



**Fort Montezuma
1879 – 1884:
Crucible of Devotion**

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1879 - 1884:

Crucible of Devotion

R.F. McDonald

All modern photographs were taken by R.F. McDonald unless otherwise noted.

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Foreword

R.F. McDonald, 80 years old, is a miracle and a purveyor of miracles. He hikes red rock canyons and wades the muddy San Juan River, taking photographs, seeking evidence of the Ute and Navajo people, the pioneers and soldiers, who lived in southeastern Utah more than 100 years ago. *Fort Montezuma 1879-1884: Crucible of Devotion*, resurrects the forgotten stories of those inhabitants.

During the late 1990s, R.F. saw two sandstone headstones among thorny weeds near Utah 262 at Montezuma Creek, Utah. The small graves were covered with cobblestones from the river, and inscriptions on the headstones read: “In Memory of Lizzie Constance Harriman Born Jan. 9, 1879 Died March 27th, 1881” and “In Memory of John Alma Harriman Aged 6 YRS and 7 MOS.” Within a white fence erected in the 1970s, remnants of cedar wood, possibly from a fence built in the 1880s, were scattered over the graves. Someone had cared for the tiny cemetery during the 116 years since the burials—yet R.F. knew all the longtime families in the San Juan area, and none were Harrimans. He put inquiries on family history message boards on the Internet, and months went by.

In 1993, my sister, Brenda Nelson Anderson—who was a great-niece of Lizzie and John—moved from Idaho to Ohio. She was a gifted storyteller and family historian, and she joined the Harriman Family Association in New England. However, by 2000, she was in the final stages of terminal leukemia. If a miracle is “a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency,” then when someone from the Harriman Association gave R.F. Brenda’s contact information, it was a miracle. When he called her in October of 2000, she felt deeply blessed to hear that someone had tended the graves of two children we had heard about since childhood. Brenda and others, notably our cousin, Colleen Smith Bingham, sent him Harriman family history so that R.F. could fill in the blanks about our family’s brief stay in the San Juan area. Brenda died December 24, 2000.

This book fits another definition for a miracle: “an amazing product or achievement.” Camera in hand, R.F. thoroughly researched the Fort Montezuma area and found more neglected stories and many photographs of the pioneers. He chronicled not only the Harriman family’s role in this saga, but also the stories of all of the Fort Montezuma pioneers that he could discover. Like the Harrimans, other pioneers left the San Juan country in 1884 because a huge flood tore out their homes, farms and water wheels, which were indispensable for irrigation. They moved, made new beginnings, and—perhaps because they may have felt they failed at their mission—the stories of their devotion to God and man from 1879 to 1884 were largely forgotten.

Brenda made sure I called R.F. in 2000, and I met him in person in October of 2015. He showed members of our family Lizzie’s and John’s graves, and possible sites for the location of the Harriman cabin. Then he allowed me to help edit this book, for which I’m deeply grateful. Brenda and the Fort Montezuma pioneers must surely appreciate his hard work and consecration—so similar to their own.

Debra Nelson Holm

Preface

This is a history of those who settled in and around Fort Montezuma in what is now San Juan County, Utah. Our purpose is to present the earliest pioneer history of this part of Utah, which is not widely known because early settlers had to move due a major flood, thieving outlaws and other problems. Their descendants scattered and their stories were forgotten for many years.

Out of necessity, the emphasis is on religious history, because most of the Fort Montezuma settlers were responding to formal mission calls from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They were charged with settling the area, establishing the Church and making friends with the Native Americans. Of those directives, they succeeded best at the last one. These pioneers dealt with two distinct groups of Native Americans – the Navajo and the Weeminuche Ute, which also included a few Paiute people. Montezuma pioneers referred to both groups as “Indians,” and made steady efforts to befriend them, as seen in these examples: The Davis family stayed in their cabin rather than gather at the fort during hostilities. Angry Indians respected them for their past kindness and made sure they were safe. Henry Holyoak was sought out by the US Army to be an intermediary with the natives, and William Hyde established trading posts to help the Indians market wool, rugs and other resources. When the Harriman family moved away, their Navajo friends held their horses’ harnesses as if to beg them to stay. These friendly relationships contrasted with the generally poor treatment that tribes received from most other white men.

Although the Montezuma settlement was part of the San Juan Mission, this history focuses only on Fort Montezuma and its close neighbors. Hole in the Rock and Bluff history are not dealt with in this document. Fort Montezuma was not a military fort, but a fortified enclosure where early settlers gathered to defend themselves against attacks.

This history is principally a compilation of historical material provided by a number of third and fourth generation descendants of the pioneers who settled Fort Montezuma. Their assistance has been vital. See Sources (pages 99-101.) Information about the pioneers prior to and after their mission is included. The majority of this history is taken from diaries, journals and life histories written by people who have long since passed away. We depend on the accuracy of those sources because in many instances, they provide all that’s available.

All participants in the Montezuma settlement worked hard and sacrificed much. A story could be written about any one of them. The failure to include the role of any particular person or family in this document does not indicate a lack of respect for their contributions. We have presented the historical materials which we have been able to locate after many years of work.

No effort has been made to entertain the reader with fiction—the task has been to find and report the facts. A concentrated, lengthy effort has been made to find and eliminate errors.

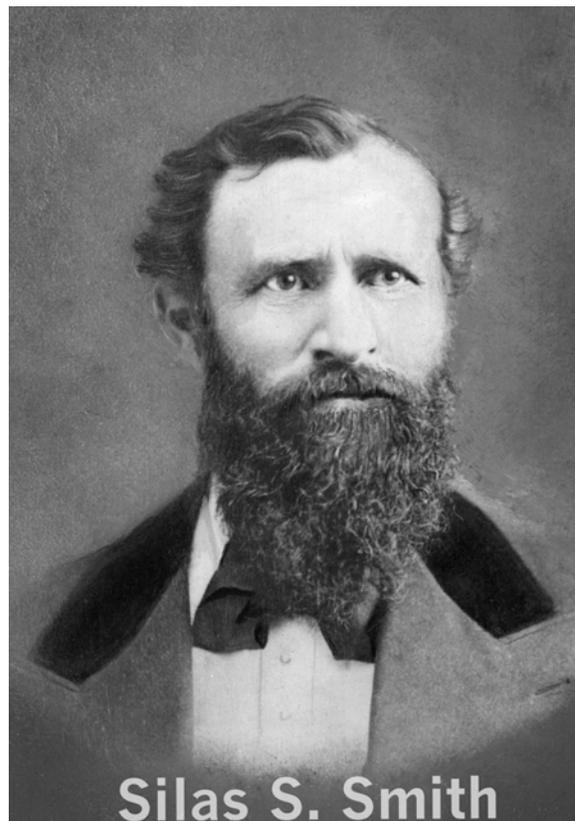
R. F. McDonald

Chapter One: Called to the San Juan River

The Scouting Expedition

In early 1879, responding to a call by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and under the direction of Apostle Erastus Snow, twenty-seven men¹, two women, and eight children set out on what would become a historic expedition.

They were charged to settle on the San Juan River in southeastern Utah Territory, establish the Church and make friends with the Indians. Of these three directives, friendship with the Navajo and Ute people was perhaps the highest priority. Church President Brigham Young (who died in 1877) asked members to treat the natives better than most elements of white civilization had done: “. . . Indians are just as much the children of our Father and God as we are. . . . We could. . . kill every man, woman and child of them. This is what others have done, and if we were to do it, what better are we than the wicked and ungodly? It is our duty to be better than they in our administrations of justice and our general conduct toward the Lamanites [Indians]. It is not our duty to kill them but it is our duty to save their lives and the lives of their children.”



Silas S. Smith
Lamont Crabtree photograph

To contrast this approach with that of the United States government, one example will suffice. In 1863, angered over attacks on prospectors who were pushing into Navajo lands, the government blamed the transgressions of a few renegades on all Navajos and ordered that they be moved from their homeland. The government sent Kit Carson at the head of an army of both cavalry and paid Ute raiders to steal livestock, take prisoners and destroy corn, squash, beans, age-old peach orchards and livestock—anything to break the Navajos’ independent spirits.

In the "Long Walk," some 8,500 men, women, and children were forced to walk 300-plus-miles to a desolate internment camp in eastern New Mexico, near Fort Sumner. An estimated 3,000 died on the journey, their plight callously ignored by US authorities. After four years, having endured miserable conditions, a treaty was signed and Navajos returned to portion of their homeland. Thus it's not surprising that the Native Americans might feel wary or even hostile toward the Mormon pioneers. There were very few white people who they could trust.

The plan was to establish the first Church settlement in a vast unexplored wilderness of more than 7900 square miles, which would eventually become San Juan County. The territory had yet to be surveyed and little was known about the area. Two families would be left to colonize near

¹ Some sources list 27 men, others list 32. We have included all 32 in Appendix I

the San Juan River in the southeast corner of Utah Territory while other members of the scouting party returned to the Cedar City and Parowan, Utah, area. From there, more than 200 saints would be called to travel back to the selected site to join the two families.

Silas S. Smith was called by church leaders as captain of the expedition. Silas was a first cousin of the Prophet Joseph Smith and was a seasoned pioneer who had lived in Nauvoo, Illinois, as a young man. Silas embarked on this journey at age 49, and took several (either two or five) of his sons with him. (A list of participants is found in Appendix I). All members of the scouting expedition sacrificed much, and a story could be written about each of them. This story, however, will focus on Fort Montezuma and the families who settled in the fort and in the general area of the fort. This history will not address every settler in the area.

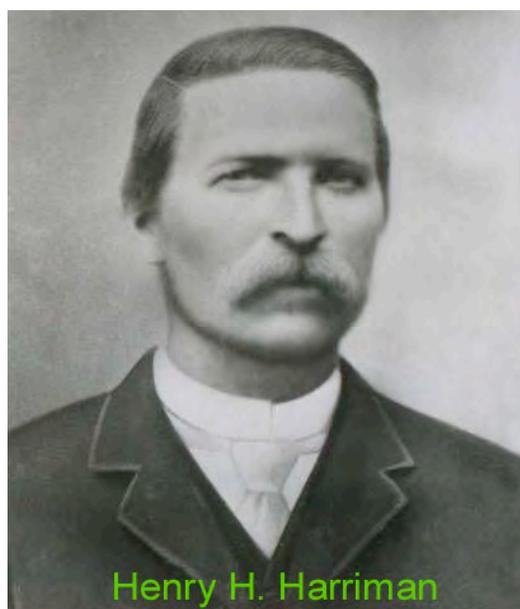
Harriman Family

Henry Harrison Harriman and his wife, Sarah Elizabeth Hobbs, were from Parowan, Utah. Henry was a son of Henry Harriman Sr. who was one of the Presidents of the First Quorum of the Seventy in the Church. His mother was Eliza Jones Harriman. Henry was a diligent saint who regularly walked six miles to faithfully attend his Church meetings, as reported by his children.

Sarah Elizabeth Hobbs, who went by the name Elizabeth, was a daughter of William D. Hobbs and Mary Ann Pope, English converts to the Church who immigrated to Utah when Elizabeth was nine. After a long voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, the family traveled in part of a freight wagon to Omaha, Nebraska. There, they bought a covered wagon and shared it with another family to journey to Salt Lake City as part of the Warren Snow Company.

Elizabeth walked nearly all the way from Omaha to Salt Lake City, often carrying another woman's baby, sometimes with her sister Ellen, age eight, and her brother George, age six, at her side. George would grow up to be a heaven-sent asset during one of her most difficult trials at Fort Montezuma, and Ellen would also settle there for a time.

Elizabeth and Henry were married on September 23, 1871, at St. George, Utah. After eight years in Parowan, they received the mission call to settle the San Juan territory. At the time of the mission call, Henry was thirty and Elizabeth was twenty-six. Their children were Henry George, age six; Mary Clarissa,



Henry H. Harriman

Colleen Smith Photograph



Sarah Elizabeth Harriman
Colleen Smith photograph

five; John Alma, three; and Lizzie Constance, three months. On accepting the call, they had no idea that two children would not survive. The photographs were taken much later, around 1895.

Davis Family

James L. and Mary Elizabeth Fretwell Davis, both born in London, England, immigrated to Utah separately. Less than a year after Mary's arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, she met James. Following a proper courtship, they were married on April 23, 1864, and soon moved to Cedar City, Utah. James was a farmer, an exceptionally motivated man who built a comfortable rock home. After 15 years in Cedar City, James and Mary owned a store, six city lots, a nice orchard, and a herd of cattle. They planned to spend the rest of their lives in Cedar City.

According to family records, Mary was in her sickbed when James returned home with the news of their call to San Juan Territory. She had previously lost four children soon after birth and was five months pregnant, and very ill. James said he couldn't see any way they could accept such a call with Mary's health so fragile. Mary rose up on her elbows and said, "There is no way we can refuse the call; if the Lord has called us, we can do it." Mary accepted the call immediately even though she knew there would be no doctor or medical assistance where they would be going. Some friends and family members thought Mary would soon die.

James struggled with the decision for several days, and likely discussed the call with their four children. They accepted the call and suffered a significant financial loss when disposing of their holdings in Cedar City. Mary asked her bishop for a blessing, and Bishop Christopher Arthur blessed Mary, promising her that she would not lose her baby and that her health would improve. Mary had been seriously ill much of her adult life. James Davis recorded a dream he had a short time prior to the mission call, in which he saw himself as a missionary living in Arizona territory. He said this mission call fulfilled what he had seen in his dream.

Their four children were Edward, age thirteen; James Harry, nine; Emily, six; and John, three. At the time of the mission call, James was thirty-eight and Mary was thirty-five.

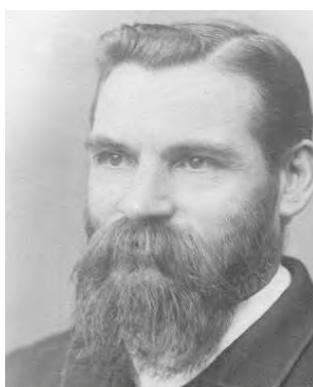
The photos on top are rare, having been taken during their years in England. The bottom photos were taken later in life, long after their Fort Montezuma mission.



James Davis. 1858 photograph taken in England, age 18. John Fretwell photograph



Mary Elizabeth Fretwell at age 19. John Fretwell photograph taken in England during 1862



James Davis circa 1880. Marilyn Johnson photo



Mary Elizabeth Fretwell. 1895 photograph provided by Marilyn Johnson

Kumen Jones, age twenty-two, was called to be an advance scout for the expedition. He reported, “On December 19, 1878, “I had the following dream. In company with others, most of whom were strangers to me, including Indians, we were all busily engaged at the building of a large stone building, in which the Lamanites were deeply interested. The country was strange and new to me. Near the place of our operations was a river that I could see the water was not quite clear. As this dream had left quite an impression on my mind, I asked our mother to interpret it for me. Without hesitation she said, ‘You will be called with others to go and live among the Indians.’ About a week later, we received word from Parowan that 16 young men had been called to make a scouting trip out in the country, in the neighborhood of the Four Corners.” Kumen was one of them, as was George Hobbs, Elizabeth Harriman’s younger brother.



Kumen Jones, circa 1880. C. K. McDonald photograph

The scouting party consisted of 28 men, plus the wives and children of James Davis and Henry Harriman. They began an historic journey into uncharted territory, where the Harriman and Davis families had pledged to become the first settlers. They had a primitive map of the area, which later proved to be seriously flawed.

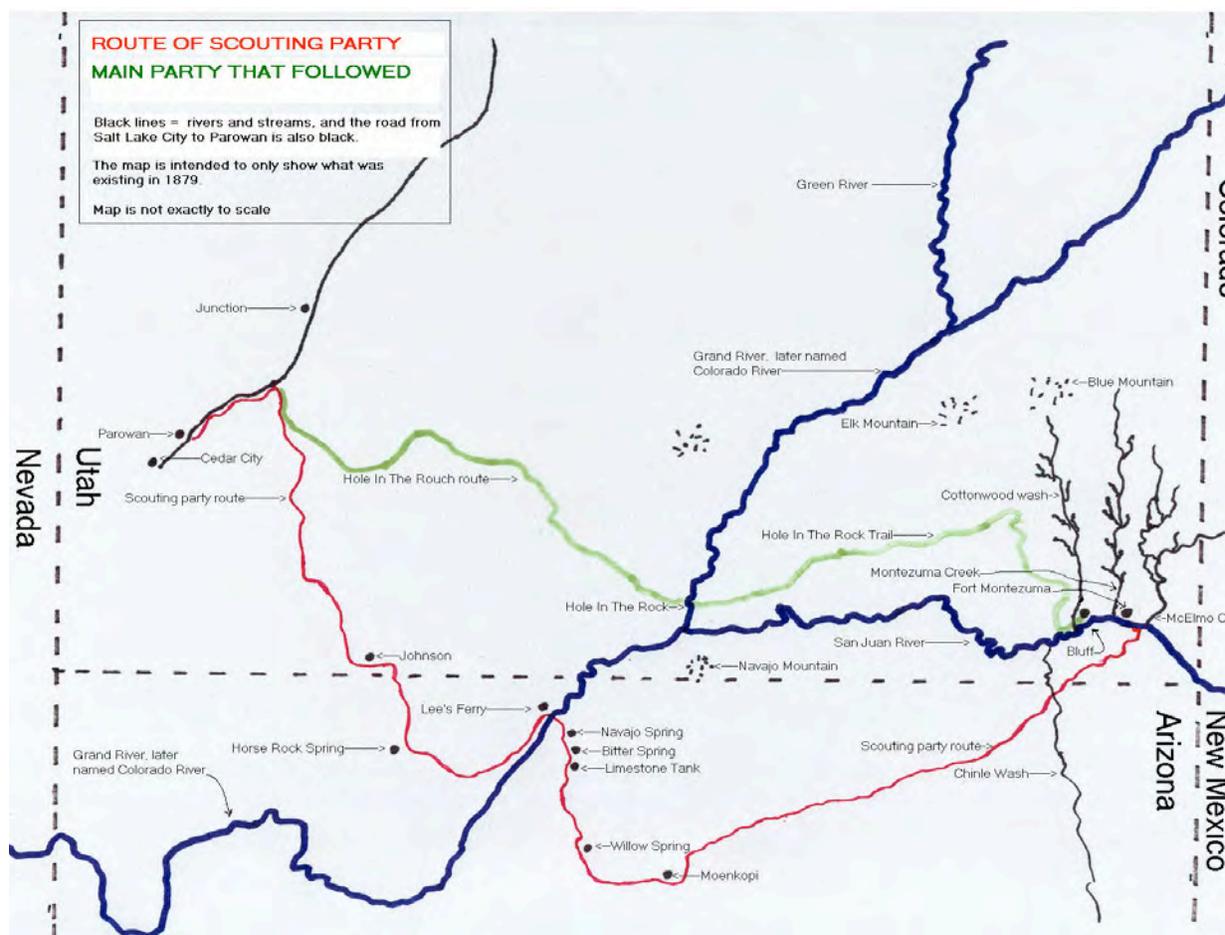
Parowan to Montezuma

The expedition rolled out of Parowan on April 13, 1879, with twelve wagons: ten freight wagons and two light duty wagons to accommodate the women and children. Four-horse teams pulled the freight wagons. Mary and Elizabeth drove the light duty wagons, drawn by two-horse teams and equipped with spring seats set up high to reduce the shock and put the women above the worst of the dust. Elizabeth’s three-month-old baby, Lizzie, probably rode on the seat next to her mother much of the way.

James and Henry each drove freight wagons with their wives and children following behind. Cattle and extra horses were herded alongside the wagons. The other men drove freight wagons loaded with food and supplies enough to sustain the group for six months.

The group passed Panguitch and followed the Sevier River to an area near Kanab, then on to Johnson and to Navajo Wells. At one extremely steep place in the Buckskin Mountains, the men chiseled holes in the sandstone surface to enable the horses to get footing, and then, four teams of horses had to pull each wagon to the summit. The men then unhooked the teams, tied ropes to the wagons and gradually lowered them off the steep mountainside.

They camped at Horse Rock Springs, then at Jacob's Pools, and crossed Badger Creek to Lee's Ferry. Mary and Elizabeth nearly overturned their wagons on Lee's Backbone, a tilted slab of sandstone. They continued through Navajo Springs to Bitter Springs, then through Limestone Tanks to Willow Springs and through Moabey Wash. When they finally reached the Hopi Indian village of Moenkopi, they were greeted by a few missionaries. They had traveled approximately 275 miles in three weeks. George Hobbs said one-fourth of the cattle died of thirst and the remaining animals had sore hooves.



After a nine-day rest, they decided to complete their journey by traveling approximately 150 miles across unknown Ute and Navajo Indian territory, without a road or trail. Mary was too ill to travel, so the Davis family decided to remain with the missionaries at Moenkopi until the site for the new settlement could be determined. Two advance scouts, Kumen Jones and Robert Bullock, were assigned to find a route, and they hired two scouts from Moenkopi: Nathan Tanner and an old Navajo man whose name is unknown, but who was familiar with the area where they would travel. Most of the cattle remained at Moenkopi to give their hooves time to heal.

The missionaries at Moenkopi didn't think it was safe to take Elizabeth and the Harriman children across such dangerous Indian Territory, but Elizabeth was willing to go. She was acquainted with adversity and danger, and she had faith that the Lord would protect her family. Leaving Moenkopi on May 13, the group of perhaps 21 men, one woman, and four children, began their journey with nine or ten wagons and some extra horses. They forced their way through dense greasewood, eight feet high, and then pushed into the deserts of Arizona. The Indians they dealt with came in two types: friendly and unfriendly. However, under the leadership of Silas S. Smith, the scouts won some Indian friends by digging wells as they camped and leaving them for the natives, because both the scouts and the Indians suffered from the shortage of water. After traveling ahead for many days, Nathan Tanner and Robert Bullock returned with word that they had scouted the way for the next 75 miles. In the weeks that followed, the group suffered from thirst and other hardships. Indians followed the scouts much of the time, and were often given food by the scouts.

According to the writings of Kumen Jones, they arrived at the San Juan River on June 1, 1879, at a point approximately half way between the mouth of Montezuma Creek and McElmo Creek,¹ where the group met Peter Shirts. It seemed Peter was expecting them—perhaps his Indian friends had informed him of the approaching scouting party. Spring runoff was in progress, which meant the river would have been around four feet deep, with holes much deeper. To cross the river, the scouts raised wagon boxes as high as they could on the frames and pulled them across one at a time with a four-horse team.

Each horse carried a rider with a knife in his hand to cut the horse loose from its harness if it began to drown. Robert Bullock was swept off and went under a logjam, which skinned his face. The current would have been too swift for a person to wade across. The women and children were taken across in a canoe belonging to Peter Shirts.

Captain Silas Smith and his scouting party had traveled through Arizona and much of Southern Utah, and had reached the area church leaders asked them to settle.

Chapter Two: Settling the Fort, Surviving the Winter

Peter Shirts

Peter Shirts had arrived in this area earlier.¹ Some of the Parowan men remembered Mr. Shirts from earlier years as a veteran frontiersman. He was friendly and helpful to the new arrivals. Mr. Shirts was 71 when the scouting party found him at Montezuma. The church did not send Mr. Shirts to Montezuma, but he claimed credit for being the first settler at the site. He said he had been there since 1877.

¹ This is a condensed review of the travels of the scouting party. The trip is well documented in other publications. For more detailed accounts see *Hole-in-the-Rock* by Miller, *Saga of San Juan* by Perkins, Nielson, and Jones, and *In the Palm of Time* by McPherson.

¹ Most histories say Mr. Shirts lived in his cabin at the mouth of Montezuma Creek. However, according to the diary of Nielson B. Dalley, Mr. Shirts also had a camp near a pyramid-shaped mountain named Lone Mountain, or Peak, 7 miles up-river from Montezuma.

Some people have given Mr. Shirts credit for naming Montezuma and Recapture Canyons; however, we have found no evidence that he actually claimed that honor. The picture shown here was taken when he was younger than 71.

The photograph below shows the dry bed of Montezuma Creek on the left and the San Juan River on the right. The picture was taken looking east. Peter Shirts lived alone in a tent near this location during 1877, and eventually built a cabin there. He subsisted partly on fish from the San Juan River, which provided Colorado pike minnows, trout, and possibly a few salmon. Montezuma Creek provided native brook trout.

We believe Mr. Shirts had another camp near the base of a pyramid shaped mountain called Peak, or "Lone Mountain," which is a few miles east of Montezuma.



