

Hole in the Rock Foundation Newsletter

February 2023



The year 2022 was a busy one at Bluff Fort. Visitors to the center totaled 49,000 in 2022, up 9.5% from the previous year. Through the labors of our outstanding missionaries, we were able to provide pleasant and informative experiences to these visitors and increase revenues from sale of merchandise by 7.5%. High gasoline costs and lack of awareness of the fort by many of the residents of Utah and other nearby states checked the total visitations to the fort. European and other foreign visitors to the fort continue to account for a significant percentage of our visitors.

March winds brought in lots of dust and dirt, along with the arrival of a new class of seven missionary couples and three single sisters. The missionaries bonded immediately and enjoyed serving together at the Fort.



Doug and Laurie Powell

Doug and Laurie Powell were named as directors of Bluff Fort in November 2021 after having served as missionaries on the fort and previously as full-time missionaries on the Navajo Reservation. Much of the work that was accomplished in 2022 was the result of their innovation and dedication to improving the facility.

Unfortunately, Doug was diagnosed with Cancer shortly after their appointment and the burden of leadership fell upon Laurie along with able assistance from Lynn and Sunny Feinauer, Brad and Tammy Spencer, and Bill and Tricia Spere. The Powell's stepped down as directors in early May 2022 and returned home to focus on Doug's recovery and spend time with their family.

Will and Peggy Redd were appointed directors at that time and endeavored to carry on that which had been undertaken by the Powells with the support of all of the dedicated missionaries serving at the fort.

Jens Property Acquisition

In the fall of 2021, HIRF acquired the Jens Nielson home and surrounding property from Hugh and LaRue Kirkham. This addition secured a historic building for preservation by the foundation and provided five additional living spaces and two RV hookup sites for the missionaries serving at the fort.



Minor upgrades to some of the apartments were completed in the winter of 2021-2022 and construction was started for an additional apartment in the fall of 2022. An existing carport was enclosed to provide space for a welding and mechanical work shop for the fort. The old tack shed was renovated to provide storage space for the missionaries. Individual electrical meters were installed on the residential sites and the electrical service was upgraded.

Kitchen Remodel

A major remodel of the Fort Kitchen was completed in late 2021. New industrial grade stoves, fridges, and preparation areas were installed and an extension to the outdoor serving area was added to facilitate serving of fort guests. This project has added measurably to the functionality of the kitchen.



Wood Shop Improvements



The paint and finishing operations were moved from the main wood shop into the former receiving area to provide a cleaner environment for finishing and free up space in the main wood shop. The welding and metal working equipment was moved to the new shop created on the Jens Nielson property. In addition to adding space for wood working and removing a potential fire hazard, the new shop provided an excellent area for metal and mechanical projects and for maintenance.

An upgraded dust collection system was added to the wood shop and an additional lathe, band saw, belt sander and sanding table were installed. The result was a safer and more spacious work area. Sales of products manufactured in the wood shop more than doubled in 2022.

Receiving Offices

Since the receiving operations were displaced by the creation of a new paint and finishing room, the Cowboy Cabin was renovated creating new receiving and clerical offices. The result



was a much more functional operation. Shipping and receiving access was moved to the south side of the building including an improved sidewalk and entrance gate.

Sewing Center

Upgraded cabinetry and shelving was added to the sewing center.

Winter Term

At the beginning of November we said goodbye to five missionary couples and three single sisters and welcomed six new couples and three new single sisters to the mission. The departing missionaries are deeply loved and dearly missed. The arriving missionaries have wormed their way into our hearts and the shoes that were left behind by their predecessors. The fort transitioned to a winter schedule with a full slate of projects, activities and hosting assignments. In spite of the reduced numbers at the fort, many choice experiences were enjoyed with those who visited the facilities.



Docent Service

We were blessed by the service of 15 docent couples who donated their time each week to drive down from Blanding and help host the visitors to the fort. Their dedication and extensive knowledge of the history of the excursion and the fort were a great asset to the missionaries. Their service was acknowledged by a recognition dinner hosted by the Blacks at their beautiful barn in Blanding.

