BLUFF FORT HISTORIC SITE

HOME OF THE HOLE IN THE ROCK PIONEERS

Grant Taylor & others
Edited by Ron Bateman



Bluff Fort Historic Site

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Written by Grant Taylor &
Other Contributors
Ronald R. Bateman, Editor

"Bluff Fort and the Hole in the Rock expedition is a story for all times. It is a story that deserves and needs to be heard around the world. It is a story of miracles and undaunted faith. To be privileged to be part of the preservation of that story is a blessing to all who serve here." —Will Redd, 2024

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Bluff Fort Historic Site of the Hole in the Rock Pioneers

In 1879-80, pioneers built a wagon road in southeastern Utah near the Four Corners area. They were fulfilling an assignment from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to establish a settlement and nurture peaceful relations with the Utes and the Navajos. Their journey turned into an ordeal of unparalleled difficulty as they spent six months blazing a route across some of the most broken and rugged terrain in North America. This trail went through the Hole-in-the-Rock, a crevice in the Colorado River gorge.

Upon their arrival in the San Juan area on April 6, 1880, they established a small community called Bluff City. Their first dwellings were one-room, log cabins. The cabins were built closely to each other to form the exterior walls of a fort in a hollow square. Security was achieved by everyone living in close proximity to each other. The fort consisted of an open square, outlined by forty to fifty cabins whose doors and windows all faced the center. A meetinghouse at the north end of the fort was used as the church and school, and became the center of all social activity.

Only one of the fort's log cabins survived. It was home to Harriet and Joseph Barton and their eight children. It remains the only tangible reminder of early home life on the San Juan frontier. Corinne Roring and the Letty Jones Foundation acquired the cabin from Gary and Sharon Guymon and hired the removal of brush, weeds and tamarisk. During the first week of April 6-11, 1998, volunteers from throughout the state convened at the cabin site. In one week's time, one room of the cabin was restored and the other rooms were excavated and preserved.

As volunteers worked to preserve the cabin, a dream and vision of founder Corinne Roring was launched and extended far beyond the task at hand. Since that time, most of the Bluff City block associated with the Barton cabin and the Bluff Fort has been acquired. The property was cleared; a rip gut fence was built in 1998 in the southwest corner, and the Log Meetinghouse was recreated on the site in 2002. The meetinghouse was constructed as authentically as possible. Its size, shape and use of twisted cottonwood logs are the same as the original.

Next came a monument plaza, dedicated to the Hole-in the-Rock pioneers in 2005. Granite slabs held in place with rock columns display the engraved names of each pioneer family who came in those first years. Four years after the monument plaza was built, a statue of President John Taylor was dedicated at the same location. John Taylor was the leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who called the pioneers to settle the San Juan region.

Fourteen cabins were constructed in a square over a four year period from 2008 to 2011. Descendants of the original pioneers funded and built the cabins in a tremendous undertaking. The cabins are furnished with furniture and numerous antiques belonging to their forebearers.

A state road shed was purchased in 2003 and converted into a woodshop, mail receiving room, and eventually a state of the art kitchen. The Utah Navajo Development Council building was acquired in 2008 and used as the first visitors' center. It was later used as the sewing and craft center. A one-room, former Relief Society building was restored in 2010, as a reminder of the charitable service of the local pioneer women. First class public restrooms were built in 2011. "Bus tours, youth groups, families and other tourists who visit Bluff Fort today now enjoy a convenience that was never imagined 140 plus years ago." The restored Kumen Jones rock home, already onsite, and a bowery added to the completeness of the Fort in 2018.

The crowning gem of Bluff Fort was erected as an exact replica of the original trading post. A two-story, solid rock structure patterned after the 1890s San Juan Cooperative was built in 2013. Corinne Roring proudly called it the "Shining Star of Southeastern Utah." A Ute tipi, a Navajo Hogan, a waterwheel (2016), and gold panning stream, 21 wagons, and other 1880 style museum pieces enhance the modern fort. Over the years, generous corporate and individual donations enable the Hole in the Rock Foundation to continue operating the Fort.

Finally, volunteer missionaries began manning the Fort as full-time caretakers in 2013. They are called by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for periods of service varying from six months to two years, and more. They are assisted during the busy seasons by volunteers from nearby Blanding and Monticello, Utah, many of whom are descendants of the original pioneers.

Most importantly are the tens of thousands of visitors who come year-round to visit. They come from all 50 states, Washington DC, and 85 plus countries internationally.

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Foreword

The story and legacy of the Hole in the Rock Pioneers will forever hold an important place in the settling of the Great Basin and beyond. The faith, courage, and indomitable spirit of this group of pioneers remains vibrant in the letters and journals that they left behind.

Bluff Fort Visitors' Center and the Hole in the Rock Foundation have given a place to share these amazing stories showing Jens Nielson's rallying cry for the Saints by having plenty of "Stickie-ta-Tudy" through their determination and faith in God.

This group of 260 Mormon pioneers, blazed a trail across some of the most broken, difficult terrain. They forged a wagon road that even today amazes those who retrace the pioneers' footsteps in the wilderness area of Southeastern Utah.

Their example of following a Prophet of God and "sticking" to the task shows their indomitable pioneer spirit of settling the wild west of the late 19th Century.

Through their perseverance, the land was tamed, the economy flourished, and a more peaceful relationship was developed with neighboring Native American tribes.

Due to the vision of Corinne Roring and other descendant "Hole in the Rockers," the time was right to recreate a canvas of cabins, historic buildings and additional exhibits that bring to life their "Stickie-ta-Tudy."

Miracles were wrought with the help of a creative board of directors, and then an army of volunteers showing up at the Fort at just the right time.

Today, you can see the fruits of this all-volunteer group of modern-day pioneers who have shown their true spirit as logs were laid, vegetation planted, and historic buildings recreated. The spirit of the 1880's comes to life as you enter the stone Co-op Store and step back in time to engage yourself in the stories of faith, courage, determination, and faith in Jesus Christ.

We hope all that come will be changed for the better; that the stories come to life for you. We also hope you are able to gain just a little of their "Stickie-ta-Tudy" spirit when life's challenges come your way. We truly feel that because of them, not only descendants, but all who come can increase their faith and determination to "Do Hard Things."

We hope that as a result of our recording these efforts you will gain a greater belief in miracles and how you can be a helper in God's Kingdom here on earth. Our deepest thanks go to all who gave their sweat and blood and a lot of financial backing to create this living legacy to the San Juan Pioneers.

We hope that people from all over the world will continue to come and feel the sacredness of Bluff Fort. Truly this ground was hallowed by the pioneers and again by all those who gave of their time and talents to restore and create this amazing center for learning.

Grant Taylor

Acknowledgements

This document is a compilation of individual narratives, photo collections, and commentary compiled for the purpose of preserving the history of the development of the modern Bluff Fort. Grant P. Taylor provided the storytelling from his vantage point beginning in about 2006. He was particularly focused on giving many individuals credit for their efforts in behalf of the Fort. His cheerful expressive style is evident. He provided leadership in getting reports from past directors and following through on needed information and questions asked. He invited service missionary Ron Bateman to help in compiling and editing the project. This production is the result of Grant's written manuscript, guidance and input.

There is some repetitiveness due to different individuals providing input. Their personal remembrance of details is valuable in telling the complete story.

Corinne Roring is center stage in making sure the Fort came about. Hers was a pivotal role from the beginning. The Fort was her lifelong dream come true. Her thick photo albums contained invaluable documentation in photos, letters, and brochures of the early Fort up to her death in 2015. Mike Roring, John Roring and their sister Janie Roring Lauritzen generously loaned their mother's collection, as well as answered questions. Mike continues on the board of directors.

LaRue Helquist Barton Kirkham with her dynamic, energetic personality continued to be a source of inspiration, service and knowledge into 2024 and will likely continue many years beyond. She along with Corinne kept the Fort operating in the early years. She had a collection of all missionary memory books printed yearly since 2013, which she gladly loaned to the editor.

Lamont Crabtree made available his knowledge through photos and response to questions asked, in a timely manner. He was an early and continual participant in the Fort development and is referred to by Grant Taylor as the Fort historian. His contribution over the years has been invaluable as noted in his history of the Barton Cabin and the Log Meetinghouse construction.

Erlene Taylor's 2009 to 2013, thick photo albums, covering Bluff Fort development, add visualization to the written word from that time period. Her husband Grant L. Taylor and his brother Dell were the sign makers and cabinet painters for the Fort. Other volunteers are given credit throughout the story.

Laurie Fifield gave valuable suggestions in the editing process. Her willingness to assist is greatly appreciated. She and her husband Bryce were called as new directors as this history project was being completed, so her attention turned in a new direction.

Many individuals willingly sent photos and written information. Some of them are Hugh & LaRue Kirkham, Beverly Black, Cindy Embleton, Lamont Crabtree, Carl Ball, Fred May, Lisa Hill, and Will Redd. Rich Murset took requested photos and aerial shots with his drone. Generally, photos not credited were taken by Ron Bateman. Regrettably, many original photos were not captioned, so individuals were not accurately identifiable. Few of the photos in any of the year books are captioned with identifying names. The best effort has been done to match faces with individual photos provided in each booklet. Apologies are made to any who are left out or are misidentified.

Mark Hancock of Family Heritage Publishers provided invaluable assistance in completing the final product in terms of pagination, combining sections, formatting, cover design and first edition printing.
Ron Bateman, Editor (Service missionary 2023-24)

TIMELINE OF MODERN BLUFF FORT HISTORIC SITE DEVELOPMENT

The Hole In the Rock Foundation objective and mission is to preserve, perpetuate, and promote the historical legacy of the Hole in the Rock/San Juan Mission Pioneers.

The HIRF motto: The San Juan Pioneers accomplished the impossible through unwavering commitment and devotion.

1978 The highway through Bluff was diverted, no longer passing directly north of the old Bluff Fort site, but south of it instead.

1994 A search was conducted in the Bluff Cemetery by asking old-timers to identify unmarked graves.

1995 March 25, Corinne Roring directed a volunteer cleanup of Bluff Cemetery.

1996 May, the covered wagon logo was approved for use on the Hole in the Rock trail. It was designed by Lamont Crabtree and used as a logo at Bluff Fort.

1997 Corinne Roring successfully led a campaign to raise funds and purchase the Bluff Pioneer Cemetery. 250—300 people attended a dedication on October 11th.

1997 Corinne Roring utilized the Letty Jones Foundation & other moneys to purchase the Barton Cabin from Gary and Sharon Guymon.

1998 The Barton Cabin Restoration took place. After much time-consuming preliminary effort by Corinne Roring, a host of individuals came to help April 6-11th, including Graig Taylor, Lamont & Spencer Crabtree, Gary Guymon, Corinne & Craig Roring.

1998 June, a ripgut cedar post fence was built on the southwest part of the Fort. Max Dalton was in charge and taught volunteers how to build it.

2002 The construction of the Log Meeting house was accomplished.

2003 Old state road shed was purchased by Corinne Roring. It was eventually remodeled into the Cowboy Cabin, a receiving room, a laundromat, a kitchen and a woodshop.

2003 September 11, the historic San Juan River Swinging Bridge collapsed nearby.

2005, Bishop H. David Burton came to Bluff Fort to dedicate the first portion of Monument Plaza. It was a cold, blustery April day and a crowd gathered for the dedication and then quickly left.

2005 Larue Barton (later Kirkham) became involved in the Fort.

2005 The board of directors for the Fort included Graig Taylor, Lamont Crabtree, Corinne Roring– president and official Fort gopher, Mike Roring and LaMar Helquist. Carl McKay in Provo, Utah was the accountant for the first few years and would come and help out once in a while at the fort.

2006 The Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation was incorporated as a 501 (C) (3) and the Bluff properties were transferred from the Letty Jones Foundation to the newly established Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation run by a board of directors.

2006 Grant Taylor was invited by his brother Graig to become involved in the Fort. Grant became a substantial contributor in many ways to the cause. In 2013, Grant was quoted as stating “My eyesight is dim, but my vision is clear.”

2006 Graig and Grant Taylor led a Sons of the Utah Pioneers tour which focused on the Hole in the Rock pioneers. The tour was impetus for several missionaries who later served at Bluff Fort because of their impressions.

2007 *The Hole in the Rock News* featured an ad seeking individuals or families to help with ground planting and site maintenance, and early 1880-1890 pioneer memorabilia for display. Interested persons were to contact Corinne Roring in Monticello, Utah. Also, a volunteer interior commercial designer to design and help build the new interpretive center was sought, with L. Graig Taylor as the person to contact.

2007 Karl and LaRue Barton purchased the Jens Nielson home. The first couple of years they came and stayed during the week, and then moved there full time in 2009. Karl and LaRue were on the board of directors for the fort.

2007 October, the McConkie family came to Bluff; sprinkler system and trees planted.

2007 10 acres of land west of Bluff was purchased for Camp Stickie and later on a well was drilled.

2007 Eighteen German wagons were donated by Gunter Liebich.

2007 Fun Fact: the first wedding was held in the restored Log Meeting house on Oct. 27th, 2007.

2008 HIRF purchased the “Kissing Hogan” (the UNDC or Utah Navajo Development Council building).

2008 April 6, a fireside was given by Corinne Roring at Bluff Fort, commemorating the pioneers arrival in Bluff on April 6, 1880.

2008 May, a wagon trip was made to Germany by the Graig and Grant Taylor to procure wagons.

2008 May, the Hole in the Rock Foundation received a Federal Scenic By-ways grant of $486,000 to be used in building a replica of the original co-op store thanks to the efforts of Joe Hurst and Lynn Stevens.

2008 July 1st- The first visitor center was opened in the double hogan building, known as the craft center. A video reenactment of the Hole in the Rock trek by Lamont Crabtree was featured on a DVD played on a TV monitor. Tri-Hurst Construction was hired to remodel it, including painting and put a bathroom in. They closed it in October for the winter. LaRue Barton was the HIRF secretary and helped to keep the Bluff Fort Welcome Center open. There were about 2,000 visitors that first year.