Peter Shirts. Toni Wyeth photograph



This is the general area where Peter Shirts lived during 1877-78, located at the junction of Montezuma wash and the San Juan River. The view is looking east. R. F. McDonald photograph 2001

Peter Shirts is perhaps the earliest known white settler in the area which became San Juan County. A brief introduction to Peter is here presented. Peter was born August 23, 1808, at St. Clair, Ohio. He married Margaret Cameron in 1833 and both were baptized that year, just three years after the LDS Church was organized. He helped build the Kirtland Temple and later moved to Nauvoo, Illinois, where he helped build the Nauvoo Temple. Peter was a close friend to Joseph Smith. When Peter's fourth child was born, he asked Joseph Smith to bless the child and give him the name "Don Carlos," the name of one of Joseph's brothers, which is evidence of Peter's feelings for the Smith family.

In 1849, one of the Shirts family members, 16-year-old King Darius, made the trek to Utah with Peter. Peter returned to Nauvoo and brought his wife and four remaining children the following year. While traveling along the Platte River near present day Ashland, Nebraska, Margaret became ill with cholera and died. This was a major tragedy for the family. Peter used part of their wagon box to make a casket for her. He and the children continued their journey, eventually arriving in the Salt Lake Valley. Peter settled his family near a spring just east of the fort at Lehi. He soon left with two of his sons to join the Iron Mission caravan headed for Southern Utah.

Peter married three more times during his life and eventually fathered eleven children. He served under the direction of Brigham Young on many scouting expeditions. This quote from a grandson, Ambrose Shurtz, describes Peter very well: "Because of his uneasy nature, and too, that he didn't mind being alone, he is known in Church History as the 'Old Daniel Boone of Deseret.' He wandered far and wide."

Peter was well known for producing iron, recovering salt from a lake west of Cedar City, building sawmills, and especially for his exploring of remote areas, being the first settler at several locations: Paria Creek, Iron City, Pegasus Spring area in Colorado, and Montezuma Creek in Utah territory, among others. Peter kept an ongoing correspondence with Brigham Young, and recommended various locations for possible new settlements. Peter had the ability to make friends with Indian people. The Paiute Indians named Peter "Pi Kumshaw," referring to the two fingers he had lost in a milling accident as a young man. We will present more about this interesting man later in this work.

We return to the account of the scouting expedition of 1879. After becoming re-acquainted with Peter Shirts, and borrowing his canoe to get the women and children across the river, the scouts traveled east about nine miles to the mouth of McElmo Creek, and found another settler named Henry L. Mitchell. Fifty-nine year old Mitchell and his wife Caroline were there with some extended families that were also trying to settle and establish farms nearby. According to census records, Caroline had 19 children. However, not all of them accompanied the family to McElmo Creek, where they numbered at least 23 family and extended family members, plus some hired hands. They had been there about eight months. John Brewer and George Clay made farms a little west of the Mitchell place, which was at the mouth of McElmo Creek. They had been there since late 1878 and were located north of the pyramid-shaped mountain, which they called Peak, or Lone Mountain. The following year these non-Mormon settlers would be joined by some of the Hole in the Rock Mormon pioneers.



This is a view of the area in the river corridor about a mile west of the mouth of McElmo Creek, very near the Mitchell place and also Peak. This image reveals how the river corridor looked before the government introduced Tamarisk and Russian Olive to the area, which has since resulted in a flood plain full of dense foliage. San Juan County Historical photograph. C. 1924

The scouts camped at the mouth of McElmo Creek for several weeks and built a 200-foot-wide riprap dam in the San Juan River in an effort to get water to Henry Mitchell's cornfields. Henry Harriman took charge of the construction of the dam. They also constructed some buildings. The Mitchell family was appreciative, and good will was established. They agreed to share their corn crop with the Harriman and Davis families. However, as it turned out, there would be no crop to share. It was not possible to make a dam which could withstand the surges of the San Juan River

This area where the Mitchell family settled has been called various names: River View, McElmo, Stulls,² Brewer's Bottom,⁴ Holyoak,³ Peak City and more. In this history we will refer to the immediate area where McElmo Creek enters the San Juan River as River View. The photograph shows what the general area looked like in 1924. The Mitchell farm, trading post and cabin were located a short distance west of the mouth of McElmo—actually a little out of this view. (For a list of Mitchell family members and employees, see Appendix II.) After the scouts spent weeks helping the Mitchell family, they had succeeded in establishing a fragile friendship with them. Next, they mapped all of the farmable land west of River View for 28 miles—all of which was on the north side of the San Juan River.

² Henry Mitchell had an employee named Aaron Stull who had a cabin and farm nearby.

⁴ John Brewer had a cabin and farm west of the Mitchell place, likely in the area pictured above.

³ Later, the Holyoak family settled not far from John Brewer's place, also likely in the view, or very near to being in the view shown in the photograph on this page.

Indian Trouble

On June 18, five men¹ were assigned to return to Moenkopi for the Davis family and to bring the cattle they had left behind. While they were gone, the Montezuma settlers celebrated the Fourth of July. The Mitchell family joined in the festivities, as well as some Navajo folks. Family tradition says that Elizabeth made a U.S. flag out of scraps from Zechariah Decker's red underwear, her daughter's blue dress and some white cloth.

At the very time the Montezuma settlers were enjoying the festivities, the five scouts who had gone to Moenkopi and the Davis family faced a crisis. Three days into their trip from Moenkopi toward Montezuma, an unfriendly Indian named Peokan entered their camp while they were eating, kicked dirt into their food, took their knife, sharpened it on a rock and pulled it across his throat as an indication of his intent.² Two men from Salt Lake City had camped with the scouts that evening. Peokan provoked a fight with a man named Smith, the smaller of the two men, and when Peokan began to prevail, Smith's dog inflicted a nasty wound in Peokan's leg. Peokan grabbed a shovel and attacked the dog. Smith went after Peokan with an axe; Peokan's friends had already gone for help. Some of the scouts reached for their guns, but James Davis pled with the younger men not to fire the first shot, pointing to his wife and children. Davis jumped for Smith, and James Decker seized Peokan, which stopped their hostilities. As Peokan walked away, he lifted the wagon flap and with a gesture of the knife, he terrified the crying Davis children and their mother. Then he departed, saying he would return before sunrise and shed some blood. A friendly Indian told the Davis family they should leave the area quickly.

A few years earlier, Peokan had attacked a missionary named George A. Smith, the son of Apostle George Albert Smith. The 18-year-old missionary showed his pistol to Peokan, who asked to handle it. Smith trustingly handed it to him. Peokan casually turned the gun on Smith and shot him in the gut three times. As he suffered on the ground, four arrows were shot deep into his back. Jehiel McDonnell and other friends, including Jacob Hamblin, Thales Haskell, and Ira Hatch, rescued Smith, but he suffered terribly and finally died on the trail the following day. Peokan was an angry man. Other Indian people who lived in the area said he was mean—full of hate and bitterness. The Indian told the scouts Peokan was gathering his band and they would return to kill before sunrise. There was no reason to doubt this man's word. However, Peokan didn't return that night. A day or two later, a friendly Indian rushed into camp and said Peokan and his band were coming. The scouts were armed and capable of defending themselves, but they chose to make a run for it, because a gunfight with a band of Indians did not fit their prime directive in any way. A bloody confrontation with Peokan and his band was to be avoided at all costs. The friendly Indian guided the group as they made a speedy departure, impatiently rushing the Davis wagon on and on until the horses were exhausted. The five scouts followed on horseback, providing a formidable defense between Peokan and the Davis family. The friendly Indian finally said they were past the area of danger and they could rest. However, it was yet a long way to Montezuma. With much difficulty, the group eventually completed the remaining 150-mile-journey and arrived at Fort Montezuma.³

¹ Nielson Dalley, Parley R. Butt, James B. Decker, Kumen Jones, and Hamilton Wallace.

² Peokan was the son of a Navajo Chieftain named Tanigoots, Dah-Nish-Uant, or Spaneshanks.

About 20 years earlier, the daughter of Tanigoots, a half sister to Peokan, married Mormon missionary Ira Hatch and she became known as Sarah Maraboots Dyson Hatch.

³ There are several versions of this story. This account was taken from two James Davis biographies, and from the writings of Nielson Dalley. There are other accounts, which read nearly the same.

Mary Davis was pregnant, weary from the hardships of the journey and still in shock from the terror of Peokan's death threat. When she saw the fort and its primitive living quarters, she began to despair. With her baby due to be born any day, she may have wondered if the fort would be the place of her death. Perhaps she would have died there, had it not been for the powerful blessing of Bishop Arthur. In the words of James: "From the time we started on this mission, my wife's health began to improve. By the time we reached our journey's end, she was a well woman." Though Mary's health may have mended, she still had to face delivering a child in the hot dusty fort without trained assistance.

Elizabeth Harriman was a great support to Mary, but the fort was nothing a woman would brag about, with perhaps a single 10-foot by 12-foot dirt floored room to accommodate the entire Davis family. Temperatures soared to 100 degrees or more during the day. The river water was muddy and hardly acceptable for culinary purposes. Mary must have endured terrifying fear, knowing that the blessing she had received from Bishop Arthur would soon be tested.

The scouts were anxious to go home to southwestern Utah. Some of them were disgruntled about the location and had no plan to return. President Smith, however, was worried about Mary's dilemma. He felt he couldn't leave until her situation was resolved. As their leader, he carried the responsibility of having brought the pioneers to Montezuma, and he prayed for a successful birth. President Smith told the scouts to start home by a new route, north through Recapture Canyon, and to camp and wait for him near Blue Mountain. George Hobbs and Harvey Dunton remained at the fort with President Smith. According to historian Albert R. Lyman, the scouts built a road 15 miles up Recapture Canyon, and ascended up onto Mustang Mesa. Some believe they camped at a spring part way up the hill to Mustang Mesa now called Richmond Spring, which is on the east side of the road up Road Canyon.

From there they made a new road all the way to the east side of Blue Mountain. They camped at a location, which was near the junction of South Creek and North Creek on the East side of Blue Mountain. There was a cabin at the site. Some accounts credit a prospector from Cedar City for building that cabin around 1876, but according to Albert R. Lyman it was freshly built by cowboys who were preparing to move some cattle into the area. Perhaps we will never know which account is correct. The location of that cabin is believed to have been near the middle of the present golf course in Monticello.¹

At Montezuma, Mary went into labor around August 1. Things did not go well, so James hired Clara Mitchell to act as midwife. Mary's travail continued into the early morning hours. Clara came out of the Davis cabin exhausted, saying she didn't think Mary would live, and then left the area for a while.

¹ All accounts report that the cabin burned soon after the scouting party left the area. Someone blamed the Utes for burning it, others say the scouts failed to put their fire out sufficiently. Perhaps we will never know who was actually responsible.

President Smith was anguishing with the others in the Harriman side of the fort. After Clara left, President Smith went to Mary and gave her a blessing at 2:30 a.m. on August 2, and Mary's child was born immediately. President Smith was referred to as Doctor Smith after that. The baby girl and Mary were both well and healthy. President Smith gave a name and blessing to the child.

New Life at Montezuma

Ethel Olive Davis was the name of the first known white child born in San Juan Territory. President Smith was very much relieved following the birth. He and George Hobbs were then free to leave for home, but they stayed for another 11 days to make sure all was well with the child. On August 13, they set out to catch up with the other scouts. They said they would return with the main party of settlers during October, and would bring more food and supplies. Harvey Dunton stayed at the fort and started building a cabin for himself and his family whom he would bring sometime in the future.

President Smith and George Hobbs joined the other scouts east of Blue Mountain, and together they searched for a new route home. The scouts built a crude road down what is now called Peters Hill, through Dry Valley, and intercepted the old Spanish Trail at Coyote Wash (near the present LaSal Junction, where highway 89 now crosses Coyote Wash.) According to San Juan History by Albert R. Lyman, they followed the Old Spanish Trail and finally arrived at the Grand River where Moab is now located. From there they crossed the river and made their way to Parowan and home to Cedar City, arriving on September 17th, having traveled over 1000 miles and making 400 miles of new road.

Many years later, Ethel Olive gave the following tribute to her mother, which was provided to us by her granddaughter, LaFawn May:

"When I was born my brother tells of two owls in a tree hooting when they heard me cry. When I was a few days old a number of Indians came in the house where Mother was alone with her infant to see this white papoose. They took me out of bed and passed me around for their inspection. It was useless for Mother to resist. She was home alone and at the mercy of the Indians. She sent up her silent prayer to God for my safety, as it was common to see a white child that had been stolen among the Indians. After passing me from one to the other, they finally put me back with Mother, and what a relief it was for her.

"I feel a deep gratitude to Mother for all she has gone through for her children, and I, the least of them, caused her more anxiety, with being so near her heart when she was in poor health, and had to give up her home, brothers and friends, to go in a desolate desert with wild Indians, taking care of the other children, getting meals on a campfire, and all the work required. Driving a team herself over such roads, and then two weeks after arriving with no doctors, she went into the shadow of death for my sake. Can I ever repay her? No, but by me trying to live the kind of life she would have me live, I hope she will be happy when we meet."

In her writings, Ethel Olive Davis said her mother was very much afraid the Indians would kidnap one of her children, so she would make them go bare footed, so they wouldn't stray very far from the cabin.

William Shurtz Family

Peter Shirts diligently worked to convince his relatives in Ohio to join him in the West. Some of them finally made the journey. Peter's brother William Shurtz brought his family from Ohio to join Peter at Montezuma. They spelled their surname "Shurtz" rather than "Shirts" and were not members of the LDS Church. They arrived early in the summer of 1879. William and Susan Shirts brought two sons with them; William Jr., age 22 and Oscar, age 21. They joined Peter and probably built their cabin near the river, not far from Peter's cabin.

They reported that directly across the river from their cabin was an Indian cliff dwelling. There is one such dwelling on the south side of the river a short distance east of where Peter's cabin was located. We speculate that this could be a clue to the location where the William Shurtz family lived.



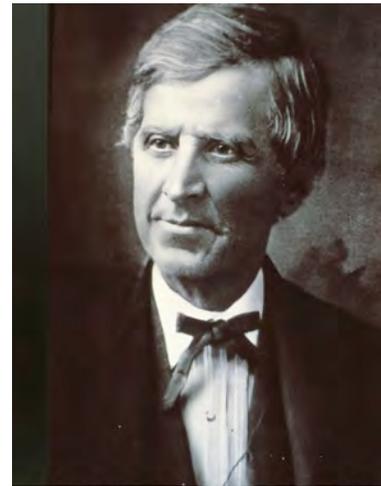
Michael and Ida Shurtz. C. 1875
Ellen Shurtz Jones Photograph, provided by Brian Tuft

William and Susan had an older married son Michael and wife Catherine, who arrived soon after their parents. They brought their three-year-old son Cornelius Alexander and an infant named George Paul, who was born in Eureka, Colorado, on their way between Ohio and Montezuma. They arrived during August of 1879.

At Fort Montezuma, the first priority was to build rock fireplaces in each cabin for the women to cook in, and James Davis set out to build them. Prior to finishing the Harriman fireplace, the small group was obliged to face their next crisis.

Meeker Massacre

On September 30, some Southern Ute Indians led by a Paiute named Douglass went on the warpath and made a surprise attack on the Meeker family at the White River Indian Agency in Colorado, where they killed Nathan Meeker and all 10 of his male employees. They then burned the buildings, took the women and children hostage, and fled into Utah territory.¹



Nathan Meeker. Meeker Museum photograph

¹ Histories held by the Meeker museum in Meeker, Colorado, indicate Nathan Meeker and his men did some things that provoked the Ute people, which brought about the attack. A study of the events that led to the attack makes it easier to understand the reason the Ute people reacted so violently. Also see *Narratives of Indian Captives*, by Garland. We are aware that histories of the Meeker Massacre indicate the Indians took the woman captives west into northern Utah territory and do not mention any of them going south.

According to the James Davis biography, a band of Ute Indians fled the scene of the massacre and headed toward Fort Montezuma. A friendly Navajo discovered this, and rode long and hard to alert the Montezuma settlers. He appeared at the fort late in the afternoon with two extra horses, in a lather from the long run. He said the angry Ute men would arrive soon. He pled with the settlers to go with him across the river into Navajo territory, where he would hide them and save their lives. The Davis and Harriman families held a council and then told their Navajo friend the Lord had sent them to Montezuma, and they didn't intend to run. They decided to defend themselves and trust the Lord. Their friend was upset, fearing he wouldn't see his Mormon friends alive again.

The fort was not secure. One end of the Harriman side of the fort was missing, having been removed in preparation to build a rock wall and the fireplace. Rocks were piled up ready to be laid, so James began hastily building a rock wall. Henry fortified the room by cutting small holes in the chinking through which to shoot their guns if the Utes attacked. By dusk, James had the bricks up to the roofline. Both families took refuge in the Harriman room. The children were bedded down and the women sat at the foot of their beds on the dirt floor and prayed, while the men kept a constant vigil. None of them slept. Elizabeth tried to extract a promise from the men that they would shoot her rather than allow her to be captured alive. With hearts pounding, they watched and listened. In the dark even the smallest sound from outside brought a surge of fear.

Then it happened! A few hours before dawn, the dogs barked and headed upriver. The children cried; the tension was terrible. After a long wait the dogs returned, but remained restless until sunrise. Later they discovered that a large band of Indians had crossed the river and turned south a short distance before reaching the fort. The settlers' prayers had been answered: surely the Indians heard the dogs and were aware of the settlers' presence, but they made the choice not to molest them.

We speculate that Harvey Dunton, and the Shirts, and Shurtz families took shelter with the Mitchell family at River View, or possibly elsewhere. We have not found any verification that they were at Montezuma when the Indians approached.

Communication was slow and unreliable in 1879. By the time news of the Meeker Massacre reached Erastus Snow in Salt Lake City, the report said that the Fort Montezuma families were included in the slaughter. Church leaders were told the bodies of the Harriman and Davis adults lay in the sun, while the fates of the nine little children were unknown. This cruel, false report must have caused Church leaders much anguish. Erastus Snow sent a message to Thales Haskell, asking him to go to Fort Montezuma and bury the settlers decently if he found them dead, and to stay with them if he found them alive. It was almost five months after the massacre before Thales arrived at the fort. It probably took two months or more to send word back to Salt Lake City that the report had been false. We can be sure that church leaders gratefully received the good news.

There is no way to excuse the White River Utes for the atrocities they committed at the White River Agency. Ute Indians, some of whom ate with him at his own table hours prior to the attack, killed Nathan Meeker. However, the fact should be noted that Nathan Meeker and others had done things that provoked the Utes.

The Harrimans and Davises wanted to befriend the local Indians. To understand the complexity of this challenge, we need to study Indian / white relations in southeastern Utah in 1879.

The majority of Indian tribes submitted to living on the reservations established for them during the 1800s. However, a few renegade bands didn't agree with the treaties—they considered themselves an unconquered, free-spirited people who resented the influx of outsiders. They wouldn't stay on their reservations, nor would they submit to the authority of white men.

For many years the Weeminuche Band, which consisted of mostly Southern Utes and a few Paiutes, roamed the high deserts of what would eventually become San Juan County and most of Grand County, none of which was designated as reservation. Some Navajos also lived on both sides of the river in the area of Fort Montezuma. Many of them were renegades. Some had escaped Kit Carson and the U.S. Cavalry in 1864 during the great round-up [which ended in the tragic Long Walk of the Navajo]. Both the Navajos and the Weeminuche Band rightfully considered themselves unconquered. Both groups tolerated the Mormons fairly well, but the situation worsened when large cattle companies arrived in the 1880s and drove cattle onto the grassland

San Juan County was public land and the cattle companies were there legally, so the companies complained that the Indians were the problem because they were not on their reservations. They petitioned the government to move the rebel Indians to their reservations. Indian agencies were given directions on several occasions to force the Weeminuche Utes back to their designated reservation in Colorado. Every attempt resulted in failure. The Indians had no interest in laws made by white men. They were unconquered and believed the land belonged to the Creator who provided it for their use. They felt that their traditional hunting lands were being infiltrated with cattle.

Cultural differences also raised havoc. Indians could not conceive of the concept of private ownership of land or animals. To them, the Creator owned the earth and the animals and had put them here for their use; thus they felt it was no serious crime to harvest a cow for food. They felt that cows belonged to the Lord, not to the cowboys or the cattle companies; nice fat cows were easy to catch, why not harvest a few? Of course, in the white man's culture, to kill a man's cows was justification for speedy retaliation. Conflict was inevitable.

Thus in 1879, Mormon families built Fort Montezuma in a challenging location—a potential hotbed for conflict with the Weeminuche Utes and the Navajos, both free-spirited groups of people, some of whom considered themselves unconquered.

According to historian Albert R. Lyman, the Mormons were totally at the mercy of the Indians, who, with their great numbers, could have easily exterminated the settlers any time they wished. Trouble would erupt in 1881, when the Ute Indians waged war against non-Mormon white intruders. A good number of both cowboys and Indians were killed that year. In this difficult environment, the Fort Montezuma pioneers were to fill their prime directive: to befriend the Indians, a task which Mormons believed could not be accomplished without the help of God.



The west end of the Montezuma Valley, The arrow points to the location where Peter Shirts built his cabin. R. F. McDonald photograph 2006

The purpose of this page is to give readers who have never been to Montezuma a feeling for the area. The river flows from right to left. The view in the photograph is looking a little north of directly west, and was taken from the mesa which is directly south of the Montezuma Valley. The land where the modern sewer pond is located was possibly land the Montezuma pioneers farmed.

Montezuma Creek, which flows from the north, is not distinguishable in this photograph because of the distance. The junction of the Montezuma Creek stream and the San Juan River is at the white arrow.

We believe the Shurtz families lived in the area in this photograph. They were likely a little up-river from the Peter Shirts place. We have not identified the exact location of their cabin. We have no record of any other settlers who lived in this area during the 1800s, but there could have been some we are not aware of. The majority of the settlers were up-river from the area in the photograph on this page.



This view of the Montezuma Valley is to the east of the one on the previous page. R. F. McDonald photograph 2003

The above view is looking a little west of directly north. At the time this photograph was taken the San Juan River divided into two streams east of here and rejoined into one stream in the middle of this photograph. The land to the right was an island. That has since been changed to one stream and no island.

Some of the land in this view was farmed by the Fort Montezuma pioneers. They dug a ditch, which took irrigation water north out into the area where the modern sewer ponds are now located.

The white arrow indicates the approximate location where the Decker families built their cabins and lived, which was near the bank of the Montezuma Creek, and was also very near an old Indian trail, which followed the Montezuma Canyon all the way to the San Juan River. The darker green foliage a distance below the white arrow is the channel where Montezuma Creek flows.



This view of the Montezuma Valley is looking a little east of north. R. F. McDonald photograph 2003

The yellow arrow shows the approximate location of the fort complex at Montezuma. This is the area where most of the Montezuma settlers lived. (Try to ignore the modern infrastructure.) The land in the foreground was an island. The fort was on the very edge of the San Juan River. Montezuma Creek can be seen to the left of the darker colored trees in the school housing area.

The white arrow identifies what is believed to be the original dugway from the mesa down to the river and the cabins. This dugway is mentioned in the Allan family history. It can still be identified today.

The trees in center photograph were on an island. In times past the river split above this view and rejoined below this view.



The east end of the Montezuma Valley. R. F. McDonald photograph, 2003

This view is directly east of the view on the previous page. The Davis family's first cabin was in the general area shown by the white arrow. The red arrow shows the general area where the Harriman and Fielding families were located. The Holyoak family's third location was near the Harriman family. The Allan families were in the area of the blue arrow.

The land in the foreground was an island. Some of the land on the island has been farmed in recent times, but we have no record of the pioneers farming the island.

The Montezuma Valley is large enough to support a nice sized town, but they chose to live on and farm the river-bottom land. Had they known about the fluctuations of the river they would not have settled in the river bottom. The settlers learned that lesson the hard way.

The modern infrastructure in the photograph is fairly recent. None of it was there in 1880. The author has searched diligently for an early photograph of the Montezuma Valley, and found one 1890s image which will appear later in this history.

