

## BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY SNOWVILLE, UTAH

Compiled by John T. Arbon

About the middle of August, 1848 a trapper, explorer and military man by the name of Captain Samuel J. Hensley crossed through what was to become Snowville and westward through the Curlew valley. He and his men were exploring for a cut-off to join the main traveled road that went north from Salt Lake City to Fort Hall then westward and southwest traveling through the "City of Rocks" (near the present Yhost-Malta, Idaho area) and down the Humbolt River through Nevada and into California and the west coast. His cut-off exploration was so successful that he talked a contingent of returning Mormon Battalion men (and one woman) into taking the cut-off instead of going all the way to Fort Hall before turning southward on the road that lead to Salt Lake City. Captain Hensley met the men of the Mormon Battalion while journeying along the Humbolt River into Nevada. Hensley called the Curley Valley stream Deep Creek. One note on the event said that the "creek was so deep and the banks so steep that a bridge had to be constructed to get their wagons across." Other names along the trail from the Bear River to Snowville are attributed to Captain Hensley, as Blue Spring (Blue Creek), Hansel's Spring (Dilly-Ranch Spring). Hensley's cut-off journey and that of the returning Mormon Battalion was so successful that from then on the road was used and known as the "Salt Lake Cut-Off." It seems quite natural for the establishment of a settlement in the Curlew Valley at a point which would be near the crossing of the old "Salt Lake Cut-Off" road and Deep Creek and this is where our forefathers decided to establish their new community in 1771.

In 1870 some people from Malad, Idaho came to look over the Curlew Valley. Both they and those who came to settle the following year described the valley as green and beautiful. The grass was tall and would wave as the ripple of waves of the sea as the wind blew over it. The valley extended 42 miles from what is now the Idaho line to the Utah shores of the Great Salt Lake. The Deep Creek flowing through the valley came from deep springs some 12 miles north of the present town sight. In 1876 Apostle Lorenzo Snow made the following prophecy relative to the stability of Deep Creek. "Deep Creek would be an everlasting stream whose waters should never diminish and one from which many should come to drink!" There was great promise in this vast area with its creek of water and endless waving grass for the raising of stock and the history says briefly, "In 1871 the Arbon brothers (George and Charles) and Richard Potter came from Malad with about a dozen families and settled near the present site of Snowville on Deep Creek." The personal histories of some of these early settlers tell us of the very difficult hardships that they endured during those first years of the settlement. Families lived in dugouts made in the banks of Deep Creek until they could

haul logs from the Black Pine Mountains and build themselves better homes. The gray jack rabbit and the herds of grasshoppers left little for them when the fall harvest was in. In 1877 and again in 1879 the inroads of the jack rabbit were so severe that at the latter date there were many who advocated abandoning the settlement, but a staunch few said they were staying and from then on (about 1880) things began to change for the better.

The following notes are reproduced from the volume, *The History of Box Elder County*, Chapter 25, pages 292-293. This was compiled by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers of Box Elder County Chapter.

"Several of Snowville's first settlers, George Arbon, his Brother Charles Arbon, Joseph Robbins and Richard Potter, came from Malad in 1871. John Houtz came from Salt Lake City to build up a cattle ranch which project was very successful. William Robbins a Civil War veteran, who came from New York to Ogden, later moved to Snowville to build a home. William M. Howell came to Snowville at a very early date. In 1877 William Cottam came from Pottersville. These men and their families have been prominent factors in the development of this section."

"Though some distance from populous centers, the Curlew Valley even at that time, was a beautiful landscape, a veritable field of waving green grass dotted here and there with clumps of sage brush. The grass, however, was so high that the sage brush was scarcely visible, and Deep Creek ran almost then as now, through the center of the valley."

### CHURCH ACTIVITIES

In 1876, Apostle Lorenzo Snow, of the Counsel of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church called Arnold Goodliffe to go from Malad to Curlew Valley to make his home. He arrived May 12, 1876 at which time there were 15 families in the settlement. For one year Elder Goodliffe served as the presiding Elder. The first Church meeting was held June 25, 1876 in Richard Potter's home. A church branch was organized July 9, 1876 and the first Sunday School was organized.