2008 The Log Meetinghouse roof was sagging so a center post was added.

2008 Dec, the first generous Sorenson foundation grant was approved for $150,000.

2008 The HIRF newsletter advertised for volunteers. “Wanted: Enthusiastic couples or singles who desire a life-changing opportunity to share the true life experiences of the dedicated pioneers who founded Bluff in Southeastern Utah. Spend two weeks to six months volunteering as guides at the Bluff Fort Visitors’ Center. Show the site to tourists from around the world. Tell the stories of teamwork, sacrifice, cooperation and faith which allowed these stout-hearted people to ‘accomplish the seemingly impossible.’ If you desire, there are also opportunities to garden, quilt, make rugs, and assist with construction projects. This experience of service will touch your heart and help you appreciate and understand the challenges your own ancestors faced during the 1800’s.”

2008 In October, three cabins had been completed, including the James and Lucinda Redd cabin, the Thales Haskell cabin, and the Amasa Barton blacksmith shop.

2008 Fall, a Ute Teepee, walkway, and a dirt-covered Navajo hogan were planned according to a handwritten note intended for use in the Fall 2008 Fort newsletter.

2008 October 18th, a fireside was given by Joseph Fielding McConkie in the Log Meetinghouse.

2009, the Lemuel H. Redd Jr. cabin was built in April, George Hobbs cabin in May, and the Lymans (Platte, Walter, Joseph & Edward) and Perkins (Hyrum and Ben) cabins were built in June. In October of 2009, unbelievably, three cabins went up: Frederick Jones cabin; Samuel Wood cabin; and Parley Butt cabin. All were finished in time for the dedication of the John Taylor monument Oct. 24. 2009.

2009 the HIRF website debuted January 1st. The new site featured an extensive image gallery, detailed trail guides, video tours of Bluff Fort, and highlights of past service projects.

2009 March through May, a Navajo hogan was built at Bluff Fort by Burand Construction of Monticello, Utah at a cost of $10,481. Two older Navajo ladies approved its’ construction as being built in the old traditional way and could be accepted and blessed by a medicine man. The interior was decorated by a local Navajo lady Mary Lou Harvey. Further consultation came later with Casey and Cecilia Lee Boy.

2009 New kitchen –“The cooks at the fort are excited about having a kitchen in one of the truck bays in the old state road garage. There are two stoves, two refrigerators, and three sinks! When we say ‘cooks” we mean you who come with your families for a good time at the Fort. The kitchen doors open onto a wraparound patio with a new roof for shade. The new roof was built in two days by volunteers like Mike and Rob Atkinson who stopped to see the fort. They returned with hammers and gloves and worked alongside Neal Roberts, Ned Hall, Jack Muterspaugh, and Dale & Jennie Major and members of the Hobbs family. The heavy timbers and boards flew into place under Ron Snowden’s supervision.” HIRF Newsletter, 2009

2009 October, sod was laid in front of the Cowboy Cabin and near the Kumen Jones home ruins. Professional sign painter Grant L. and Grant P. Taylor volunteered to do the job. Grant L. Taylor also painted all the Fort signs with the assistance of his brother Dell Taylor.

2009 Some 500 descendants and San Juan County residents gathered Saturday, October 24th, under deep blue skies to join with Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve in dedicating a bronze statue of John Taylor, the third president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The statue was erected on the original site of the fort. Accompanying Elder Perry was Utah Gov. Gary R. Herbert, who paid homage to the political accomplishments of President Taylor. Beverley Sorenson and the Sorenson Legacy Foundation donated the money to build the statue and she unveiled it. After the dedication, Elder Perry, the Sorensons & others were treated to a trip to San Juan Hill where they were told the story of Bishop Jens Nielson's ox dying. After they were served a lunch.

2009 HIRF received generous donations from George & Delores Eccles Foundation, One Foundation, Inc., Redd Investment Corp., San Juan County Office of Tourism, Sorenson Legacy Foundation, and the Utah State Office of Museum Services as well as generous donations from individuals.

2010 New restroom facilities were started at Bluff Fort by Hurst Construction and Redd Mechanical. Completed in 2011.

2010 March, the Relief Society building was refurbished.

2010 May- Charles Eugene Walton and Jens Nielson cabins were built.

2010 June 3, The first ever Trek was hosted at Bluff Fort. Over 280 participants from the Blanding stake came. They performed service projects, trekked up and down San Juan Hill, square danced, ate and held a fireside over the period of a few days.

2010 Ron & Lorraine Barton, Dennis & Lorraine Harvey, and Bill and Marilyn Moen came and spent all summer doing electrical work while camping in their trailers, all on the same little septic system.

2010 Grant and Nina Taylor, and Karl and LaRue Barton went to a trade show in Denver to purchase items to sell at the fort. Prior to that, they had been selling a lot of T-shirts, books, candy sticks and similar items.

2010 Steve Bronson was the Bluff Fort visitors' center director. LaRue Barton worked at the Fort the previous three years and two years following Steve.

2010 October 9-10, building rocks were cut into 7 inch thick slabs for the Co-op.

2010 October 29-31, the Deckers joined forces to honor their ancestors (James, Cornelius, Nathaniel & Zachariah Sr. and Jr.) with a cabin building project.

2011 LaRue Barton served at the Fort again. One missionary couple came during September and October.

2011 The fort went digital with its own Facebook page.

2011 On the morning of April 21st, construction began on the Hanson Bayles cabin at the Bluff Fort.

2011 The little cabins at the Fort now had electricity thanks to Ron Barton and all who assisted him. Fourteen cabins and a restroom facility had been erected in less than four years.

2011 15,118 visitors from 29 countries and all 50 states visited the Fort from March to October.

2011 The July *Ensign* Magazine contained two articles that highlighted the Hole in the Rock experience. Elder Jeffery R. Holland captured the emotion of Belle and Sanford Smith and the story of the "Last Wagon" in the article "Faith to Answer the Call" on page 48. The second is an article by R. Val Johnson titled "Sand and Stone" on page 40. He highlighted the trekking of three stakes along the Hole in the Rock Trail in 2010.

2011 Construction began on the Co-op visitors center. Ground breaking for the Co-op with Utah Governor Gary Herbert was October 12th.

2012 Elder Steven E. Snow authorized calling Church service missionaries to serve at the Bluff Fort. The following year of 2013, twelve missionary couples came to serve at the Fort.

2012 February 17, the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University sponsored a symposium entitled "Charlie Redd Symposium." There were three presenters: Lamont Crabtree discussed the selection of a route for the trail, Doug Major talked about the decision to take the difficult route, and David Carpenter described life in Bluff.

2012 September Dick Jacobs comes aboard with amazing electronics skills. Gary Cook wrote a script for a movie about the fort and introduced movie producer and director Alan Peterson to Bluff Fort.

2013 "If These Walls Could Talk" was filmed in January, mostly in Cottonwood Canyon near Bluff. Alan Peterson was the director. It was filmed during a six-day period, other than a segment at the top of Hole in the Rock in June. Script by Gary Cook.

2013 Ben and Mary McConkie Donaho donated an antique pump organ for use in the Bluff Fort Co-op & Jack Powers made repairs to it.

2013-14 Frank and Elaine Rowley were Bluff Fort directors. They were called in late 2012.

2013-2014 Bluff Fort HIRF (Hole-in-the Rock Foundation) Board Members - Corinne Roring –President, Grant Taylor, LaMar Helquist, Mike Roring, Lynn Stevens, Steve Jensen.

2013 February, Gary Spears built room divisions, stairs and laid pine flooring upstairs. In March Jack Powers began installing interior cabinets at the Co-op.

2013 April, Grant and Dell Taylor painted Co-op fixtures. May 1st, a ribbon cutting ceremony marked the official opening of the Co-op. June, ice cream machine was donated. June, pine flooring laid.

2013 October 11, a spectacular copy of a painting by Farrell Collett entitled "The Hole in the Rock" was installed in the Bluff Fort Co-op prior to dedication. It was donated by Paul and Diane Redd.

2013, the San Juan Cooperative building was completed and dedicated on October 12th. Bishop Keith B. McMullin told Grant Taylor "to never get off your soap box about the Fort."

2013-2014, the Roring apartment complex and home was built to house missionaries and to provide a gathering place for the missionaries to hold socials such as Family Home Evening. During the winter, Vance Seeley added stones to the Co-op store.

2014 Wooden barrels were ordered.

2014 Elder Peter Evans of the First Council of 70 of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints visited the Fort.

2014 Camp Stickie was built.

2015 Gerald Lund and Corinne Roring gave missionary firesides.

2015–16 Dale and Beverly Black Bluff Fort were directors, winter & summer.

2015 Eagles nest office above second floor of co-op was constructed.

2015 June 15, Corinne Roring age 87 passed away. She was the founder of Bluff Historic Fort and president of the Hole in the Rock Foundation.

2015 Oct 10, Elder Steven E. Snow of the First Quorum of Seventy & Church Historian dedicated the monument to the second group of San Juan pioneers and gave a fireside.

2015 Shop expansion was completed. An air conditioner was added. A policies and procedures handbook was developed. The highway cleanup was started. Showers and a water tank were added to Camp Stickie.

2015- Board of Directors were LaMar Helquist, president, Mike Roring, vice president, Donna Jensen, Steve Jensen, Stuart Matheson, Lynn Stevens, and Grant Taylor.

2016 Utah Senators Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee visited the fort on separate occasions.

2016 “Taj-Ma Cluck” or the “House of Chickens” coop was built.

2016 A water wheel was built and installed.

2017 Quote in missionary yearbook- Albert R. Lyman, the “Old Settler” stated that ‘no one enters the boundaries of the San Juan Mission by chance.’ He said that everyone who would come, would come to fulfill a foreordained purpose, no matter their race, profession, or religion.

2016- Board of Directors were Lynn Stevens, president, Mike Roring, vice president, Donna Jensen, Stuart Matheson, Grant Taylor, and Jed Lyman.

2016-17 Burnis and Lana Skinner served as Bluff Fort directors.

2017 Utah Symphony Concert performed in Bluff at Camp Stickie.

2017 Dick Jacobs built the new electronics to show all three Hole in the Rock movies in various languages in both the visitors center upstairs and in the log meeting house.

2017 New countertop and cabinet additions in the Co-op were made by Jack Powers and his son.

2017 The flagstone sidewalks were cemented in. They had been installed earlier by Boy Scouts in sand.

2017 A new receiving room was built adjacent to the woodshop.

2017 Repairs were made to the water wheel and gold panning pumps.

2017–19 Jim & Vicki Orr were called as Bluff Fort directors.

2018 Teepee, picnic tables & benches, and the hogan were updated.

2018 Ruben Garnica designed and made new covers for the wagons and created the stained-glass windows in the Kumen Jones home.

2018 The bowery was built. Elder Alan Pace, a retired commercial electrical contractor was able to share of his talents and skills on the pavilion and Kumen Jones home restoration. The Kumen Jones Home was completed, furnished and opened.

2018 Visit of Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in December.

2019 Two new displays were added with farm implements and the Holyoak wagon encampment. Farm implements were donated by Bluff resident Melvin Gaines. The displays were created by Leon Jones with help from the service missionaries.

2019 The brochure display cabinet was built.

Winter 2019-Summer 2021 Wayne and Cindy Embleton were Bluff Fort directors during the challenging Covid 19 epidemic which required adjustments in personal distancing, opening and closing the Co-op and Fort, etc.

2019 Waterwheel bucket repairs were made using Trex wood.

2021 The Hole in the Rock Foundation successfully applied for grant money to remodel the Fort kitchen and add a new laundry.

2021 September 25, dedication of the Kumen Jones home restoration.

2021 Breakfast fundraiser was held for the Bluff Volunteer Fire Department, which had become an annual event.

2021 Bluff Fort had an entry in the Founders Day Parade in Monticello. Service missionaries Parrishes and Embletons rode in an iron-tired buggy, with a Bluff Fort Visitor Center/Museum sign on it. Bluff Fort had entries several times prior to this in local parades in Blanding, too.

2021 New state of the art kitchen and "Sweet Shoppe" addition was completed, and a new laundromat was built under the direction and workmanship of Fred May and Bruce Riches.

2021 Elder LeGrand R. Curtis of the Seventy visited Bluff Fort & spoke to the service missionaries. He was director of Church historic sites.

2021 Elder Mitchell A. Smith passed away early summer while serving a mission at the Bluff Fort Historic Site.

2021 The waterwheel was repaired, and a new design was used.

2021 October 22, senior service missionaries Dan Seegmiller and Ann McEuen were married in the Log Meetinghouse.

2021 November, HIRF purchased the Jens Nielson property from LaRue Kirkham. Property. The parcel of land included one of only three Bluff artesian wells.

2021 –22 Will and Peggy Redd were directors.

2022 Machine shop and storage room enclosed.

2022 Building of Apartment #5 was started on the Jens Nielson property.

2023 February, a Royal International RV was donated to HIRF by Ted and Jean Demars for use as missionary quarters.

2022 Dump trailer was rebuilt and reinforced.

2022 Purchase of a laser woodburning, computerized system allowed professional signs to be made using laser technology.

2023 February, Jack and Lorie Rasmussen were called as directors to begin serving March 1st.

2023 A concrete sidewalk leading to the kitchen and a concrete extension in front of kitchen patio was installed. Needed repairs were completed to wagon steps, staining and sealing of windows and door frames of co-op, and repairing and artwork done on photo-op display. All work was under the direction of Bill Hansen, missionary.

2023 Community outreach programs of the Fort involved Adopt-a-Highway, Fireman's' Breakfast, and Friday Nights at the Fort. The missionaries also helped the city with planning for crowds coming to watch the solar eclipse. There was a one-day record of 453 visitors on the Fort to watch the eclipse. Later, the Fort missionaries helped serve a free Thanksgiving meal at Twin Rocks Café with several hundred in attendance.

2024 January- the Bluff Fort missionaries were assigned to the New Mexico Farmington Mission as fulltime missionaries. The designation of service missionaries would no longer apply to incoming senior missionaries.

2024 January 26th, Bryce and Laurie Fifield were called as Bluff Fort Fort directors to begin serving March 1st.

2024 Several new, commercially made signs were installed around the Fort. They were researched by Leon Jones and designed by Lamont Crabtree. Most were descriptions of the cabin occupants.

2024 March, the San Juan Cooperative roof was re-shingled.

2024 April, a cement sidewalk and patio were installed at apartment #5.

2024 June, a beautiful video presentation was placed in the Relief Society building honoring the legacy of the pioneer women of Bluff.