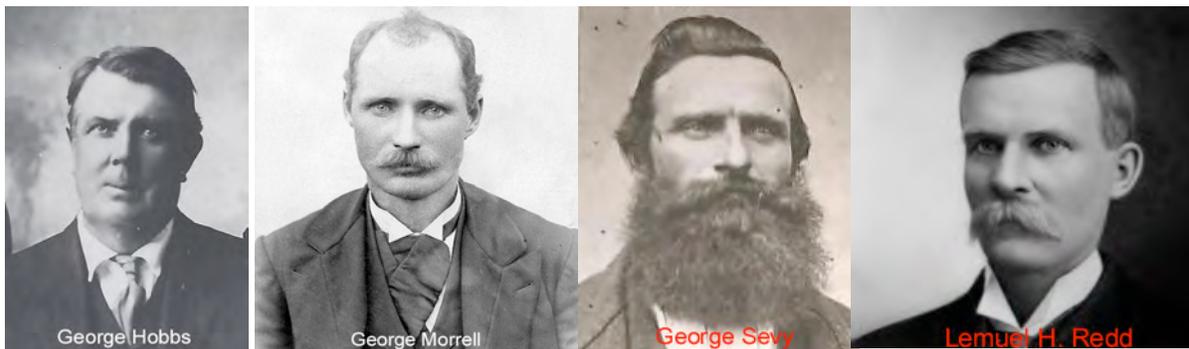
There was plenty of work to do: building ditches, preparing farmland for the coming year, and building corrals, outbuildings for animals and storage cellars. The Harriman and Davis families reached out to the Navajo people with love. Some responded well and were friendly with the settlers, and it soon became apparent that there was no immediate need to stay close to the fort. There was little danger to the women and children from the Navajo people; the settlers quickly became close friends with many of them. The Navajo people were curious about the settlers because they were treated well by them. The settlers often invited them in for dinner, or to sleep by the warm fire.

James Davis wrote about the lonesome winter of 1879-80 at Montezuma, when two men with their wives, nine children, and Harvey Dunton barely survived. His family lived one-half mile from the Harrimans and they saw each other on occasion. It seems somewhat strange that two families living in such an isolated area would live so far apart, but that's how it was. They each wanted to live on the 160 acre plots they had staked out for their homesteads. The area had not been surveyed, so it was not yet possible to apply for the homesteads. It's difficult to imagine what the Harriman and Davis families experienced that winter. Perhaps they became acquainted with the mournful cry of the coyotes and the sound of the river. They expected the main party of settlers to arrive any day. Little did they know that the main party was not even close.

They were friends with the few Navajo people in the area. On the north were Ute Indians, who were less predictable than the Navajos. Outlaws also occasionally visited—this was the last frontier, which provided safety and isolation for criminals running from the law. So instead of hunting for game, James and Henry had to stay close to home to protect their women and children. While they waited for the main party of settlers to bring supplies, weeks turned into months. The main party had been delayed at the Hole-in-the-Rock and would be six months late. The Montezuma settlers were in a precarious situation. When their food ran out, they began eating their seed wheat.

Second Scouting Expedition

During December of 1879, four men were sent from the Hole-in-the-Rock party to scout a new route to Fort Montezuma. George Hobbs, Lemuel Redd, George Sevy and George Morrell were chosen. Their trip is a story of its own. Suffice it to say, they risked their lives for eight days, getting lost, and running out of food days before arriving at Montezuma. The photos shown here were taken later in their lives. All of the photographs on this page are from LDS Family Search.



The four scouts arrived at the fort on December 29 and found the Davis and Harriman families living on seed wheat, which they ground in a coffee grinder and boiled in water. There was no food for Hobbs and his companions to take on their return trip. It rained for two days while they famished in the fort. Evidently, Peter Shirts returned to Montezuma at this time with a load of beaver pelts and some flour. Hobbs and his friends happened to see Peter, and after some persuasion, they were able to secure 40 pounds of flour from him for \$20—all the money they had among the four of them. It seems providential that Peter Shirts would show up at the exact time George Hobbs and his scouting companions were in such dire need. This makes us wonder if Peter Shirts also spent the remainder of the winter of 1879-1880 at Montezuma. Where would he be going with a load of flour in January? At the time of this writing that question has not been answered.

Harvey Dunton was worried about the welfare of his 25-year-old son, James C. Dunton, who was stranded at the Hole in the Rock with his wife Eliza Ann and their two small children—he had learned about their situation from George Hobbs. Harvey decided to return with Hobbs and the others to try to help his son and his family. Before leaving, he cleaned out his wagon box and found a small amount of frozen wheat in a bag, which he gave to Mary Davis. Mary later reported the miracle that happened with this wheat—it multiplied and could not be depleted. This miracle at Fort Montezuma was similar to others recorded in scripture. (See 1 Kings 17:8-16.) George Hobbs and his companions began their journey traveling down the river corridor.

The Scouts Meet Mitchell and Merrick

The scouts hadn't gone far when it began to rain, so they took shelter in a cabin,¹ which was already occupied by two prospectors who were headed to a silver mine in Monument Valley: Charles, James or Ed Merrick, and Herson Mitchell, going by the names of Ernest Mitchell and James Merrick.² According to George Hobbs, the scouting party parted ways with Mitchell and Merrick at the mouth of Comb Wash. Hobbs and his companions went north, Mitchell and Merrick crossed the river and went south into Indian country, and were both killed by Indians soon after. Mitchell Butte was named for Mitchell, and Merrick Butte was named for Merrick.³ The site of Mitchell's death has been taboo to many Navajos, and more than 100 years after his death, one could still see the rusted metal from Mitchell's stirrups and bridle laying in the sand where he and his horse met their demise.³ In 1969 the author saw the grave marker with the weathered inscription "Mitchell" still legible. Contrary to what some people think, his burial site is not located at the base of Mitchell Butte—it is located on the southwest side of Gray Whisker Butte. The author has not seen the grave of Charles Merrick, but was told by natives it is located near Merrick Butte, about two miles east and three-quarters mile north of Mitchell's grave.

¹ The cabin they met and stayed in may have belonged to Peter Shirts, or his brother William Shurtz, but we don't know for sure.

² Mitchell and Merrick were using alias names: Ernest Mitchell and James Merrick.

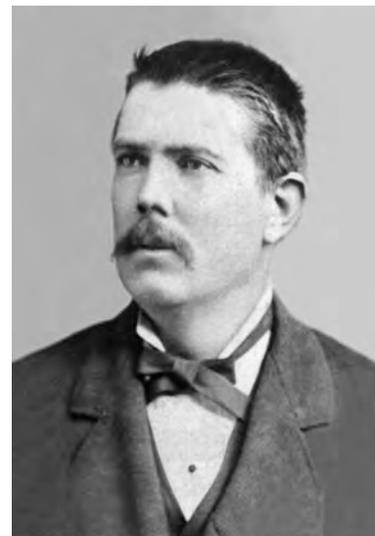
³ Some historians say the Ute Indians performed the killings, others credit the Navajos. See *Navajo Trading Days* by Hagemann pages 351 and 352, which gives credit to the Navajos. The writings of George Hobbs blame the Ute Indians for the killing. We don't know for sure. The only witnesses were the Indians who carried out the killings.

³ Interview with a 96-year-old Navajo man named Seth Bigman, who lived his life very near the site where Mitchell was buried. The burial spot was in view from Seth Bigman's hogan.

The Lean Winter

On the return trip George Hobbs and his companions became lost in a heavy snowstorm and nearly died. Hobbs later gave credit to the Lord for literally leading them through, and they eventually found the main party of settlers. Harvey Dunton met his son on the trail and gave assistance. He continued on to Paragonah, and began preparing to move part of his family to Fort Montezuma.

Meanwhile, at Montezuma, having been apprised of the predicament of the main party, the Davis and Harriman families finally understood that no food or supplies would arrive anytime soon. A gloomy feeling of urgency settled over them. During heavy winter weather in January, James had to kill their precious cow. Eventually, Henry stayed to protect the women and children while James took a pack horse on a 200 mile round trip to the Mancos Valley in hopes of buying food. He took the long route up the river and bypassed the shorter route through McElmo Canyon to avoid a camp of Ute Indians who the Mitchell family said were in a very bad mood.



George Hobbs. Lamont Crabtree photograph

When James arrived at the Mancos Valley, he found about 12 families who were nearly destitute. He paid \$66 for six bushels of frostbitten wheat, hardly edible, which he hauled to Montezuma. When he arrived home, James was glad to see his old friend, Thales Haskell, who had been sent by Erastus Snow to give the Davis and Harriman families a decent burial. In her memories of this period, Emily Davis said Brother Haskell had a small sack of white flour which he gave to Mary and asked if she would bake a small loaf of bread, as he was very hungry. The Davis family had not seen any real bread for a long time. The children had their eyes on it, but Mary said it was only for Brother Haskell. When dinner time came, Emily wondered if Brother Haskell would notice the finger marks in the bread. She said he purposely acted like he didn't notice it.

Thales was very much relieved to discover that no burial detail was required. He had been asked by Erastus Snow to stay at Montezuma if the settlers were found alive, and to remain with them as a missionary to the Indians until further notice. We will present some of the Haskell history later in this work.

The Navajo people were also next to starvation. Elizabeth Harriman told of some Navajo men entering her cabin and asking for food. She had nothing to give them, but they looked around and found some alfalfa seed. They tried to eat it, but then spit it out vigorously. As they were leaving, Sarah tried to make them understand she had no food for her own family. Soon after, one of the Navajo men returned and presented Elizabeth with half a lamb, all dressed and ready to cook. By the end of January, both Montezuma families were living on the pulp (bran) from their seed wheat and digging roots of all kinds. James became very ill, along with most of the children. George Hobbs and his companions had promised they would return with food in no more than 60 days. The question was, could the families last 60 days? They trusted George Hobbs to arrive no later than the first of March.

By the end of February they were weak and emaciated. George Hobbs was their only hope. Years earlier, as a little boy, George had followed Elizabeth as the Hobbs family walked across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley. George had grown up, and this was the time for him to prove what he was made of—and he did. We have three witnesses: First, a letter from Lizzie Decker to her parents reported that Hobbs left the main company at Escalante with three mule loads of flour to be delivered to his sister Elizabeth Harriman; second, George reported in his history that he delivered the flour on February 23, but stated that only two mules completed the journey; and third, in the James Davis history, much praise was given to Hobbs for risking his life to deliver food to the Montezuma settlers.

From the writings of Emily Davis, who was eight years old at the time, we have this exact quote. “Although we cried for bread, we did not suffer.” It is left to the reader to decide what Emily meant.

On March 15 a missionary to the Indians, Llewelyn Harris, arrived at Montezuma with news that the main party would arrive in perhaps 10 days. Mary Davis later revealed that the small amount of wheat Harvey Dunton had left was used to feed Brother Harris, and it miraculously continued to multiply. Quoting James Davis: “There was an unseen hand controlling our welfare.”

Chapter Three: New Families Come to the Fort

Hole in the Rock Party Arrival

Meanwhile, the main party of settlers who had been called to join the Davis and Harriman families at Montezuma were spent and weak. The torturous climb over San Juan Hill had consumed the last of their strength; their horses’ feet left a trail of blood, and they were so weak they stopped moving on April 6, 1880, 15 miles short of Montezuma. The 85 wagons and more than 180 people could go no further. An Indian made the trip from Bluff to Fort Montezuma carrying a letter from Platte D. Lyman to James L. Davis, informing the two Montezuma families that the main party could not travel any further and would make a settlement at a location they had named Bluff. They were almost out of food, but would send a portion to the Montezuma settlers. (Unfortunately, the name of the Indian who carried the message is unknown.)

The Harriman and Davis families were disappointed that the main party could not make it to Montezuma, but at the same time they were thankful that their old friends and neighbors had arrived in the area and would provide desperately needed food.

It’s not surprising that George Hobbs delivered the food. It was meager, but was an immense improvement over the diet at Montezuma for the past few months. The agonizing winter of 1879-80, with its near starvation conditions, was finally over. There had been no recorded deaths at Montezuma; however, at Bluff, Roswell Stevens died less than a month after arriving, leaving a wife and two children.

With spring planting time at hand, everyone found new hope, and the whole valley, from McElmo down to Butler Wash, was a scene of industry.

Kumen Jones made a trip back to western Utah for supplies and passed Silas Smith and his family on the trail. The Smiths were on their way to Montezuma. They made the Hole-in-the-Rock trip in May of 1880, and settled upriver a distance east of the Harriman family, where they began building a cabin.

On June 7, 1880, San Juan County was organized, and a Bluff precinct and a Montezuma precinct were created.

Erastus Snow and Brigham Young, Jr. arrived at Bluff during the first week in September. They congratulated and encouraged the settlers. The Church leaders also visited the Fort Montezuma settlers. President Smith received an honorable release as president of the San Juan Mission and Platte D. Lyman was called to replace him.

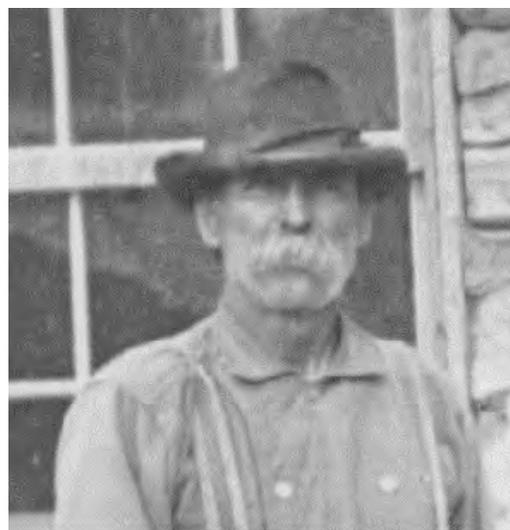
It may seem strange that general authorities of the Church could endure the hardships of traveling to Bluff and Montezuma over the primitive trails, but it can better be understood when we recall that both Erastus Snow and Brigham Young Jr. were seasoned frontiersmen. Erastus Snow recorded this trip in his journal.

Holyoak Family

The Holyoak family were Hole in the Rock pioneers who continued to Montezuma. They brought one of the largest herds of cattle ever to pass through the Hole-in-the-Rock.

Henry Holyoak was born March 5, 1839 to George Holyoak (Hollioke) and Sarah Green at Worchester, England. His wife Sarah Ann Robinson was born December 22, 1842 at Hancock, Illinois, the daughter of John Rowlandson and Alice Coupe Robinson. When the Holyoak family arrived at Montezuma Henry was forty-one and Sarah was thirty-seven. The photographs on this page were taken in 1898, eighteen years after they lived at Montezuma.

The children were: Alice Jane, eleven; Henry John, nine; Richard James, eight; Mary Luella, seven; Eliza Ellen, five; Richard, four; and Albert Daniel, seven months. Their oldest child, Sarah Ann, had died two years earlier.



Henry Holyoak 1898



Sarah Ann Holyoak 1898

After arriving at Bluff they began farming, but the river soon destroyed their ditches, causing them to search for a better location further upriver. They found a place they liked in an area they called Peak, about 22 miles upriver from Bluff. The site they selected for their farm was a little west of the Mitchell place, near the base of a pyramid shaped mountain they called Peak, called Lone Mountain on modern maps. They lived near 29-year-old George Clay who had come from Missouri with the Mitchell family and also John Brewer, who had moved from Colorado in late 1878.

Hole in the Rock pioneer James C. Dunton, with his wife Eliza and two small children, James and Mary, also moved to Peak. For a short time their parents, James Harvey Dunton and family, also lived at Peak. Eventually they began calling the location Peak City. The Holyoak family built a cabin and a water wheel. The Holyoak and both Dunton families became part of the Montezuma colony, being located about seven miles upriver from the Montezuma Fort. They expected to live there permanently. They had no idea the volatile river would raise havoc with their plans.

Hyde Family

William Hyde and his family were living in Salt Lake City at the time they received their mission call to Montezuma. The call was issued on April 7, 1880—interestingly, one day following the arrival of the Hole in the Rock pioneers at Bluff.

Church leaders had no apparent way of knowing the group had arrived safely, or that they had stopped short of reaching their destination. William and his family were the only missionaries called to San Juan during that April General Conference. Their call was to Fort Montezuma, so that is where they went.

William Hyde was born on September 22, 1832, at Williamson, Illinois, the son of William Wood and Sarah Jackson Hyde. He crossed the plains with his mother in the wagon train which followed the original vanguard company from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. A few years later, William was called to help settle San Bernardino, California, where he served as a Spanish translator, along with other assignments. He married Angeline Harris while in San Bernardino. Soon after their marriage, when Johnston's Army entered Utah, Brigham Young called most of the San Bernardino saints back to Salt Lake City. The Hyde family obeyed Brigham Young and returned to Salt Lake City.



Henry John Holyoak and Henry Holyoak
C. 1925



William eventually worked for the city, and at one time held three important positions at the same time: water master, street supervisor, and jailer. He supervised prisoners in the laying out of Liberty Park and served as a policeman on occasion.

William was also known to deliver mail to outlying communities. One news account in 1867 mentions William having an altercation with a fugitive at Buckhorn Springs while carrying the mail near Paragonah.

William was known for being exceptionally motivated. Some said he cut a wide swath wherever he went and often created considerable controversy. He was highly praised in the *Deseret News* on August 30, 1870, as being a very competent official. One report indicated that William's mother was a cousin to President Andrew Jackson.

Angeline Harris was born November 4, 1834, at Burtrand, Missouri, to John Harris and Lovina Eiler.¹ She married William Hyde on September 13, 1852 in San Bernardino, and was later sealed to him in the Endowment House on March 25, 1858. William married a second wife, Mary Ann Green on April 7, 1858, and was also sealed to her in the Endowment House.

Several Hyde family children were married adults and were not included in the mission call. Those who responded to the mission call were William, age forty-eight; wife Angeline, forty-six; and their children Harriet Parthenia "Feenie", seventeen; Ernest, thirteen, Frank, eleven; and Edna Estalla, five. With his second wife, Mary Ann, who was forty-two, William brought Helen Athalia, nineteen; Mary Luella, (called "Lutti") ten; and Charles Albert, five.

¹ Angeline's parents and siblings were the lone family found already living at Bluff when the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers arrived in April of 1880.

Mary Ann was born to Harvey and Jane Ann Rich Green. She had five children by William; Joseph and Edwin died prior to the mission call and the three surviving children were on the mission with the family.



William Hyde. Troy Goodsell photo



Mary Ann Green Hyde
Troy Goodsell Photo



Helen Athalia Hyde
Troy Goodsell photograph

All the photographs on this page date to around 1876, four years prior to their mission call to Montezuma.

According to the history written by Evelyn Hyde Dunn, their mission description was to enable import and export for the Navajo people, providing a way for them to export wool and other goods in exchange for flour and other items they so badly needed.

William Hyde and his family hired eight teamsters and guards, making a total of 18 people in the caravan. Evelyn Hyde Dunn wrote that the Hyde family left Salt Lake on June 27, 1880, with six wagons loaded with supplies. The written account of one unidentified hired hand tells of leaving half of their supplies at Escalante and blazing a new trail to the Grand River (Colorado River) and crossing the river by way of Hall's Ferry.¹

They suffered many hardships and traveled long distances without water. One hired hand said they sifted wigglers and polliwogs from the water at first, but eventually gave up and just drank what water they could find, wigglers and all.



Mary Luella Hyde, known as Lutti most of her life. Photo provided by John Needham. Circa 1876

¹ There is some confusion about the route they took. Some reports say they didn't pass through the Hole in the Rock, but crossed the Colorado River at Hall's Ferry, which was later located upriver from the Hole. However, the fact is that Hall's Ferry was not moved up-river from the Hole until 1882. The Hyde family crossed the river in 1880. Hall's Ferry was at the Hole during all of 1880. That is evidence that the Hyde family probably did enter San Juan through the Hole in the Rock, but we have yet to locate any documentation to prove it. We have seen one report that they traveled through Arizona, and another that they traveled through Colorado. It has been frustrating trying to learn the facts. At the time of this writing we simply don't know for sure what route they took.

The group arrived at Fort Montezuma on September 18, making the trip from Salt Lake City to Montezuma in three months less nine days. The Hyde family immediately went to work building a substantial house, followed by construction of the first store in San Juan County.

William freighted supplies from Alamosa, Colorado, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. It was a six to eight week trip to bring freight from Santa Fe. He eventually freighted supplies from Animus City above Durango, Colorado, which only took two weeks per trip. He could freight the 17 miles from Montezuma to Bluff in two days and return with an empty wagon in one day.

During November of 1880 William's daughter Parthenia "Feenie" was hired as school teacher at the school in the fort. Her class would soon grow to nearly 30 students of diverse ages, some of whom were close to her age, seventeen.

Fielding Family

The Amos Hyrum Fielding family were Hole in the Rock pioneers who didn't settle at Bluff, but continued upriver to Montezuma. Ellen Agnes Hobbs Fielding was Elizabeth Harriman's and George Hobbs's sister, and we can imagine the joy at their reunion.



Back row: Hyrum William, Thomas Amos, Joseph Oliver, and John Melvin
 Middle row: George Walter, Ellen Agnes, Amos Hyrum
 Front row: Alice Constance, Mary Jane, and Franklin Down.
 Not pictured: Ellen Delcena, Myrtle, Delia, and Leonard.
 December 1889 Photo provided by Paul S. Fielding.

The Fielding family arrived at Fort Montezuma in the spring of 1880. Hyrum was thirty-two and Ellen was twenty-six. The photograph on the previous page was taken in 1889. They brought four children with them: Hyrum William, age eight; Thomas Amos, six; Joseph Oliver, four; and Ellen Delcena, two.

Just days after arriving at Montezuma, on September 13, Ellen delivered a baby boy in the wagon box and named him John Melvin. They hadn't had time to build a cabin. Ellen's brother George Hobbs helped them get settled. He probably helped them put up a cabin before he left the area.

We don't know the exact location of their cabin, but suspect it was near the Harriman family, toward the east end of the Montezuma valley.

Dunton Family

Late in 1880, James Harvey Dunton returned to Montezuma with his second wife, Mary Ann Doidge Barker. Mary Ann was from Devonshire, England.

The photographs on this page were taken later in their lives.

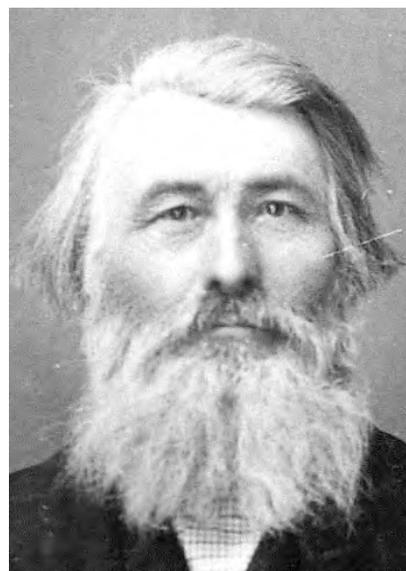
They brought Mary Ann's daughters from her first marriage to Joseph Barker: Ellen, nine, and Madora, seven, and their son, John, sixteen months old.

The Dunton family left their home in Paragonah during November of 1880 and followed the Hole in the Rock trail on a very tedious trip to Fort Montezuma, arriving during December.

After they arrived, Harvey finished a cabin in the fort complex which he began the previous year. Harvey was fifty-one and Mary Ann was forty-two when they arrived at the fort.

It is our good fortune that Mary Ann, a schoolteacher, was adept at writing. In 1881, she wrote our only description of Fort Montezuma:

"The fort was built in a square, the cabins touching each other, with the doors facing inward. The river flanked the south end of the fort. A tall pole fence secured one side where cabins had not yet been built. The Dunton children were required to stay inside the fort."



Harvey Dunton. B. Willden photograph



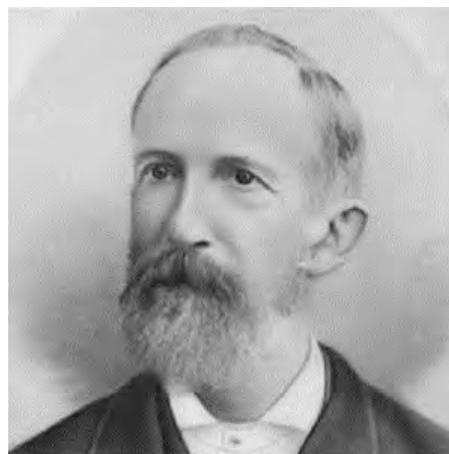
Mary Ann Dunton. Paul Ryan Decker photograph

Haskell Family

As stated earlier, Thales Haskell was sent by Apostle Erastus Snow to see if the Harriman and Davis families had been killed, or if they were found alive, to remain with them as a missionary to the Indians. He arrived at Fort Montezuma in March of 1880. Thales Haskell was born on February 21, 1834, to Ashbel Greene Haskell and Ursula Billings Hastings in New Salem, Massachusetts. When Thales was about nine, the Haskell family received the gospel. Thales had only one sibling, Irene, who was eighteen at that time.

The following year, Irene married Francis Pomeroy. Irene and Francis traveled to Nauvoo in 1845. Ashbel and Ursula decided to go West in different ways and meet at the unknown location to which Brigham Young would lead the saints. Thales and his mother traveled with a pioneer company and arrived at Nauvoo in March of 1846. Ashbel traveled with a group of 328 saints on the ship *Brooklyn* from New York in February of 1846. The ship was loaded with gristmills, carpenter and blacksmith tools, sawmill irons and other machinery.

