

HIRF NEWSLETTER

BLUFF FORT VISITOR HISTORIC SITE AND HOLE IN THE ROCK FOUNDATION

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BLUFF FORT ROUNDUP

Jens Nielson Property Purchase

Jens Neilson's home on the corner of Black Locust and 600 East was recently purchased by the Hole in the Rock Foundation. It was purchased from LaRue Barton Kirkham. The property includes the pioneer historic stone home as well as 4 apartments and 2 trailer hookups. There is also a 3-bay carport and two storage areas on the property.

The foundation felt it was important to secure this contiguous piece of property to the fort because of a real need for apartments for Service Missionaries coming to serve at Bluff fort.

LaRue and Karl had purchased the property

in 2008 and had hosted numerous groups coming to work or visit at the Fort. All who came felt a wonderful spirit about the home and loved LaRue's hospitality.

The home was built in 1903 for Jens' second wife, Kirsten. It passed through a number of owners and had even been a Thai restaurant in the '90's.

LaRue had been renting the units and home through Canyon Country Lodging similar to Air B&B. The Foundation will rent the apartments and hook-ups to Church Service Missionaries.



Fort Reopens after COVID Closing

In March the Co-op Visitor Center reopened to the public, following the lead of other historic sites. Using best practices masks were worn and service missionaries were vaccinated for the COVID virus.

Many of our missionaries were asked to return home while a small contingent remained to watch over and care for the Fort. We were sad to have missionaries who had only served a short time have to leave.

Initially yellow caution tape closed the Fort to visitors, but visitors kept slipping under the tape to visit the cabins and wander the Fort.

Visitors could still listen to audio messages at the cabins.

A video screen was installed on the shed veranda and visitors could watch either of the two videos which had been offered in the Co-op. The Service Missionaries began greeting visitors using social distancing as their guide.

Finished sales area. Display windows on each side and cash register in the middle.



A table and plexiglass screen were set up outside the kitchen doors and cookies, candy and a few souvenir items from the Co-op were offered for sale.

We learned from this new sales area that visitors were ready for a home-made cookie, soft ice cream cone, or other comestible. They would sit by the picnic table and talk about their experience at the Fort and of the faith and courage of the Hole in the Rock Pioneers. Sales of homemade cookies and candy quadrupled.

New Cookie / Candy Counter

A bump out from the kitchen doors on the veranda now allows for freshly baked cookies and brownies to be sold to visitors as they visit the Fort.

Funds were raised to re-model the Fort kitchen and upgrade its work space to comply with all county health recommendations.

An extension onto the veranda gives sales space for dispensing soft ice cream, soda pop and other home-made confections through a sliding window.

The kitchen was expanded into an area where we had two washers and dryers for missionaries in the shed. These washers and two others were added and moved to a room created in the storage area of the shop giving service missionaries 4 washers and 4 dryers to quickly do their weekly laundry.

The kitchen took over the old wash-room and a triple sink and hand wash sink and storage were added to this area. New stainless steel cabinets, a new gas stove, and refrigerators were added to the other appliances already in the kitchen.

The area was designed by Fred May, one of the serving service missionaries. Fred had previous professional experience designing commercial kitchens. Thought was given to both candy making and cookie preparation areas. The remodel makes the space much more efficient for those working in the kitchen.

HIRF Board Message

Lynn Stevens

Perhaps my most enjoyable duty is serving with the Hole in the Rock Foundation Board of Directors as we plan and direct the affairs of this sacred "mission". As you read this newsletter, you will be amazed by all that has occurred since publishing the last newsletter. The past two years have been productive, gratifying, challenging, and chuck full of happiness. Yes, they have also had cause for both joy and sadness.



We are saddened that Mitch Smith, one of our longest serving missionaries, passed away while serving at Bluff Fort. We are very concerned about current Director, Doug Powell, as he faces the uncertainty of a cancer diagnosis. We are happy about the marriage of Dan and Ann. We are very happy about the extraordinary attitudes of all the Service Missionaries who have served, and are now serving at the Bluff Fort.

We are happy about the acquisition of the Jens Nielsen property. This will give us a much more stable capability to provide housing for missionaries. We are happy about all the improvements to the facilities at the Fort, which are reported in this newsletter. We, as a board are extremely pleased with the outstanding leadership and guidance provided by Wayne and Cindy Embleton as Fort Directors for the past two years. They continued to keep things going very well during the disruptions caused by COVID-19, even as they both struggled with being afflicted by this disease themselves.

The spirit that is ever present at the Fort is so inspiring and heart warming that it is unquantifiable. We are continually strengthened by the commitment and faithfulness of the original pioneers who accepted the call to settle in Bluff and build communities in the San Juan region. We are also extremely appreciative of all the people and organizations that donate financially to keep the mission functioning.