Board Support

Our operations were supported, as always, by a dedicated board of directors: Lynn Stevens, President, Mike Roring, Vice-president, Donna Jensen, Jed Lyman, Stuart Matheson and Grant Taylor. Unfortunately, We were saddened to learn that Graig Taylor one of our former directors and early proponents of the fort, and brother of our current director, Grant, passed away suddenly in December 2022. We extend our condolences to his family.

Camp Stickie

Camp Stickie upgrades included overhead doors to enclose the large pavilion during inclement weather and the appointment of Todd and Holly McAllister as camp stewards. Jed Lyman

assumed the leadership role for the camp. Three youth conferences and two family groups utilized the facility during the summer of 2022.

Community Service

Several community events were hosted or participated in by the Bluff Fort missionaries. Friday Night at the Fort was reinstated again after a covid hiatus with eight outstanding performances accompanied by free ice cream. The annual Easter Egg Hunt was a big success, along with the Fireman/Emergency Services fundraiser, the Balloon Festival and hosting of school groups and family reunions. Highway cleanup and other community service as well as support to our Navajo neighbors was rendered by the fort missionaries.

Missionary Activities

As a diversion from the labors of operating and maintaining the fort, and in addition to normal preparation day activities, the fort missionaries participated in a boat trip on Lake Powell to the base of the Hole in the Rock in early July. This trip was at first considered unattainable because of the extremely low water level in Lake Powell, but our good friends from Blanding were able to launch their boats in Bullfrog and then pick us up at Hall's Crossing. We had a most enjoyable cruise on the lake and saw several landmarks that have been hidden under water for the past fifty plus years. A pleasant dip in the lake, lunch on the water and a hike up to Uncle Ben's Dugway were enjoyed by several of the more spry ancient ones. Angela Gallagher, our amazing young single sister, hiked to the top of the hole and made it all the way back down!

In October most of the group drove over to Escalante and stayed the night before venturing to the top of the Hole in the Rock from the west side. This was a memorable experience, not only for the breath-taking vista from the top of the hole, but for the bone shaking drive to get to it. We enjoyed a short stop at Dance Hall Rock and a pleasant lunch at 50 Mile Springs. We were fortunate to be hosted by Lamont Crabtree, who is one of the foremost experts on the Hole in the Rock expedition.

Several of the group accompanied our Branch President, Delton Pugh, on the Hole in the Rock Trail from the east side of Lake Powell in off-road vehicles in March. Experiencing the trail the Hole in the Rock pioneers traversed was a mind blowing and humbling experience for all.

We had an enjoyable day trip up to the Needles Overlook, Church Rock, Jail House Rock, the Monticello Visitor's Center and other points of interest guided by our own area expert and historian, Scott Christensen.

We were also able to climb San Juan Hill, ride the Dripping Springs trail, hike the Cedar Mesa trail and see many other points of historic and geological interest.

Conclusion

Serving at Bluff Fort is a unique experience. Many miracles have been witnessed both by the early pioneers and practically daily by those currently serving at the fort. To learn of and feel the faith and the determination and "stickie-ta-tudy" of the original Hole in the Rock Pioneers changes the lives of those who visit the fort and especially those who have the privilege of serving here full time. The hand of the Lord is evident every day in the testimonies, the dedicated service and the love exhibited by those who serve here.

We salute the individuals who had the vision to make this all happen and who continue to promote, support and serve Bluff Fort. We thank those dedicated missionaries who give of their time and talents to care for the fort, make articles for the tourists to take as souvenirs of their visits and who tell the amazing stories of the Hole in the Rock expedition. We pay tribute to those indomitable pioneers who made this all happen in the first place.

Bluff Fort and Hole in the Rock expedition is a story for all times. It is a story that deserves and needs to be heard around the world. It is a story of miracles and undaunted faith. To be privileged to be part of the preservation of that story is a blessing to all who serve here.