys were reduced to rotting garbage and their owners were reduced to near penury. The three Sanders brothers salvaged what they could and two of them moved away where opportunities appeared to be less gloomy. Not only was Reed Wilson's source of income gone, he owed a \$50,000.00 feed bill. He was forced to sell a two thousand-acre mountain ranch in order to meet his obligations. He went to work for the state. The Gublers reeled from a similar blow. Lyman launched into the trucking business, making hauls between the Midwest and the West Coast in order to pay off the huge family debt and to support his own wife and children.

The family farm, as a means of family support, was passing into history. In LaVerkin, by the 1960's, only Horatio and Ovando Gubler were depending on farming and cattle ranching as their main source of income, and they were soon to retire.

### Religion

It isn't feasible to separate church and community affairs during LaVerkin's first years, and we have already gotten the LaVerkin Ward organized as part of the St. George Stake. It became part of the newly organized Zion Park Stake December 8, 1929. One ward was sufficient for seventy years. It was split in two in 1973. By 1981, LaVerkin was the nucleus of a stake, the Hurricane North. In 1984, the new stake chapel was completed, and the LaVerkin Stake was born. This chapter will chart the development of church activities and building projects.

Ward leaders from 1904 until creation of the LaVerkin Stake are as follows: ( the bishop is named first, followed by all who served as counselors.)

1904 - 1928: Morris Wilson, Jr., Henry Gubler, Allen Stout, Loren Squire.

1928 - 1931: Ovando Gubler, Loren Squire, Lafell Iverson.

1931 - 1942: Vernon Church, Lafell Iverson, Wickley Gubler.

1942 - 1945: Loren Squire, H. Winferd Gubler, Leonard Hardy.

1945 - 1949: Horatio Gubler, Roland Webb, Karl Church.

1949 - 1956: Wayne Wilson, Ervil Sanders, Walter Church.

1956 - 1962: Lafell Iverson, Walter Segler, Kent Wilson, Wickley Gubler, Gerald Gifford.

1962 - 1965: Loren Squire, Wickley Gubler, Gerald Gifford, Sheldon Demille.

1965 - 1973: Reed Wilson, Sheldon DeMille, Thell Gubler.

1973 - 1978: Lloyd Howard, Kerry Gubler, Max Richan, Devar Gubler, Edward Reber, Craig DeMille, Lyman Gubler.

(Additions to the chapel were made, including a spire on top of the cultural hall)

Ovando Gubler's three-year term as bishop was unusual in that he was a bachelor at the time. By

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

the end of Bishop Howard's term, LaVerkin's population had grown to over a thousand, and two Wards were created: the LaVerkin First, with Kerry Gubler, Bishop; Ben Wilkin and Lyman Gubler as counselors, and the LaVerkin Second, with Walter Church, Bishop; Antone Hinton, and LaMar Gubler as counselors. The creation of two wards marked the end of an era. The town family was split in two and many tears were shed.

The difficulties and sacrifices required for a small rural ward to build a chapel are hard to appreciate at the present time when, the LDS Church hires contractors to build chapels and pays all the construction costs. This wasn't the policy for most of the century. The Church helped with funding, but much of the cash, and practically all the labor, came from local members. The usual ratio was sixty percent of construction costs were paid by the Church and forty percent came from local donations. Money was scarce then. People grew much of what they ate, of course, but the typical family sees as much cash in a week now as they did then in a year.

The Church lacked the resources to give more assistance for chapel construction. In the late 1800's, the Church was financially "on the rocks". Persecution of the Church because of polygamy had devastated its finances. The Manifesto of 1890 ended that problem, but two nationwide economic crises struck--the Panic of 1891 and the Panic of 1893. Apostle, Heber J. Grant who was a nationally known businessman was able to obtain loans from New York bankers that kept the Church solvent.

The burden was on local wards, but there were also blessings. The hundreds of money raising events, the sacrifices of time and money made by people working together, brought a kinship that probably comes in no other way. That kinship is fondly remembered by people who experienced it in their various capacities as ward members, as bishops, as relief society presidents and as other ward leaders.

The building known as the White Chapel was built one segment at a time beginning in 1925. The final project was completed almost fifty years later, just a few years prior to the building being sold to the city in 1993 to house the LaVerkin City offices.

The recreation hall was built first. It hosted every kind of activity from sacrament meetings to basketball games beginning in 1926. The chapel itself was next, and was first used Sunday, February 11, 1962. Additional classrooms and office space were added later. The first two building phases took years of sacrifice and ingenious fundraising schemes to be paid off. The little ward had just two hundred and thirty one men, women and children in 1930. When you look at the building, think "dime-a-dip" dinners, fund-raising stage dramas, and families going without even minor luxuries so they could donate to the building fund. Even luxuries such as lavatories were an avoidable expense. Two outhouses, one for boys and one for girls, served both the little rock school house, and later the White chapel, until into the 1940's.