Wedding at the Fort

Wedding bells rang out for Dan Seegmiller and Ann Mceuen at Bluff Fort in September. They were both serving as Service missionaries at Bluff Fort. Dan and Ann were married in the log meeting house. President Delton Pugh, President of the Bluff Branch, performed the ceremony and then catered the event. Ann was escorted by her brother Ruben Ganica who served a mission with his wife Kathy at Bluff Fort in 2019. Wayne Embleton was the best man, director at the Fort. They were feted at the Fort at a reception afterwards with help from other Service Missionaries. Flowers and quilts adorned the log meeting house and the co-op gallery where the reception was held.

Dan had served at the Fort in 2017-18 and then again on 2020-21. Dan helped with the Jones home and stage. He offered many of his talents to the work at the Fort. Ann was in charge of the craft center. They will make their home in Heber City where Ann already had a home..



Directors and Service Missionaries

Doug and Lauri Powell are the new directors at Bluff Fort Visitor Center. Doug and Laurie have previously helped with Youth Conferences at Camp Sticky, but then decided to come and serve at the Fort. They were asked by Lynn Stevens, president of the Hole in the Rock Foundation, to serve for a time as directors. The Powells started out with their new crew on November 1st. We have a great group of service missionaries (SMs) that are serving through the winter and many will remain on for the coming season.

It is amazing that most of our SMs have friends that are serving or served at the Fort or just happened to stop on a road trip to Southern Utah. Senior missionaries can interrupt a part-time service mission to serve a full-time mission. Senior couples can also ask to serve at certain sites such as Bluff Fort.

If you are interested in serving call Bluff Fort 435-672-9995. The Powells can help you through the process.

EDITORS NOTE:

Doug went to the Huntsman Cancer Institute for test in mid December and was diagnosed with cancer. He had a tumor removed from his brain and is recovering but additional tests are being conducted to determine the severity of the disease. Our faith and prayers go with Doug and Lauri.



Directors, Doug & Lauri Powell

In Memorium

With appreciation for their service



Mitchell A Smith



Grant L Taylor

Signs

Grant Taylor

Comb Ridge signs all have been updated by Lamont Crabtree working with the Bureau of Land Management. The signs at the highway pull off, Navajo Springs, San Juan Hill, and the Rincon Trading Post were all in pretty bad shape. Sunlight and vandalism had taken a toll on the signs.

The BLM and Bears Ear National Monument have changed their sign format and so Lamont made changes to the Hole in the Rock Foundation format. The new signs will be installed later this spring. After final approval from the government agencies they will be sent for fabrication and then will be installed.

Fort Cabin Signs

Family cabin signs will be installed this year after the Herculean work of Leon Jones a former service



missionary at Bluff Fort. Leon is a great grandson of Kumen Jones and also author of the new book highlighting the life of Kumen Jones.

Cabin signs had been created for a few of the cabins but only temporary signs had been placed at the others. We just needed someone who could research and write appropriate family and historical information in each sign. Leon took on this project this winter and then Lamont Crabtree finished formatting the signs for fabrication. It was a great team to work with and these signs will give visitors more information about each of the families. We seek to work with the families regarding the signs.

Kumen, Mary, Lydia May Jones Family



Kumen and his wives, Mary Nielson and Lydia May Lyman, devoted their lives to helping others. Prior to the ordeal of the Hole-in-the-Rock journey, Kumen was one of the advance scouts who spent five months exploring sites for the settlement and searching for possible routes. He developed a bond and friendship with the Navajos and Utes and was a skilled peacemaker. Kumen was assigned various community leadership responsibilities. He was the second bishop of

of Bluff. Whenever anyone needed anything, Kumen was eager to drop what he was doing to help. It seems that people in need were placed in his path. Kumen's home was open to anyone in need of lodging. Later in his life after his leg was amputated, he chopped wood for hours each day and continued helping others. He quietly donated generously to the establishment of the community of Blanding.

Mary was head of sales at the Bluff Co-op, served as a leader of children's and women's organizations in the church and made many home visits to the sick. Lydia May cared for their children. "A sudden change came into our home life when a coal oil lamp exploded, and in carrying it out to save the house her (Lydia M. Lyman Jones) clothing caught fire and she was so badly burned that after suffering a week, passed away." Kumen Jones

Kumen, Mary and Lydia May would invite all to look for someone to help each day.

Hole in the rock Floating Dock Signage

The Hole in the Rock Foundation has been working with the National Park Service/Glen Canyon Recreational Area to place a dock and signage at the base of the Hole-in-the-Rock. Chris Cook and his crew fabricated the floating dock and the Hole in the Rock Foundation has supplied the signage for the floating dock. We hope Aeromar, the concessionaire at Wahweap, will be able to find a time to haul the dock and signage to the site.