2024 A fully harnessed team of life-sized, horse statues was attached to a covered wagon on the Fort.

"God does not begin by asking us about our ability, but only about our availability and if we then prove our dependability, He will increase our capability! "
-Neal A. Maxwell

Corinne Nielson Roring Tribute

This is a tribute to our mother written by Corinne's children: John, Janie, and Mike. We recognize our mother as one of the key founders and developers of the restored Bluff Fort. She was a visionary and passionate about Bluff from the time she was a very young girl. She never let it go.

It started when she organized and raised money to save the Bluff Cemetery. Then the opportunity to purchase the Barton cabin from Gary Guymon presented itself. With Gary's generous support Mom made the purchase with funds from her personal account and from the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation of which she was the trustee. Mom told Mike that she had just bought us a family cabin. Then took him for a ride to Bluff to see the tree-covered, dirt-covered, and Tamarac-covered Barton cabin. Next came the log meeting house, the Cowboy Cabin, the craft center, the hogan, the individual cabins, the blacksmith's shop, the woodwork shop, the Kumen Jones home, and the crowning jewel of it all, the Co-op Store.

No one will ever know how much time and money she invested in the Fort. She said the Fort was our inheritance. For this, we are honored. For her, it wasn't a sacrifice. She considered it her calling. She wanted the amazing history of the Hole-in-the-Rock adventure and Bluff settlement to be preserved and shared. Mom said, "The Fort must go on. Like the old Jens said, 'We must go on whether we can or not. And if you have plenty of Stick-ity-tu-ity we cannot fail.' If our children learn just those two things, then this Fort has been worth it." Mom always said, "When the time is right, it will happen."

Miracles happened over and over again. Mom involved all of her family in this dream, including grandchildren, and especially Mike and his son Craig. She wore out the road between Monticello and Bluff, often loaded down with needed supplies. She was there for every cabin building, every celebration, every feeding of volunteers, and every drip line set. Mom loved greeting and helping every missionary she could. She was ALWAYS there working for the benefit of the Fort. The Fort was her life.

It was not in our mother's nature to take credit or be in the spotlight. She just wanted this important history preserved so future generations would know of the sacrifice made by these incredible pioneers. She was smart and savvy. She served on other foundation boards and knew how they should operate. Mom was blessed with a keen business mind which helped in the creation of the foundation with a board of directors that still exists today.

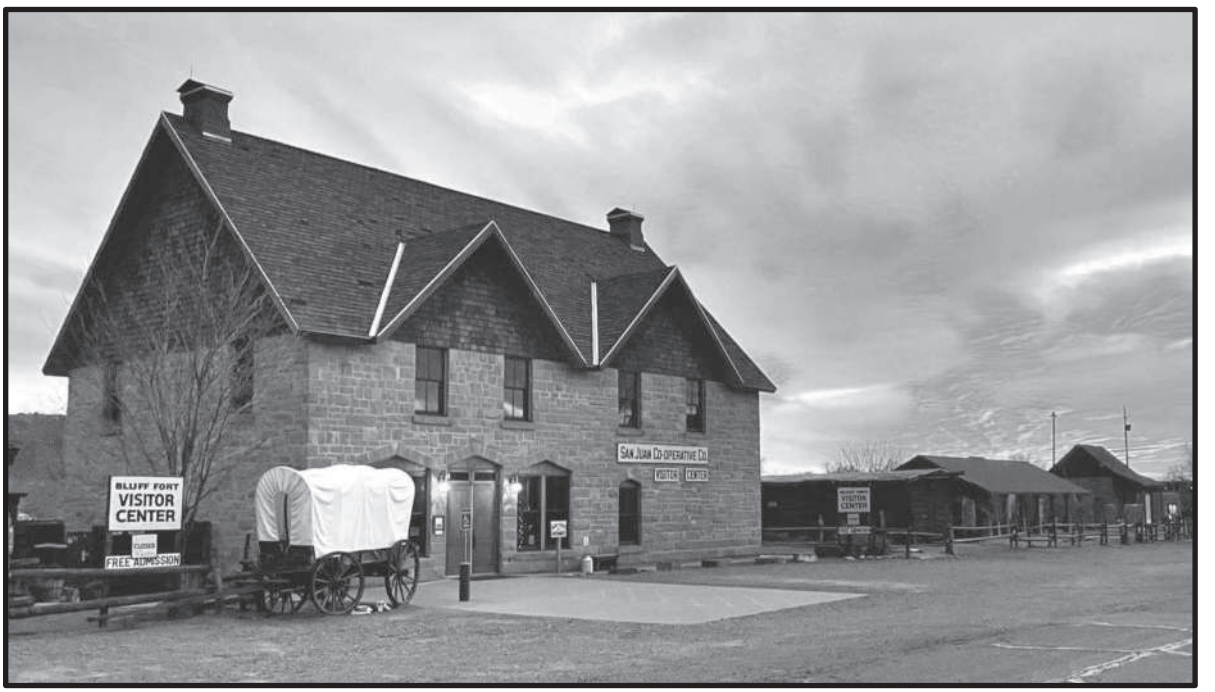
We will be forever grateful to all who served with her and who will serve in the future. If we couldn't find our mother, we knew she was in Bluff staying in the Cowboy Cabin. She was often found working by herself cleaning up and walking around the Fort. We recognize many, many other individuals who contributed tremendously so this dream could become a reality.

Mom never stopped. She finally had the opportunity to build a home across the street from the Co-op, along with some apartments for her beloved missionaries. She just had to have a place of her own in Bluff. In her later life, she would stay in Bluff to watch over what was happening in this place she loved.

We thank all the directors and missionaries who "watched" over our mother. We knew when she was alone in Bluff, she was in the hands of earthly guardian angels. Thank you for being there. Bluff was a sacred place to her. We still feel her Spirit there and know she is watching over her beloved Fort.



The original Bluff Fort San Juan Cooperative. Charles Goodman photo.



The replica of the Bluff Fort San Juan Cooperative 2024. Ted Hill photo.

CHAPTER ONE Miracle of "When the time is right, it will happen."

Corinne Roring Quote

"There are small predatory bands of renegade Indian tribes who prey on defenseless persons as well as lawless adventurers from among the whites. We therefore deem it a matter of solemn prudence that temporary dwellings should be in close proximity to each other, and where practical we would recommend that you build in the form of a hollow square, and close up the spaces between your dwellings with a stockade." Erastus Snow September 5, 1880 San Juan Stake Records



Corinne and John Roring. Corinne Roring photos.



Corinne Roring.

Modern Bluff Fort

The idea of re-creating Bluff Fort began with Corinne Nielson Roring. As a young girl she came to Bluff with her parents to visit relatives and to decorate graves on Memorial Day. When just married to Johnny Roring, Corinne wanted to buy the old Bluff School when it came up for sale in the early 1950's. It had fallen into disrepair. The price was only $3,000 she said, but you could buy a home in Blanding or Monticello for less than that.

Corinne's father, Floyd Nielson, took her up to a bluff overlooking Bluff City. There he told her she needed to make sure that the story of the "Hole in the Rock" pioneers was remembered. Jens Nielson was her great-grandfather and she had always loved to hear the stories of his and other's faith and courage. She kept her eye on Bluff and waited for the time to be right.

Corinne's father told her when she was just young that he wanted to rebuild the fort, so the seed for her dream was planted then. He owned the fields to the east of Bluff and she spent her youth in Bluff, sometimes playing in the wreckage of the co-op building with Dorothy Butt Hurst.

She said that the story of the Hole-in the Rock pioneers must be preserved and told so all generations may know of their valiant sacrifice and obedience. She often quoted her Danish grandfather, 'If ve have plenty of Stickie-ta-tudy, ve cannot fail.' This was her mantra and was embedded into her very soul. In her own words, her grandpa from the other side of the veil pushed her to do this work, and probably helped many miracles happen. There have been so many miracles in the restoration and building up of Bluff Fort, that there is no doubt that the hand of the Lord had been in this project from the beginning.

Corinne later wrote "I have been possessed with Bluff Fort for so many years, and now to see this little corner becoming the shining star of southeastern Utah is exciting and wonderful. Now that I have a place of my own to stay, it is hard to leave or stay away from Bluff."

In 2007 Corinne Roring related the beginnings of the Fort from her perspective: "When I was a teenager, my summers always included riding the mail truck to Bluff with Dorothy Butt (Hurst) and spending days at her home there. Every day we'd walk over cemetery hill to the old swimming hole, and then explore the Bluff hills and visit people.

In the Barton cabin lived a quaint little woman named Mrs. Rappley. Her husband had come to Bluff in the oil boom, years before. We were always welcome in her cozy cabin with the muslin ceilings patterned from the rainwater that brought red dirt down from the rooftop.

Time moved on and took its toll on the old Barton cabin and the Kumen Jones house next door. The brush and weeds and Tamarisk grew so tall that only a small portion of the cabin could be seen. In fact, most of the block seemed to grow lots of weeds and wait silently for a purpose. No serious activity seemed to occur there for years. It was being preserved, waiting.

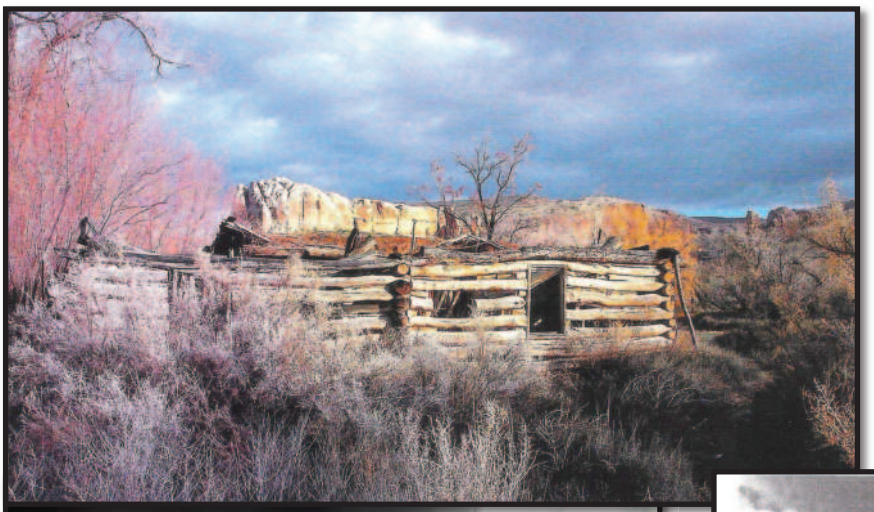
The silent perseverance of the old Barton cabin was rewarded when Gary and Sharon Guyman acquired 3/4 (editors note just 1/2) of the town block with the aim of preserving the site of the old Bluff Fort. Next, I entered the story, acquiring from Gary and Sharon the Barton cabin lot. Finally came the boys from up north, Graig Taylor, LaMar Helquist and Lamont Crabtree who helped restore the cabin. By the time the project was completed, complete with signs and a picture bulletin board, the group had acquired a fever of Fort restoration, Graig said "Now what Corinne?" And I replied, "The log meeting house of course."

This proved to be a bigger job than we had anticipated. Where could we find the Cotton-wood logs, let alone the money to pull it all together? Gary Guyman suggested using dead cottonwoods from the old irrigation ditch near Blanding, but heavy timber equipment and expertise were necessary to move them. David Kimmerle, a great- great grandson of Bishop Jens Nielsen was prepared for the undertaking. He cut, sawed, and hauled the heavy logs to Bluff. He repeated this operation four times. The next challenge was building with crooked logs. A Canadian old timer, who had just happened to be visiting the area, knew cabin construction. From a single picture, the great old meetinghouse was reconstructed right down to the dirt roof and the bell. What had originally cost the settlers mostly time and labor, cost us $85,000. We had restored the cabin and rebuilt a meeting house, but what about the early Bluff Fort inhabitants themselves?

How could we preserve the story of our hearty pioneer ancestors who came in 1880? in 2004 a granite monument to honor the Hole in the Rock trekkers was built. It was dedicated by LDS Presiding Bishop H. David Burton amid some of the worst weather I'd ever experienced in Bluff. It gave us an added appreciation for the elements the pioneers endured. The monument was built totally from donations from friends and descendants. Like them, it is solid and beautiful. Curtis Jones, Norman Nielson, Mike Halliday and their wives spearheaded that drive.

The next fort project will be our biggest undertaking yet—to rebuild the stone Bluff Co-op store as an interpretive site and visitors' center. It is anticipated that this will cost half a million dollars. Last year (2006) 5,000 visitors signed in at the little fort, and many indicated a desire for added historical preservation and history of the area. We will meet that request.

From the very beginning the Fort dream has been challenging, exciting and scary as the amount of money needed grew larger and larger. Then the feeling would come, don't worry, keep planning, and when the time is right, it will happen. This Bluff Fort is meant to be. Come visit the Fort and beautiful Bluff. Once the red sand gets in your blood, you will return again and again. I guarantee it. (Corrine N. Roring, Hole-in the Rock News Volume 1, Summer 2007)







Joseph Barton Cabin before restoration. Corinne Roring told her family to come to Bluff for the weekend. She had purchased a cabin. "Bring your shovels!" she exclaimed.
Corinne Roring photos.

Corinne Roring and her grandson Craig spent nearly every birthday of his for the first 18 years of his life working on the fort. The Barton cabin was hidden in tamarisk, trash and mounds of blown sand. The roof was nearly collapsed from the weight of heavy sand. It was felt that the roof would cave in more than it already was if an adult got on it. Craig was light weight enough that he was designated to go on top of the cabin where he loaded sand and dirt, one bucket at a time and handed it to Corinne down below. So He learned how to work hard even at the young age of six. He carried bucket after bucket off the roof. Corinne said "Craig was so exhausted every day, that she would hurry and get him showered off, feed him and then many times had to carry him and put him in bed. When the roof was stabilized and new dirt placed on it, Craig got back up one more time to place local 'cliff flower seeds' on the roof to grow (shown on page 32).

Craig's father Mike said that when the Log Meetinghouse was being built, twelve year old Craig would sometimes stay up until four in the morning, cutting expanded metal sheets for use in adhering the exterior rock to it. His hands were cut and bleeding but he stuck with it as long as he could. Craig left his mark at the Fort also.