When the ship landed in California on July 31, 1846, Ashbel expected to eventually travel east to reunite the Haskell family. In the meantime, Thales and his mother arrived at Nauvoo just in time to be forced to flee from the mob. Thales was very anxious to find his father. He, his mother, his sister Irene, and her family departed from Nauvoo with other saints on May 20, 1846, not knowing their destination. Brigham Young asked them to spend the winter at Winter Quarters.



Thales Haskell. Derrick Thales Alfred photograph

The following year they traveled to the Salt Lake Valley, arriving in the summer or fall of 1847. Sometime during 1849, the Haskell family received a letter from Ashbel in Yerba Buena, later named San Francisco. He reported that their poverty would soon come to an end, because he had saved considerable money from working and had acquired gold near Sutter's Mill. He was on his way to Salt Lake City with a company of travelers.

That was the last they ever heard from him. A traveler delivered a bolt of very fine fabric to Ursula, a gift from her husband in California. The traveler had received it from another traveler and knew nothing about the sender. No message was attached. Members of his traveling company said Ashbel probably died at a place called Rock Valley. No one could remember seeing him after they moved from that camp.

Family members set out to find Ashbel, traveling to California on the Old Spanish Trail. They found no gravesite, nor did they learn the details of his possible death, but they realized a man traveling from Sutter's Mill with a substantial amount of gold could have easily encountered foul play. One can imagine how his family agonized about not knowing what happened.

Thales was a cheerful, happy man despite the fact that from the age of nine years old, he experienced adversity that persisted throughout most of his life.

In 1853, Thales was told his name was on a list of missionaries called to Santa Clara, in the southwest corner of Utah territory. Thales accepted the purported mission call and reported to Santa Clara. He soon learned it was actually Francis Pomeroy who had been called, and Pomeroy had substituted Thales' name on the list in place of his own. Troubled by this deception, Thales counseled with Church leaders who told him he could serve in place of his brother-in-law and he would be blessed accordingly. Thales was pacified.

On October 4, 1855, Thales married Hannah Maria Woodbury. The very rare 1855 photograph of Hannah shown here was taken near the time they married.

They built a 12-foot square cabin on the edge of the Santa Clara River, and Thales continued his missionary work to the Indians. On June 23, 1857, a young Paiute Indian shot Hannah at her cabin while Thales was upstream working on a dam. When Thales received the news, he rushed home and found Hannah mortally wounded.

Hannah, pregnant with their unborn child, died after four days of suffering. The young Paiute man claimed it was an accident, and Thales was willing to believe him, but the tribal elders felt sure it was not an accident.



Hannah Maria Woodbury Haskell. Jesse Winzenried, Kris Johnson, or Thales Haskell Jr. photograph 1855

Because of their love for Thales, they were determined to execute the young Indian for what he had done. Thales prevented them from killing the young Indian for a time, but eventually they killed him without Thales's knowledge. Hannah was just twenty-three at the time of her death. Many men would have abandoned their mission after a tragedy like that. When Thales went to Salt Lake City to be with his mother for a time, Brigham Young found him, spent time with him, and encouraged him to find a new wife and return to his mission.

It took Thales three months to follow the advice of Brigham Young. On September 15, 1857, he married Margaret Johanna Edwards in the Endowment House. This photograph of Margaret was taken many years after their marriage.

Thales wanted to take his mother with him back to Santa Clara, but her daughter, Irene, needed her and as a result, that was the last time Thales ever saw his mother. Thales and his new bride made the trip back to Santa Clara. Margaret must have been a courageous woman to step back into the same situation where Hannah had been killed.



Margaret Johanna Haskell
Wendy Stillman photograph

On their way to Santa Clara, they discovered the dead bodies of many people at Mountain Meadows, arriving at the site not long after the famous massacre. At first, Thales told Margaret to stay in the buggy. He didn't want her to see the carnage, but she got curious and took a look.

Thales and Margaret lived in the same cabin in which Hannah had died. Their first child, Johanna Maria, was born on April 6, 1859. Not long after Johanna was born, the Santa Clara River carried a huge flash flood, which caught the Haskell family by surprise. It took their cabin and everything in it, and the ground it was on. They were destitute and had to begin anew. At age twenty-six, Thales was well acquainted with adversity. He would yet experience much more.

It is difficult to condense the fascinating Haskell story to fit this work, the five-year history of Fort Montezuma. However, we must move forward 20 years to the Haskells' arrival at Fort Montezuma in 1880.

The Haskell family was called by Church leaders to move from Moenkopi, Arizona, to Fort Montezuma. Thales would continue his mission as interpreter, missionary, and peacemaker to the Indians at Montezuma and Bluff, and Margaret would continue her calling as a midwife. At Montezuma they built a cabin on the mesa above the river flood plain—they didn't need to learn that lesson a second time. Their home was not far from the Davis cabin.

The family had grown to include nine members. Thales and Margaret were forty-seven and forty-six, and their two sons, Thales Jr., age thirteen and Ashbel Green, nine, both accompanied their parents to Montezuma. Two of their older daughters, Irene and Margaret, followed later.

Their oldest daughter Johanna Maria, was married and didn't move to Montezuma. Two of the Haskell daughters, Sarah and Mary Elijahetta, moved to Salt Lake City for schooling.

The Davis and Haskell families were great friends and often socialized. Thales was an accordion player, and often played for dances and entertainment, while James was known for his singing and dancing skills. They had many good times in spite of their struggles at Montezuma.

Thales became a legend as a peacemaker and Indian missionary, speaking five Indian languages and Spanish. He magnified his calling. The Haskell family lived at Montezuma until perhaps the fall of 1882.

Their two daughters, Irene and Margaret, came to live with them. Irene was hired as a schoolteacher at Bluff, and because her mother was often called to Bluff for midwife services, the whole family moved to Bluff.



Thales Haskell family 1885

Photograph provided by Kris Johnson

<u>Front Row</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Back Row</u>	<u>Age</u>
Mary Elijahetta Haskell	14	Sarah Francelle Haskell	19
Thales Hastings Haskell	51	Johanna Maria Haskell Harrison	26
Margaret Johanna Haskell	50	Benjamin Harrison	27
Ashbel Greene Haskell	13	Thales Haskell, Jr.	16
Margaret Ann Haskell Smith	20	Jesse H. Smith	27
		Albert R. Smith	23
		Irene Ursula Haskell Smith	23

We do not know where this picture was taken, but we can put a close date on it, because we know a few facts. Mary Elijahetta died in November of 1885, so it had to have been taken earlier than that. The two sons of Silas Smith married into the family in 1884 and in January of 1886. We estimate the ages of the two young men, Thales Jr., and Ashbel Green, by their appearance. Albert and Irene were probably engaged at the time of the photograph. It was likely 1885.

We believe the empty chair was a show of respect for Thales' first wife, Hannah, who was killed by a Paiute Indian 28 years earlier. The custom of placing a hand on another person in a photograph is interesting.

The Settlers Settle In

As the winter of 1880-81 approached, the Davis and Harriman families were living on their farms. They were probably well stocked by this time and would not face a repeat of the previous lean winter.

Emily Davis was seven years old. She recorded her memories of Montezuma: “Our house was not far from the river. Trees and flowers surrounded it. The trees were the largest I have ever seen. Two or three of us could run around them and lose sight of each other. The sweet peas grew to a great height in the underbrush, and how beautiful they were. On the mesa, nature had planted one of the most beautiful flower gardens that ever grew anywhere.”

Some accounts say the Davis cabin was a quarter of a mile from the river. We know it was in dense foliage, and half a mile west of the Harriman cabin, perhaps in the approximate area where a modern bridge crosses the river. It was in the floodplain, as were all the other cabins at first. The photograph shows how the area looks 123 years later.



**The approximate area where the first Davis cabin was located before the river moved over the top of it.
R. F. McDonald photograph 2003**

Another quote from Emily: “One day I was left alone with my five-year-old brother. Mother had gone to the Haskell cabin to spend some time sewing with Sister Haskell. I lifted an iron kettle of boiling water from the hook in the fireplace. It turned in my hand, and scalding water went on my foot. An Indian passing by heard my cries. He came in and put me on his lap and treated my burns with flour. For six weeks I never walked, but I will always remember the Indian’s kindness.”

The Davis family grew close to their Navajo friends. Mary told the story of a tall, quiet Navajo man who in years past had been treated hospitably at the Davis home in Cedar City. While on their journey to Montezuma, he seemed to show up out of nowhere to assist them, helping the settlers on several occasions. James Davis wrote in his history that the Indian was a Paiute who had two Navajo wives. He was the man who helped the scouts escape the wrath of Peokan, and after rushing the scouts out of the reach of Peokan, he bid them farewell and returned to Moencopi. Elizabeth Harriman also mentioned feeding an Indian man who may have made the trip from Parowan, but whose identity remains unknown.

In later years, Mary mentioned Jim Joe as being a wonderful Navajo friend to the settlers. Jim Joe was also a very close friend to Kumen Jones of Bluff, and much good has been written about this fine Navajo man and his family in the Jones journal. Jim Joe was a young man when the settlers first met him.



Jim Joe and his family. Charles Goodman Photograph.
LaVerne Tate Collection, San Juan County Historical

Jim Joe Family

The photograph of Jim Joe and his family was taken more than 15 years after Montezuma was settled. The family lived about half a mile west of the mouth of Butler Wash on the San Juan River. Jim Joe is the man with the striped blanket on his lap—the family wove it from scratch, along with the magnificent hanging rug in the photo.

Jim Joe was known for resolving disputes and recovering stolen animals from both outlaws and Indians. Whites and Indians alike respected him. He was known to be honest, friendly and extremely intelligent. In his old age he was blind. Jim Joe was a friend to the settlers to the end of his life and was a significant help to the San Juan Mission. (See *The San Juan Mission* by Kumen Jones). Another significant Navajo friend was named Pejo.

On one occasion, the Davis family came home to find three Indian men waiting at the cabin. James invited them in and they enjoyed the fire, so Mary asked them to stay for dinner. They were on foot with a long way to go. James invited them to stay the night.

James and Mary prepared a bed for the visitors by the fireplace of the two-room cabin. James left a loaded rifle on the fireplace mantle and all of the Davis family slept in the other room, leaving the loaded gun near the Indians. The Davis family said they didn't sleep well, but their show of trust initiated a lasting friendship with their guests.

The photograph to the right is a modern view of the general area where the fort was located. James Davis examined the large trees in the flood plain and discovered watermarks high up on the trunks, which convinced him to build a new cabin on higher ground.

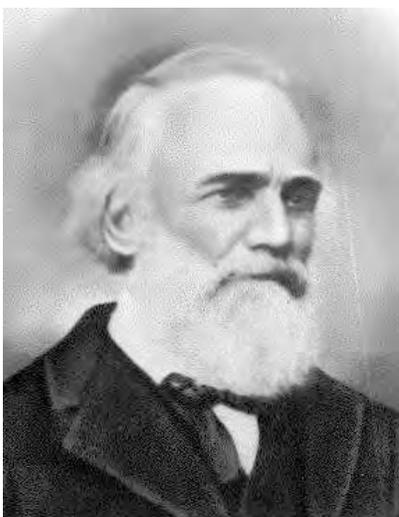


He began planning a new cabin site which, out of necessity, would likely be in the hot sun rather than the cool shade they had enjoyed. He described the new location as “up near the mesa.” He used the word “near” which suggests that it was not on top of the mesa, but near the top. Emily called it “up on the mesa.” The area called the mesa was flatland about 25 feet above the river, with no trees.

Decker Family

Zechariah B. Decker Jr., a Hole in the Rock pioneer, settled at Montezuma in 1880 with his wife Emma Saraphine, and five children: Zechariah Nathaniel, eight; Louis, six; Emma, four; Inez, three; and Jesse, ten months. When they arrived at Montezuma, Zechariah Jr. was thirty and Saraphine was twenty-seven.

Zechariah Jr. said Erastus Snow asked him to take charge of the place called Montezuma. He said he did his best. Three of Zechariah’s brothers and his 64 year-old father were also Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. Zechariah’s father, Zechariah B. Decker Sr. also moved to Montezuma during the summer of 1880 and lived near his son about two miles north of the fort.



Zechariah B. Decker Sr. Jan Hawkins photograph



Zechariah B. Decker Jr. Jan Hawkins photograph



Emma Seraphine Decker. Patricia Ann Bingham photograph

Zechariah Jr., who was usually referred to as Zack, along with his father, located their cattle ranch on land two miles north of Fort Montezuma on the bank of Montezuma Wash.¹ They built corrals and two cabins. Zechariah Sr.'s cabin was a fair distance from Zack's. They were probably planning to each apply for a 160-acre homestead, but it was not possible to homestead until the area had been officially surveyed.

During the 1800s, Montezuma Wash carried a significant year-round stream, with a few exceptions when a long drought dried it up. This occurred at least once, during 1875. During the 1880s, the sources of water for Montezuma Creek included North Creek, South Creek, and Upper Montezuma (now called Verdure), Devil's Canyon and a number of smaller tributaries and springs, some of which have since been diverted or have dried up.

No significant amount of water from Blue Mountain has reached the San Juan River by way of Montezuma Wash in recent years, but it usually had a nice stream during the 1880s. It was called a wash because rainstorms swelled the stream, making it better described as a wash than as a creek or stream.

The location probably looked inviting to the Deckers because the wash had water, but unlike the San Juan River, it was much smaller and less threatening. However, they were tempting fate by setting up housekeeping in a corridor regularly traveled by renegade Indians. They would have visitors.

Two of Zack's sons later recorded the stories that follow, and his grandson, Calvin Decker, put them in the book *Zechariah B. Decker, Indian Fighter, Pioneer, Gun Slinger, Bishop*. We share from that book with permission of the author.

Four outlaw Indians stole a mare from Zack. He found them in possession of it and relieved them of the animal, arousing their resentment. They sought revenge. One Sunday morning, Zack hitched a team to a wagon with running gear only, and took the four older children to Sunday School, which was two miles down the wash at Fort Montezuma. Zack left his wife and baby home. Zack used the running gear of the wagon only, because the box from the wagon was part of their cabin at the time. As they exited the fort following Sunday School, he saw two Indians riding fast toward their ranch.

He put the children on the hind hounds of the wagon and told them to hold on tight. Standing on the front bolsters to hold the king bolt, Zack whipped the horses, and away they flew for home, hoping to get there before the Indians. The horses ran fast, but the Indians were faster.

When Zack reached the house, he jumped off, leaving both team and children panting in the yard. He ran into the house, past Saraphine, who was arguing with the two Indians, to the back of the room where he jerked his revolver from a peg on the wall. He turned and faced the Indians and asked them to leave and not return.

¹ R. F. McDonald made a diligent search of the area up Montezuma Wash above the fort location in hopes of finding some proof of where the Decker cabins had been. No evidence was found. Part of the problem is that all Zechariah recorded is that they lived about two miles from the fort. We don't know if he meant two miles following the stream, or in a direct line. Also, modern activity in that area has likely obscured evidence.

The Indians said they had come for the mare. Zack told them if they had to have her, they would have to try to get her. The Indians mounted their horses and rode to the corral down by the wash, but when they arrived, Zack had beaten them there on foot. The Indians reluctantly left without the mare.

During the night Zack woke Saraphine and told her he had just had a dream that the Indians were stealing his horses. He felt it was a warning revelation that couldn't be ignored. Saraphine tried to protest as he dressed. He told her not to worry; the same power that warned him would protect him. It was dark, but Zack was able to saddle the horse he kept near the house. He left it there while he rode a mule a short distance to his father's cabin. His father said four Indians had camped near there, and Zack asked him to watch Saraphine until he returned.

Zack knew the Indians would try to get the stolen horses across the San Juan River before sunrise. As it got light, he picked up their tracks. He was pleased to see there was a cow among them, because that would slow them down. He tracked them several miles to the San Juan River, probably down river a few miles from the fort. The Indians were not expecting anyone that early, and Zack caught them by surprise. They had corralled the stolen horses in a natural crevice in the rock wall on the north side of the river, and held them there with a long willow pole across the opening.

Two Indians were butchering the cow. A third man was cutting the hide in strips so they could tie driftwood logs together to make a raft for moving the beef across the river. A fourth Indian was on his horse standing guard. There were other Indians waiting on the south side of the river, and they saw Zack first and raised the alarm, which distracted the Indians on the north bank long enough for Zack to get the jump on them.

The startled guard couldn't believe that one lone white man would attack them. With a show of bravado, he waved at his companions and exclaimed, "There four of us!" Zack waved his pistol in the Indian's face and calmly replied, "Yes, and there are six of us." The Indians realized they had been caught with the stolen beef, and offered Zack some if he wouldn't tell the Indian agent. Zack refused.

The beef was not his. He didn't know who owned it. Zack ordered an Indian to move the willow pole and release his horses. With a quick look across the river, he saw several Indians running to catch their horses to come after him. He would have to hurry. He ordered the captive Indian on his horse to ride in front of him and soon the horses were running for the ranch.

After traveling some distance, the Indian asked what was going to happen to him, and was told he would be turned over to the Indian agent. That frightened the Indian, and he told Zack he could kill him, but he would go no further. Zack had compassion on the terrified Indian and told him he would let him go if he would promise to tell the Indian agent about the cow he had stolen. The Indian agreed, and was set free to join his friends, who were in hot pursuit. Zack's horse was becoming jaded, so he roped his stallion, not taking time to change saddle or bridle. He fashioned a nose loop, jumped on the stallion bareback and outran the Indians.

The cow got the worst of the deal.

Later Zack told a rancher, Billy (William) Gurr, about the incident. Gurr commented, "That accounts for the \$20 government check I received!" Apparently the Indian confessed to the agent, and the government reimbursed the rancher for his cow.

Zack said: "Had I not gone to San Juan, I never would have learned that Indians are honorable if you treat them right, and I have learned to love them. They steal, and so do white men."

During that summer of 1880, Zack took a wagon to Mancos for supplies. All went well until he started home. In the evening when he stopped to make camp, he saw the dust of horsemen running toward him. He unhitched the team and tied all but one horse to the wagon. A band of about 15 Indians in battle array surrounded Zack's wagon. Zack gave them the peace sign and invited them to stop and have a meal with him. They camped for the night.

One of the Indians asked if he was carrying supplies for the soldiers. Zack told him that they were only for his family. He asked if Zack was a Mormon and was told that he was. The Indian said, "Mormons good, Americans no good." The next morning they parted in peace. Zack later learned that the soldiers at Fort Wingate had had a battle with the Indians near that very spot, and he felt the protecting hand of the Almighty in saving him from the angry Indians.

During the months that followed, life in Montezuma Wash became more than Zack's father had bargained for. After the Indians stole all of his livestock, he moved back to Parowan. Life in Indian territory was too harsh for a 65 year-old man. Zack stayed at Montezuma through the winter of 1880-81.

During June of 1881, Zack abandoned everything he had built for the same reason as his father—Montezuma Wash was renegade Indian territory. The family took only what they could fit in the wagon and set out to join Saraphine's family at Snowflake, Arizona. When they arrived, they owned only their wagon, four horses, 200 pounds of flour and \$100. Snowflake would become their permanent home.

Trouble with the Utes

During the spring of 1881, major Indian trouble erupted. Weeminuche Utes had been looking for an opportunity to punish some white men. The trouble began about 40 miles north of Fort Montezuma. The Ute Indians killed two cowboys in a cabin east of Blue Mountain. They also robbed the men of considerable money and burned the cabin. They rode to the bench land above Montezuma and Bluff, still on the rampage. They continued their depredations by stealing some horses belonging to the Mormons.

A young man who was tending the horses made a swift ride to alert the settlers at Bluff. A posse of perhaps three men followed the tracks of the rustlers across Butler Wash and finally into the head of Butler Wash, where they confronted the large band of Ute Indians and set out to recover their horses. The Indians drew their guns and aimed at the Mormons, but one of the Ute men yelled in the Ute language, "They are Mormons, don't shoot." The Indians, who had recently killed two cowboys, lowered their guns and begrudgingly allowed the Mormon men to round up and recover their stolen herd. No violence occurred, but being intimidated by only three men put the Indians in a very bad mood.

A few days later the same Utes confronted some Blue Mountain cowboys who were less fortunate. The major fight that ensued was known as the Pinhook War, because the final showdown occurred in Pinhook Draw on the northwest side of the LaSal Mountains, 90 miles directly north of Fort Montezuma. According to *San Juan History* by Albert R. Lyman, 14 cowboys and two innocent prospectors were killed in a shoot-out which lasted several days.

The number of Indians killed is unknown, but is believed by some historians to exceed the number of cowboys killed. No Mormons were involved in the fight. (An excellent account of the Pinhook War by Bob McPherson is found in *Blue Mountain Shadows* magazine, Volume 29, Winter 2003-04.)

Feenie Hyde Leaves her Mark

At Montezuma, William Hyde built a water wheel and placed it in the river to lift water into irrigation ditches. The Noria design water wheel built by William was 16 feet high and 12 feet wide. To the side of each power slat there were lift-buckets that collected the water and dumped it in a receiver trough at the top. From there, the water was ducted to the irrigation ditches.

During the spring of 1881, William's daughter, Feenie, found herself being stalked by a young Ute Indian, the son of Sanop. Eventually Sanop approached William and asked for Feenie to marry his son.

William refused, and Sanop threatened to kill him, but William was firm. Sanop backed down, though it was a severe insult to the Indian. In his culture, Sanop had acted properly and respectfully, following the Ute Indian custom.

Feenie inscribed her nickname on the rock wall of the canyon with a drawing of a duck under it. The duck is carrying something in its bill. The inscription is found on the north wall of the river corridor, about half way between Montezuma and Bluff. It dates to around 1881. Feenie was about 18 when she inscribed her name. Not shown in the photo, but to the right of it, there is another inscription, which reads, "Jenny Owen." We have not fully identified Jenny or her family, but we know they lived at Montezuma and had a water wheel.



Harriet Parthenia, "Feenie" Hyde Barton at age 24, Tom McLehane photograph



Chapter Four: Life at Montezuma

Tragedy for the Harrimans

Lizzie Harriman, who was a baby when the family traveled to the San Juan country, was a remarkably beautiful child. With golden blond hair and blue eyes, she was easy to love. Her family said she was also very intelligent. Lizzie was almost worshiped by a Navajo family who became close friends to the Harrimans. They begged Sarah for permission to take Lizzie because Elizabeth often let Lizzie go with them. Lizzie picked up some of the Navajo language, and when she was two years and two months old, she could communicate in Navajo fairly well. Lizzie was even known to correct her older siblings on their pronunciation of Navajo words. She had a pair of bright colored shoes. The Navajo friends thought Lizzie's shoes were magnificent.



R. F. McDonald photograph 2002

On February 5, 1881, Elizabeth gave birth to a son in her cabin and named him William Harrison Harriman. He is believed to be the third white child born at Montezuma. Less than 60 days later, their happiness was marred by tragedy. Lizzie became ill and died on March 27, 1881. The agony and heartbreak of losing Lizzie cannot be fully understood by anyone but Henry and Elizabeth. All of their earlier trials seemed insignificant. We do not know the cause of her death. Some Harriman descendants believe one possibility could have been measles.

Lizzie was laid to rest on high ground in sandy soil a few hundred feet north of the cabin. Their Navajo friends were anguishing, also. A family story tells of Navajo friends offering to trade a quart jar full of rubies for Lizzie's little shoes, but Elizabeth refused the offer. The author believes the stones were garnets, which look like rubies, gemstones which can still be found at Raplee Ridge, about 27 miles southwest of Montezuma. She was the first casualty at Fort Montezuma, but not the last. Two years later, their son John Alma, who was six years old, died in a measles epidemic on March 7, 1883. He was buried next to his sister. These deaths saddened all of the Montezuma settlers.

High Water in 1881

In the spring of 1881, the river surprised the settlers with high water, which destroyed the Holyoak cabin at Peak City and made a mess of the land they were trying to farm. It washed their water wheel away and left it wrecked on the opposite bank. The flood damage forced them to relocate a few miles downstream at a site that looked safe. They lived in a tent while building a small cabin. Following the flood damage at Peak City, George Clay and the James C. Dunton family were also forced to abandon the site. Peak City became a ghost town. There may have been other families at Peak City, but we have no record of them. During May 1881, Harvey Dunton was in need of income to support his family and was forced to seek work anywhere he could find it. The family loaded their belongings in their wagon and traveled from the fort at Montezuma to a site a few miles north of Durango, Colorado. Harvey built a dugout for his family while he freighted lumber for a sawmill.



A segment of the original road between Montezuma and Bluff. R. F. McDonald photograph 2002

The Montezuma families would occasionally make a trip to Bluff to see old friends, leaving Montezuma in a wagon before daybreak and reaching Bluff in the evening. A lone man on a horse could make the trip in four hours. They would likely visit the Moody, Woolsey, Bayles, Decker, and other families on the way—they lived at various locations along the river between Montezuma and Bluff. Those family stories are not included in this history, except for some of the Moody and Decker family history.