We so appreciate the Glen Canyon staff for their willingness to maintain this floating dock. Rainbow Bridge is the most visited site on Lake Powell, but the Hole in the Rock has been difficult to visit because of the rock at the bottom of the Hole and no real place to tie off a boat. The dock will be large enough for two house boats and a couple of smaller craft to tie off.

Lamont Crabtree is working to create new signs and gain approval for their installation at the top and bottom of the Hole. Other signs are being considered for "miner's steps," "post holes" and other points of interest. We hope that signs will help visitors understand the faith and courage of a group of missionaries following their prophet's call to settle the San Juan.

Living History Project

Bluff Fort has a place in history as a gathering place for the early San Juan missionaries. The stories seem endless of faith and courage and determination of the early pioneers.

The recreation of Bluff Fort also has great historical significance. A dream of Corinne Roring and lots of hard working Bluff Fort volunteers made its re-creation possible.

The Hole in the Rock Foundation has been hard at it pulling money, volunteers and plans to reconstruct important elements since 2006 when it became a non profit foundation.

Many volunteers have literally come out of the woodwork to help in its re-creation. Thinking of all those early volunteers that had faith in the project, it was decided to pull them back to Bluff and video record their involvement.

In May of 2021, many of the volunteers converged on the Fort to reconnect, reminisce, and of course eat. Lane Palmer, a recent grad from “now not

We realized that with every year these volunteers were getting older, and we needed to do it now. The Log Meeting House made a great recording studio and past directors, contractors, and volunteers came to share their stories.

Dale and Beverly Black
Wayne and Cindy Embleton
Lamar Helquist
Joe and Hurst
LaRue and Hugh Kirkham
Stuart and Kristi Matheson
Jim and Vicki Orr
Jack Powers, Sr and his son Jack, Jr
Mike Roring
Ron and Linda Snowden
Frank and Elaine Rowley
Burnis and Lana Skinner
Gary and Starla Spears
Joe and Kathleen Sorenson
Vance Seeley
Lynn and Lynette Stevens
Dell and Mary Taylor
Graig Taylor
Grant L and Erlene Taylor
Grant and Nina Taylor



Dixie State,” and HIR descendant, graduated in cinematography. Lane lives in Blanding and came with his equipment and experience to help us video record these amazing people.

We ended up with over 3 terabytes of recording. We are now working on fitting the stories together into a video history that will be available on line at our website or at the Fort

Since the recording our friend, Grant L Taylor, passed away due to complications from cancer. Grant had worked for the Church Sign Painting department. He had painted tabernacle columns in faux to look like natural oak graining. He and his brother Del painted most of the signs at the Fort along with the fixtures and furniture in the Co-op using milk paint from Boston. Grant and Erlene had recently built a new home in Centerfield.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Grant L. Taylor passed away in October, succumbing to pancreatic cancer. Grant has left an indelible hand print at Bluff Fort and will be missed. We were glad that the video recordings were made before his passing to continue the story of Bluff Fort. Grant and Erlene were able to move into their new home just before his passing.

Youth Conferences

Stuart Matheson, Board member

This year marks the tenth year the Foundation has hosted youth conferences at Bluff Fort and Camp Stickie. Youth conferences have long been a mainstay of the spiritual, social, and physical growth of the youth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Especially recently Church leadership has encouraged activities that will help youth build faith in Jesus Christ, develop testimonies, make new friends, share fun activities, and connect with their leaders and each other. Our theme is simple, “We can do hard things.” The story of the Hole in the Rock pioneers is an exciting and inspirational chapter in our Church’s history. It is a story of mighty miracles; a story of faith, obedience, courage, strength, perseverance, and hope. With the Lord’s help, applying these eternal principles, these pioneers did hard things and overcame their challenges in their day. Our focus at youth conferences is to teach young people that by applying these same eternal principles, they, too, with the Lord’s help, can do hard things and succeed in our day.

Then-Elder Dallin H. Oaks’ remarked in a general conference address: “It is not enough to study or reenact the accomplishments of our pioneers. We need to identify the great eternal principles they applied to achieve all they achieved for our benefit, and then apply those principles to the challenges of our day.”

Unique to youth conferences in Bluff is the combination of an inspirational story experienced on sacred ground. Of this combination, Elder Stephen E. Snow, the Church Historian and Recorder observed: “Being in the Sacred Grove is a much more powerful experience than being taught about the Sacred Grove. Families want to feel the spirit of the places, and parents want their children to remember what others did who went before.” These youth conferences

provide participants an opportunity to walk on ground made sacred by the sacrifice of these pioneers, particularly San Juan Hill.