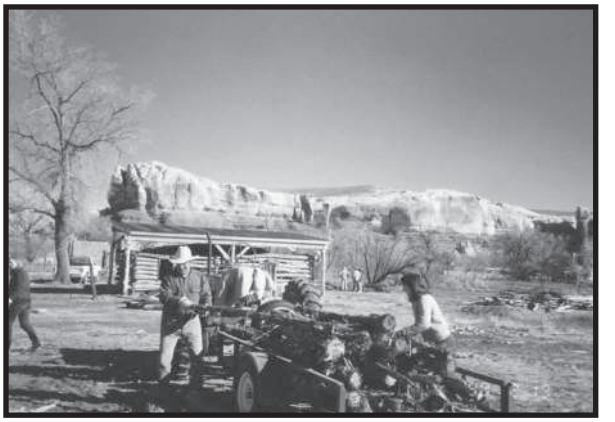
As the Fort development progressed Corinne wrote "It is fun to see the Fort buzzing with projects and people coming from all countries. What a joy it is seeing the effect it has on the visitors. The fort has a destiny! A purpose! Travelers are finding our corner and the word travels." Her only disappointment was, 'Now when all the fun starts, I got old."



The Bluff Fort rip gut fence in 2023. Ron Bateman photo.



Installing a rip-gut fence at the southwest corner of Bluff Fort. Leon Jones and Max Dalton were some of the fence builders. Max was in charge. Corinne Roring photos.





A rip-gut fence was envisioned early on by Corinne Roring . It was constructed in June 1998 on Bluff Fort's south and southwestern boundaries.

Many of the miracles that happened in the development of the fort occurred because of individuals and families who became intimately involved. Lamont Crabtree is one of those remarkable individuals. He created a document regarding the Barton Cabin.

The following 17 pages provide an excellent pictorial description with regard to the Barton cabin entitled *"The Barton Cabin Preservation and the Initial Development of the Bluff Fort Historic Site"* by Lamont Crabtree.

The Barton Cabin Preservation and The Initial Development of the Bluff Fort Historic Site

When visiting the Bluff Fort Historic Site, one walks on ground made sacred by the trials, conviction, and faith of those who made great sacrifices to reach this place and make it their home. Visitors from near and very distant lands have commented on the special feeling they have felt here. The difficulties encountered by the pioneers, as they blazed their path to Bluff, are unmatched in the annals of pioneering history as are many of the trials faced in making a home in such a barren land.



The Bluff Fort Historic Site, 2022. West-Looking View



North-Looking View

This summary was written by Lamont Crabtree. The information was derived from recorded interviews of Corinne Roring in 2013, Graig Taylor in 2019, and Gary Guymon in 2019, records in the San Juan County Recorder's Office in Monticello, Utah, and Lamont's journal. All photos are by Lamont Crabtree unless otherwise noted. Compiled May 2022 - Revised February 2024

The circumstances surrounding the preservation of the Barton cabin in Bluff, Utah, and what it has developed into is no doubt "providential" as Corinne Roring frequently put it. The coming together of key people at precisely the right time was more than happenstance or mere coincidence. This continues today with the volunteers who give of their time and talents to share the legacy of the San Juan pioneers.



Joseph Barton cabin prior to the preservation work, late 1980s

Key Participants in the Preservation of the Barton Cabin and the Initial Development of the Bluff Fort Historic Site



Gary Guymon July 1991



Lamont Crabtree, Graig Taylor, Corinne Roring

The Barton Cabin, Neglected and Left to Deteriorate - A Tragedy or a Blessings?

Considering the number of owners of the cabin during the first half of the 1900s, it is amazing that it was not torn down to make way for something new. As far as I have been able to determine, the cabin was left abandoned since the late 1940s. I recall that in the 1970s, the sod roof and walls of the south cabin rooms were still intact and in reasonably good condition. Those of us who knew of its historical significance were frustrated over the property's neglect. However, if the cabin property had been sold during this time, it likely would have been torn down and replaced by a home or business, and the opportunity to create the Bluff Fort Historic Site would have been lost.

Barton Cabin Ownership Record: *Owners who lived in the Barton cabin

1880 - Pioneers began building cabins on the Bluff Fort block.

*1884 - Pioneers moved onto designated town lots. Joseph Barton's lot was on the SW corner of the fort block.

*1902 - Joseph Barton was issued a (homesteading) grant deed for his lot. Block 2, Lot 2

*1919 - Morgan A. Barton (Joseph's son) acquired the property.

*1921 - Joseph F. Barton reacquired the property.

*1927 - Karl S. Barton (Joseph's oldest son) acquired the property. Joseph had died in 1926. 1927 - Julia Butt (Jens Nielson's daughter) acquired the property and immediately sold it.

*1927 - Adelbert (Del) Raplee

*1934 - Harriet Putman Raplee (Adelbert Raplee's wife) inherited the property at his passing.

*1936 - David Putman Miller (Harriet Raplee's son) inherited the property at his mother's passing.

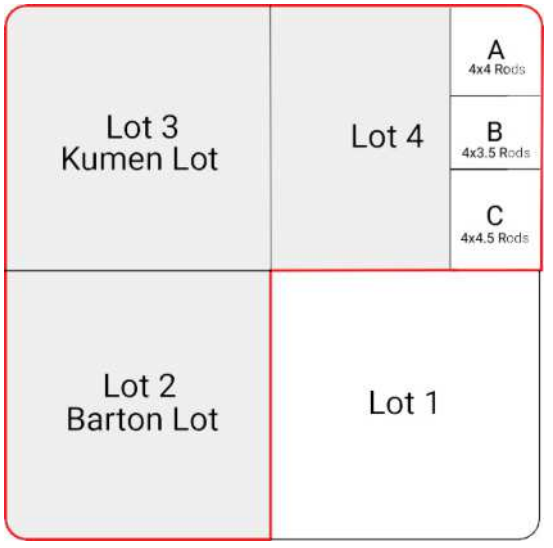
*1940 - Frances Lillie Miller (David's wife) inherited the property at her husband's passing.

1948 - Albert E. Watkins acquired the property. Albert owned/operated the Watkins Gas Station in Provo, Utah. In 1956 - The Carter Oil Co. purchased most of the block.

1963 - H. Von Watkins (son of Albert E. Watkins) purchased Lot 2, 3, and ¾ of Lot 4. 1989 - Ernest C. Watkins inherited property at the passing of his brother H. Von Watkins.

1990 - Ervin R. Guymon purchased Lots 2, 3, and 2/3 of Lot 4 as well as 220 acres in the Cottonwood Canyon north of Bluff from E.C. Watkins.

1990 - Gary and Sharon Guymon purchased lot 2 and 3 and 2/3 of Lot 4 from Gary's father Ervin.



1997 - Letty Jones Foundation acquired Lot 2 (Barton cabin & the southwest corner of the block).

2000 - Letty Jones Foundation acquired Lot 3 (Kumen Jones corner) & 2/3 of Lot 4.

2006 - The Hole in the Rock Foundation was incorporated. The property was transferred from the Letty Jones Foundation to the Hole in the Rock Foundation.

Guymon Property Purchase

Additional Property Acquisitions

A original site of the pioneers' co-op - now the site of the R.S. building

B state highway shed - now the shop and kitchen

C hogan building - now the craft center

Present Historic Site Boundary

1975 - The Barton Cabin Pulled at Heart Strings

In 1975 several unusual circumstances resulted in my parents and I (Lamont Crabtree) seeking lodging at Recapture Lodge in Bluff, Utah, where we connected with Gene Foushee, the lodge's proprietor. Gene answered many of our questions about Bluff. Since that night (47 plus years ago), I have been driven to search out and document the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail and all aspects of the pioneers' journey to Bluff.

My great-grandparents Sarah and James Riley were Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. Whenever my research brought me near Bluff, I spent time at the Barton cabin. It was all that was left of the original Bluff Fort. This was a very special place to me. This was a very special place to me. The cabin pulled at my heartstrings. I soon learned that I was not alone in these feelings and interests.



Room on the left (southeast room of the cabin) prior to the roof's collapse. Eugene Crabtree standing in the back doorway, late 1970's.



South west room after the roof collapsed, 1980s.



East breezeway entrance after the roof collapsed, May 1998.



North-looking view of the southeast room after the roof collapsed, 1980's.



Southwest room after the roof collapsed, 1980s



Northeast corner of the Barton cabin showing remnants of the kitchen addition. After purchasing the cabin, Gary Guymon cleared the tamarisk and sagebrush to minimize the fire hazard.

1990 - Gary Guymon - A Miracle Acquisition of the Barton Cabin

Blanding residents Gary and Sharon Guymon were very interested in making sure that the Barton cabin was preserved. At the encouragement of Sharon, Gary researched and found the owner, Harrison Von Watkins, who at that time was living in a rest home in Provo. Gary never had the opportunity to connect with Mr. Watkins.

In 1990 Gary attended a lecture on rock art at the Edge of the Cedars Museum in Blanding. During a break, a couple from St. George asked the presenter about the location of Bluff. The lecturer turned to Gary and asked him if he could answer the couple's questions. Gary then learned that he was talking with Ernest Watkins and his wife. Ernest had inherited the Barton cabin and Kumen Jones property from his brother Von. Gary gave them directions and said to them, "You don't want to sell it to just anybody. That's an important part of our history here in San Juan County." The couple then departed.

Gary was teaching at San Juan High School in Blanding at the time. Early the next morning, Gary needed to go to the high school. Being a Sunday, it was very unusual for Gary to go to the school, but he had some crucial tasks that had to be taken care of before Monday morning. As Gary approached the high school at sunrise, he noticed an RV on the corner south of the school with a couple who were looking at a map. It was the same couple he had met the day before. Gary once again asked them to not sell the property to just anyone because of its historical significance. Gary gave them more directions and connected them with his father, Ervin, who lived in Bluff. Ervin showed them their property.

Unbeknownst to Gary, when the Watkins put the property up for sale, both he and his father were bidding against each other. Upon learning this, Gary dropped out. Gary's father, Ervin purchased property and then sold it to Gary and Sharon.

1991 - Lamont Crabtree Connected with Gary Guymon

In 1991, I met Gary Guymon at a Hole-in-the-Rock commemoration event. I was thrilled to learn that he had recently acquired the Barton cabin and wanted to preserve it. That summer I took Darrell Best, a contractor friend, to Bluff to brainstorm with Gary concerning the possible restoration of the cabin.

1993 - Graig Taylor Connected with Lamont Crabtree

In learning of my trail documenting and interpretive projects, Graig Taylor, a descendant of Hole-in-the-Rock pioneer George Hobbs, offered to assist. Gary Guymon assisted us with many trail marking and interpretive projects, which provided many opportunities to visit the Barton cabin and discuss Gary's vision for its preservation.

Graig Taylor and Lamont Crabtree Connected with Corinne Roring

A few years later, Graig Taylor and I connected with Corinne Roring, a descendant of Jens Nielson. At the time Corinne Roring was involved in the San Juan County Historical Commission. This commission keeps and collects historic photographs and documents pertaining to San Juan County's history. Corinne was keenly interested in and supportive of our trail efforts and allowed us to scan all of the Bluff photographs in the commission's holdings.

Corinne was also the trustee of the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation. This foundation was created to utilize the assets of Letty Jones, a Monticello resident, who wanted her assets to be used for educational, local heritage, and wildlife projects at her passing. As trustee, Corinne oversaw a number of historic and educational projects

1997 - The Guymon's Transferred the Barton Cabin to the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation

For seven years Gary and Sharon continued to cover the bank loan payments to ensure that the Barton and Kumen Jones properties and historic dwellings were preserved. The Guymons hoped to renovate the Barton cabin and develop the historic site, but lack of funds hampered their dream. In November 1997 the Guymons sold the Barton cabin/Lot 2 to the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation. In doing so the Guymon's donated 1/3 of its value to the foundation.

In addition to funds from the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation, Corinne generously utilized her personal funds throughout the fort's development. (Editor's note: In buying the cabin, Corinne wrote two checks initially; one from the foundation and one from her personal account.)

Corinne had a keen interest in Bluff and its history. As a young girl, Corinne stood on the cliffs overlooking Bluff with her father as he expressed his wish that the old fort could be restored. Graig Taylor and I were the newcomers. Corinne's passion and dream for the site and Gary and Sharon Guymon's involvement in initially acquiring and preserving the cabin is what made it all possible.

(Editor's note. Corinne cleared and worked cleaning weeds long before the group came together for the week-long restoration as described on the next pages. Galen Headley helped Corinne haul debris and weeds during that early process.)



Corinne with her husband John at the west entrance of the Barton cabin, March 22, 1998, two weeks prior to the beginning of the renovation work.

1998 - The Barton Cabin Restoration / Preservation (After much pre-preparation by Corinne.)

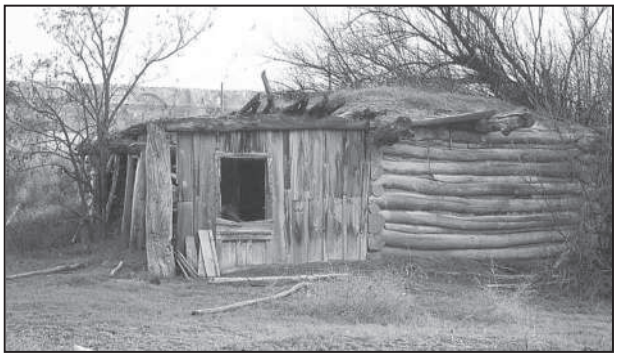
On Monday, April 6, 1998, Corinne Roring, Gary Guymon, Graig Taylor, Keith Munk, contractor Darrell Best, myself, and a few of our friends and family members went to work on the cabin. Seeing our activity, locals such as Gene Foushee came and helped throughout the week. We even had a local river guide show up. Before the end of the week, twenty-one people had helped with the project.