The route they used was in the flood plain, which meant they struggled through soft sand much of the way. In some locations, the river was against the north wall of the canyon, which forced them to make a road part way up the cliff through boulders of all sizes in order to avoid the river. The photograph on this page is an example of such a location.

This area is still remote and unharmed by modern vehicles. Walking down this old pioneer road is like turning time back 137 years. Hopefully it will remain unharmed. It is important that we do not allow such areas to be impacted by modern traffic.



Another piece of the original road the pioneers built between Bluff and Montezuma. R. F. McDonald photograph 2003

In some locations, the river was against the north wall of the canyon, which forced the travelers to make a road part way up the cliff through boulders of all sizes. This photograph is one example where much work had been done.

The reason this pristine piece of road is in such preserved condition is the fact that in 1884 the river moved south and made a new channel. After 1884 wagon travel was easier in the old river bottom, and this original segment of road was abandoned and left to become history.

The pioneer road is beautifully preserved, with several miles which have not been harmed by modern society. Many would argue that this piece of public lands should be designated for foot traffic only.



Drill hole made by the pioneers using a hand-held drill. R. F. McDonald photograph 2005

The photograph above is an example of how the pioneers drilled deep into a boulder to split it into a size which a team of horses could move. This massive amount of work was done so they could make a road which was high enough above the level of the river to allow wagons to pass between Montezuma and Bluff. The red arrow below shows a cut in the rock made by the steel wheels of heavily loaded wagons. The other set of wheels would sometimes be in the river.



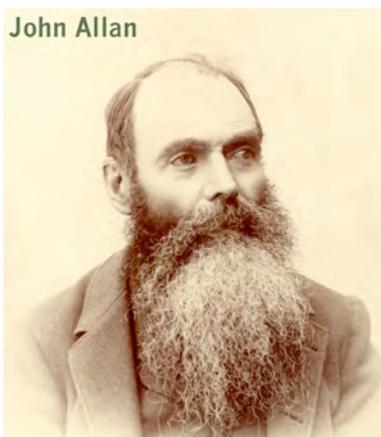
Allan Family

Apostle Erastus Snow released Bishop John Allan as the Church leader at Manassa, Colorado, and asked him to move to Montezuma. During June of 1881 he traded his property ten miles outside of Manassa to Silas Smith in exchange for his property at Montezuma. It's not clear which place at Montezuma they traded for. However, according to the James Davis history, the Allan family were three and one-half miles east of the fort. Most of the Allan family arrived at Montezuma on July 31 and others arrived on August 7, 1881.

John Allan was born September 21, 1823, at Kirkintilloch, Dumbartonshire, Scotland, the son of Robert Allan and Elizabeth Stirling. John was fifty-seven and his first wife, Agnes, also from Scotland, was 50 when they arrived at Montezuma. She had no children.



Agnes
McAuslan
Allan



John Allan



Jane Fleming
Ferguson Shaw
Allan

Ada Rigby provided all of the Allan family photos in this history

John's second wife, Janet McAuslan, was a sister to Agnes. She and John had separated a few years earlier, and she did not accompany John to Montezuma. She was not a Fort Montezuma pioneer, and so her photograph is not included; however, her two sons, John Jr. and Peter, moved to Montezuma with their father. Their photographs are on the following page.

John's third wife, Jane Grey, also from Scotland, died during childbirth in 1867 at Coalville, and she is not pictured here. However, her only child Robert—"Bob"—survived and was with his father when they arrived at Montezuma. Bob's photograph is on the following page.

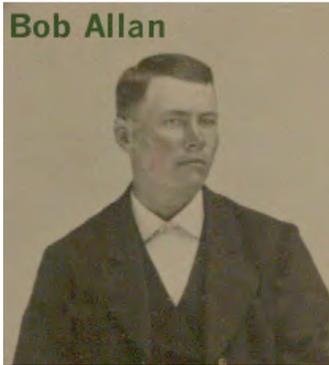
John's fourth wife, Jane Fleming Ferguson Shaw, also from Scotland, accompanied him to Montezuma. She was forty-one at the time, and she brought three daughters; Agnes "Aggie," ten; Elizabeth "Lizzie," eight and Annie Jane, six. Eleven days after arriving at Montezuma, Jane delivered her fourth child in a tent and named her Florence. The following year, she delivered her only son and named him John Alexander.

Jane's greatest trial came seven years later, when her two youngest children, Florence and John, both died of diphtheria. They were buried in the Bluff Cemetery. Their half-brother, Peter, prepared the burial spot, because their father was in Colorado at the time.

John Allan Jr.

Johanna Hellstrom Allan
Family Search photograph

Bob Allan



Peter Allan



John Allan Jr. also brought his wife, Johanna “Jenny” Amelia Hellstrom, with a two-year-old child, Warren Eugene, and a small baby named Nellie. No photographs of the child or Warren have been located. Jenny’s mother, Anna (Bridget) Olsson, from Sweden, lived with them. John Allan Jr. was 23 when they arrived at Montezuma. Jenny was 22 when they arrived, and she delivered a daughter named Mabel on September 22, 1882, while living at Montezuma.

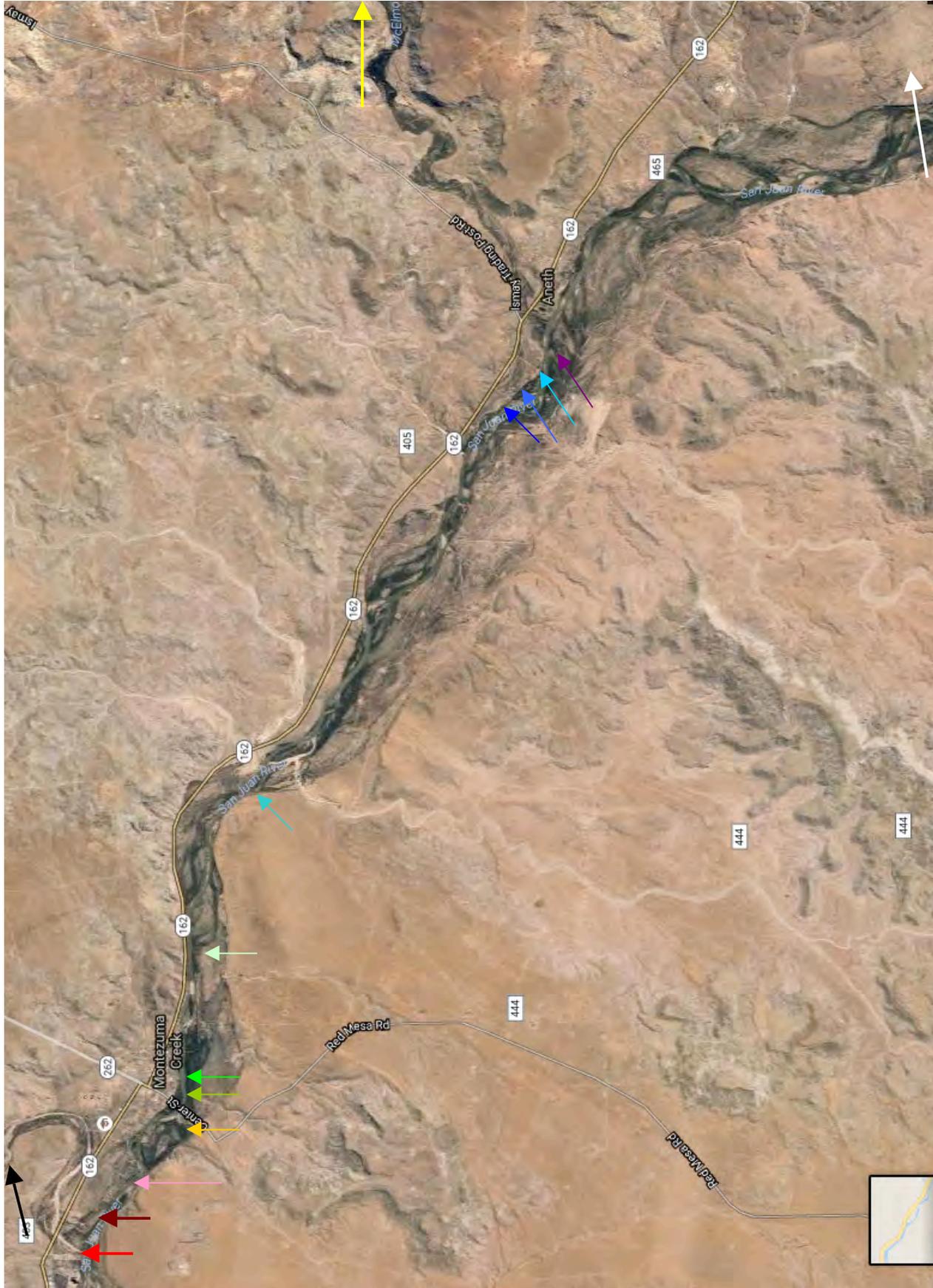
According to Albert R. Lyman, the Allan family built six cabins in the flood plane. Two cabins for John Allan and his immediate family, two cabins for Agnes, who was known as Auntie, plus two cabins for John Allan Jr. and his family.

Annie Jane said they traveled three and one-half miles west to the fort to go to school and church meetings. Some accounts say the Allan family were a mile and a half upriver from the fort, but James Davis said it was three and one-half miles in his daily diary, and his diary has proved to be quite accurate, because he wrote every day, and didn't go by memory.

However, nothing remains of any of the cabins or the fort at the time of this writing, so we are unable to pinpoint the exact location of any structure, except perhaps the water wheel cribbing rocks left from William Hyde's wheel, and the Harriman gravesite.

The Allan family built their own water wheel during 1882 with the help of other Montezuma settlers, and also had help from them to build their cabins. Annie Jane wrote of her mother feeding many workmen. It's humorous that Annie Jane mentions a workman pinching her nose and telling her it was broken, and how unimportant it made her feel.

The Allan family consisted of 15 people. They became popular with the other settlers partly for the molasses they produced. They owned a large boiler, and used local wild berries, which at the time were plentiful in the area. The river was south of their farm at first, but after the flood changed the channel, their farmland ended up on the south side of the river, which was considered Navajo territory. They had no choice but to relocate once again.



Approximate locations: Black = Zechariah Decker, Red = Peter Shirts, Fat purple = Shurtz families, Pink = The Fort, Hyde cabin and trading post, Haskell cabin, Davis 2nd cabin, and more, Orange = Davis 1st cabin, Dull green = Harriman cabin, Bright green = Fielding cabin, Pale green = Holyoak 2nd place, Turquoise = John Allan place, Dark blue = James C. Dunton, Medium blue = Holyoak 1st place, and William Hyde's 2nd trading post, Bright blue = Peter Tracy cabin, Violet = Henry Mitchell, White = William Hyde's 4th trading post, Yellow points to William Hyde's 5th trading post which is about a mile beyond the edge of the map.



Pioneer cellar remains at Montezuma

A short distance from the gravesite of Lizzie Harriman, one can see the remains of a structure which dates to pioneer times. The rock walls extended into the ground about four feet, suggesting it may have been a root cellar. The rocks from the walls have been removed from the site and used to build a Navajo hogan a distance east of this location.

The single large cottonwood log was probably the main roof beam. Local natives likely used the missing roof beams for firewood. According to local natives, a worn out pioneer wagon remained next to this cellar for many years.

Peter Tracy

Peter Tracy lived alone at his cabin a short distance south of the Mitchell place at River View. Evidently he had been told slanderous stories about the Mormons, because he feared them so much he dared not approach the James Davis Post Office at Montezuma, the only post office in the area.

One day, Peter was expecting a letter from one of his two sons, who lived in Little Cottonwood Canyon above Salt Lake City. Mary Davis reported hearing a man yelling from the bushes. He wanted to know if he had a letter, but he was afraid to come near the Mormons. Mary finally took his letter out a good distance from the building and left it on the ground. After she returned to the trading post, Peter, carrying a shotgun, made a dash, grabbed the letter, and disappeared into the bushes.

This mail retrieval procedure continued for a long time until James and his family were able to make friends with Peter. James wrote that Peter was terribly lonesome and afraid, and he often spoke of how much he would love to see his two sons, one named Peter Jr., who lived in the eastern states, and the other, a miner named Thomas, who was living near Salt Lake City. Peter had buried his wife Catherine, age fifty-nine, near McElmo Creek during November of 1882.¹

James taught Peter about Mormonism, gave him literature to read, and answered his questions. Peter was an Irish Catholic, but he became somewhat interested in Mormonism. He and his family had come from Ireland and lived in New York for a time.

The last time Peter came for his mail, he was low in spirits. He confided to James that he had a feeling he would be killed if he returned to his cabin. He didn't know what to make of the feeling.

James, who was adept at heeding promptings, told Peter he had better stay at the Davis cabin for the night, or until the bad feeling left him. Peter didn't want to impose, and decided he would risk going to his cabin.

The following day, Bob Allan stopped at the post office and said the mail carrier had found Peter dead outside his cabin with his dog standing guard. He was killed on the 27th or 28th of August 1883.

The Bluff authorities were notified and a posse from Bluff was sent to River View. They intended to investigate the killing, but by the time they arrived, someone had buried the body near the cabin and close to the river. They questioned the Mitchell family. Two very young boys were brought forward who said they witnessed a Navajo man kill Tracy. Nobody admitted to burying the body. The posse did not solve the mystery, and they did not believe an Indian had buried the body. A short time later, a flash flood eroded the sandy bank and took Mr. Tracy's body downstream. It was never seen again.



Eroding bank of the San Juan River. R. F. McDonald photograph

¹ See Mrs. Peter Tracy, page 325 of *Rooted in San Juan*, by Toni Richard Turk. Catherine and Peter had at least four children: Thomas, age 39; Mary, age 37; Peter, age 32; and John, age 27. U S Census information provided by Brian Tuft.

After a second investigation by an Indian agent, a Navajo man named Claw was apprehended and confessed to the killing, saying he and his friend wanted to camp at Tracy's place, but Tracy took a shot at them as they scrambled into the bushes.

Thinking Tracy had killed his friend, Claw retaliated by shooting Tracy, but later found his friend had not been hurt. Claw was taken to Fort Wingate by U.S. agent D. M. Riordan, and was placed in jail where he waited for his trial.¹ Tracy probably shot over the Indian's head to scare him out of the garden. Tracy died at age 60, not long after the death of his wife.

Not long after the Tracy killing, a Ute Indian was killed near the Mitchell place. This murder was never solved, and it kindled a Ute uprising which we will discuss later. The Ute Indians wanted revenge, but they didn't kill any Mormons. They did, however, show their anger by killing many cattle belonging to Mormons, even though the Mormons had nothing to do with the original offense.

A Davis Family Miracle

Because of its sacred and personal nature, the following account taken from the writings of James Davis was not originally intended to be in this book. It is added at the suggestion of some Davis descendants because they felt it would strengthen the faith of people who believe in miracles.

One morning, the Davis family discovered that six of their cows had been stolen from the corral during the night. This was a serious setback for the family, so Ted, at age sixteen, was determined to track the thieves and recover the stolen cows. James knew this was an extremely dangerous undertaking and tried to talk his son out of the idea, but Ted had plenty of confidence and would not let the idea rest.

James finally gave permission and Ted mounted the family horse in the morning. James instructed his son to be home no later than noon the following day—cows or no cows. There was no sign of Ted at noon the following day. By 2 p.m., Ted's mother was frantic.

So James set out on foot, climbing to the top of a small mountain, which gave him a view of the area Ted would have searched. In James's exact words: "I was at a loss to know what to do when something seemed to say, 'The Lord knows where your boy is, ask Him.' I felt very unworthy. Then again I thought of selling my home and all I had to fill this mission and serve the Lord, and not-with-standing my weakness, I began to get faith, for I knew He could make it known to me.

"I knelt down and asked the Lord to make it known whether or not my boy was alive. I got up and looked at a hill not very far off, and I saw my boy as plain as I ever saw him in my life. He was riding his horse with his gun over his shoulder. He had no cows, but I was so thankful to know he was alive, I did not care."

¹ Navajo tribal records and a news article from the Salt Lake Tribune. There are other versions of this event.

James continued, “I ran all the way home and told his mother not to cry for Edward was alive, he had not found the cows, but he was safe. I told her he would be home in about one hour, because the place I had seen him seemed not far away.” The afternoon dragged on and on. Evening came, and still there was no sign of Ted. James wrote, “I knew I had seen him, but came to the conclusion something had happened to him afterward. It got dark and we all felt very badly.

I started out again but had gone only a few steps when I saw him. I asked what had kept him so long, for I had seen him and knew he had no cows. He was very surprised, and said he had been miles away at the time. I knew I had seen him, but he told me he would not think of climbing up on a hill and exposing himself in any such way. I knew the Lord had answered my prayer by showing me my son on that hill. I went there and found it impossible for a horse to travel on that hill. I had hard work to get there on foot. This was a strong testimony to me, and I shall never forget it.”

Rincon Road

During spring of 1883 the river cut a new channel at Montezuma, which left half of the Hyde farm on the wrong side of the river. So William took his two sons and started a new trading post at Rincon, 25 miles down river from Montezuma. One of the most difficult challenges for William at Rincon was to find a way to freight supplies between Rincon, Santa Fe and Durango. The only route was San Juan Hill, which was simply too steep for freight wagons. Soon after arriving, the settlers had discovered an old Indian trail which descended down Butler Wash to the San Juan River. The settlers began traveling that route on horseback between Bluff and the river bottom. The Indian trail was narrow and very difficult, definitely not adequate to accommodate wagons. The settlers began widening the road a little at a time in order to eventually enable wagons to pass, and to create a route to Rincon.



The red arrow points to the road down the Butler Dugway. R. F. McDonald photograph 2005

The men donated their labor to dig the “Butler Dugway.” By late 1883, freight wagons could travel down the road. The route required alert and skilled teamsters, as one false move could hurtle them into the canyon below. The photograph shows a piece of the Butler Dugway road. The red arrow identifies ruts cut in the sandstone which were made by the steel wheels of pioneer wagons



A segment of the road to Rincon located on the east side of Butler as it looks after 124 years of erosion. The deep canyon on the left was to be avoided. The photograph is looking northeast. R. F. McDonald photo 2006

Where the Butler Dugway road reached the San Juan River, it appears the road turned west and was against the rock wall for the next half mile going toward Rincon. The red arrow shows where we believe the road had been in 1883. The road washed out between the red arrow and the point where the photographer was standing on the old road. When that happened, it was the final demise of the road down Butler. The volatile river severed the road to Rincon not many years after they finished it, and it is still severed in 2006.

Tamarisk and Russian olive trees have filled in the old road against the rock wall of the canyon. The red arrow points to the center of the road



The space between the red arrow and where the photographer was standing was the original Butler road after the river severed it in the late 1880s. Photograph by R. F. McDonald

In 1883 wagons could pass this way and travel up the river bottom for half a mile. At that point the river ended against the north rock wall of the canyon until Hyde, Amasa Barton, and perhaps other men cut a road—eventually called Barton's Dugway—in the vertical canyon wall. Those men had to be highly motivated. They were doing what many people said was impossible.

Barton's Dugway is a narrow cut in the canyon wall, just wide enough to enable a team and wagon to pass. The dugway is steeper than it looks in the photograph. We were able to locate wagon wheel marks in the rock, which proved they actually did freight on this road.



Barton's Dugway. View looking East. R. F. McDonald photograph 2006

The rock walls seen in the top right corner of this photograph are directly across the river from Bluff, giving perspective on where Barton's Dugway is located with reference to Bluff. The dugway was built in 1883, probably because wagons could not pass down the river corridor because the river was against the north rock wall of the canyon. Some time since then, the river moved to the south. Hyde and Barton freighted on this road because it was their only way to supply their trading post at Rincon. The Navajo people were the beneficiaries, as the trading post enabled them to export their goods and trade for flour and other commodities that they could get in no other way. William's mission call was to provide import and export for Navajo families, and that is exactly what he did, which verifies what was said of William: that he was a highly motivated individual. Amasa Barton was the same kind of man. There may have been others also.

At Rincon, William and his sons built a modified Noria design water wheel. It was unique because it was completely anchored from one side. There was no support out in the river. To do this required a massive cribbing platform to support the huge cottonwood beam that the wheel would hang from. This modified design might be unique to William Hyde.



Remains of the water wheel at Rincon. It was built by William Hyde and sons during 1882 or 1883. 2012 photo by R. F. McDonald

There was extensive carving into the rock wall to make room for the wheel to turn without rubbing. The above photograph shows what remained of this waterwheel after 127 years of erosion.

The river has long since moved to the opposite side of the valley. The wheel and water trough have also long since disappeared, but we are fortunate to have the remains of the handiwork of William and his sons. This view is looking north. The photographer was standing where the river had been. When William first moved to Rincon, we believe he built his cabin in the valley cove a short distance northeast of where this water wheel cribbing is located. It is the only location where water could have been delivered to a garden. The garden had to be at a lower elevation than the wheel, and the cabin had to be located where the garden was in view, otherwise the Indians would have harvested the crops.

During 1883, William also built a magnificent ferryboat, which ran on a cable across the river. On the north side of the river the cable was likely anchored on the rock shelf as indicated by the white arrow. It was located approximately 500 feet west of the water wheel. The other end of the cable was anchored to a huge cribbing platform filled with rocks, and located on the south bank of the river. The ferryboat was 30 feet long and 12 feet wide, and could transport up to two loaded freight wagons per trip across the river.

The Navajo people often used the ferry and left it on the south bank. It became Ernest Hyde's task to retrieve it— by going hand-over-hand on the ferry cable until he was over the middle of the river, then dropping into the water and swimming the remainder of the way. Ernest then piloted the ferry back to the north bank. The cribbing platform, or anchor post on the north bank would have been in the vicinity indicated by the arrow.



This view is looking west. During 1884 Ernest and Frank Hyde built their own trading post after their father had moved to River View during late 1884. We speculate that the ferry cable, which spanned the river, might have been secured at or near the location indicated. R. F. McDonald photograph. 2006

R. F. McDonald visited this site during 1951. At that time, the old rusty ferry cable which had spanned the river during 1883-84 was laying on the rock ledge, one end near the arrow, and the other end east of there. the cable has since disappeared. It might be in the bottom of the river, or perhaps has rusted away.

Moody Family

In late 1882 or early 1883 two brothers from Escalante settled on the river between Bluff and Montezuma. The location they chose, two miles upriver from the mouth of Recapture Canyon, soon became known as Moody Bottom. Brothers Henry and Theodore Moody and their wives Sarah Barney and Laura May Barney built cabins and began farming. Sarah and Laura were sisters. Eighteen-year-old Alfred Barney was also with them. Seventy-seven year-old Edson Barney, the grandfather of Sarah and Laura, traveled from St. George and spent the winter with his family members at Moody Bottom, during which time he built two water wheels and placed them in the river to feed the irrigation ditches the Moody brothers had dug. (No photographs of Henry and his wife Sarah have been located.)



Theodore Moody and Laura Barney Moody

LDS Family Search
LDS Family Search photograph



Edson Barney

LDS Family Search photo



Moody Bottom, looking East. R. F. McDonald photograph, 2010

Chapter Five: An Honorable Release

Letter from Church Headquarters

The Montezuma settlers were under pressure on all sides: they were constantly at risk of having livestock stolen by thieving outlaws or Indians, and the unrelenting fluctuations of the river repeatedly raised havoc with their farming efforts. Church authorities in Salt Lake City had been appraised of these difficulties on a regular basis. A letter signed by Apostle Erastus Snow was received on December 1, 1883. The letter gave missionary families who wished to leave Montezuma the privilege to do so, with an honorable release from their mission.

Two days later, Montezuma settlers met with their Church leaders at Bluff to determine the future of the Montezuma settlement. Some wanted to leave the area, some wanted to remain for one more year, and one family wanted to stay regardless of what happened. After considerable discussion, a majority voted to give it their best effort for one more year, and all settlers agreed.

Yet as spring unfolded, the settlers must have begun to wonder if it was possible to successfully establish a permanent community at Montezuma, or if they should have accepted the mission release. In the early spring of 1884, the Holyoaks were forced to move due to high water, and others must have pondered their farming prospects given the vagaries of the San Juan River. Then the Mormons were endangered because of the killing of a Navajo man, though they were not responsible.