We continue to support and encourage activities for young and old alike that will instill those values exhibited by those hardy Hole in the Rock pioneers. Please contact board member Stuart Matheson at stuartmatheson67@gmail.com for more information about these activities.



Dedication of Kumen Jones Home

Donna Jensen

After living in a log cabin, the stone masons and carpenters, Nicholas Lovace, Ed Thompson and H.T. Hibbs built the Jones' a rock home. In 1906, there was a terrible fire accident when Lydia Mae was burned and died.



Kumen

Mary

Lydia Mae



Ruin as it appeared in 2015

Later (1921) Kumen and Mary moved from Bluff to Blanding to allow the younger Jones children to attend school. Kumen Jones leased his home out after they moved. Around 1975 the home again burned. The interior walls and roof of the home were destroyed. After the winds and fire destroyed the home, walls fell leaving the home unusable. It was always the plan of Corinne Roring to restore the home back. The question was how much reconstruction would be required to restore the home.

Originally the plan was to restore the home to its former state, complete with furnishings. After much discussion, it was decided to partially rebuild the home. The destroyed home would tell the story of the of the fires. It highlighted the heartache of the terrible accident.

The standing red stone walls needed to be reinforced and the missing walls needed to be rebuilt. Corinne collected the red limestone around Bluff for this restoration. Vance Seely, a skilled stone mason, accepted this assignment and chiseled the limestone rock to build the walls from the rubble pile.

and entertainment; everyone was always welcome at their home. Now, once again the Jones home welcomed meetings and musical entertainment.

Money donated to the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation purchased a professional sound system for the stage. A missionary couple graciously donated a piano for musical presentations.

Construction photos by Fred May



A 14 X 14 room was rebuilt in the house to display artifacts of the Jones family and tell their story. Many of the Jones family were involved with this project. To help tell the story of Kumen falling in a well, a stone circular well was also added.



Roger Jensen, Dan Seegmiller, full time service missionaries, and other Bluff missionaries accepted the task to frame the building. The living room and kitchen area of the home were left open and became the stage for entertainment. In the past, the Jones home was a gathering place for meetings



The Completed Project

The stage is on the on the other side of the Jones home. It butts up against the pavilion, which serves as a shelter for those watching the programs. A misting system was installed to cool the guests.

The Kumen, Mary, Lydia Home Dedication Program

Welcome-Lynn Stevens-The Hole-In-The-Rock Foundation Board President

Masters of Ceremony-Dr. Val Jones (Leonard)

Chorister-Donna Slade (Thomas)

Accompanist-Marcia Cameron (Leonard)

Opening Song- "Love One Another"

Opening Prayer-George Jones (Alma)

Bluff Missionaries:

Roger Jensen

Dan Seegmiller

Tribute to Kumen Jones-DeAnn Ivins (Mamie Adams)

Musical number-Rusty Jones, Clay Jones (Marvin), Devan Ryan

And Julia Jones (Francis)

Life History of Mary Jones -Susanne Anderson (Leonard)

Life History of Lydia Jones-Candice Lyman (Mamie Adams)

Musical number-Rusty Jones, Clay Jones (Marvin) Devan Ryan,

Julia Jones, and Diana Lockwood (Francis)

History of Kumen Jones-Leon Jones-(Marvin)

Dedication of the Jones home-Layne Jones (Marvin)

Closing Song; "Oh My Father" *

Closing Prayer-Fred May (Thomas)

"O My Father" was one of Kumen's favorite songs.

This hymn sung at Kumen's funeral.

Fred May created the Jones Home slideshow

The local Jones family members provide food, and the
Hole-In-The Rock Foundation.

Many people contributed to the rebuilding of the Jones Home:

Corinne Roring
William Browning

Roger Jensen
Dan Seegmiller
Mike & Teresa Roring
Val & Sunny Jones
Keith & DeAnn Ivins
Jed & Candice Lyman
Steve & Donna Jensen
Lydia Jones Family

Mary Margaret North
Rubin Garnica
City of Blanding
Mike & Linda Halliday
Norma Dee Ryan
Marilyn Valenzuela
Ron & Merle MacDonald
Michele Halls
George & Donna Jones
Leon Weldon & Mary Jones
Leon & Cherie Jones

Joseph & Kathleen Sorenson Legacy
Foundation
George & Delores Eccles Foundation
Milton B. & Grace G. Jones Trust
Jones Enterprise LTD
Vance Seely
Tri-Hurst Construction
RBC Dain Rauscher Money FND-HIR
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Bluff Fort Missionaries
Kendal & Kyson Shumway