August 14, 1876 the brethren selected a town sight and named it Snowville in honor of Apostle Lorenzo Snow.

January 30, 1877 a mass meeting was called to petition Box Elder County to set up a School District. April 22, 1877 a log building 26 feet by 20 feet was dedicated as a combination church meeting house and a school. April 19, 1877 a ward was organized

with Bishop Arnold Goodliffe as first Bishop. Bishop Goodliffe opened a store and established what was known as "the Salt Works" near Monument Point. This enterprise became a profitable business and some years later was sold. On October 24, 1878 the location of the town-site was changed from the west side of Deep Creek to the present site on the east side and lots were issued to the citizens. In January 1878 Arnold Goodliffe was appointed postmaster, and Joseph Robbins was the first mail carrier between Snowville and Kelton. Peter Nelson came from Brigham City and established Snowville's first store. William Cottam and Arnold Goodliffe were merchants also. For many years the community maintained a dramatic organization which furnished high class entertainment for the people. Dancing, their chief entertainment, was conducted by the ward bishopric.

#### FIRST SCHOOL TEACHER

Margaret Cottam was the first school teacher in the Log School House. In 1882 the Curlew Irrigation and Reservoir Company incorporated. Under this organization was built 2 canals from 12 to 15 miles long which carried water to several thousand acres of land. This land which produced thousands of tons of alfalfa hay and excellent crops of barley, wheat and in some years an excellent yield of alfalfa seed. Home gardens of vegetables were always a part of the farming. There are two storage reservoirs for water in the valley that contribute to the success of the irrigation systems.

The rock school house was built in 1887 and as with the first school house was used also as a church for many years. The people of the community have through the years insisted on quality education for their children and as a result hundreds and perhaps into the thousands of children have had most excellent teachers. This has enabled them to continue through high school and many into and through college competing successfully with children schooled throughout Utah and the intermountain area.

Bishop Goodliffe served for some 29 years as the spiritual and community leader having been appointed as presiding Elder August 13, 1876 and released August 13, 1905.

Bishop Jonathan C. Cutler was sent from Brigham City, Utah to succeed Bishop Goodliffe. For some ten years he served as Bishop and on May 17, 1915 was installed as the first president of the newly created Curlew Stake.

March 12, 1934, a series of earthquakes centering around the end of the Great Salt Lake, caused considerable damage to the rock meeting house and former school building.

The town was incorporated November 6, 1933. Hard surfaced roads came to the community on November 15 of that same year. The first Town Board was Bealy S. Cutler, Maroni Arbon, William Hurd, Jr., Doyle J. Cutler and Nephi Larkins. The community now has a telephone system, electric power, a culinary water system, a postoffice, several stores and a modern and beautiful all brick LDS meeting house. Students of high school age are transported to high school each day by bus. The population of the Curlew precinct is given as 249.

SPECIAL NOTE: There are two items of note in any history of Snowville: (1) The people of the "7 Mile Ranch," "the Sinks," or presently "the Rose Ranch," have played an important part in the development of Snowville. This would include all families and especially the Abe Rose family. Special contributions relative to physical and spiritual well being in recent years have come from Archie and Jerry Rose, their mother, and their families. (2) A second note would be to give credit to those who served in the place of medical doctors and this should include many names but one in particular we find in the history book and that is of "Ellen B. Cottam" who served her neighbors as midwife in the delivery of some 350 babies without losing a single child.

#### REFERENCES:

*Early History of Box Elder County*, by Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Chapter 25, pages 292-293. See Libraty, Utah Historical Society, 603 East on South Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Article — SNOWVILLE, *Deseret News*, January 8, 1950. Captain Samuel J. Hensley and the "Salt Lake Cut-Off" see *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 19, 1951. (Copy at the Utah Historical Society, 603 East on South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah).

Snowville has been the temporary home for so very many of the Arbon families it seemed appropriate to give a very brief article of its early history.