Killing at the Mitchell Trading Post

Around the middle of April 1884, three Navajo men arrived at the Mitchell Trading post at River View. The first one to enter pointed a rifle at the people inside. A visitor at the post pulled his pistol and shot the Navajo dead. One of the Mitchell boys who was outside thought it was a shoot-out, so he grabbed his gun and fired a shot at another Navajo named Bylilly (Bia-a-lil-le) who had not entered the trading post. The bullet split the skin across Bylilly's forehead and knocked him unconscious. A third Navajo man was shot in the elbow as he jumped over a fence to avoid the hostilities. After the gunfight ended, it was discovered that the gun belonging to the dead man had no bullets. He had been bluffing, a mistake which cost him his life. The result was one dead and two wounded Navajo men who had meant no harm to anyone, and only wanted to do business at the trading post.

Typically, Navajo people went on the warpath slowly over a period of time, weeks or perhaps months. They brooded and gradually worked themselves up to it. True to this pattern, they eventually became troublesome because of this incident. Family members of the victims announced they would seek revenge: a white man must die, and any white man could satisfy the requirement. That meant one of the Montezuma or Bluff pioneers could become a victim, even though they had not been involved in the original offense, nor had they been in the area when it occurred.

Henry Mitchell was very concerned, and secured the post as best he could, believing a fight with the Navajos was inevitable. He sent for soldiers from Fort Lewis, Colorado, asking for protection from the Indians; 120 soldiers came and built a stockade near the Mitchell place.

The army hired approximately 25 Blue Mountain cowboys to help them. They expected a major war because Mitchell had exaggerated the number of Indians who were on the warpath.

The Navajo people, who were friendly with the Mormon settlers, told the Montezuma and Bluff people they should probably enter their forts because there could be a killing.

From biographies of the settlers we learn that both Navajo and Ute Indians participated in this siege, because a few Ute Indians had witnessed the killing of the Navajo man, and they may have been angered by it, even though none of their tribesmen were harmed.

Upon learning that Henry Holyoak had a close friendship with many of the Indians, the corporal from Fort Lewis prevailed upon him to arrange a meeting with the Navajos in an effort to achieve a peaceful resolution. The Navajos agreed to meet three on three at the Holyoak camp. The Navajos said the trouble began when Mitchell refused to return some pawned items; a Navajo man pointed a gun at another customer, and the gunfight ensued. They said white men did all the shooting. The Navajo men didn't fire a single shot.

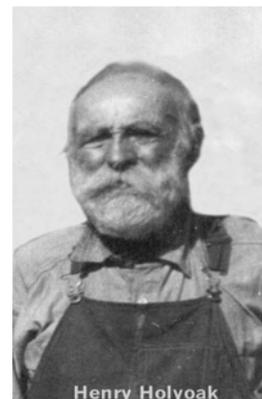


Photo provided by

They complained that Mitchell had stolen all the jewelry from the murdered man. The corporal later recovered the jewelry from Mitchell and gave it back to the Navajos, but he had no way to make restitution for the dead man or the two wounded men. The Navajos were not satisfied. They felt a white man must die to make full restitution for the harm that was done to their tribesmen. There was nothing the corporal could do to appease them. The Navajos were determined to kill a white man, and knew they had to start a fight to better justify the killing. They were not mean enough to shoot a defenseless person.

A friendly Navajo, possibly Pejo,¹ told James Davis some heavily armed Indian men were on their way with revenge on their minds. James closed his trading post and was prompted to unload the needle gun he kept inside, to put the bullets in his pocket, and to hide the gun. Though this seemed like a strange thing to do, James said he was prompted by the Spirit to do so. Soon the angry natives arrived. They were irritated because James had closed the store, and they became very troublesome, trying to start a fight so they could better justify what they had come to do. Young Ted Davis, speaking in the Navajo language, accused one of them of being sick, which caused the Navajo to pull his gun and aim it at Ted.

James jumped in front of his son and told him to open the trading post and let the angry men have what they wanted. Ted was reluctant, saying they would steal everything, but he opened the door and ran for the needle gun, only to find it missing. James later acknowledged that unloading and hiding the gun had prevented a shoot-out and perhaps a killing. He thanked the Lord for the prompting. After the Indians calmed down a little, Mary invited them into the house and prepared a meal for them. They eventually left without stealing or killing at the Davis place.

¹ We learn from the writings of Annie Jane Allan of a friendly Navajo man named Pejo, who on occasion was known to have run down the south side of the river, yelling across the river to alert the settlers of approaching danger.

They would seek revenge elsewhere. They had much difficulty trying to get in a fight with the Mormons.

A few Indians had forced all the white men in the area into their fortifications: the soldiers were in their stockade, the Mitchell family was in their barricaded cabin, and the Montezuma and Bluff settlers congregated at their respective forts. All, that is, except the Davis family. The bishop at Bluff rode up the river to make sure the Montezuma settlers were in the fort. The Bishop found them all in the fort except for the Davis family. When asked why they were not in the fort with the others, James said it was very crowded, and he and his family felt safer in their own cabin. The bishop didn't press the issue.

That night at about 9 p.m., Mary Davis heard a noise outside their cabin. She opened the door and went out to look, and quickly re-entered the cabin with a large group of heavily armed natives right behind her, most likely looking for a white person to kill to satisfy their desire to for revenge over the Mitchell Trading Post killing. This time Ted probably remained quiet.

The Indians asked why the Davis family was not in the fort with the others, saying, "Why aren't you afraid of us?" James told them he had always treated his Indian friends well and he expected them to treat his family the same. That seemed to please the angry men and they left, saying, "Stay inside your fence tonight and you will not be harmed. There may be a fight before morning." No fight occurred that night, but there would be one a few weeks later.

The Davis family trusted the promise from President Brigham Young, who assured them that if they would treat the natives with love, they would not be harmed by them. That promise was fulfilled many times at Montezuma.

The Flood

During the early spring the Holyoak family were flooded out a second time. They moved into an abandoned¹ cabin near the Harriman family where they planted a patch of corn and watermelons. Their stay would be a short one, however, for disaster was looming.

The Holyoak family's corn patch was located in the direct path of the swollen river. The river continued to rise, covering their crops and cabin. They were forced to set up housekeeping in their wagon box. Everything they owned was destroyed, except their cattle and what they could carry to higher ground.

¹ We speculate that the abandoned cabin was that of the Fielding Family who had moved to Mancos.

Six months following the meeting in which the pioneers decided to farm for one more year, heavy dark clouds hung low over the entire area. Many settlers felt a sense of foreboding. Some were warned by local Navajos that the river would cover their cabins. Heavy rain in Colorado fed the already high river until it was running five feet deeper than it would for a normal spring run-off. It began destroying everything in its path.¹

During ensuing weeks the river continued to rise, destroying the two largest water wheels on June 8th, and finally reaching its peak on June 18, when it finished gutting the entire flood plain. Huge cottonwood trees were uprooted and farmland was flushed downstream. The San Juan River has yet to see another flood to equal that of 1884. The water exceeded the highest previous watermarks on the trees by two feet.

Water cut a channel on the north side of the fort, surrounding it on all sides, and eventually swallowing the entire complex. The churning torrent flushed everything downstream except for heavy rock structures. These quotes are from two of the victim families: Henry John Holyoak: "The river made a new channel in 1884." From the life history of Mary Ann Dunton, who lived in the fort: "The water wheels were washed out of the sandy soil and floated down the river. The people were obliged to leave there and look for new wilds to conquer. Later when I went back over the same route, the river was running through the place where the fort had stood."

The only male at the John Allan place was seventeen-year-old Bob. The flash flood rose quickly and cut a channel on the north side of their six cabins, the same as it did at the fort, leaving the family stranded on the wrong side of the river. Bob was safe on the bank, but could see that his family's lives were in danger. He mounted his horse and made a fast trip down the north bank of the river for help, and found James Davis at home.

James and his son Ted harnessed a team of four horses and rushed to the Allan place. Meanwhile, the Allan women had rescued some of the chickens that were in the water. They put the small children on a bed in one of the cabins, and all of them kept climbing higher and higher as the water continued rising.

Annie Jane Allan wrote of seeing a water wheel float past. According to her account, James moved Auntie's things to safety first, but the current became so swift that the horses were losing their footing and could not continue.

Evidently John Allan appeared on the scene just in time. He decided to save the lives of the family and let the belongings go. They tied the molasses boiler to the team and put one person at a time into it and pulled them to safety, testing the four-horse-team to its limit. They saved the people, but the boiler got away and floated down the river. Albert R. Lyman wrote that one of their six cabins was swallowed by the river and major damage was done to the other five.

The largest flood ever recorded in the Colorado River Basin, which includes the San Juan River, was in the summer of 1884, based on gage height observations at Grand Junction, Colorado, and Yuma, Arizona; observations at Lees Ferry; and high water marks in Black Canyon. The volume of the 1884 flood was estimated to be about 30,000,000 acre-feet for a five month period. <http://www.riversimulator.org/Resources/USBR/MaxProbableFloods.pdf>



This is the approximate location of the Allen family farm, where the cabins were prior to the flood. Perhaps the river moved from the channel indicated by the arrow, to the present location. Photo by R. F. McDonald 2002

The John Allan Jr. history stated that all six cabins succumbed to the river. They were located three and one-half miles upriver from Montezuma Fort. After the flood the Allan family set up a temporary shelter of cottonwood limbs on the hill directly north of the general area where their cabins had been located. The river changed its location in 1884, but it is not possible to know exactly where it had been or where the cabins had been located. Prior to 1967 the river changed locations often. In 1884 the river moved to the north and made a new channel. The land they had been farming ended up on the wrong side of the river.

The general area of the photograph on this page was home to several of the settlers in addition to the Allan family. The Holyoak family was nearby and suffered from the same disaster. There was also the cabin Silas Smith had built, and the one the Fielding family left when they moved to the Mancos area.

The south side of the river was generally inhabited by Navajo people, and was designated as Navajo Reservation soon after this time. The farmable land at Montezuma, and between Montezuma and Peak, ended up on the Navajo side of the river. It was evident that the settlers would have to move on.

Even at Bluff much of the farmland was cut off from the settlers who lived there, so there was not enough farmland to accommodate the settlers in the area.

The home belonging to William and Angeline Hyde was the largest home at Montezuma. According to Albert R. Lyman, at some point William and his sons checked on Angeline and then left the area, apparently feeling that the home was safe from the deluge because it was located a considerable distance from the river. However, the angry river began cutting an unusual-looking cove inland toward the Hyde home, little by little coming closer. It almost seemed that the river had an agenda, because finally to Angeline's amazement, it swallowed the entire structure and flushed it downstream along with most all of her belongings.

Angeline lost many of her possessions, probably because when it became apparent the river might take the house, it would have been surrounded by water, preventing her from entering. Her husband and sons didn't return in time to help. The men had gone to River View to save Mary Ann Hyde's cabin. As it turned out, Mary Ann's cabin was above the water line. For William, this must have been one of those times in life when no matter what you do, it's wrong. William also lost most of his warehouse full of animal hides and wool to the turbulent river. At the time the flood began, we believe William and his two sons lived at Rincon, but Angeline and her daughters, Edna and Feenie, lived at Montezuma.

On June 8 the Harriman, Davis, and other families, watched their water wheels disappear into the frothy, churning mud. Their ditches, dykes, crops, and fruit trees were destroyed. The first Davis cabin, which was in the flood plain, disappeared. The Harriman cabin was built on a rock, and it survived, but we believe it ended up surrounded by the river's new channel. A few structures were above the flood and survived.¹

The 1884 flood was the deathblow for the Montezuma community, the Mitchell trading post and the cabins at River View. There were other settlers in Colorado and New Mexico who were also flooded out. A few settlers between Montezuma and Bluff were washed out, including the Moody family. The Allan family lost much of their farmland because the river moved north and made a new channel.

At Rincon, the narrow passage for the river caused the water to rise very high, damaging the Hyde family cabin. We learn from the Hyde River-bed testimonies that the river destroyed the cable-cribbing platform on the south side of the river, which released the ferry to begin its long journey toward the Gulf of California. It was probably the same flood that destroyed the water wheel, though we have no definite documentation to that effect.

¹ There are many conflicting accounts of what did and did not survive the flood. Some accounts say the Harriman cabin was destroyed, but others say it was built on a rock above the flood. Some accounts say the Davis and Haskell cabins were the only ones to survive. Other writers say only the Davis cabin and store survived. Some accounts say everything was destroyed. A few accounts say five of the six cabins at the Allan farm survived, but were badly damaged, while another account by John Allan Jr. said all six cabins succumbed to the river. One account mentions the river cutting a special cove, which eventually swallowed the William Hyde cabin. We may never know exactly what survived and what didn't. After studying the many accounts, it is the opinion of the author that a few of the cabins and other structures were above the flood-plane and survived, but many of the cabins, and all of the water wheels, succumbed to the churning river. The settlers' dams, ditches, dykes and farmland were destroyed. All their fruit trees and crops were sucked into the ugly river—except for part of the Holyoak watermelon patch.

1884 Fight

When the river began to recede, it had been two months since the killing of a Navajo man at the Mitchell place, but the Indians had not yet taken their revenge because the flood diverted everyone's attention. In fact, it seems the Navajos were never able to get the revenge they sought. They were unable to do it at the Mitchell place because of the cavalry, which continued their vigil nearby, and they were unable to provoke the Mormons into a fight.

As noted before, Navajo people were generally not so aggressive as to kill someone outright. They intended to provoke a fight, and thereby better justify the deed without it being an outright murder. The Ute people were somewhat the same, preferring to do their killing in what they saw as an honest fight.

Not long after the peak of the flood, on July 3, 1884, an opportunity presented itself to the Weeminuche band of Ute Indians. A gunfight broke out between the Ute men and some cowboys at Upper Montezuma, presently known as Verdure, approximately 45 miles northwest of Fort Montezuma. A cowboy shot a Ute man in the mouth, and the bullet came out his neck. It was caused by a misunderstanding of what the Ute man was doing. The Ute was attempting to cut the rope to a cowboy's horse, not to harm its rider. The cowboy over-reacted.

Mancos Jim was the leader of the Ute band at the time. The cowboys were outnumbered because the cavalry at the Mitchell Ranch had hired about twenty-five of their comrades.



Mancos Jim. Denver Public library, Western History Collection

Both the Utes and the cowboys scrambled into the bushes and exchanged gunfire. It became an armed standoff between a few cowboys and a larger number of Ute men. The cowboys had good reason to be concerned, because it was this band of Utes who had killed 14 cowboys at Pinhook Draw only a short time earlier, and some of the cowboys who fought at Pinhook Draw were again involved. They were well aware that Utes could put up a real fight if they got too angry.

Only one of the cowboys was a Mormon. He didn't agree with what was happening, so he mounted his horse and left the area immediately. He intentionally rode where the Utes would see him leave and thereby know he was not one of those who were shooting at them. Another cowboy made a fast ride to the cavalry stockade at River View and asked for assistance. A rider was also sent to Mancos, Colorado, where a posse was quickly formed to come to the aid of the cowboys.

When the Ute Indians discovered the cowboys were receiving support, they fled to the west. The soldiers, a few cowboys, and posse members from Mancos, pursued the Utes. They outnumbered the Utes considerably. So far the Utes had not harmed a single white man in this conflict, and they had a written permit from the Indian Agency in Colorado which gave them permission to be in the San Juan area and off their reservation. The permit was not authorized by headquarters however, but the Utes probably didn't know that.

Their trail led west toward Navajo Mountain, a favorite retreat for Indians who were in trouble, both Ute and Navajo. The Utes traveled west about 45 miles, and then realized they would not be able to outrun their pursuers, because they had their women and children with them. So they decided to make a stand.

They led their pursuers up a narrow ravine, which led to a flat mesa, where they hoped to get a little advantage. The plan worked well for them. The Utes were in familiar territory, but their pursuers were not so fortunate. The posse gathered at the base of the mesa. A Ute yelled, "Send someone to talk with us." Nobody was anxious to go, but finally a cowboy named James Higgins said he would go if someone would go with him. Government scout Joe Wormington offered to go, which was a serious mistake for a man with a wife and four children.

The two men went a short distance and were both shot by the Utes. Higgins was dead, and Wormington was badly wounded and could not get up. He begged the posse not to leave him, but there was no way they could help him without getting shot. In fact the Utes had them trapped, and could have killed more posse members, but decided that two was enough. They allowed the posse to retreat. Wormington and Higgins died on July 15, 1884. The posse was out of water and very low on food. They were conquered and in a very bad mood as they started back the way they had come. The Utes won the fight, plain and simple.



Graves of Joe Wormington and James Higgins, 1884. San Juan County Historical photograph

The Utes headed for Navajo Mountain, worried because they had killed a government scout and another man. They were aware it could cause serious repercussions and feared that they might have to deal with a regiment of the cavalry.

According to James Davis, Mancos Jim showed up at the Holyoak camp at Montezuma, trying to keep a low profile. He trusted Henry Holyoak completely, and sought help, believing Henry might have the ability to appease the cavalry and perhaps prevent them from retaliating. This amazing piece of information demonstrates the success of the Mormons in making solid friendships with even the most volatile Indians. However, Mancos Jim found the Holyoak family in complete disarray from the flood, and living in their wagon box. The Mitchell family had moved, or was in the process of moving, to Colorado, because the river had destroyed their cabin and trading post at River View. The stockade which the soldiers built at River View may have been flooded by the river also.

(The preceding is a very abbreviated account of the 1884 fight, which was taken from the writings of James Davis, and also from an excellent in-depth account by Bob McPherson.¹ There are other versions of the story also, but they basically agree on the important events.)

James Davis and the Cavalry

Indian trouble, coupled with the devastating flood, would discourage any normal person. In his personal history, James Davis recorded some memories of those difficult times:

“The soldiers were sent to protect the settlers and make peace with the Indians, but they were more afraid of the Indians than the settlers were. A young soldier came to talk with me. He told me he was a corporal. He was anxious to be promoted and in order to do it he had to visit the Indians. He wanted me to go with him and act as interpreter and be a witness to his bravery. I told the corporal I was certain the Indians would not kill him. He was riding a very fine horse and saddle, had a pearl handled pistol, was quite an important person, and a little conceited [so] he ventured alone.”

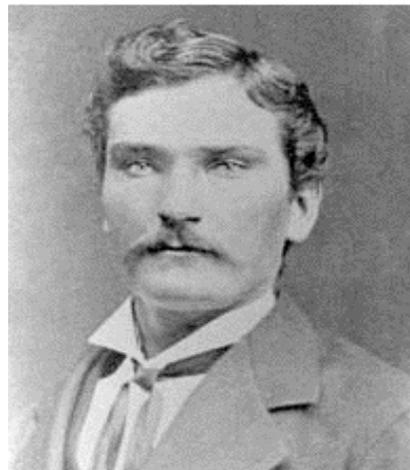
“I was uneasy at his long absence, but just before sunset we saw at a distance what looked like an Indian having trouble getting his horse along. He was trying to lead it. When he came closer, we saw it was the corporal with a young colt. He had a piece of rope around its neck. The corporal was dressed in some old Indian clothes. I asked him if he had been trading with the Indians. He replied ‘trading be damned. They forced me to trade.’ He returned to the stockade late that evening and he no longer wanted a witness to his bravery.”

Another story recorded by James Davis tells how the Indians knew the soldiers were afraid of them, so they had their fun: “The stockade at River View was small and crowded with so many men living inside, so they often made a fire outside the stockade, where they had dinner. On one occasion, four Indian men crept up in the bushes near where the soldiers were eating. They fired their guns in the air, which sent the soldiers scrambling into the stockade. The Indians then helped themselves to the food, and casually left without further fuss.”

¹ Blue Mountain Shadows volume 29. There are other versions also

Amasa and Feenie Barton

During November of 1884, Amasa Barton married Feenie Hyde. William gave the trading post and improvements at Rincon to Amasa and Feenie as a wedding gift. This was a significant gift, even though much of it had been destroyed by the flood the previous spring. Angeline, Feenie's mother, moved in with Amasa and Feenie because her home at Montezuma no longer existed. At Rincon a new partnership was formed, which included Amasa Barton, Joseph Barton, Ernest Hyde, and Frank Hyde. They had no clue what massive problems were ahead of them



Amasa Barton. Tom Mclehaney photograph

William had moved to River View to be with his second wife Mary Ann, and her two children, Charles Albert and Mary Luella. Their daughter Helen Athalia married and moved to Nephi. At River View William built a fourth trading post and a ferryboat system seven miles up river from River View at Marble Canyon, equipped with a small skiff like the one at River View.

William built a fifth trading post inland from the river at the mouth of McElmo Canyon and freighted goods from Durango to the San Juan River, stocking the two posts on the river and then up McElmo Creek. Now called Ismay Trading Post, it is still in business at the time of this writing, but the only part of the trading post built by William Hyde is the foundation.¹



Feenie Barton. 1890, Kimberly Ann Stevens photograph

Fort Montezuma had become history, but William and Mary Ann Hyde were still on their mission as directed, providing a wool depot for the Navajo people. It is unfortunate that though Mary Ann and her children managed the River View trading post for about seven years, we have found no written account of that time of their lives.

¹ “My understanding is that the Ismay Trading Post was built on the foundation of William Hyde’s store. Now I can’t say for sure who sold it to the Ismay’s, it could have been William, or it could have been one of his sons, or they could have sold it to someone else who sold it to Ismay’s. But, I do know that I visited the store a few times over the years with my father 45 years ago, or more, and Mr Ismay himself was familiar with the story as they spoke of it together. Sadly I wasn’t as interested in history then as I am now, so I didn’t pay the attention I should have.

“The store was gone and all that was left was the foundation. The consistent part of this story is the foundation being William Hyde’s foundation, and that Mr. Ismay himself said so. I say that part is consistent, because that is the part I heard myself, that their store was built on William Hyde’s foundation. I remember that part well, because from the way my dad always told it, I had thought the store itself was the one William built, and so I was surprised to learn the facts from Mr. Ismay.”

By Johnny Wesch, great grandson of William Hyde. 2015 interview by R. F. McDonald

They would've been there during the killing at the nearby Mitchell place, when the cavalry built its stockade, for the Peter Tracy episode, and other significant events.

The Abandonment of Montezuma

The river was triumphant. During September of 1884, a caravan prepared to leave Montezuma: a wagon for the Harriman family, and a wagon and a buggy for the Davis family. Family lore says when the Harrimans were packed and ready to roll out, leaving the graves of two of their children forever, their Navajo friends gathered silently and held the horses' harnesses as if to say, "Don't go." The Navajos promised that they would watch over the burial site of John and Lizzie, and perhaps they have. Descendants of those Navajo families still live in the area 132 years later.

It is said that the Harriman and Davis families never lost faith in the gospel, nor did they become bitter because of their trials. Emily Davis later wrote about how much she missed Montezuma and her Navajo friends who lived there. The Montezuma pioneers had no way of knowing that eventually there would be a beautiful chapel at Montezuma, with Navajo branch presidents and bishops serving there.



Harriman gravesite. The bundle of cedar slats are all that remains of the original fence that surrounded the plot. This photo is dated 2002. The cedar slats are no longer there in 2016.

In 1972 the LDS Church secured land for a meetinghouse near the Harriman cabin site at Montezuma, partly to show respect for the sacrifice of these pioneer families, 88 years after the demise of Fort Montezuma. From the meetinghouse, one can see the little plot where Lizze and John Alma Harriman are buried. Their graves are a solemn reminder of the sacrifice made by the first LDS settlers in this corner of Utah Territory. LDS members believe Henry and Sarah are now reunited with Lizzie and John Alma in a place called the Spirit World.

During the 1960s a kind man named Don Kemner built a pipe fence around the Harriman graves as a Lions Club project. LDS children in the local branch of the church have kept the plot clean and the fence painted.



By 2001 there were very few visible remains of anything the Montezuma pioneers had built other than the Harriman graves and the possible Hyde water wheel cribbing. The author has searched diligently, but hasn't found any additional evidences that can be conclusively tied to particular original settlers.



Unidentified Pioneer Homestead

As the pioneer families moved their wagons west down the precarious road in the river corridor, they witnessed the destruction other settlers had suffered. They must have passed by a stone building which had been seriously damaged by the flood (white arrow). It also appears there was a cabin on the flat level space, (black arrow), and some unusual rock art (red arrow).

The river had been close while someone lived in this location, but has since relocated toward the south side of the river corridor. To the right is a close-up photo of what remains of one corner of the stone building, which is indicated by the white arrow in the upper photograph. The flood evidently destroyed most of the structure in 1884. Rocks from the destroyed walls are in the wash below, as seen in the right bottom of the lower photograph.



Stone building. R. F. McDonald Photos, 2015

Only the northeast corner remains of the stone cabin a pioneer family built sometime around 1880. There are sufficient artifacts at the site to indicate that a woman and some children lived there. We don't know what family lived at this location, but they inscribed the date 1880, and their names on a rock wall nearby. However, 135 years of erosion has rendered the names too dim to read. The 1880 date was etched deeper in the rock wall and can be easily read. So we know when they were there, but we have yet to identify this family. As of the date of this writing the author has been unable to identify the pioneers who built this stone house.