Loren Squire (6) described the process of initiating construction as follows:

April 6, 1925, the LaVerkin Ward bishopric met on the ground where the recreation hall now stands for the purpose of making plans to build what our Bishop Wilson called an 'all purpose building'. We measured out a building large enough to play basketball, with a good size stage at

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

one end, and plans for a basement that would accommodate classrooms. The plans were sent in to the Church Office for approval. At bishop's council meeting two weeks later, Bishop Wilson read the letter from the authorities in which they stated we were wanting to build all out of reason and much too large. I stated that maybe we were asking for too large a building. I remember so well that Bishop Wilson put his hand on my knee and said, 'My dear brother, you will live to see over six hundred people living in LaVerkin. I won't, but you will'.

The bishopric decided that we did need that large a building. We started to dig the basement with teams of horses, plowing and scraping the basement, [they would have used horse-drawn earth moving implements known as fresnos], pulling most of the dirt out on the road all across the front of the building. In the center of the basement a furnace room eighteen feet square was dug eight foot deep. Picks and shovels were used to toss dirt out where scrapers couldn't reach.

Several teams and wagons went to Mt. Trumbull for lumber. (Owen Sanders helped haul lumber from Kaibab to make the roof trusses.) Cement was hauled from the railhead in Cedar City by wagons and by trucks. Nathon Porter and George Elder did most of the building over the next two years, with others helping. Ward members contributed almost all the food they and their families needed during this time.

The fifteen-inch thick walls are of concrete. Generous quantities of limestone were added to make the aggregate go further. Woven fencing gave added strength to the concrete. Roof trusses were made up of one-inch by fourteen-inch pine lumber fastened together with sixteen-penny nails. Owen Sanders describes Nathon Porter as being a genius of design and of innovation. Nathon was unschooled but he knew how to correctly design and build the trusses so that would do their job indefinitely. Only the crudest tools and machinery were available for mixing the concrete and for pouring it down into the walls. As the walls got too high to easily get the concrete up by human power, Nathon devised an elevator to do the job powered by an old car motor.

Owen, as a teenager, like other ward members donated many hours of labor. His contributions weren't entirely voluntary. His father, Will, driving by the construction site on the way to the farm, would ask, "Do you need any help today?" They always did, and Owen would get elected to do it.

Maude Judd gives the following report concerning the building:

"A new meeting house, a concrete building; was erected in LaVerkin in 1925-1926, having a seating capacity of six hundred. It also has five classrooms and a Relief Society room in the basement. In the rear of the main auditorium is a recreation stage twenty by forty feet. The erection of the building represents an outlay of \$15,000.00."

It was truly a multipurpose building-- serving as a chapel on Sunday, a drama theater or a dance hall on Friday or Saturday nights, and a gymnasium for basketball.

A grievous oversight, as far as future basketball stars were concerned, was that no foul lines were marked on the floor--at least not at first. Implorings by the youth to rectify the problem fell on deaf ears. So one night, young Thell Gubler and a couple of friends, eased themselves into the

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

building. (They probably didn't have to pick a lock as the building was rarely locked.) After careful measurements, they went to work using liquid black shoe polish. They were soon apprehended and were summoned to a meeting of the bishopric where they were duly reprimanded for their misdeeds. What did not happen, however, was any suggestion that the line be removed. The good-natured bishop, Vernon Church, who always upheld law and order, had observed the well-made line and knew a good thing when he saw it.

Maude Judd reported that January 16, 1955, the church building was finally dedicated; even though it had been in use since 1925. A chapel was to be built later.

Summer "cooling" was accomplished by opening windows and having hand-fans available, that displayed a religious motif when opened out. Two wood or coal-fired heaters in the basement kept winter's cold at bay. A chute on the north side of the building eased the task of bringing in fuel. When asked about her childhood fears, one LaVerkin native said she was afraid of going near the crude doorway that opened to the fuel chute. She was sure the Devil lived down there. Vents provided for convectional air circulation; there was no forced-air provision.

Walter and Warren Church had the job of stoking the heaters. They got fires going at 4:00 a.m. on Sunday. After services were over, they mixed a little coal oil with sawdust, applied it to the floor, and swept up. They received four dollars a month each, which put them among the big money earners of the day.

In January 1960, Bishop Lafell Iverson reported the new chapel would cost around \$111,000.00. The Ward's share would be \$55,000.00, and \$22,228.00 would need to be on hand before starting. Joseph Gubler was called on a mission as the clerk for keeping track of the building project. Groundbreaking ceremonies were conducted in February, and fund raising activities such as "dime-a-dips", birthday calendars, and county fair booths, were begun. In March, though, the cost was revised upward and the Ward's share was raised to \$68,310.00. This was a most discouraging time for the little group. One shot in the arm was provided by the Hurricane South Ward. One of its ward's dinners yielded \$500.00 that was donated to the LaVerkin Ward. Additional money was also raised at home, and in May of 1960, construction began. An accounting in November of 1961 showed that over \$34,000.00 was still needed. Also, that \$12,000.00 worth of labor had been promised, but only \$5,000.00 worth had been done.

Women did much of the inside labor. The account showed 1,270 hours of women's work doing painting and laying both floor and ceiling tile. The construction foreman was very particular about the quality of painting and varnishing that was done. When he became satisfied that Genevieve (Heaton) Gubler had the proper skill, she got to do just about all the varnishing. Fortunately, she was both skilled, and fast.