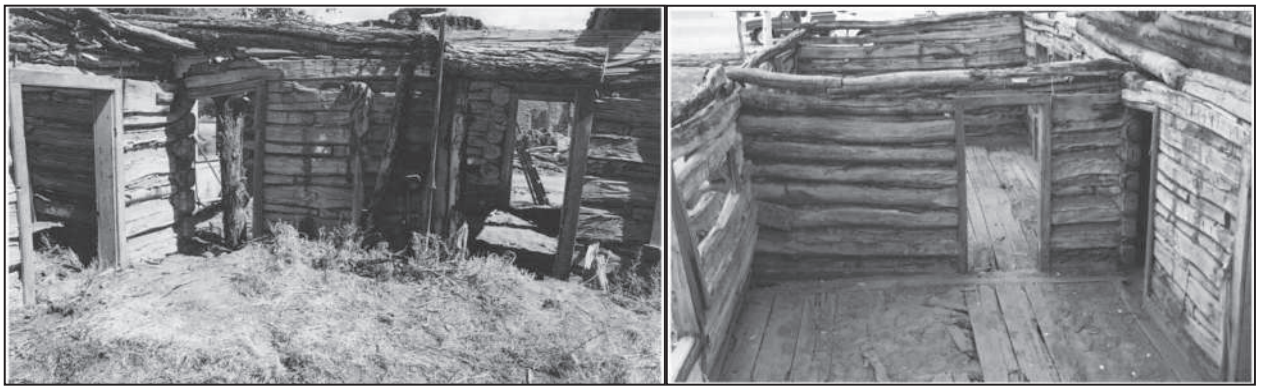
Corinne Roring Photo From left to right, Lamont Crabtree, Brad Best, Spencer Crabtree, Darrell Best, Patrick Haskins (red shirt)? Craig Roring.



What appeared to be a small cellar near the kitchen and adjacent to the northeast corner of the cabin's back room had collapsed, causing the northeast corner of the cabin to sink. To correct this, the corner of the cabin was lifted up and the cellar/depression was backfilled.



At the northeast corner of the cabin was a framed kitchen, which was a later improvement. Due to its condition, it was removed. The kitchen had a cement floor that we covered with dirt. We also found a pipe for indoor water.



After removing two plus feet of dirt/ debris from the collapsed sod roof and decades of blown sand, wood floors were revealed. Wood floors would have been a later improvement. The pioneers' originally had dirt floors. Keith Munk photos



The original sod roof on the northeast cabin room was still mainly intact, but due to its condition, it was completely removed.



New logs for the roof were harvested from Cottonwood Canyon north of Bluff. The new logs were covered with a layer of straw, a rubber membrane, tar-covered sheet metal, and dirt.

Construction of a New Roof over the Breezeway and North Room.

Gary Guymon, with the assistance of Graig Taylor, spent days harvesting new cottonwood logs/limbs from Cottonwood Canyon north of Bluff. These logs/limbs, ranging in diameter from two to three inches, were placed adjacent to each other, spanning the distance between a center beam and an outer wall.



After being anchored in place, the logs/limbs were covered with straw, a rubber membrane, and sheet metal that had been coated with tar. The sheet metal was then covered with two to three inches of soil. Hefting the soil onto the roof was accomplished with the hired help of Galen Headley (then the owner of the Cadillac Ranch RV Park in Bluff) and his backhoe.

Galen Headley's backhoe and skills also proved invaluable in raising the sunken corner of the back of the cabin and lifting the breezeway center beam while a supporting wall was stabilized.



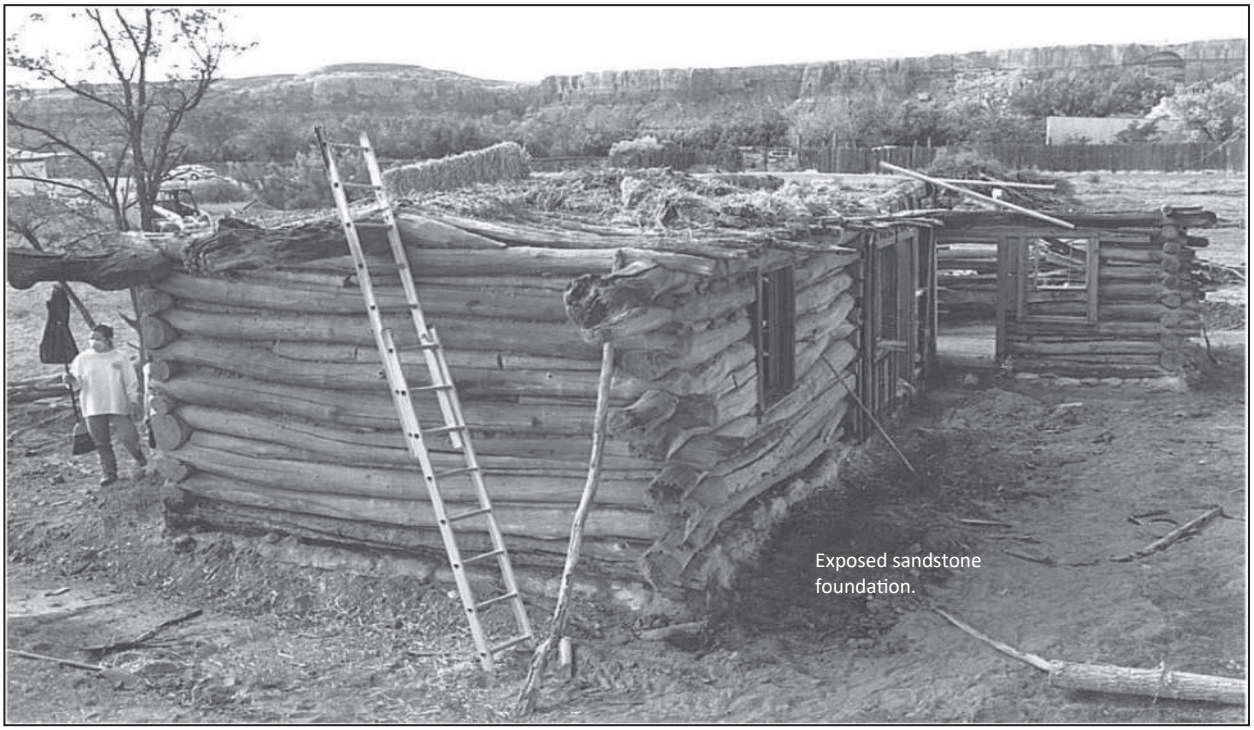
The remnants of the breezeway ceiling/roof prior to its renovation. Note the opening for a stove pipe to the left of the door.



The breezeway ceiling after renovation.

Keith Munk photos with the exception of Galen and his backhoe, which were provided by his daughter Pamela Yearous.

In six days, we removed the remaining sod roofs and the kitchen addition, cleared out two feet of debris and blown sand from the floors, shored up the walls, dug down to the cabin's stone foundation and backfilled it with gravel, and partially excavated and shored up the walls of the water well.



Graig Taylor's daughter Kristin (in photo left of cabin) and her friend Bengte Evenson spent their college break working on the cabin.

Several unexpected finds were unearthed during the project including the water well, wood floors, and foundations comprised of large sandstone rocks. To minimize future water damage to the bottom logs, dirt was removed from the sandstone foundation. The foundation was then backfilled with coarse gravel. Considering the number of log cabins the pioneers had to construct, hauling so many large stones and harvesting so many cottonwood logs would have been a monumental undertaking.



The remnants of the water well prior to its excavation.

The well was partially restored using its original stones. For safety reasons, the well was only excavated down about three feet. Pioneer journal entries indicate that they obtained good water at 16 feet.

Keith Munk photos.

Restoration and Historic Site Development Coincides with Bluff Founders' Day

The date of April 6th to begin the restoration project was chosen based on the beginning of school spring break to accommodate the school students who came with us. However, in looking back on it, what a fitting day to commence the work that would preserve and begin the Bluff Fort Historic Site. It was on or just prior to April 6, 1880, that most of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers arrived in the Bluff valley. Jens Nielson designated this date as the formal Bluff Founders' Day to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When we began the cabin renovation, I don't think any of us realized that we were commencing the project on Bluff's Founders' Day.



Craig Roring and Graig Taylor assisting Keith Munk in preparing a pancake breakfast for the volunteers. Keith Munk, a friend of Graig's from Logan, Utah, was famous for his scout camp, church events, and community breakfasts. A year earlier he served his pancake breakfast in Blanding in conjunction with the Salvation Knoll interpretive site dedication events.

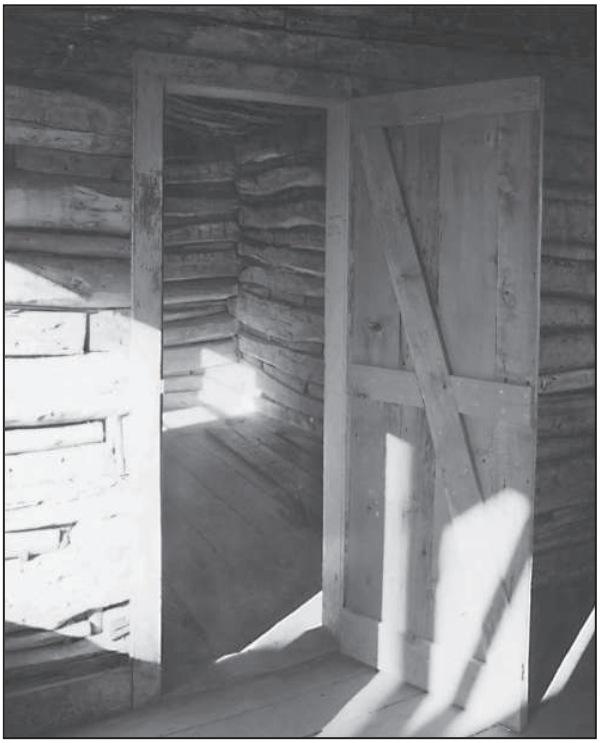


From left to right, Keith Munk, Graig Taylor, Spencer Crabtree, Lamont Crabtree, and Corinne Roring.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Blessing

The following experience was recorded in my (Lamont Crabtree's) journal.

"Near the end of the week, the thought kept coming to me that it would take Divine intervention to keep it [the Barton cabin] from being burned or damaged by vandals and that a prayer would be appropriate. Before departing Bluff for our home- towns at 7:00 a.m. [Sunday morning April 12th], we gathered everyone [who was still in town] in the restored cabin room, where we knelt and offered a prayer. I will never forget this experience. I do not know what the future holds for this site, but I will always be grateful for the experience of feeling what I did every time I visited it and for the opportunity of seeing firsthand the humble homes of the San Juan pioneers and the experience of working on the cabin with my son Spencer and good friends."



In one week, the cabin went through an amazing transformation considering the condition it was in before we started.





Why are the logs of the Barton cabin the color they are today? As seen in these images, the old cottonwood logs had a very light brownish-gray color. Years after the renovation of the cabin, a paint company donated a barrel of wood preservative. We were unaware, until it was applied, that the preservative contained a dark stain that was quickly absorbed by the dry logs. Thus, we ended up with a better preserved but darker-colored cabin.



First winter following the renovation work. Note the pioneer-style rip-gut fence in the background. This was one of Corinne's first additions, which was directed by Max Dalton. Years later after the fort site was further developed, Connie & Garda Nielson and family built the two & three rail pole fence that surrounds the balance of the fort property today.



1 Craig Roring, 2 ?, 3 ?, 4 ?, 5 Graig Taylor, 6 ?, 7 Gary Guymon, 8 Patrick Haskins, 9 Corinne Roring, 1O ?, 11?, 12 Darrel Best, 13 Lamont Crabtree, 14 Spencer Crabtree, 15 Brad Best. Missing from the photo: Bengte Evenson, Gene Foushee, Gene Headley, Keith Munk (who was taking the photo), a river runner, and Kristin Taylor. Numbers 3, 4, 10, & 11 were members of a family who spent their vacation helping, names unknown.

Corinne Roring - Weed Removal, Cleanup, and Ongoing Maintenance

Clearing tamarisks, sagebrush, and weeds from the property was a never-ending task for Corinne that began upon her acquiring the property. Corinne hired Galen Headley with his backhoe and men to clear the brush and tamarisk from the entire lot and haul them away. Galen hauled away many truckloads from the site. Corinne and other volunteers gathered the rest of the debris and weeds and burned them. This made the cabin more accessible for the crew that came in April.



Upon the departure of the volunteers in April, Corinne had the monumental task of removing large mounds of old sod, roof logs, and the removed kitchen walls, as well as large mounds of dirt and debris removed from cabin rooms and foundations. Corinne also had the ongoing task of removing weeds that continually flourished on the barren ground.





A few months following the renovation work, Corinne's grandson Craig Roring spent part of his 8th birthday collecting wildflower seeds and planting them on the Barton cabin roof. Gary Guymon assisted by hand, carrying dirt up a ladder in a bucket. Young Craig, who was from Orem, spent many weeks each year assisting his grandmother Corinne.

Corinne Roring Photos

Acquisition of the Kumen Jones Corner/Lot 3 and the Formation of the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation

In January 2000, three years after the Barton cabin purchase, Gary and Sharon Guyman sold the Kumen Jones corner/Lot 3 to the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation. Once again, the Guyman's donated one third of its value.

In 2006 The Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation was incorporated, and the property was transferred from the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation to the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation in 2007. Corinne Roring was the new foundation's president. Early board members included Mike Roring, Graig Taylor, LaMar Helquist, LaRue and Karl Barton, Cleal Bradford, and Lamont Crabtree.