The old pioneer road passed by this stone cabin, and can be easily identified both to the east and to the west.



This view is looking south, showing the northeast side of the stone cabin, which appears to have been destroyed by the river during 1884.



Rock art, artist unidentified. R. F. McDonald photograph. 2013

This rock art, 42 inches high, looks like the work of a young teenage boy. The location is indicated by the red arrow on a previous page. The art is directly above the stone building. The etched figure is on a vertical rock wall, 40 feet above the remains of the stone building. There is a narrow ledge below it, where the artist could carefully position himself. It appears this etching was done using a hammer and chisel. Next to the image is the image of a horse, not shown in this photograph.



Zoomed image of the Stone Cabin and the old road. 2009

The blue arrow in the photograph points to what remains of the rock building that fronted on the old road between Montezuma and Bluff. We are unable to determine where the door of this building was located. We were able to identify rocks in the walls of this building which were cut while making the road, which proves the road was built before the building was.

There is also evidence of a cabin nearby. A few of the logs still remain in the area. However, more research and a more diligent study of this site is needed.

The red arrows point to the road. It isn't difficult to see where the river flowed around the building. We can only wonder why someone built this structure so close to the edge of the river. As with many of the sites we have found, this one produces more questions than answers.

The location of the river forced the settlers to make a steep road up the hill in very rough terrain, as indicated by the red arrows. They had no other option, because the river was against the north wall of the river corridor. This location is one of many locations where the river was against the north wall of the river corridor in 1880-1884. It is also easy to visualize how the river destroyed most of the stone building, which likely occurred during the flood of 1884.

Turning North from the San Juan River

Further west, the Davis and Harriman caravan passed through Moody Bottom, where the Moody Brothers and their wives had lost everything to the flood, including two water wheels.

The flood of 1884 flushed both water wheels downstream. We have found no account of what happened to the cabins. The river moved to the south side of the valley, the opposite of what it had done at Montezuma. It left Moody Bottom without irrigation water. The Moody brothers were conquered. We believe they left the area and moved to Thatcher, Arizona, a short time before the Harriman and Davis caravan arrived at the site.



View of Moody Bottom looking East. R. F. McDonald photograph 2015

The river and the water wheels had been located where the trees are on the right side of the above photograph. The valley to the left of the trees was the land the Moodys farmed before the 1884 flood, which relocated the river to the other end of the valley—to the right of the photograph.



View through Moody Arch, looking at West Moody Bottom. R. F. McDonald Photo 2015

A natural stone arch stands on the north side of the valley called Moody Bottom,. This arch has nothing to do with the Fort Montezuma history, but the beauty of this location is such that the author could not resist making a page for it. Surely it was a sad day for the Moody family when they were forced to leave this beautiful valley.

A person can look through Moody Arch and see the west end of Moody Bottom. On top of the rock formation seen in the distance through the arch, one can see red cliffs in the distance, on which the date 1882 is inscribed in the rock. That is the year the Moody brothers arrived at the site and decided to homestead. The author did not name Moody Bottom, but he did name the arch, because it evidently had not been named as far as we know.

Moody Bottom is near the edge of the Colorado Guide Meridian survey line, which was established by Ferdinand Dickert by using a horse to drag a 66-foot chain from Temple Square in Salt Lake City during 1878. The locaton of the Witness Tree mentioned in the Platte D. Lyman history is also in view when looking through the arch, as is an unidentified child's grave. The Harriman and Davis caravan passed this way in 1884.



Steel wheeled wagons made the ruts in solid rock were pioneer wagons have traveled near Moody Bottom.

R. F. McDonald photograph, 2014

This photograph is a good example of wagon ruts ground into solid rock, which were made by the steel wheels of pioneer wagons passing near Moody Bottom. William Hyde and others freighted on such roads, forming deep cuts with heavily loaded wagons.

After passing Moody Bottom the Harriman and Davis caravan continued two more miles west down the river corridor to the mouth of Recapture Canyon, a trip which would have taken at least a full day from Montezuma, perhaps two days. At the mouth of Recapture they might have viewed the grave of Eva Bayles, a child who had died of measles near the same time as John Alma Harriman.

The Hanson Bayles family was living at the mouth of Recapture at the time; some of the Decker family lived there for a time, and also others. There was often a stream of water in Recapture, so the Davis and Harriman caravan probably camped there and prepared for their long journey north.



The view is looking north up Recapture Canyon from the exact location where the Harriman and Davis families would have entered Recapture on the old pioneer road. R. F. McDonald photograph 2016

At the mouth of Recapture, the Davis and Harriman families joined six other families who were leaving Bluff. A caravan of eight or more wagons traveled together up Recapture Canyon, with a few animals being herded along side. These families were seeking a more hospitable location to live.

For readers who are not familiar with San Juan County, Recapture is a major canyon between Blue Mountain and the San Juan River, and is approximately 38 miles in length. Recapture Creek drains into the San Juan River about three miles east of Bluff.

The wagon route between the San Juan River and Blue Mountain was in Recapture Canyon part of the way. About 14 miles north of the San Juan River, the old road ascended up out of the canyon on a trail later named Road Canyon, and to a grove of cottonwood trees with a spring, which made a nice camping spot. It was later named Mustang Spring. From there, they climbed to Mustang Mesa and continued north toward Blue Mountain.

Chapter Six: The Montezuma Families Scatter

Allan Family: The John Allan family remained at Montezuma for almost a year after the flood, and then moved to Bluff. The flood of 1884 rendered Bishop John Allan nearly destitute, and being too old to start over, he farmed the best he could at Bluff and Fruitland, New Mexico. The family also established Milk Ranch near the head of Comb Wash on Elk Mountain. Allan Canyon on Elk Mountain is named for John Allan. He died April 27, 1908. His wife, Agnes McAuslan Allan died at Bluff on April 1, 1909; his wife, Jane Fleming Allan, died at Bluff on May 27, 1915.

Bob Allan spent most of his life ranching in the Fruitland and Mancos, Colorado areas, and finally died in Wyoming.

John Allan Jr. lived in Mancos, Fruitland, Bluff, and a few other places. He came to the end of his life's journey at Blanding, where he died on July 24, 1928. His wife Johanna (Jenny) died at Mancos, Colorado on October 7, 1891. His second wife, Ardelle Stevens, died at Blanding on April 28, 1937.

Peter Allan died at Blanding on February 4, 1930. His wife, Martha Jane, died at Blanding on October 5, 1937. Peter served as Blanding Stake Clerk, and also was the postmaster for many years. Much good is said of Peter Allan. Allan family members served in many Church and civic positions, and left a large posterity, some of who still reside in the area.

Davis Family: As previously stated, the Davis family departed Fort Montezuma in September of 1884 as part of a caravan of eight or more wagons, of which one wagon and one buggy was theirs. They drove up Recapture Canyon and then ascended up Road Canyon to a spring later named Richmond Spring, and on to Mustang Mesa. From there they traveled to the east side of the Blue Mountains and down what was later named Peters Hill, through Dry Valley until they intercepted the Old Spanish Trail at Coyote Wash. They then traveled to Moab, to the Grand River (later named the Colorado River.) William Granstaff was living in the old Mormon fort and growing beans and tobacco. Granstaff loaned the company his small boat, and they disassembled all the wagons and took them across the river a piece at a time. This took more than a week.

The Davis family continued all the way to Paris, Idaho, where they made their home and spent the rest of their lives. Mary is said to have halted and refused to move forward when she saw Bear Lake. She had seen enough water. Only after much persuasion was James able to convince her to continue. Mary gave birth to eleven children. The last three were born at Montezuma. She never lost another child after the blessing she received from her bishop in Cedar City, and her health improved. James farmed a few miles outside of Paris and later built a home near town. He made part of his farm into a park for young people to enjoy. According to James, "We were poor, but we gained much experience." He lived to the age of 80, and died on February 7, 1920, having served in the Church faithfully to the end. They say he still enjoyed dancing a jig when he was 80. Near the time of his death he said all the promises that had been made to him by the elders of the Church, when he joined as a young man in London, had now been fulfilled, and life had been worth living.

Mary survived James by eight years, and died peacefully at the age of 85. They were highly respected citizens, loved by many. They were faithful pioneers who set a wonderful example for their posterity, and for all of us.



The Davis Family

Back row: Cordelia 1881-1955, John Orson 1876-1952, Emily Ellen 1873-1947, James Henry 1870-1930 Ethel Olive 1879-1947

Front row: Stella 1883-1952, James L. Davis 1840-1920, and Mary Elizabeth Fretwell 1843-1928
Edward Fretwell 1865-1940

Photograph provided by John Fretwell c 1896

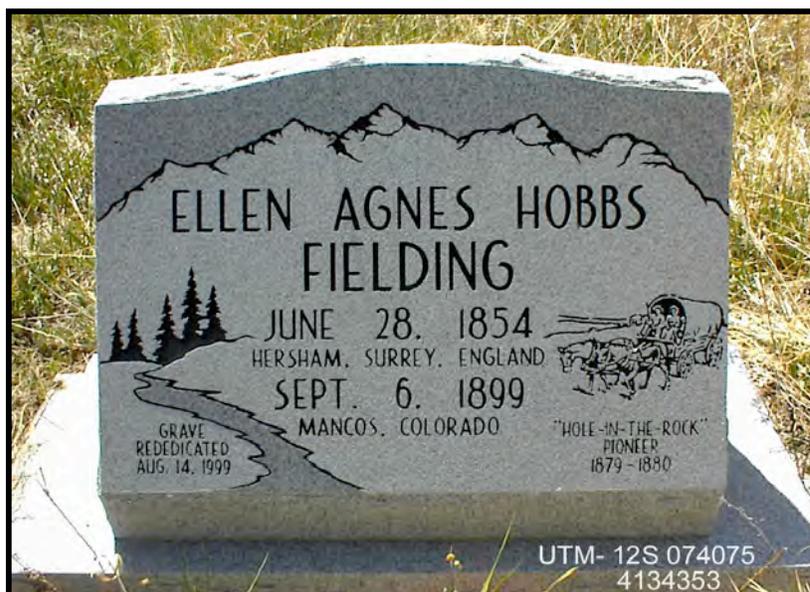
Dunton Family: James, Eliza and their two children, who had settled at Peak City, were flooded by the river in the spring of 1881. Their farm improvements were destroyed, along with those of all of the other Peak City residents, so they left the area. James' father, Harvey Dunton, and his wife, Mary Ann, with their three children received the same treatment from the river at the Fort, and they also moved from the area during May of 1881. They built a dugout a few miles north of Durango, Colorado, where Harvey freighted lumber for a sawmill. The following year they moved to the community of Mancos, Colorado, where Harvey was soon called to be the Church leader. At a later date Mary Ann served as Relief Society president in Mancos.

Fielding Family: The Fielding family became discouraged with the prospects at Montezuma sometime during 1882 and moved to the small community of Webber, located a few miles south of Mancos, Colorado, where they remained for many years.

Ellen eventually gave birth to twelve children but they lost their daughter Ellen Delcena to cholera when she was only nine years old. Amos Hyrum had serious health problems. He eventually began having convulsions. His health became so serious he had to be taken to an asylum in Pueblo, Colorado, where he remained for many years. It was reported that a doctor attempted the removal of a brain tumor but couldn't get it all. It's difficult to imagine what kind of an ordeal brain surgery would have been in the late 1880s.

While that episode was in progress, Ellen Agnes died of cholera on September 6, 1899. She was only forty-five, and left children as young as five years old motherless. When Hyrum learned of Ellen's death, he made his way to Mancos to see what he could do for his family, but found the older children taking charge of the family quite well, so he returned to the asylum. He survived another six years, working for the asylum for wages to cover his expenses and then died of a convulsion on June 1, 1905, at age 57.

Hyrum was buried at Pueblo, and Ellen was buried in the LDS cemetery near Webber. The Fielding family descendants have recently provided a very impressive and much deserved headstone for them with the names, birth and death dates of all twelve of their children engraved on the backside. They were an splendid family who endured far more than a normal share of adversity.



Guymon Family: The Lafayette Guymon family moved into the fort during 1881 and relocated during 1882. They left Montezuma about the same time as the Fielding family, and both families moved to Webber, south of Mancos, where they lived as neighbors for many years.

Harriman Family: The Harriman family left Montezuma during September of 1884 and moved to Huntington, Utah. Henry's parents, Henry and Eliza Jones Harriman, moved from Parowan to Huntington. Henry's father had been the Senior President of the Seventy of the LDS Church since 1882; he died at age 86 on May 17, 1891.

Elizabeth gave birth nine children. The last four, born at Huntington, were Alice, Franklin, Cornelia and Zuma Elizabeth. Note the name of their last child—Zuma was born eight years after they left Montezuma. This gives us some sense as to their feelings about the mission they served there.

The Montezuma mission was a great sacrifice for the Harrimans, and though they were not successful at co-existing with the troublesome river, they were successful at filling their mission. They became fast friends with the Indians and helped establish the Church in this new frontier, filling their mission exactly as directed. The Harriman family stayed at their post longer than any other Montezuma settlers, remaining for an uninterrupted five years and three months; they left behind their beloved children, Lizzie Constance and John Alma, in graves overlooking the San Juan River.

The Harriman family continued at Huntington until 1894 or 1895. Henry didn't like the poor soil, and they sold their place and packed furniture, a cupboard, a stove, bedding, ticks filled with straw, an organ, a few farm implements, a sewing machine and grain for feed and seed. Taking Henry's mother with them, they departed Huntington with four wagons, headed to Idaho. They hitched four head of horses to each wagon and trailed a short-tongued wagon behind each. William and Frank rode horseback, driving about 50 head of cattle.

When the caravan entered Spanish Fork Canyon, a train surprised them. Alice heard the whistle and alerted her father just in time to keep him from moving the first wagon onto the track. As they traveled through the Malad Valley, their cattle ate locoweed and were poisoned; some went crazy and chased people. Twelve head died. This was a substantial setback for the family. Elizabeth had almost reached the limit of her endurance. As they crossed the Snake River, high water was lapping up on the bridge. She stopped her wagon in the middle of the bridge, very discouraged, and said, "I wish the bridge would give way and wash us all down the river." She wasn't serious, but one can imagine how tired and melancholy she must have been.

They eventually settled on an unimproved farm three and a half miles from Idaho Falls, where they cleared sagebrush, built a home and began farming. While living there, Elizabeth took a nursing course from Dr. Ellis Shipp of Salt Lake City. She had already had some nursing and midwife experience prior to the schooling. In 1902, the family moved to a smaller but better quality farm north of Rigby, Idaho.

Elizabeth worked as a nurse and midwife, while Henry farmed in earnest. Life was better than it had been for a long time. In 1906, they filed for a homestead at beautiful Canyon Creek, in timber country north of Rigby Idaho. Henry built a one-room cabin at the homestead.

Not long following the completion of the cabin, Henry was hauling a load of timber when a large log fell and threw him against a steel tire of the wagon. He sustained a serious brain concussion, and his suffering became intense. A doctor bled him in an effort to reduce the pain, which failed to give the relief the family had hoped for. Henry died two weeks following the accident, on June 14, 1908 at age 59.



Elizabeth sold the farm at Rigby and lived in the cabin Henry had built at Canyon Creek. A few years later her sons built a house for her, pictured on the previous page. She had a playful side, because when her granddaughter, Clara Nelson, was small, Elizabeth would hold Clara on her lap and let Clara slide down her legs like slippery slide. Elizabeth died on August 5, 1925, at the age of 72.

Harriman descendants still have the Winchester model 1876 .45/60 caliber rifle that Henry owned. There are a number of stories about Henry's rifle (whether it was this one or another is not known. The Winchester 1876 first became available in 1879. Henry could have bought it before leaving for the mission to Montezuma, or could have bought it from the William Hyde trading post at Montezuma. The serial number might tell us more.)

At Montezuma, Elizabeth was traveling in the wagon when she saw a band of Ute Indians coming her way. She knew they would ransack the wagon, so she wrapped the rifle in some of her spare underwear, hoping the Indians would respect her privacy and not search her underwear.

Sure enough, they surrounded her wagon and began looking for things they might want, but respected her underwear, and didn't find the rifle.

The rifle was nearly lost on another occasion when family members left it out in the woods because ammunition in that calibre was no longer available in the stores.

Fortunately, a young man reconsidered and went back for the old rifle, which makes it a prized treasure in the Harriman family.



Winchester 1876 .45/60 rifle owned by Henry Harriman. Photo by Wilbur Thayne Nelson. 2004

Haskell Family: The Haskell family moved to Manassa, Colorado after the 1884 flood, except for Thales. He remained at Bluff until his mission release in 1886. Fourteen-year-old Mary Elijahetta died of typhoid fever on September 14, 1885, not long after arriving in Salt Lake City. This was a terrible tragedy for the Haskell family, which they had much difficulty accepting. The Haskell family was very spread out, and only one family member could attend the funeral—her sister Sarah Derrick. Sarah had lovingly taken care of her and given her a proper burial in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

Thales had a short rest at Manassa, and then he received a letter from President Wilford Woodruff, calling him back to the San Juan Mission. The Bluff saints were in trouble with the Indians, and Thales was the only answer the Bluff people could think of. Thales answered President Woodruff, saying he would go if he had a decent change of clothes. President Woodruff sent Thales \$20.00, and he accepted the mission call and moved back to Bluff alone. Thales served faithfully for another three years, and was then given a written release from the mission, having served as a missionary almost 32 years.

Thales was a wonderful accordion player and singer, and was a happy and friendly man. He spent his last working years as postmaster at Manassa, and Margaret served in many Church callings through the years, including a long history of midwife service. She eventually assisted in more than one thousand births.

A story from the Thales Haskell biography tells that while new at the postmaster job, he noticed a small man nosing through the mail, and told him to quit. A few minutes later he found the little man again looking through peoples' mail, so Thales picked him up by the neck of his shirt and the seat of his pants, and tossed him out on the street. The little fellow dusted himself off and returned to show his credentials, which read: "Federal Postal Inspector."

Thales died on July 13, 1909 at age 75, and was buried at Manassa. Margaret died August 19, 1916 at age 81, and was buried near her husband.

Holyoak Family: The Holyoak family moved to Bluff for a short time, but much of the land at Bluff had been washed away, and it seemed there was no place for them. They decided to accept the mission release and search for a more hospitable location. This would be their seventh move in just over four years. The wagon they brought through the Hole in the Rock had been their home for much of the past four years.

During October of 1884, the Holyoak family followed the tracks left by the eight wagons, which a few weeks earlier had carried the Harriman and Davis refugees north. They then continued their journey past the spot where the Old Spanish trail intercepted Coyote Wash and finally to the location now called Kane Springs. The old wagon broke a wheel, and they were stranded.

This was probably the low point for the Holyoak family. They were out of food; the wagon had serious damage; and they didn't even know where they were going. Fortunately, they still had a few cattle left from the fine herd they had brought from Parowan.

Henry left his family at Kane Springs and rode all the way to Castle Dale in search of food. The trip took two weeks and the family hunted and ate rabbits until his return. He procured some pig feed, with the chaff, bran and all, mixed together, which was the only thing he was able to buy.

Henry went to work repairing their wagon. Near the end of February, they arrived and pitched a tent at a place a little east of the present town of Moab. Henry traded nine cows and ten steer to Lester Taylor for eighty acres of land in an area, which appropriately became known as Poverty Flats, and still carries the name to this day. They had found their permanent location, however, and there would be no more moves other than local ones. Things gradually began to improve. The Holyoaks were among the first settlers in the area. Someone said they were the seventh family to settle in the area. The location of this photograph was between Mill Creek and Pack Creek at Moab. They called the cabin Bachelor's Hall.



Part of the Holyoak family at a cabin they called Bachelor's Hall, in Moab 1898

Left to right: Henry Holyoak, Richard Leroy Holyoak (child), Hattie Elizabeth Lutz Holyoak, Marion Thompson-child behind the dog, Mary Luella Holyoak Young inside cabin, James Thomson in left side of basket, Henry Thomson in right side of basket, Alice Jane Holyoak Thomson behind the basket, Sarah Ann Robinson Holyoak, Gurtie Thomson, Robert Thomson with strange object in his shirt, Henry John Holyoak, ? Davenport, and the dog was named Bob.

Henry served a mission to England and his son, Henry John, served a mission to the southern states and Florida. Albert Daniel also served a mission.

The Holyoak history says that the Indian friends they made at Montezuma occasionally visited them at Moab. There would be a happy reunion when they arrived, and Henry would kill the fatted calf and put on a feast. The Holyoak family and the Indians enjoyed a genuine friendship. This is truly amazing, when considering the fact that just fifteen miles from the Holyoak place, there are graves of ten or more cowboys who were killed in a fight with these same Indians during the Pinhook War. What can we learn from this?

Sarah Ann died on November 20, 1921 at Moab. Henry died on January 23, 1926 at Ogden, Utah, and was buried at Moab. They were wonderful pioneers, who lived valiant lives, facing all their tribulations and adversity with faith and patience. They left a very impressive posterity. They helped build the town of Moab, and they are buried in the original Moab cemetery.

Hyde Family: The Hyde family brought a good number of cats with them from Salt Lake City. The local Indian people were very curious because they had not seen domesticated cats. Cats multiplied and became numerous around the Hyde place. Following the abandonment of Montezuma, many of the cats remained. Possibly as a result, the Navajos named the area Mosi, which means cat, and the area is still called Mosi by natives to this day. One Navajo account states the place was named for a trader the Indians called "Old Cat." It's unclear whether Old Cat was William Hyde or if it was some other trader who lived there at a later date.

In the summer and fall of 1884, most of the Montezuma settlers had a written release from the missions and left the area. William Hyde had some decisions to make. Most of his holdings both at Montezuma and Rincon had been destroyed by the flood. Angeline and her daughter Edna had no home, and temporarily stayed with friends in Bluff. Ernest and Frank went to Rincon and began patching things up as best they could.

Angeline and her sons blamed William for the loss of their home and belongings at Montezuma. (This seems unfair because he was doing the best he could while trying to deal with three properties during a massive flood.) There were hard feelings in the family. William disposed of the few things he still owned at Montezuma and moved to River View to be with Mary Ann and their two children.

At River View their cabin and store were located a short distance west from the Henry Mitchell place. William built two more trading posts. One was approximately eight miles up-river from River View, at a location then called Marble Canyon. He put a ferry in operation with a cable across the river as he had done at Rincon. He then built another trading post at the mouth of McElmo Canyon, about seven miles northeast of River View. As noted, that trading post is still in operation as the Ismay store.

The Navajos gave William the name: Nakai Nez, probably in reference to his deep sun tan, and his ability to speak Spanish to the Mexicans in the area. He also spoke Navajo. During 1888 William and Mary Ann sold their cabin and all three trading posts, due to age and health issues. The two remaining children who were living at home, Mary Luella and Charles Albert, moved to Mancos, Colorado, with their parents. According to second great grandson Johnny Wesch, William worked as marshal for a time, and also during another period was employed as Mancos City Manager. Mary Ann operated a restaurant. William Hyde died of Brights disease on September 13, 1894 at age sixty-two. Mary Ann died at Mancos on January 6, 1912, at age seventy-four.

William and Mary Ann were interred in the Cedar Grove cemetery near Mancos. William Hyde and family filled their mission in San Juan remarkably well. William was known for being extremely motivated, and very honest. He and his family certainly had more than their share of adversity. William was loved by many. Johnny and Joe Wesch provided the following unedited and interesting obituary for William Hyde. We have yet to find one for Mary Ann.

Another old resident of Mancos has passed to the mysterious beyond. Yesterday morning at about 7 o'clock Mr. William Hyde, who would have been 62 years of age on the 23 d of this month, breathed his last. he was a man of magnificent physique but for some months past it had been noticed that some insidious disease had been making inroads upon it. he was born in Illinois and moved to Utah in 47. In 1858 he was married to Miss Mary Green, a southern lady. In 80 he and his family moved to the San Juan River and there he established Hydes ferry. In 88 he and his family came to Mancos, where they have since resided. His life was an eventful one, filled with deeds that border on the romantic. For some years he was personal secretary to Brigham Young Sr. His nature was kindly, but one could readily see, even in his declining years that he would be a foe of great energy and implacable fierceness. His wife, daughter (Miss Luttie) and son Albert, were at his bedside when he passed away. The funeral services will take place at union Hall tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock. Mancos Times 21 September 1894. Retraction: William Hyde obituary in error. He was never a secretary to Brigham Young.

