



Hole in the Rock Foundation
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Fall 2024 Newsletter

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From President Lynn Stevens

In 2012, Elder Steven E. Snow, Church Historian, gave Bluff Fort Visitor Center the opportunity to have Senior Church Service Missionaries come to serve at Bluff Fort. Elder Snow gave the HIRF the charge to give visitors a great experience learning the stories of the Hole in the Rock pioneers. Since 2012, many wonderful Service Missionaries have served at Bluff Fort.

This year, the Southwest Area Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints made a change to the missionary status at Bluff Fort. A meeting was held in January where we were asked if changing the Senior Service Missionary to Full-time Senior Missionary would work at Bluff Fort. It is the usual procedure that Senior Service Missionaries serve from home and Senior Missionaries serve away.

The change requires missionaries to fill out the longer application which includes health clearance and a trip to the MTC for a missionary experience there. It would also mean that their call would come from the Church Missionary Department and would be signed by the President of the Church.

This change also means that the Farmington, New Mexico Mission Leader is responsible for the Senior Missionaries at Bluff Fort. President William McNabb brought great enthusiasm for Bluff Fort and held Zone Conferences at the Fort because he felt the pioneer spirit resonated with the missionaries. President Aiventi Taufa replaced President McNabb in July.

This is a significant improvement by recognizing our missionaries as being approved by the Church Missionary Committee.

Time and time again we have been blessed with missionaries with the exact skills needed. For the kitchen remodel, a missionary came who was a professional kitchen designer. For our electrical upgrade, one of the missionaries was a licensed electrician. Our wonderful bakery and candy items are the product of missionaries who brought the needed expertise. We have had computer

specialists, marketing specialists, expert seamstresses and woodworkers and master gardeners. The missionaries at Bluff Fort have been one of our greatest blessings.

At this writing, we are still short of the number of missionaries needed to be fully staffed. This year there have been shortages of missionaries because of health or availability. As a result, former missionaries have come back and served here, which has been a saving event for the workload. It is important to recognize the value we receive from our docent volunteers from San Juan County.

I believe our interaction and acceptance by the leadership in the Bluff Township has greatly improved over the years. Our missionaries have been willing to do small projects for the community which their own citizens are not able to do. For example, we hold a Fireman's fundraising breakfast each year for the local Fire Department and EMT Technicians.

We enjoy the activities of the youth who come for Youth Conference and are greatly impressed by their enthusiasm at the end as they recount their experiences.

We cannot say enough about our very generous donors for financial support.

I have served on 6 Boards and Commissions concurrent with my service as president of the Hole in the Rock Foundation, but the most significant time I spend is the commitment to Bluff Fort and the Hole in the Rock mission. Sadly, during the past year I have spent approximately 9 months in continuous care for lymphoma cancer. The Lord has blessed me in my recovery, as have the faith and prayers from many others. Even though I still have treatments to go, everything is favorably supportive from the cancer specialists for cancer research center in the Salt Lake City Huntsman Cancer Institute. Medicine does a miraculous job, but the prayers and blessing of my Father in Heaven are more significant. Thank you all.

Relief Society Building

The Bluff Fort Relief Society Building has a new video story telling presentation. Ben Wilson, Dick Jacobs and Grant Taylor have been working on a video presentation for the little adobe Relief Society Building for a number of years.

The idea was first born after a visit to the Church History Museum. Calls were made to try and replicate a touch screen design similar to the museum's, but it was cost prohibitive. A few years later, Grant and Nina Taylor were visiting friends in Oakland, California. They visited the Oakland Temple Visitor Center and saw a similar system but it used a touch pad instead of a touch-screen. This brought the pricing way down and so they decided to copy the idea. Ben Wilson designed the system to turn on each morning at 8:30 and off at 6:30 pm.

As you walk into the Relief Society Building, on your left, on a table is a little touch pad that gives you three choices. So far, three Bluff women have been installed in the system.