The Log Meetinghouse

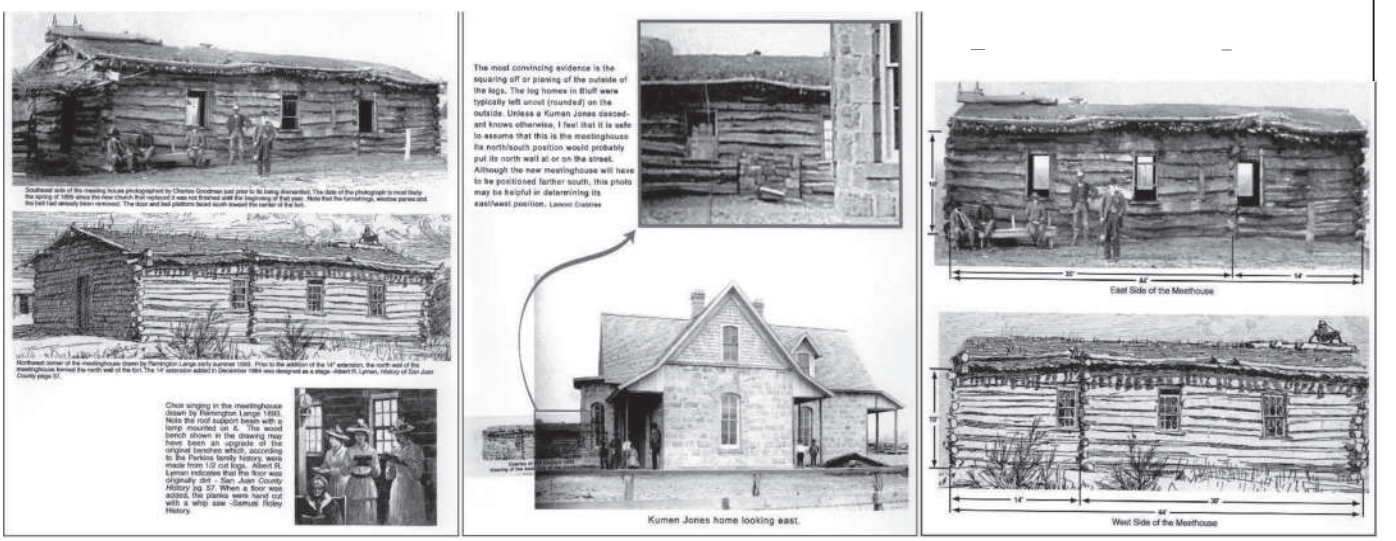
The reconstruction of the Log Meetinghouse was another significant "right person at just the right time" event. About one and a half years following the Barton cabin preservation, Graig Taylor, Hole -in-the-Rock Foundation treasurer, had secured enough funds for the reconstruction of the Log Meetinghouse. Using old photographs and histories, we were able to estimate its size and determine its features and position relative to the Kumen Jones home.

Wanting to make it as authentic as possible required cottonwood logs. Concerning this, Corinne Roring recorded, “This proved to be a bigger job than we had anticipated. Where could we find the cottonwood logs ...? Gary Guymon suggested using dead cotton-woods from the old irrigation ditch near Blanding, but heavy timber equipment and expertise were necessary to move them. David Kimmerle (a great-great-grandson of Bishop Jens Nielson) was prepared for the undertaking. He cut, sawed, and hauled the heavy logs to Bluff. The next challenge was building with crooked logs. A Canadian old-timer, who just happened to be visiting the area, knew cabin construction."



David Kimmerle.

The Canadian who came to the area and connected with Corinne Roring at just the right time was Ray Wrigget. Ray knew how to construct a large log structure and also knew pioneer construction techniques. Joe Hurst, the general contractor for the project, and his crew did an amazing job. Ray advised and assisted on all aspects of the construction. Not long after the completion of the meeting-house, Ray moved on. Years later Joe Hurst and his crew once again did a remarkable job in constructing a replica of the pioneers' stone co-op store.



The above document (created in 1999) summarizes how the meetinghouse dimensions, and its position were determined from old photographs, drawings, and historic references to the length of an extension that was added to the meetinghouse in the early 1890s.

Log Meetinghouse Replica Construction




David Kimmerle harvesting and shaping cottonwood logs for the meetinghouse. Finding enough cottonwoods was a major challenge..




Ray Wrigget and Joe Hurst's crew securing logs with dowels (wood stakes) as the pioneers did.



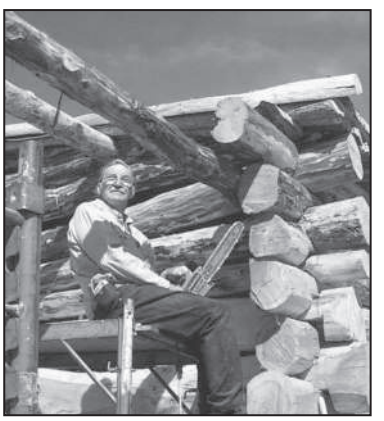
From left to right: Harrison Carter, Robert James, Ray Wrigget, and Eddie Kee.



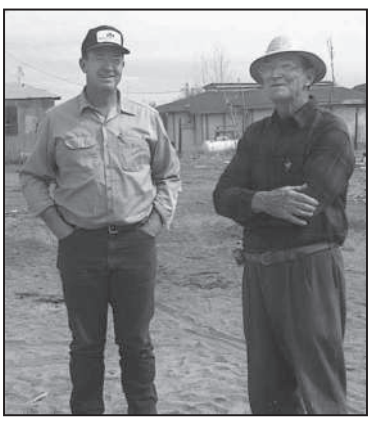
Ray Wrigget, Brian Hawkins, and Harrison Carter



Harrison Carter, Ray Wrigget, and Robert James



Ray working on the finishing touches.



Contractor Joe Hurst and Ray Wrigget.

Whenever a log does not span from corner to corner due to a window/door opening or because the log is not long enough, it must be secured to the log below it. In modern day cabin construction, this is accomplished with steel rods. Ray followed the pioneers' method of drilling a hole through adjoining logs and driving a dowel (wood stake) through the hole to secure the logs in place. (See top right images). This method can be seen throughout the Barton cabin rooms. This process of drilling and driving a stake was repeated about 200 times during the construction of the log meetinghouse. Corinne Roring Photos

Early Key Participants



Gary and Sharon Guymon
Without Gary and Sharon's desire and sacrifice to secure the property, the Barton cabin would likely no longer exist, and there would be no Bluff Fort Historic Site. Their foresight and sacrifice made it all possible. In looking at the documents transferring the property ownership, their desire to preserve the site is very evident. They contractually stipulated that the structures be rehabilitated and that nothing would be done on the property "that would be incompatible with the historic or architectural character of the site…." Gary worked on the cabin restoration and even harvested the logs for the new sod roof from his own property. I have never met anyone who could work as hard as Gary. It would take at least three men to match his work pace. Gary has also assisted with trail research, interpretive sign installations on the trail, and reenactment filming.



Corinne in front of the Barton cabin near the end of the renovation work, April 1998

Corinne Roring
From the day she obtained the Barton cabin and throughout the rest of her life, Corinne dedicated herself to the development of the Bluff Fort Historic Site. During its initial years, she staffed it by herself and at times recruited volunteers from Blanding and Monticello. She spent countless hours and made an untold number of trips between her home in Monticello and Bluff. She worked tirelessly promoting the fort and coordinating volunteers and contractors. She would remind all of how the circumstances of each project were providential and that "When the time is right, it will happen." The construction of the co-op replica/visitors' center was her crown jewel project, the culmination of her dream.
Thanks to Corinne's personal donations and funds from the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation, she was able to acquire additional property and make numerous improvements. Her personal touches in the fort, to name just a few, include improvements to the Kumen Jones ruin, the riprap fence, and the procurement of the state highway property and building/shed. She turned a portion of this building into the "Cowboy Cabin," which until 2022 provided on-site lodging for volunteers. It is now used as the fort's office. The rest of the building is now utilized as a workshop and a concession kitchen.
Some of her other touches include the flagstone paths, restoring the Relief Society building and acquiring the property that it sits on, the benches in the meetinghouse, and some of the furnishings in the co-op. As we enjoy the soft-serve ice cream available at the fort, we can thank Corinne, for that was a feature she insisted on. For many decades Corinne had the foresight to collect and save the stones from the original co-op. These stones now cover the exterior of the co-op replica/visitors' center.
Corinne's right-hand man was her son Mike Roring. He made countless trips from his home in Orem to Bluff to assist. Anytime there was a large project involving heavy equipment, Mike took care of it. Mike is currently serving as the foundation's vice president. Mike is the longest serving board member and continues to play a key role in the ongoing success of the foundation and historic site.



Craig, Corinne, & Mike Roring at the ground breaking for the stone monument.



Corinne at the sales counter in the Co-op, November 2013. Corinne Roring photos.

Graig Taylor

Graig Taylor had a great appreciation for the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. He helped with trail marking and interpretive signs on the trail and covered their cost.



Graig Taylor and LaMar Helquist.

The Bluff Fort Historic Site would not exist without the funds to purchase property and pay for future projects, some of which were very costly. Graig and his cousin Drew Major made generous personal contributions via the Esther Foundation. Graig, who at the time was partially blind, joked many times that he would take his tin cup and white cane and solicit donations. He obtained generous donations from the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, the James and Beverley Sorenson Foundation, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Foundation, among others, as well as many contributions from descendants. These donations made additional property procurements possible as well as the addition of the Log Meetinghouse, stone monument, John Taylor statue, the co-op store/visitors' center, etc.

Graig's eyesight challenge never stopped him from personally working on numerous projects, including many of the log cabins.

We were not far into the fort's development when Graig's good friend LaMar Helquist, great-grandson of Jens Nielson, joined the team and became a valuable contributor, working beside Graig on every project. He served for many years as the foundation's vice president and president in 2015.



LaMar Helquist touching up chinking.

Gene Foushee

1998 without being asked, Gene Foushee worked throughout the week on the cabin restoration. As we were finishing the work, Gene made a make-shift time capsule out of a quart glass jar, and in it he placed a paper with the names of those who had worked on the cabin. He then tucked the jar above the ceiling logs, just inside the door of the main/preserved cabin room.

Gene was a friend to anyone who had the pleasure of meeting him. He renovated several of the original stone pioneer homes in Bluff and is credited with revitalizing Bluff when it was nearly a ghost town. He also discovered a previously forgotten section of the pioneers' trail down the Twist.

In a letter Gene sent to the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation on October 11, 2006, he asked the board members to consider constructing a performance area that would be covered by a high roof, adjacent to the Kumen Jones ruin, He stated, "I would volunteer my time and work liberally on such a project." This illustrates Gene's interest and willingness to help.



Gene pointing out a feature on the Twist



The Foushee's treating the HIRF board members/volunteers to dinner on the Comb. Left to right: Mary Foushee, Corinne Roring, Grant Taylor, Cleal & Nancy Bradford, Graig Taylor, LaRue Barton, Karl Barton, and Gene Foushee. Missing is Lamont Crabtree, photographer.

Karl and LaRue Barton



LaRue and Karl Barton's involvement began at the time of the monument/site dedication in 2005. In 2007 Karl felt impressed to purchase Jen Nielson's home that was kitty-corner to the fort site. At about that same time, the Foundation acquired the hogan-shaped building (now the craft center). This building became the site's first visitors' center. Karl, descendant of Joseph Barton, and LaRue, descendant of Jens Nielson, took on the task of being at the site as much as possible. For years LaRue operated the visitors' center, greeting visitors and sharing stories.

LaRue and Karl both served on the foundation's board. LaRue's talents and support continue to this day. The sale of LaRue's handiwork and that of many other women has greatly offset operating expenses. The amount of time LaRue has spent volunteering at the Bluff Fort site and supporting its operations with her crafts is amazing. Karl and LaRue also made an in-kind donation of property in Monticello to the foundation.

Lamont Crabtree



Lamont Crabtree, Bishop Harold David Burton, and Graig Taylor

I, like so many others, recognize that what initially connected me with the pioneers' trail and the Barton cabin was not happenstance. I am grateful for the opportunity to be involved in historical research, the foundation's first web page, brochures/ maps, newsletters, videos, displays, and interpretive signage. Some of my children's service projects can still be seen at the fort and on the trail. I continue to work on interpretive projects for the fort and the trail.

Additional Volunteers

This document is far from a complete history. It is an overview of how the site got started. There are numerous others, such as Cleal Bradford who gave of his time and talents and was instrumental in additional property procurements. Ron McDonald helped with research and interpretive projects. Lynn Stevens' work resulted in a Federal Scenic Byways matching grant for the co-op/visitors' center. Grant (Graig's brother) and Nina Taylor have also been substantial contributors. Besides the intense manual labor of building new cabins and other projects such as the audio tours, Grant and his wife Nina prepared fabulous meals for the volunteers. Lynn, Grant, and Nina continue to be valuable contributors to the foundation and historic site. Lynn is currently serving as the foundation's president and Grant is serving on the board of directors. Skilled contractor Vance Sealy did the site's masonry and rock work. (Vance & Corinne spent many hours chinking the Log Meetinghouse and cabins. His masonry talents are seen throughout the fort.) There have also been numerous fort directors, missionaries, local volunteers, and board members. Without them the site could not function. Hopefully, each will record and share his/her own story and experiences pertaining to the fort.

Friendships

One of the great blessings of being involved in the Bluff Fort Historic Site and trail projects has been the opportunity to become acquainted with so many wonderful people who have a shared interest in the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers.

Volunteer Endeavor

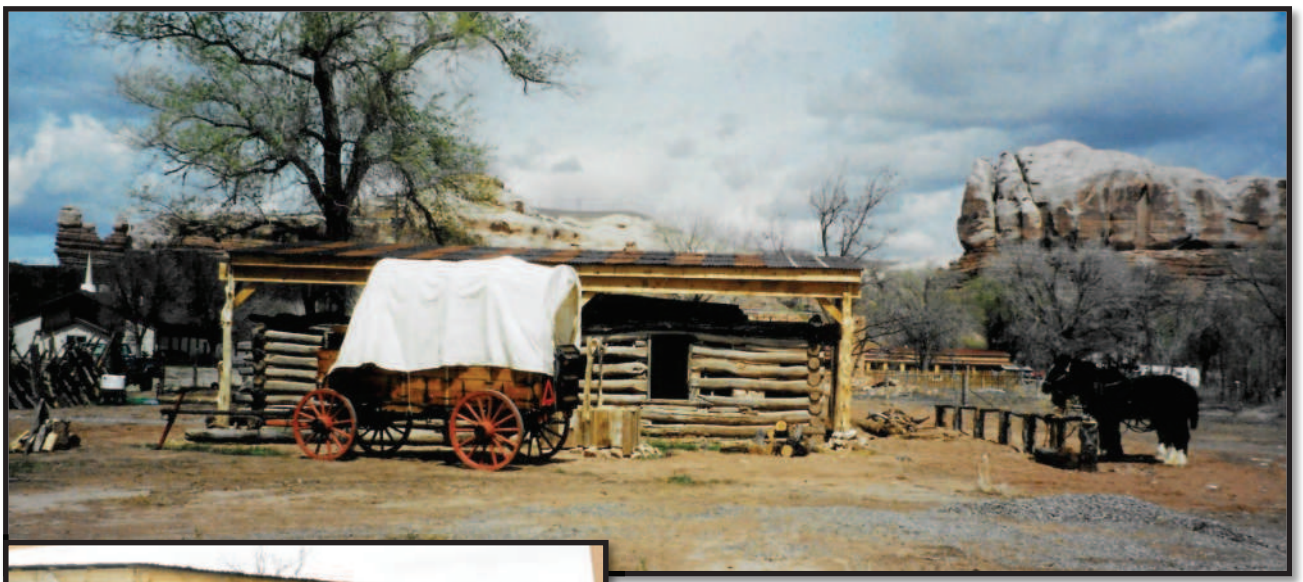
A key to the site's success has been the volunteer effort by the people involved. Other than contractors and accountants when they were needed, all, including board members, have volunteered their time and covered their own transportation and lodging expenses. Each one who has or will yet volunteer/serve at the Bluff Fort Historic Site makes a difference.

