

The Old Forts of Cedar City

On Nov 11th 1851, Cedar City was 100 years old.

Positively identified as names who were with the first company of 35 men, with 11 wagons, and the necessary animals to draw the wagons, drive loose stock and etc., are such names as Lunt, Chatterly, Carruthers, Wood, Cartwright, Harrison, ~~Wright~~, Bullock, Meeks, Lee,

No one now, can provide a list of that first group, and only as the families of these named, have related instances of happenings connected with that first coming, have we felt sure that these names are correct.

Within a two or three-week period, a great many more families were sent to strengthen and help the first small group.

This Fort-site, previously surveyed by George A Smith, Wm Dame, and some other explorers, seems to not have been given a name, and seems to have been but a temporary stopping place. The men set their 11 wagon-boxes in an east west line, on the afternoon of Nov. 11, and began to throw up around themselves a corral and wind-break, of anything in sight. Cottonwood, willows, rock, cedar and soil was plentiful and close, so before night-fall, weary but feeling quite secure, after placing a 'watch', crept into their wagon-box beds to rest from the toils of the day.

Water was their first need. They surveyed and run a plough-furrow to make a ditch, the remains of which, in a few places, may still be seen. This circled the south side of the 'Knoll', passed along the East side of what is now lower Main Street behind the new businesses, over the Indian village, thru the Church Welfare property, the new City Ball Park and on across the Canyon highway, to tap the Coal-Creek near the Grey Point.

This Fort was built directly West of the Knoll North of Cedar City on Highway 91. Of course the wall was improved daily by closing gaps with brush, and whatever could be picked up to tighten it. We are told that a few adobe rooms were built, George Wood hauled the stout log cabin from Parowan, which he had built there. This was a Fort within the Fort. Port-holes may still be seen in it's rough log walls. This log room graces Cedar Public Park.

This group of people had no indian scares or troubles, but well into the year of 1852, there came rumors of killings and much worry over the way the indians were behaving toward the settlers further to the north. This Colony became aware of many things they had overlooked before. There was that high Knoll just outside their camp area, from which each and every move of the people could be watched. There was the matter of that long shallow ditch that could with a few shovels of earth, deprive them of their necessary water. Their Fort wall was little protection as it stood, and altho they had a Military organization, realized how poorly they were protected to defend themselves, if indians attacked.

They loaded their belongings and moved out, all in a day.

A mile west, a flat boulder-strewn area presented itself as a prospective building-site. It was close to the creek-bed, which at that time carried the excess water toward the Iron Spring Gap. Unloading their wagons they measured around themselves a 100-rod square.

This became ----- Old Fort

From the dried cakes of clayey mud, and the immense number of all sizes of boulders lying around themselves, they began to build a wall, determined that nothing should stop that work until they felt securely protected from anything that indians could do to them.

Pres George A Smith, while at Fort Peet-neet on the way to this Southern Mission, organized the Iron County Militia-One Company of Horse two of Infantry, two of Artillery-the whole of which formed the Iron Battalion. Of course parts of these units moved to the Cedar area, as special help and protectors. Constant manouvers kept them always in readiness should the need for their services arise.

This Fort was laid out (different ones have given different dimensions) to be wide at the bottom, narrower at the top, high enough to be beyond the reach of a big man, with a gate in each side, a Bastion at each corner, so a lookout might sweep each side, readily. The inside wall should form the back wall of the needed homes.

The water was to run along the north wall so that power could be derived from it. A grinding mill, a small still, and a carding mill are known to have been built on the atream.

An attic of the Carding house became the Hall for the Social functions; Janet Corry and William Walker celebrated their Wedding in that place.

The Ross Brothers sold their interests to Joseph Chatterly-planted fields, a two room log house. This house became the school house and, for a time the religious and public gatherings-place. By removing the partition between the two larger-than-usual rooms.

A new field was laid out close to the Fort. This field lay east and South of the Fort walls, and comprises that part of the present City which lies between 5th and 14th West, south of The Rail-road tracks. Men could still farm the land in the other field if they wished.

Matthew Caruthers acted as Presiding Elder of the groups in both these places until Pres Young visited in the Old Fort on Sept 24th 1854 and organized a Stake that extended from Johnsons Fort (Enoch) on the north to Virgin River on the south. Johnathan Pugmire was first and John M Higbee was second councillor, to Isaac C Haight- President. Philip Klingensmith was made the first Bishop, with James Whittaker 1st Councillor, Benjamin Hulse 2nd Councillor, George K Bowering-Clerk.

Isaac C Haight had been sent to Cedar, by Pres Young to take over the Managership of the Iron work, in November 1853. The first election held, elected him to be Mayor. John D Lee, George S Slack, Philip Klingensmith, as Aldermen, and James Lewis Recorder.

The people in this Fort had a small lively Band led by James Haslam a good Chior Group, led by Robert Wiley. Services were held regularly on Sunday and on Thursday evening, where these music groups performed. This kept the people in good spirits, and helped to over the longing for the things impossible to get.

The BIG OBJECTIVE of their coming to this far Southern Mission was to build up an Iron Industry to replace the worn out iron from beyond the Mississippi.

The work of the Colony was divided as to desire and capability so that there was a constant-iron-effort, always in progress. By the time the people moved from their first fort, the first test run was ready to be made. The night of September 29th, 1852, this was done.

Proof conclusive was shown -that iron could be made to run from that ore, and a committee was sent with samples to show Pres Young.

Much raw iron was run off, and considering the fact-that all of the work connected with the building, the testing, making coke, and every other feature of the effort that went into that BEGINNING, was made-shift, made from nothing, you might say, those people did a marvelous job.

During it's hight, the population arose to around a 1000 souls. At it's abandonment, which began at the time of the Mountain Meadow trouble, the population dropped to less than 300.

In May of 1854 Pres Young was visiting. He noted that the Fort lay directly in the path of an enormous flood area. With others, he looked carefully over the whole area, commenting that a force which had rolled the great bowlders into this valley could do untold damage to the Fort, and advised the people to move out of the direct path of such a force. He stood on the corner of the Isaac C Haight, D.S. Macfarlane home property, the creek behind him cut deep in that big bend.

"Build south and build West of this spot, but build no farther north." He advised them to loose no time moving.

This whole canyon mouth was covered with cedar trees, but the area was surveyed and laid out in blocks and lots.

At a 24th of July Celebration held on the Tabernacle Lot in 1857, the people drew again, the 3rd time for their home lots, and began to prepare to move. It was about this time that Cedar City acquired it's new name.

Cedaressa Cartwright was the first white and the only child, born in the first settlement. Steve Walker-first in Old Fort, George H Wood 2nd-born Dec 29 1859. Joseph Chatterly-the only mentioned death.

Rhoda Wood