Following the flood, Angeline Hyde and her daughter Edna moved in with some friends at Bluff. Ernest and Frank Hyde went to Rincon and began trying to salvage the damaged ferry. With the help of Amasa Barton, they put the ferry back in operation using smaller boats which did not run on a cable. According to the *Water Use Hearings*, Ernest, Frank, and Amasa Barton worked at restoring things at Rincon, building a new house up on the rock shelf where the river never would harm it. They also built a new trading post, and a blacksmith shop.

On November 28, 1884 Amasa Barton married Harriet Parthenia (Feenie) Hyde. They moved into the new cabin, and also brought Feenie's mother Angeline from Bluff to live with them. We don't know if Edna Hyde moved there also, or if she stayed with someone in Bluff. It was crowded in the house at Rincon, so we believe Ernest and Frank built their own cabin out on the very edge of the rock shelf overlooking the river.

A Rincon Trading post partnership was organized, which included Amasa Barton, Joseph Barton, Ernest Hyde and Frank Hyde. Rincon was back in business and doing well until June 9, 1887, when a renegade Navajo murdered Amasa Barton. It happened less than 30 days following the birth of his and Feenie's second child, William Penn Barton. That triggered the termination of the Rincon operation.

Feenie Barton later moved to Monticello, Utah, with her brother Ernest, and Frank moved to Bluff. Angeline Hyde moved to Nephi, Utah, and died on February 13, 1893, just eight months prior to the death of her husband William Hyde. The flood of 1884 caused a massive amount of harm to the Hyde family.



Mitchell Family: The Mitchell Family were not part of the San Juan Mission, but they were close neighbors, therefore we submit a little of their history here. The Mitchell family left River View for a time during 1880, claiming to have been chased out by Indians shortly after the Meeker Massacre in the fall of 1879.

They returned soon after. In the spring of 1884 the Mitchell family and other settlers along the river took a beating the same as the Montezuma settlers. Porter Mitchell later built a new trading post and cabin up higher on the hill, which is still in operation in 2016, with different ownership. The Mitchell family finally gave up at River View, and moved back to Mitchell Springs in Colorado. According to Kenneth Dennison, Henry and his son, Porter, operated the business and Peter Shirts was somehow involved in business with them, but we have not found verification that Peter was actually involved.

Henry Mitchell Sr. and wife Caroline moved back to Missouri in 1885 and eventually Henry died there during 1893. The name the Navajos gave Henry L. Mitchell was Bila'Dich'iizhi, which means rough hand. One member of the family settled in Trail Canyon, a tributary to McElmo. There is a Mitchell family private cemetery in McElmo Canyon. Four of the headstones have writing which is no longer legible. See appendix II for additional Mitchell family information.

Shirts Family: Prior to the founding of Fort Montezuma, Peter Shirts found a location near the confluence of the Green and Grand Rivers which he liked. He set out, in late 1873, to make it a settlement. He went back to the Chicago area, spending six months with relatives promoting a colony effort to encourage settlers to come to the new site. An advance group of this colony made it to Colorado in late 1874, but the effort collapsed as they crossed the Rockies.

Peter was disappointed, and returned to Utah, probably to his daughter and son-in-law's home near Marysvale. Around 1876 he may have traveled with a group from Marysvale, following the Old Spanish Trail from Green River area to Lisbon Valley, ascending out of Lisbon valley at Three-Step, finally settling for a time at Big Bend Colorado (now Dolores.) He followed the San Juan River to Montezuma in 1877 and built a cabin there.

Peter's brother William and seven family members joined Peter at Montezuma during the summer of 1879. While in Colorado he had become friends with the Henry Mitchell family, and had filed for water rights in the Big Bend area. For a short time Peter also had a camp near Pegasus Spring, about five miles west of Mitchell Springs in Colorado. Although the Shurtz¹ family settled in the Montezuma Creek area in 1879, their stay was short-lived and by early 1880 they had moved to River View.

Some of the family stayed at River View for a time. Others eventually made it to California. After the flood of 1884 Peter relocated to the home of his daughter, Elsie, and son-in-law, Reese Richards, in Fruitland, N.M.

¹ Peter spelled his name Shirts, his relatives who joined him spelled their name Shurtz. They were not part of the San Juan Mission.

During the 1850s some family members decided Peter died at the home of Walter Stevens during 1882 at Fruitland, and a gravestone was placed in the extreme southwest corner of the old cemetery where an unmarked grave was located. Recently the burial was exhumed for verification. It was not Peter.

The quest for facts has produced two documents that impact the story. There is a court document, FHL. Film: 0484620 from Utah, Garfield County Probate Records, which was filed by Peter's son Don Carlos, on which he claimed his father's property in that county. Peter Shirts is noted on the document as having died while traveling in Kansas during 1885. Also a family member has located an 1884 news article, which was an interview with Peter Shirts in Denver, Colorado. So he certainly did not die during 1882 as was thought. He survived into 1884 or perhaps into 1885.

There was considerable traffic between Fruitland and Escalante during the 1880s. Many people knew the Shirts family. Walter Stevens was from Escalante. We also believe Peter's daughter Elsie and her husband Reese Richards were living in the general area of Fruitland. It seems very unlikely that Peter could have died there without his relatives learning of it. However, if Peter actually died while traveling in Kansas, it would be easy to believe the family might not learn of his death. Again we have speculation, but no proof. At the time of this writing, we simply do not know for sure where or when Peter Shirts died.

Smith Family: After a few weeks at Montezuma, or River View,¹ President Silas Smith was released as President of the San Juan Mission. He and his family, including seven of his sons, moved to Manassa, Colorado in September of 1880. His rest was only temporary, however. On June 10, 1883, he was called as president of the newly formed San Luis Stake. President Smith lived the remainder of his life in the San Luis Valley along with his wife and several of their children. Three of the Smith children married into the Haskell family, and they all lived at Manassa.

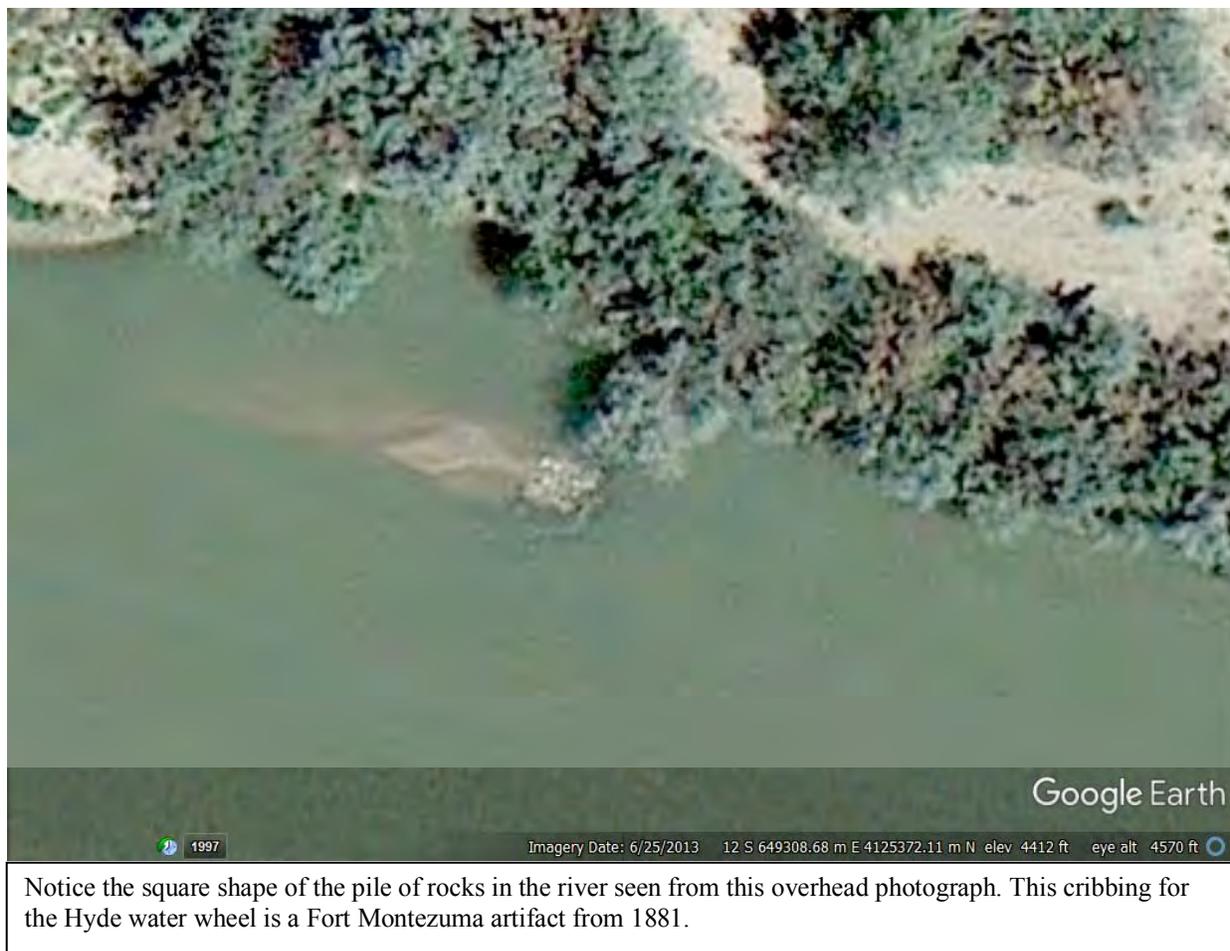
By the end of 1885 all of the original Montezuma settlers had left the area. Ninety years later, in 1975, the Navajo Dam was successful in bringing the river under control. Eventually the community began to grow a little at a time, and the Navajo population increased. Most of the land in the area became Navajo reservation, and the river corridor between Montezuma and Bluff remained public lands, which eventually became unavailable for homesteading. Therefore, the river corridor between Montezuma and Bluff is uninhabited at the time of this writing. It is mostly wilderness.

The Mormons were sent to Montezuma to establish the church and were successful at making friends with the Indian people. They left the area on a very friendly basis with the local Indian people. They did not succeed in taming the river, however. Most of the Bluff settlers eventually moved away from the river also.

¹ Some biographies say the Smith cabin and farm were near River View, others say Montezuma, a little east of the Harriman farm and cabin. There is a possibility they made a start at both locations, River View in 1879, and Montezuma in 1880. We don't know for sure.

Traces left behind

By 2001 there were very few identifiable evidences of anything the Montezuma pioneers had built: the Harriman gravesite, the possible rock water wheel cribbing built by William Hyde and sons, and a short piece of wagon road.



All of the rocks in the river bottom are smooth and round. When square sandstone rocks are found, we can be sure people put them there. We speculate that all of the sandstone rocks seen in the above photograph, and on the following page were placed by William Hyde and sons during 1881. They are only visible when the depth of the river is at a minimum.

The author waded out in the river and hefted a number of rocks, and felt the ones under water. All of the rocks in that pile are the size a man could carry. The logs and the wheel have long since washed away. The pile of rocks is located about 200 yards from where the fort at Montezuma once stood.

The remains of the rocks that were part of the actual fort are also in the river, but not close enough to the surface to be seen from the satellite photograph. If the river happened to move to a new channel we would see what remains of the Montezuma Fort. That will not happen however, because the flow of the river is controlled by the Navajo Dam, and has been since 1967.

In the years between 1879 to 1884, the Montezuma pioneers fulfilled their commissions: to settle on the San Juan River, establish the Church and make friends with the Indians. However, the elements combined against their efforts to establish farms, and they were released from their mission to find more hospitable habitations. But the church remained, as seen in the branch building established near Montezuma Creek, and friendship with the Indians remained, as seen in the families whose stories we've told and the care that was taken of pioneer graves. That friendship, contrasted with the attitudes of other white people of the time, is a blessing of sacred and eternal importance.

And in another important sense, their mission bore fruit in the lives of their progeny, who spread to other parts of Utah, to Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Idaho—and now, no doubt, around the world. These people honor and revere the sacrifices of their ancestors. Fort Montezuma and the devotion forged in its crucible will live forever.



The square pile of rocks in the river at Montezuma where the William Hyde water wheel once stood. R. F. McDonald photograph 2008



Notice the similarity between the two. This photo is the water wheel cribbing built by William Hyde at Rincon. The one at Montezuma was swallowed by the river in 1884, thus the logs are gone. R. F. McDonald photograph 2008

Appendix 1
List of Montezuma Settlers or scouts
Those in bold print were in the original scouting party

Adams, James J.**Allen, Isaac**

Allan, John
----- Robert Grey
---- Agnes McAuslan
----- Peter
---- Jane Fleming F. Shaw
----- Agnes
----- Elizabeth
----- Annie Jane
----- Florence
----- John Alexander

Allan, John Jr.
---- Johanna A. Hellstrom
----- Warren Eugene
----- Nellie
----- Anna Mable

Bayles, Hanson**Bladen, Thomas****Bullock, Robert****Butler, John****Butt, Parley****Dalley, Nielson B.****Dalton, John C.**

Davis, James L.
---- **Mary Elizabeth Fretwell**
----- **Edward Fretwell**
----- **James Henry**
----- **Emily Ellen**
----- **John Orson**
----- **Ethel Olive**

----- Cordelia
----- Stella

Decker, James B.**Decker, Zechariah B., Jr.**

---- Emma Seraphine
----- Zechariah N.
----- Louis A,
----- Emma C.
----- Inez G.
----- Jesse M.
Zechariah B. Sr.

Duncan, John C.**Dunton, James Harvey**

---- Mary Ann Doidge
----- Ellen Melissa Barker
----- G. Madora Barker
----- John Harvey

Dunton, James Cyrus
---- Eliza Ann Prothero
----- James Albert
----- Mary Alice

Fielding, Amos Hyrum
---- Ellen Agnes Hobbs
----- Hyrum William
----- Thomas Amos
----- Joseph Oliver
----- Ellen Delcena
----- John Melvin

Gower, John

Guymon, Lafayette
---- Phebe M. Perkins
----- Anna Emeline
----- Anna Madora
----- Enoch Cough
----- Heber Columbus
----- James Neils

Haight, Caleb

Haight, Isaac C.

Harriman, Henry Harrison

---- **Sarah Elizabeth Hobbs**
----- **Henry George**
----- **Mary Clarissa**
----- **John Alma**
----- **Lizzie Constance**
----- William Harrison

Haskell, Thales
---- Margaret Johanna
----- Margaret Ann
----- Irene Ursula
----- Thales Jr.
----- Ashbel Green

Hobbs, George B.

Holyoak, Henry
---- Sarah Ann Robinson
----- Alice Jane
----- Mary Luella
----- Henry John
----- Eliza Hellen
----- Albert Daniel
----- Richard James

Hyde, William
---- Angeline Harris
----- Harriet Parthenia
----- Ernest Bertrand
----- Francis (Frank)
----- Edna Estelle
---- Mary Ann Green
----- Helen Ataxia
----- Mary Luella
----- Charles Albert

Jones, Kumen**McGregor, Adelbert****Nielson, Joseph**

Ollson, Anna Brita

Appendix I Continued

Owen, O., or (Owens family)¹

Perry, George

Robinson, John

Shirts, Peter²

William Shirts

---Susan Shirts

-----William Shirts Jr.

-----Oscar Shirts

Michael Shirts

---Catherine Shirts

-----Cornelius Alexander Shirts

-----George Paul Shirts.

Smith, Silas Sanford

--- Martha Eliza Bennett

-----**Silas Sanford Jr.**

----- Jesse Joel

----- **Stephen Agustus**

----- **Albert Ricks**

----- Ella Clarinda

---- Betsy Williamson

----- Clarinda Ann

----- Silas S.

Smith, John Aikens

---- Emely J.

----- Emely J.

Smith, Joseph Stanford

---- Arrabella C.

----- Ada E.

----- Elroy

----- George

Tanner, Seth

Thornton, Hamilton

Urie, George

Wallace, Hamilton

Perhaps others who remain
unidentified

Indians mentioned in this book

Navajo Indians

Bia-a-lil-le

Claw

Jim Joe

Pejo

Peokan

Sarah Mababoots (Half Paiute)

Tanigoots

Ute Indians

Bridger Jack

Cowboy Charlie

Douglass (Paiute)

Hatch Skunk

Henry Watermelon

Joe Bishop

Mancos Jim

Nic-O-Cat

Polk

Posey (Paiute)

Sanop

Sachem, son of Sanop

¹ The Owen, or Owens family have provided a significant mystery. James Davis mentions O. Ownes, and the Ownes family twice in his diary. He helped them with their water wheel. O. Owen performed three church ordinances at

Montezuma between the spring of 1881 to mid 1883. On the rock walls of the canyon near Montezuma we found the inscription "Jennie Owens 1881" We have not identified any member of this family. We know they were

there, but we do not know who they were, where they came from, or where they went.

² The Shirts settlers were not LDS missionaries.

Appendix II

The Henry Mitchell Family

The Mitchell family were not part of the San Juan Mission, nor were they part of Fort Montezuma, but they were close neighbors and the author believes some readers would appreciate a little information about them. According to census records, Henry Mitchell was born in Ohio during 1820. He married Caroline Taylor, and they began their family in Warren County, Indiana. In about 1857 they moved to Missouri. We have identified nineteen children of this marriage. The family moved to Colorado in about 1878. Some of their children were adults by that time, and did not follow. We have identified the children who came to Colorado, and eventually, to River View, Utah.

Another interesting item is the fact that the family began locating at River View, Utah, in late 1878. However, the Colorado census worker found them back at Rio LaPlata Colorado during the spring of 1880. At Rio LaPlata, they operated a boarding house and sawmill. We have also seen reference to a letter written by Henry Mitchell in July of 1880, which carries the return address of Parrott City, Colorado, not far from Rio LaPlata. See the list of employees who are credited to the Mitchell household. They evidently didn't spend much time at River View during 1880. However, we believe they moved back to River View around the end of 1880. At this point in the research, there are more questions than answers. The Mitchell family is outside the scope of this book, but we hope to provide these few leads for anyone who might want to do additional research. One irregularity we found is that many histories of San Juan County list Henry as the father of Ernest Mitchell who was killed by Indians, and buried at the base of the Butte named Mitchell Butte in Monument Valley. We have not found any child in this family named Ernest. We believe Hernon—who was Henry and Caroline's son—to be the man who was killed at age 24 in Monument Valley during January of 1880, possibly because of Indian unrest over the Meeker Massacre scare. Hernon is not found with the family on any census records after 1870, probably because he was killed by Indians in January of 1880. One more note of interest. Many of the San Juan County histories indicate Henry claimed to be party to driving the Mormons from Missouri, but he didn't move to Missouri until 1857, about 17 years after the main body of Mormons had already left the state. Perhaps Henry helped persecute some of the stragglers.

Henry Mitchell's immediate family, some of which did not follow the family to Colorado or Utah:

Name	Status	Birth date	Place	Notes
Henry L. Mitchell	Head	1820	Ohio	Moved to River View
Caroline	Wife	1822	Ohio	Moved to River View
Mary (Carpenter)	Daughter	1842	Indiana	Married John Carpenter
Porter	Son	1843	Indiana	Moved to River View with family

Appendix II Continued

Name	Status	Birth date	Place	Notes
Harrison	Son	1844	Indiana	Possible casualty in the Civil War.
Jasper	Son	1847	Indiana	Possibly moved to Texas
Edgar	Son	1848-49	Indiana	Moved to River View with family
Henry	Son	1851-52	Indiana	Homesteaded near Pegasus Spring
Hernon C.	Son	1855	Indiana	Killed by Indians in 1880
Louise or Laura	daughter	1856-57	Indiana	
Clara	daughter	1858	Missouri	Married a man named Williams at River View
Martha	daughter	1859	Missouri	
Caroline	daughter	1861	Missouri	
Jessie	daughter	1864	Missouri	Moved to River View with family
Lucinda	daughter	1865-66	Missouri	Moved to River View with family

Appendix II Continued

James Frank family son 1867-68 Missouri Moved to River View with family
 Charles son 1869 Missouri Died at Mitchell Springs 1879-80.

Henry Mitchell and his extended families at Rio La Plata, Colo. From 1880 U.S. census. Moved back to River View Utah before the end of 1880

<u>Person</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Birth date</u>	<u>Birth Place</u>	<u>Age in 1880</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Henry Mitchell	Head	M	1820	Ohio	60	
Caroline (Taylor)	wife	F	1822	Ohio	58	
Caroline	daughter	F	1862	MO	18	Married Oen Edgar Noland
Jessie	daughter	F	1864	IN	16	
Lucinda	daughter	F	1866	MO	14	
James F.	son	M	1868	MO	12	
Porter Mitchell	Head	M	1843	IN	37	
Isabel	wife	F	1858	OH	22	(Isobel, Isabel, or Isabella)
Flora	daughter	F	1868	KS	12	
Theodore	son	M	1871	KS	9	
Dale	son	M	1874	KS	6	
Hernon	son	M	1878	KS	2	(Don't confuse with his uncle born in 1855)
John Carpenter	head	M	1841	IN	39	
Mary Mitchell	wife	F	1843	IN	37	
Ulysuss J.	son	M	1866	MO	14	
Harry	son	M	1868	MO	12	
Orion	son	M	1870	MO	10	
Lula	daughter	F	1873	MO	7	
Carrie	daughter	F	1876	KS	4	
Edgar Mitchell	head	M	1849	IN	31	
Cynthia	wife	F	1850	MO	30	
Floyd	son	M	1873	MO	7	
Jasper	son	M	1877	MO	3	

The following men are listed with the household of Henry Mitchell, as Boarders / Employees

Aaron Stull	single	M	1853	PA	27	Saw Mill Hand
George Clay	single	M	1851	MO	29	Saw Mill Hand
Daniel Harris	single	M	1849	IN	31	Saw Mill Hand
Nathanell Swensey	married	M	1835	NH	45	Saw Mill Hand
Wiley Cappe	single	M	1858	TX	22	Saw Mill Hand
Oen Edgar Noland	single	M	1854	MO	26	Saw Mill Hand
Larkin Runnels	single	M	1854	KY	26	Saw Mill Hand
James Jones	single	M	1844	IN	36	Saw Mill Hand
Thomas Moore	single	M	1833	IL	27	Saw Mill Hand

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Google Earth photograph copyright 2014; Data provider information pending

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permission granted by Chris Smallbone

Notes

A person can look at Montezuma (which is dry) and then look at Webber and Mancos, Colorado, (which are green) and it becomes easy to understand why so many families moved about 100 miles to those towns. Very early church leaders in Bluff included the Mancos and Webber areas in the San Juan Stake, so San Juan missionaries who moved there had not abandoned the San Juan Mission. There is an LDS ward at Mancos at the time of this writing. The area was far more hospitable than Montezuma, and in particular, the creek did not wash the settlers out!

On LDS Church records that were kept at Montezuma during 1879-1884, the Fielding family carried the surname of Perkins, but on cemetery records at Webber, Colorado, their surname is listed as Fielding—perhaps because Amos Hyrum Fielding’s stepfather was John Perkins.

According to page 11 of *Richard Wetherill Anasazi Pioneer Explorer of Southwestern Ruins* by Frank McNitt, the Richard Wetherill family settled on the river at or near Fort Montezuma in the summer of 1879, but were washed out by a flood during the fall of the same year and left the area.

Caleb Haight and Isaac C. Haight, both single men, lived at Montezuma for a short time, and then moved back to Cedar City.

Joseph S. Smith moved his wife and three children into a cabin at the fort while he went to Mancos in search of work. (See Appendix I). After a few months, Joseph moved his family to Webber. Their story is not included in this history.

Lafayette Guymon and his wife Phebe were not called as missionaries, and they moved to Webber in 1881. They had four children with them. On the way they stayed at Montezuma for three months while Lafayette drove a freight wagon for William Hyde. Because of their very short duration at Montezuma, their story is not in this history except for a brief note on page 81.

Readers may wonder if the Harrimans placed the headstones for their two children, or if kind friends placed them later. We don’t know how they got to the hillside. They resemble the Allan family headstones that were later placed in the Bluff Cemetery, and John Allan was the LDS bishop at Montezuma when both Harriman children died. However, the possibility exists that Henry Harriman could have placed them sometime between the time of the deaths and when the family moved. One clue is that when they were engraved, we can be sure Elizabeth was not close at hand, because had she been available, she would’ve known the birth date for John Alma—so, somebody took a guess. John Alma was six years, nine months old instead of six years, seven months old as the headstone says. If one compares zoomed images of John Alma’s headstone with Bishop Allan’s family plot headstones, the rockwork and the rock type look the same, but the engraving style is quite different. The two sets of headstones date over 20 years apart, so they could have been made at the same facility with a different engraver. We could conjecture that George Hobbs, who made many trips from Nephi to San Juan, provided the headstones. He was a loving uncle to John Alma and likely knew the boy’s approximate birth and death dates. He may have had better information on Lizzie from a wooden marker. This is one more Montezuma mystery to ponder— among many!