I cannot help but think the pioneers would be pleased that their faith, conviction, and hard work has not been forgotten. End of Lamont Crabtree document.



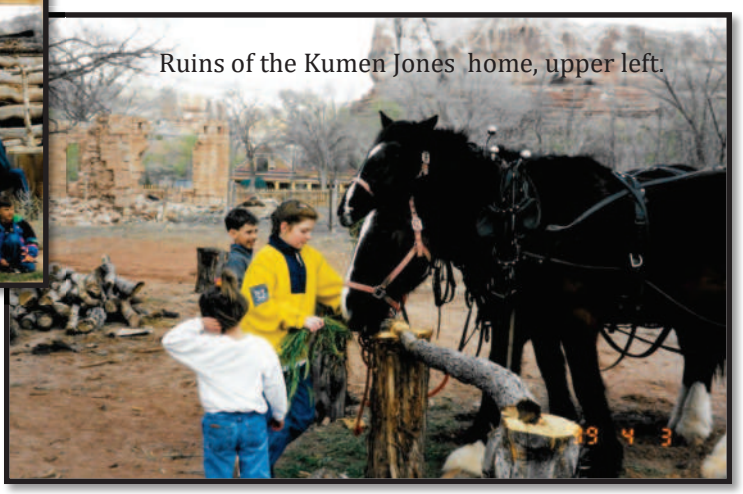


Top left, portrait of the Joseph & Harriet Barton family in 1896 shortly before Harriet died. It hangs on the cabin wall. Top right is cabin interior.





Celebrating the restoration of the Joseph Barton Cabin, complete with a team of horses (1999). Corinne Roring photos.



Ruins of the Kumen Jones home, upper left.



Additional photos of Bluff Fort Meetinghouse Construction, 2002.
Corinne Roring photo collection.







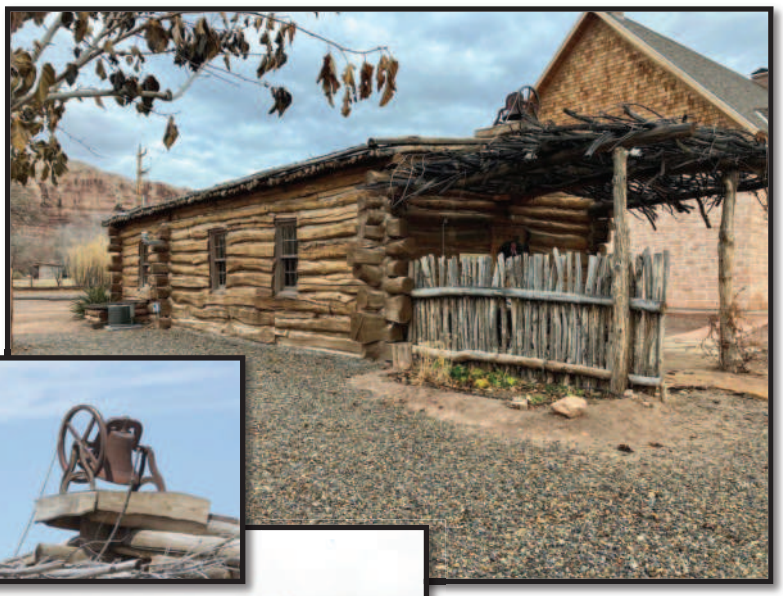
January 2003, Corinne Roring sweeping in front on Log Meetinghouse.

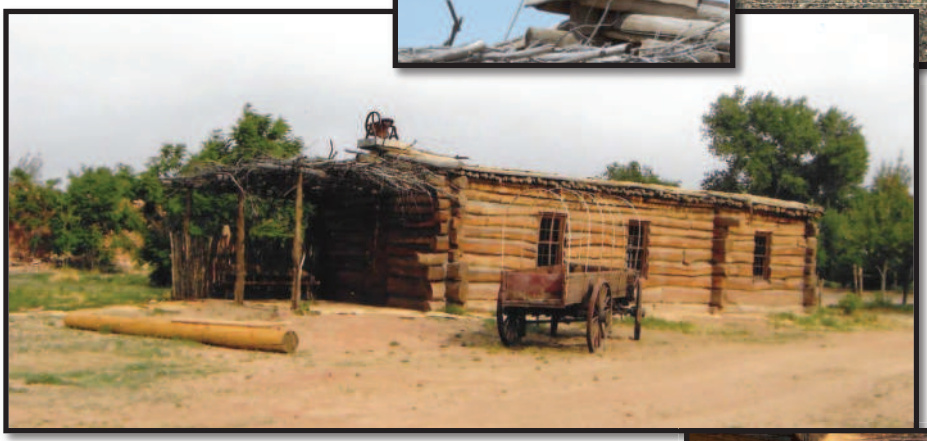


The Fort speaks- "On our way to Moab. Something attracted us to stop by. We had a great experience. Thank you!" From the Netherlands:

Local natives helping with log cabin construction.







Above: looking north on the west side of the Log Meetinghouse.

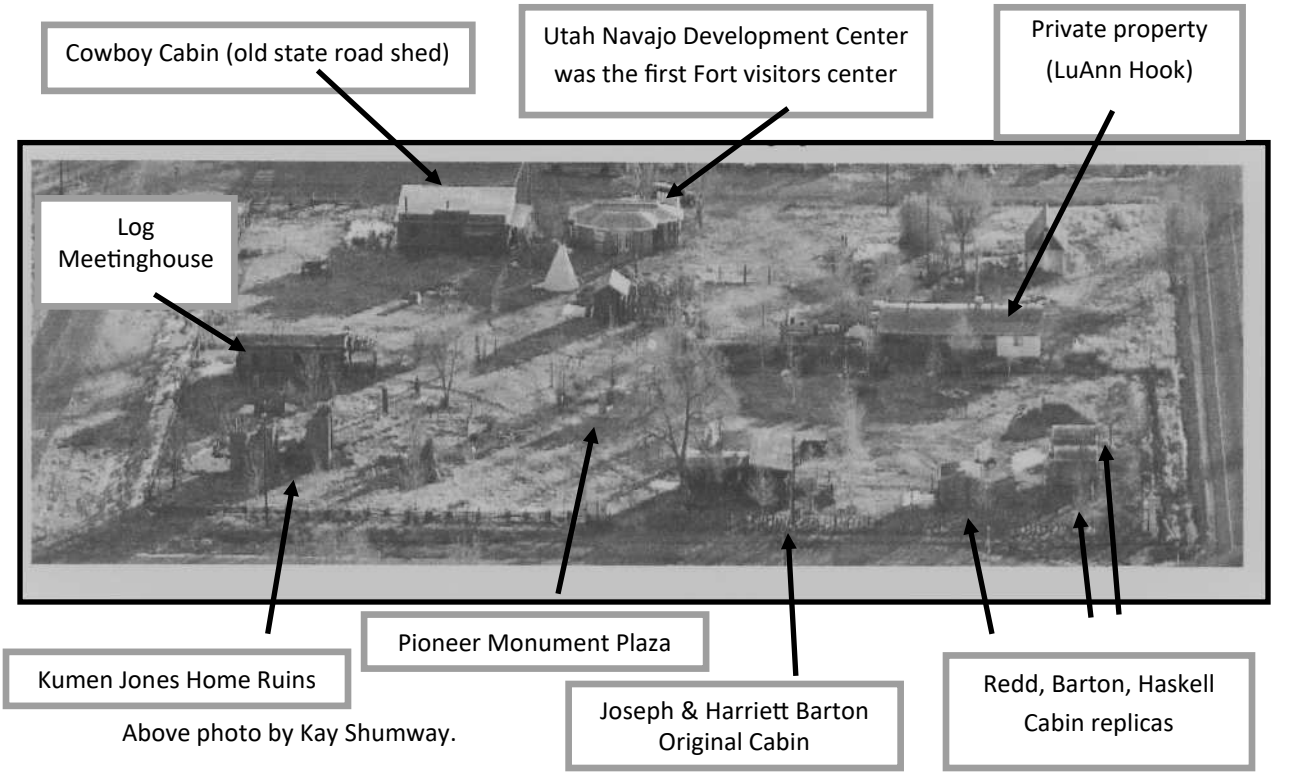
Log Meetinghouse 2009. Erlene Taylor photo
The Bluff era bell originated from John Roring's mother Ruth's home in Corinth, Mississippi. HIRF photo



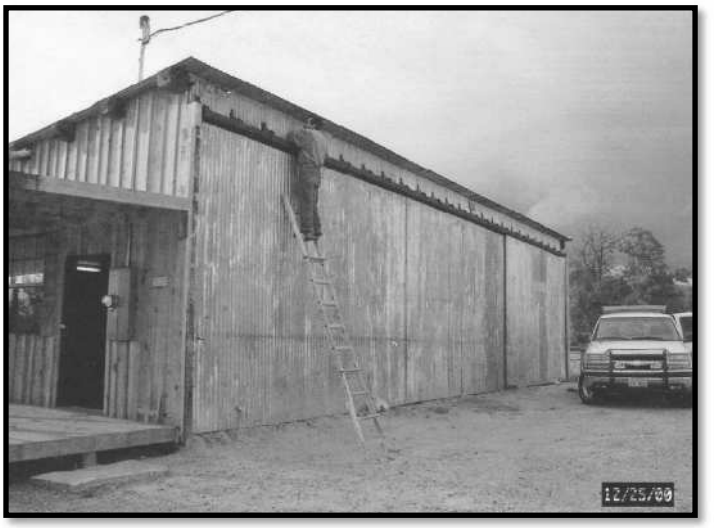


Interior shots of Log Meetinghouse, Christmas 2023. The rostrum houses a television monitor which is kept down in order maintain the 1880 appearance, unless needed to show the videos. Photos by Rich Murset, service missionary.

Early layout of Bluff Fort. The first visitors center was the UNDC building, a double Hogan.



Above photo by Kay Shumway.



Old State road shed purchased in 2003 by Corinne Roring. It was later covered with rough sawn boards similar in appearance to the old Bluff City Oil Exchange. Corinne Roring photos.



State road shed side view- John, Stacey (Roring) Jensen, & Nicole Roring in front. Soon after she purchased the building, Corinne was accidentally locked inside and was rescued by Karl and LaRue Barton who heard her pounding.

2003 State Road Shed

Grant continues: The Bluff state road shed, part of the Bluff Fort block, came up for sale in 2003. The building, a post and beam constructed metal building, included a belt driven machine shop and a forge as well as a large furnace. A large room took up the east side of the shop. This room was remodeled, and a small kitchen and bathroom were added on the south side, turning it into "The Cowboy Cabin." Corinne fitted the cabin with single beds, each with a sponge sleeping pad. This was used for a number of years as housing for volunteers that would come from "Up North," as Corinne coined the "Boys from Up North."



Corinne Roring photo of west side of shed.

The state road shed became the "Cowboy Cabin," and later the wood shop, laundry, paint shop, garden shop, receiving office and kitchen as seen below in 2023 with new sidewalk extension.

Corinne stocked the kitchen with food for breakfast and lunch, always supplying Half and Half for the breakfast cereal. She was remembered for her famous potato salad and vinegar cucumber & onions appetizer. She would take great care of her boys knowing that they were helping dreams to come true.

The shed now houses a wood shop, paint shop, a kitchen, and Fort laundry. The Cowboy Cabin was remodeled into an apartment for service missionaries by LaMar and Lyle Helquist when LaRue and Karl Barton purchased the Jens Nielson Home and began hosting Bluff Fort workers. The Cowboy Cabin was later fitted as the fort office and receiving. The shop remodel and expansion was funded by a grant from the George and Delores Dore' Eccles Foundation.



Brochure display & Sweet Shoppe. Ron Bateman photo.

The kitchen was remodeled again in 2019 & 2022. The kitchen cabinets were replaced with a more commercial construction, and a gas stove and convection oven were added. The design facilitates baking on one side of the kitchen and candy making on the other side. There is also a commercial sink and storage area, plus a new laundromat.

Five different parcels of land ultimately made up the Bluff Fort Historic Site. The southeast corner remained under the ownership of LuAnn Hook, Recapture Lodge. In 2007, the Utah Navajo Development Council building owned by the Navajo tribe, came up for sale.

The story went that they needed money to clear up some back taxes with the IRS. The price of $50,000 was agreed upon and the Ester Foundation came up with $25,000 and the rest came from the George and Delores Dore' Eccles Foundation.



Volunteers Garda & Connie Nielson eating on the Cowboy Cabin bunks. Their family built the pole fence around the property. Corinne Roring photo.

Early work projects included cleaning up the property, building a perimeter fence, removal of trash, and weed control. Corinne and her grandson, Craig cleaned up and planted trees around the Fort perimeter. They installed a drip irrigation system so that they didn't have to drag hoses to water the new trees. Craig would come to Monticello each summer and help his grandmother. He claimed that until about the age of 18 he had spent every birthday at Bluff. Craig was great with an old backhoe Corinne found for a deal. The hydraulics were difficult to control, but Craig seemed to have the knack.

Graig Taylor and Lamont Crabtree organized groups of friends to come to Bluff and help out. The Cowboy Cabin was a great hang out. There was a wobbly kitchen table with a few three-legged stools and a couple of scrounged wooden chairs. There were extra sleeping pads under the beds just in case there was a larger group. It got pretty noisy at night with a chorus of snoring men. Days were spent working hard trying to keep up with Graig. They were dead tired so sleep came soon. Graig would take 4 Advil at night, calling it his adult Vitamin A. He always slept like a baby.