Actors portray Harriet Barton, Elizabeth Decker and Jane Walton. Each of the women tell their story of settling Bluff. When you push the button, the video screen on the wall changes from a historic photo to a cabin with an empty chair. Each of the women, in turn, sparkles into the chair and tells her story. The actors do a really nice job of portraying these amazing women. Next time you are at the Fort drop by and take a step back in time.

Tap to Donate

A fun fact is that the Fort averages a 50 cent donation from each visitor through our present donation box. However, most people don't travel with currency these days and so pass-by the box. A "Tap to Donate" card reader is being added to our sign out station just before leaving the Fort. This will allow visitors to donate via credit card. It is located at the southeast corner of the Co-op. We hope the option to use your credit card will increase donations. These monies are used for maintenance and upkeep of Bluff Fort.



Grant and his grandson, Joseph, saw this same system at Greyfriars Churchyard in Edinburgh, Scotland a few years ago. Joseph pointed out the option to his grandfather and they tapped his credit card leaving a pound for the upkeep of the cemetery. After much searching, Bryce Fifield found the reader system. We hope this will be a soft way to encourage visitors to say thank you for their experience.

Interpretive Signs

Lamont Crabtree and Leon Kent Jones have been working on interpretive signs that have been installed in front of most of the cabins. Pictures and text tell of these pioneer families and offer historical information. Other signs were also upgraded around the Fort. These new signs give another interpretive layer to the learning experience about the pioneers that helped settle Bluff and beyond.





Are you related to a Bluff Fort Pioneer?

With a tap of your phone and entering the name of a deceased relative plus birth, death or burial data, you can search the Hole in the Rock database and find your likely Bluff relative.

Mike and Debbie Ostler, from Tempe, AZ have been working on a Family History experience and were willing to help us at the Fort. The Ostlers are serving a Church Service Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, serving through their local Family Search Library.

Visitors use their phone and with the help of our volunteers are guided to tap a QR code. A field pulls up and the visitor types in a deceased relative's name and the state where they died. Possibly, a few narrowing choices pop up to choose between, but you can tap on a good option, and then press "search." In just seconds a list of people that you are related to will show up on your phone.

We've tried it out with a couple of friends who had no idea that they were related to so many of the Hole in the Rock Pioneers.

If you jump back about 4 or 5 generations and, assuming you have British heritage, it's amazing how many pioneers you are related to. We think this will be a fun new addition.

We are already seeing great excitement as visitors scan QR codes in each cabin and discover their relationships to San Juan pioneers.

You can check and see if you are related to the residents of the cabin. It's an activity that all can participate in.

Are You Related to the Pioneers in this Cabin?

Enter your deceased grandparent to see how you may be related!

Ancestor's First Name

Ancestor's Last Name (or maiden name)

Birth Place (Optional)

Death Place (Optional)

Death Year (Optional)

Search

Clear

Sample search form

We had a guest come to the Visitor Center and report that she "really really really liked" the "QR code Are You Related" activity and was so excited to share her ancestry. She was only a few minutes behind another excited guest who showed us his relationship to one of the San Juan pioneers.

The "Spirit of Elijah" is strong here.

Web Site

It's been a few years since we updated our website and we found a professional website designer, Jeff Tettters, who offered his services to bring us up to date. We are copying the ideas of other historical sites and working on simplicity and ease of navigation through our site. The new upgrade will also make it cell phone friendly which is where most people search these days. Lamont Crabtree has been working with our web master, David Walton to make the changes necessary.

Anticipated Changes:

- a video that you can click that will take you on a tour of Bluff Fort and what you will see and experience while at the Fort.
- a video about Youth Conferences and using Camp Sticky for a ward or stake youth conference. We have a biography section with a pretty good library that can all be accessed and downloaded/printed if you want.
- a Fort Calendar which keeps you up on events at the Fort including our summer Friday Night at the Fort.
- newsletters and lots of other information about the Hole in the Rock expedition
- animated home page banner to visually grab the surfer and have them explore more about the Hole in the Rock Story.

Thanks to David Walton, Lamont Crabtree and Jeff Tettters for helping on this amazing project.