The first church services held in the new chapel, were on February 11, 1962, although they were still paying off the ward's share of the costs. In fact, during Reed Wilson's term of office that ended in 1973, about \$20,000 was raised to finally pay off the debt.

Additional segments were built in the 1970's, again financed by combined Church, and local efforts. As indicated above, population growth had necessitated the creation of two wards, and

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

population planners knew that growth would continue. A new stake, the Hurricane North, was created in 1981 with the two LaVerkin wards as its nucleus. The new stake offices were housed in Virgin after a short stay in Hurricane.

The LDS Church had now become strong enough financially to take over all construction costs so that when a new stake center was planned it didn't mean a new round of squeezed family budgets. A major contribution was required though--that of land. Both Horatio and Ovando Gubler owned property on the north end of town where the new building was proposed to be located. The two brothers and their wives met with the stake presidency and, with the wholehearted support of their families, offered whatever land was desired. The three and one-quarter acre piece of prime real estate that was finally chosen, was cheerfully donated by Ovando and Edna Gubler.

When the building was completed in 1984, Stake President Leon Lewis handed the contractor a check for one million and five hundred dollars. Now the Stake had its own home and no longer had to find temporary quarters in the Virgin chapel. The LaVerkin Utah Stake was born. Besides those in LaVerkin, there were the Toquerville, Virgin and Springdale Wards. The white chapel continued to house two of the LaVerkin wards. The new stake center housed the stake offices and in 1987, became the house for the newly formed Third Ward also.

Excess irrigation water very nearly did to the white chapel what it had done to the little rock schoolhouse. Slumping, caused by saturated soil, meant either expensive repairs or abandonment. The Church Building Department refused to spend money for its rehabilitation and the wrecking ball loomed in the building's future. A new chapel was constructed in Toquerville to take pressure off the stake center, and later when a second Toquerville ward was formed, it included the north end of LaVerkin.

Cleared of buildings, the original site would have had considerable resale value, but fortunately, the wrecking ball never swung. The growing city entity needed housing, and after polling ward members, the decision was made to sell the building and lot to the city for the sum of \$38,000.00. The sale was consummated in 1993. After making structural modifications, removing the steeple as specified in the contract, putting on some new roofing, and doing some internal remodeling, the city had a home. A most important historical landmark had been preserved. Since pressurized, rather than flood, irrigation is now used in LaVerkin, saturated subsoil should never again imperil the white chapel.

Two other organizations who appeared later on the scene are the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Mountain View Bible Church. Both currently have chapels and offer religious services in LaVerkin.

### Sources

(1) A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LA VERKIN HOT SPRINGS AND THE LA VERKIN CANAL. DUP, 1986.

(2) A HISTORY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, Douglas D. Alder, Karl F. Brooks. Utah

## History of LaVerkin

Victor Hall

State Historical Society, Washington County Commission, 1996.

- (3) Deseret News, June 26, 1852, as quoted in Utah Historical Quarterly
- (4) GEOLOGY OF UTAH William Lee Stokes, University of Utah, 1986
- (5) History of Mary A. Gubler
- (6) HURRICANE VALLEY, Selected Short Stories reflecting The Founding Of The Hurricane Valley. SUP, 1989.
- (7) The Journal of The LaVerkin First Ward, Loren DeLance Squire (About 1980)
- (8) "LaVerkin", Maude M. Judd in Under Dixie Sun, Washington County Chapter Daughters Utah Pioneers, 1950
- (9) LaVerkin City Council Meeting Minutes.
- (10) Washington County Court Records, December 3, 1856, as quoted in Two Rivers Run Through It, A sesquicentennial Tribute To Toquerville, 1997, By Dr. Wesley Larson.
- (11) Washington County News files on microfilm.
- (12) "Wayne Wilson Memoirs". (Unpublished document)

### Interviews:

Ken Anderson, Afton (Wilson) Ballard, Quinta (Nielson) Beatty, Clark Campbell, Delma (Sanders) Dutton, Walter and Muriel (Stratton) Church, Jack and Faun (Gubler) Eves, Gary DeMille, Rolfe Griffiths, Kerry Gubler, Thell Gubler, Lyman Gubler, Ethelyn Humphries, Thomas and Shirley (Hinton) Judd, Gladys (Woodbury) Isom, Leon Lewis, Wesley Larson, James Lemmon, Kay McMullin, Ray Mendoza, Cherrie (Gubler) Naegle, Ruth (Gubler) Nielson, Burt and Maxine (Toland) Pace, Owen Sanders, Adrien Squire, Don Squire, Ray and Afton (Stratton) Stapley, Alice (Isom) Gubler Stratton, Willard Webb, Dale Wilson, Reed and Maureen (Sullivan) Wilson, Gordon Wood, Ardella (Gubler) Heiner, Gaylynn (Gubler) Wisner.

### Editing assistance

Antone Bringhurst, Leon Hall, Ethelyn Humphries, Eldon Pierce, Cherrie Naegle, Owen Sanders, Alice Stratton, Dani Bettridge.