New Mexico Farmington Mission

Elder and Sister Jose L. Alonso visited the Fort in early July. Elder Alonso is the Southwest Area President and we have been working closely with him and the Missionary Department for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with our missionaries.

Elder Alonso, while speaking with our Senior Missionaries, said that each of them had received calls to serve at Bluff Fort for a season. He said similarly that God had called ancestors who had passed to serve alongside you as you serve at the fort.

In an earlier meeting Elder Alonso said that "obviously great things have been happening at Bluff Fort" and he felt that it was important that the Church align themselves more closely in helping with efforts to share the stories of faith and courage.

Activities for Children and families

Our current directors are Bryce and Laurie Fifield. Bryce and Laurie have education backgrounds and Bryce has a

passion for figuring out fun things for children to do. He added a new treasure hunt booklet for non-readers or non-English speakers that is entirely picture based. Children go from cabin to cabin looking for the items in the pictures. It has been especially fun this summer for the children from French and German speaking countries. On Sundays when the ice cream counter is closed, children can earn a wooden token for finding the clues. Parents and children both love this activity. Bryce has also set up a place for children to make their own petroglyphs with a wooden handled stylus and a block of sandstone. They can also do rubbings with wooden blocks that are etched with the Bluff Fort logo and other western type pictures.

Another fun thing for all ages is searching for little brown hats that are hiding in plain sight. We have hidden forty of them, but it is rare that anyone finds even half. Of course there is gold panning, and we have little ping pong balls that can be floated in the stream. The little wooden cows and horses have been refreshed and are so much fun to rope. Families come for a quick stop and end up spending a few hours, then coming back to say "this was the best activity we've had on our whole vacation!"



School Visits

This spring we had visits from lots of school children. Bluff Elementary, Baclabito Day School, and the elementary school in Teec Nos Pos brought their whole student body. We entertained second graders from Monticello, and had four days with Blanding Elementary kids. They enjoyed making butter, learning how pioneers did laundry, playing horseshoes, hoop rolling, gold panning, roping cows and finding little hidden brown hats. Every child got to see our presentation of "If These Walls Could Talk."

Show and Tell

Missionaries serving here now are encouraged to come up with a "Show and Tell" where they are out doing an 1880's type of activity that gives them an opportunity to visit with guests. Some of these activities have included hoop rolling, rope making, tatting, rug making, gardening and weeding. One of our missionaries, Michael McConkie, takes pictures of the guests, with their permission. A continuous display of these pictures is played on a television screen by the picnic tables. Mike

also made a lovely screen saver for the television by the kitchen. It displays beautiful pictures taken in Bluff and surrounding areas with a quiet classical piano background. People love to sit and eat ice cream there and are happy to watch the documentary or other films after being drawn in by the screensaver.

Translating the brochure

We have been able to update the Bluff Fort Trifold brochure and then have it translated into French and German, with the plan to get an Italian version as well. German and French speaking guests are blown away when offered audio, video and now even a brochure in their own language. During the summer months, the majority of our guests, especially the traveling families, do not use English as their first language. It is fun to see their faces light up when they have an opportunity to hear about this important part of American History in their mother tongue.

Horses



Two large fiberglass horses have arrived and are getting ready to be hitched up to a wagon. This has been a difficult and long process getting them here. They arrived damaged, but Ivan Carr in Blanding helped us put the tail back on "Jack" the blonde horse. They are very realistic looking and have been the subject of many photographs. Visitors are having a great time using the wagon as a photo opportunity. It was reported that a young lady in her 80's wanted to climb up to have her photograph taken. Visitors have shown real interest in the harness and how the wagon and horses team up to pull the wagon. The horses are a great addition to things to see at the Fort.

Our 2023 missionaries raised the money for Jack and Mont. Ideas were bantered around and a source for fiberglass horses was found in New York. Bill Hansen, Jack Rasmussen, and Kyle Bateman worked on this

project together, choosing 15.2 hands high, a Bay and a Chestnut. Funds were raised by the missionaries and others to pay for the project. The horses' names, Jack and Mont after the Rasmussen brothers who came to serve at Bluff Fort with their wives.

If any of you have hiked to the top of San Juan Hill, you can't help but feel the sacrifice of those teams pulling and stopping and pulling again to bring the pioneers and their belongings to Bluff. We take for granted our transportation and feel that the story of the animals both on the trail and working the land will be another great story to tell.

New Book *Bluff Fort Historic Site*

The first printing of *Bluff Fort Historic Site* is now on sale at the Visitor Center Gift Shop. This book tells the story of re-creating Bluff fort from Corinne Roring's dream to where we are today as a world class visitor site.

Ron Bateman, a Bluff Fort Missionary, came with the experience of having published a number of town history books as well as some family history books. Ron and Grant Taylor worked closely pulling past and present information together to tell the story of recreating Bluff Fort.

Talks and letters were gathered by the Rorings and stories from Lamont Crabtree all were edited to tell the early beginnings of the Fort. Grant continues with his experiences over the last 18 years at the Fort. The miracles, volunteers, and stories of how the re-creation of Bluff Fort came together are noted in the 337 page book. It is 8"x11" with over 100 pages of color photographs. Lamont and Corinne contributed many photographs. Erlene Taylor, wife of an early volunteer who is also named Grant Taylor, shared hundreds of images from 2009-2014. There are fun items stuffed into the appendix such as news releases and talks given at dedications. Previous directors recall their experiences at the Fort as well. Literally thousands of people have become "Bluff Fort Worker Boys" helping create an amazing backdrop to share the stories of the Hole in the Rock pioneers. We thank all who helped pool their memories and record the history of rebuilding Bluff Fort.

We plan on updating the book every couple of years to continue the saga of Bluff Fort and the amazing miracles that have brought us where we are today. Available in soft back \$40.

YOUTH CONFERENCES



“It was a memorable experience and I believe it will be remembered by everyone for years and years to come. What a blessing!” So said an adult leader from one of this year’s groups. Another commented, “I absolutely loved the stories shared in the cabins. Several of them brought me to tears. A couple in our ward shared how these stories touched them when they spoke in Sacrament Meeting.”

These and similar comments sum up the feelings of participants of the 2024 youth conferences sponsored by Bluff Fort and held at Camp StickieTa-Tudy.

A group from Tooele began their youth conference in early June and were followed by a Tooele ward. Both conferences proved successful as the youth and their leaders experienced activity after activity designed to reinforce how eternal principles such as the value of work,



faith, teamwork, perseverance and reliance on the Lord that enabled the Hole In The Rock pioneers to succeed will be just as useful today as youth and adults apply them in their own lives.

Activities included a tour of Bluff Fort with stories of the Hole In The Rock pioneers, challenge courses, finding the best route to take handcarts from point A to point B, a visit to the Bluff pioneer cemetery, service and a hot and difficult climb up San Juan Hill. All were designed to teach lessons applicable in today's world.

Shortly before leaving for Bluff, the City of Beaver had experienced an especially difficult loss of a community member. After climbing San Juan Hill, one of the youth said that since the pioneers could do the hard things required of them, he now felt better able to endure his own challenges. He learned that he could do hard things.

The youth conferences proved to be a fun and exciting learning experience where lessons were learned, personal bonds strengthened, and testimonies of the Savior increased. It seems safe to say that seldom was heard a discouraging word and the skies were not cloudy all day.

The herculean efforts of Todd and Holly McAllister, Mike and Terri Liechty, Eric and Allison Dastrup, Frank and Elaine Rowley and Jed and Candice Lyman made the experience one that will change lives and help youth enjoy greater success regardless of their personal circumstances.

Anyone interested in scheduling a youth conference or learning more about the possibilities are invited to call Jed Lyman at 435-979-8882 or Todd McAllister at 435-896-7707.



Tell your friends and neighbors about Bluff Fort. It is a well kept wonderful secret that we hope you will share. Missionaries are needed here. "Transfers" happen now at the beginning of March and September. To make sure their mission application gets to the right place, have them text Bryce Fifield at 435-757-6484, or email mbfifield@gmail.com or blufffort@gmail.com.