2008 Visitor Center/Sewing



Visitors' Center in the UNDC Building. Erlene Taylor photo.

After the purchase of the UNDC building in 2008 LaRue Barton presented the idea to the board that the double-hogan become a visitors' center for the Fort. LaRue rolled up her sleeves and did much of the tear-out herself. The first visitor center opened July 1, 2008. We had a little over 2,000 visitors that first year. LaRue and Corinne donated benches from the South Blanding Ward remodel. We used Lamont Crabtree's video, "The Impossible Journey." The benches were set in front of a TV screen and we used a DVD player to show the video in English. LaRue worked Monday through Thursday and Corinne came for the weekend but would drive home every night. They closed the fort for the winter near the end of October the first year.

In March 2009, LaRue was diagnosed with lymphoma cancer. Two high school-aged sisters living with their parents on the Hook Property were hired to work at the Fort while, LaRue underwent treatment for cancer. Karl and LaRue Barton, Grant and Nina Taylor went to the Denver Gift Show to buy items for the gift shop. Back then, $100 was a great sales day. LaRue designed and made quilts, aprons, bonnets and lots of other sewable and wearable items. LaRue continued to come to Bluff and quilt weekly and sewed lots of items for sale in the Co-op from their new home in Blanding.

LaRue Barton Kirkham's informative account of the early years of the Fort follows:

I, LaRue Barton Kirkham came into the picture about 2005. I actually had a booth at the Bluff Pioneer Monument dedication, so I know how cold and cruddy it was. I had key chains and a little book that showed every cabin and a list of all the people, the monument and everything to sell but didn't sell any because no one stayed around. So anyway, I started being involved. I have a small business and was doing some things with T-shirts and embroidery and things like that. My daughter and I fixed those up to sell.



Things to see at Bluff Fort were fairly minimal in the beginning years.

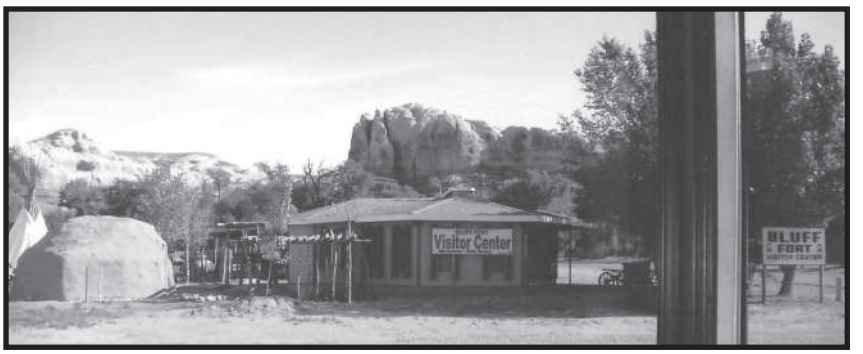
And then in 2007 my husband Karl Barton who's a great grandson of Joseph Franklin Barton purchased the Jens Nielsen home in Bluff. The first couple of years we stayed in Bluff on weekends and later on moved down full time. In February of 2008, we were sitting on the front porch and watched people wandering all through the Fort. Things to see were pretty minimal. There was the Barton cabin, the Log Meetinghouse and the monument. A lot of other kind of trashy buildings were there. The little house that's now the Relief Society building was on site but was in really bad shape. The Cowboy Cabin and the workshop were there. About that time, the Hole in the Rock Foundation was able to purchase the building that was later the craft center. They were going to use it for storage until they could build a co-op. We had plans to build the co-op but were raising money for that. It was a long ways off. The suggestion was made to turn the Utah Navajo Development Council building, which is the sewing center currently, into a visitors' center. So we spent a few weeks working on that. We hired Tri-Hurst construction to remodel it, to put a bathroom in it, repaint and do some work there.

We opened the first visitor center July 1st, 2008. We had the little church benches in there and the TV. Then we took a couple of shelves out of one of the shelving spaces and put a TV in there and would run a little video. We would visit with people and invite them to go out and look at the log meeting house and the cabin. The video was from Lamont Crabtree. It was about a 17 minute one. It was the first one we had.

Lamont worked with the board for a long time. He hadn't retired so he worked on his own as he could. The



By the end of June 2009, the James Redd, Haskell, Barton Blacksmith Shop, Lemuel Redd, Hobbs, Lyman and Perkins cabins were in place. Erlene Taylor photo



In 2009, looking north toward the Bluff Fort Visitors' Center.

board helped him buy camera equipment and recording equipment so he was able to go down to Hole in the Rock. The little video that shows little children sliding down the Hole in the Rock that's our first little movie that we showed. We would tell people where things around the area were for them to go see and things like that.

We were only open in the summer. We worked until close to the end of October, which was what a lot of the businesses in Bluff were doing. A lot of the motels and restaurants would close down in the winter and then open again in April. I would work on Monday through Thursday and then Corinne would come for the weekend. We lived in Monticello. We hadn't really moved down. I would travel and stay in our house and work at the Fort all day and come home for the weekend. Corinne would drive back and forth every night. She purchased the property where her house now stands a little before I purchased the Jens house so she would go to work over at the Fort and have a place where she could stay.

The original co-op was destroyed in July 1925 and had been purchased by the Hunt family, so it was no longer owned by the Bluff Co-op. It had been privatized when they bought it. A young man as far as we know must have come from World War One and was wandering through the area. He was hired to work there. His name was Alfred Earl Wright. His nickname was "Fred Starr." He decided to rob the safe. He set the dynamite in place but wanted to see it blown open. He used so much that it blew the building down on him. We always assumed that it blew him up but a lady that lived in Bluff at the time said she was about 10 years old when it happened. Of course it made a loud boom and the fire was going because of all the wood inside. It was really burning and she said they heard the screaming inside. People tried to get in to help get him out but he was under rocks in the fire and they were unable to get him out. She recorded in her oral history that they were little kids and they were told not to go and look but they did . . . It would have been a lot better off if he had been blown up.



2011 Bluff Fort was a happy place to be, as exhibited by some of the local docents: l-r Steve Bronson, Director, Neldon and Bobbie (kneeling) Holt, LaRue Barton, Ariella Thomas (kneeling), Ron and Lorraine Barton, LaMar Helquist and Graig Taylor HIRF Board members. Photo by Janet Keeler Wilcox.

I worked at the Fort the summer of 2008. In March of 2009 we were all at the Fort cleaning and getting ready to open up. I woke up one



Steve Bronson, Director 2010.

morning with a really bad pain in my back and side. A week later I found out I had a lymphoma tumor and ended up going back and forth to the Huntsman Cancer Center in Salt Lake. Corinne rounded up some friends in Monticello and there was a family living next door to the south of the Fort. They had two teenage girls come over and work for us. We tried to keep it open. It was really a bad situation. My siblings came down and worked also. I ended up getting a bad infection and had to stay a week in the hospital. All my family came down and ran the Fort for a week while I was gone. I would be in Salt Lake for one day for an infusion and then come back home. I could do a lot of things because I didn't ever get sick from the chemo like a lot of people would do, but from day 7 to 10 I had no immune system so I wasn't supposed to be around people. But we had tours from the Sons of the Utah Pioneers come and I would help feed them and ended up getting really sick.

Again we were open from April to October. The year of 2009 was pretty crazy. We started building the first cabins the fall of 2008. In October of 2008 we put in the first three cabins. In the spring of 2009 we put in three more. Every spring and fall we would do cabin building until all that are now there were built. They were finished in 2011. In 2009 we ran it as we could with anybody who would come. The next year I did it again, but I could tell it was getting a busier and they were trying to find more volunteers than people who would come. It was becoming a full time job which I didn't necessarily need.

In 2010, Steven Bronson from Blanding came and worked part time. He was hired by the board to work and be in charge. We were still running with volunteers. We had some good people that would come so many days a week or whenever they could. We're trying to keep up with it that way. Ron and Lorraine Barton, Dennis and Lorraine Harvey, and Bill and Marilyn Moen came and spent all summer doing electrical work. They camped with their trailer camps where Corinne's apartments are now. One summer I think we had four trailers parked there all hooked up to the same little septic system, trying to survive. Hiring Stephen Bronson to work turned out really well because in December of 2010 I found out I had cancer again. It had come back. Only this time it was in my brain. That resulted in me being in Salt Lake a week at a time and then home for a week. So, it was a good thing he was there to work. I would go help him all I could. Luckily, I survived really well.



LaRue quilting in the Craft Room.

Starting in 2011 I was in charge again. They were getting to the point that they had the plans for the new building and so they tried to get missionaries. We had one missionary couple come for September and October of 2011. (Editor's note: LaRue lost her husband Karl unexpectedly December 4,



LaRue Barton Kirkham machine quilted this colorful quilt.



LaRue and Karl Barton.

2011. She married Hugh Kirkham, November 28, 2015)

When we started the next year of 2013, they were ready to open the big co-op building and we had full-time missionaries. One couple was Dennis and Lorraine Harvey. They came from Arizona two summers and lived all summer from April through the whole season living in their trailer and working everyday. There was Dennis, Lorraine and me— just the three of us and we would work every day. One would work in the morning and the other in the afternoon. In those days one person in the visitor center could handle it. We didn't have a ton of people and we didn't have much to sell. We finally bought a lot of T-shirts, books, candy sticks and things like that. We (Karl and I with Grant and Nina Taylor) went to a trade show in Denver in 2010.

The HIRF board incorporated in 2006. They were volunteers helping each other and everybody worked hard. Graig Taylor was from Orem. Lamont Crabtree from Salt Lake was on the board. Corinne Roring, Mike Roring and my brother LaMar Helquist from Orem were on the board. They decided in order to form a group to be able to go after funds they had to be a nonprofit organization so they incorporated as a 501(c)3. Carl McKay in Provo was our accountant for those first few years and he would come down every once in a while and help do things. I think they paid him a little bit to do his work. Because of the incorporation we had funds from Larry H. Miller foundation. The Sorenson foundation has been our biggest contributor. We've had donations from the Eccles which are all big names in Salt Lake as they have money they give out each year. There's a donation group from the Church also. It's not directly associated with the church and will donate to the humanitarian things. They donated money one year. We were able to drill the well at Camp Stickie with that money and purchase the property.

I got involved with the Fort about 2007 when Karl and I bought the Jens Nielsen house. The board kept contacting Elder Steven Snow who was the head of the missionary department, asking “Can we get missionaries down here?” They finally let us have six couples the first year. What a blessing! Holy cow! You don't just go and put your papers in and get called to the Bluff Fort Mission. You have to come in through the back door so you're put in the right spot. That's been such a blessing to this place. There's no way we could come up with enough volunteers one day a week here and one day a week there to do what the missionaries are doing down there, but it was through Elder Snow.

When they sent the first group of missionaries, the new Co-op building wasn't quite

finished. We were still over in the craft center. For a while they had to use the Log Meetinghouse to greet visitors. That's when they were filming the movie because they used the big room in the craft center for all the costumes for the movie actors. They had shoes strung out all over the place and costumes everywhere. When they made the movie, we fed them. The Co-op was finished enough that we could feed them upstairs. The suppers were catered, but we fixed lunches and breakfast. The "If These Walls Could Talk" movie that you see now was done then. Alan Peterson filmed the movie mostly here in the Bluff area. They went to Escalante to film some scenes but they weren't allowed to use wagons over there. The part you see with the wagons and the little girl finding the ring were filmed in Bluff. The part where the little girl finds the ring at the end was filmed right in the cove behind Twin Rocks.



Hugh and LaRue Kirkham.

We started the missionaries making crafts as soon as they got here, as soon as we could move into the new building leaving us the craft center to use. We had started trying to make quilts. We were quilting them over at the Log Meetinghouse on the stand. We put up a quilt there and would work on it when we could, just as volunteers; those that were there. When we knew we were moving out of the space, they talked once about making it the Native American center. I suggested however how about we turn it into the craft center so that we can make the things we sell? We got the idea to put in all the dress-ups. My first idea for the package of dress-ups, was a few minimal things out there in the little wagon that is pulled by the horse by the grapevines. Then when they said we could use the space in the craft center the way was opened to do the dress-ups in there. It all fell into place really well.

We had sewn a few of the dress-ups. A lot of them are donated from people who have been on trek or people that have been to Nauvoo and have come back and donated things to us. They made quite a few in the last few years, dresses, aprons, and bonnets. People come in all the time and want to buy them. You could never keep up making enough to sell. There's no way. We do sell bonnets.

It seems like every missionary that comes has an idea and that's another thing added to the mix. We had a couple come to the Bluff Fort from Nauvoo because they didn't want to be in the programs. The husband made those little animals that twirl around. He also made a couple of those big rocking horses like the old-fashioned ones.

The first year we had missionaries, Gary Spears did all the work on the building. We got the Co-op finished. The whole inside was one big room. It didn't have any divided rooms in it at all. It had the office where the safe was. Jack Powers, a man from Farmington, Utah built all the cabinetry and shelving because we wanted it to look like an old-fashioned trading post. Gary Spears of Alpine, Utah did all the walls. He wouldn't let anybody help him do anything. He hung all the burlap by himself. Everything in there was done by him. Gary's wife Starla was the cookie maker. Because we had started feeding groups of people who came when they were building their cabins and since we had the kitchen they started making all these cookies.

The family of Nina Taylor, the wife of Grant Taylor who is on the board of directors owns Jacob Lake which is the hotel and store by the Grand Canyon. She shared some of their cookie recipes with us. The recipes have been tweaked over the years . Anyway, we started making cookies. Gary Spears wife baked all the cookies by herself the first year. We only had one cook. Everybody traded off with other things. The next year I think there were two people in the kitchen. Now there are several that are assigned to the kitchen during the year.

The directors questioned the new volunteers with questions such as “What do you like to do?” They're trying to have the missionary do things they like doing, like blacksmithing, They've had people who have some expertise in an area come during celebrations. We had a man from Blanding that was doing blacksmithing. They called him “Big John.” He would come and demonstrate a little bit. He did it during the time we had the dedication of the building but nothing on a regular basis. We had one man, Jack Powers Jr who was also a tinsmith. Some of the things in some of the cabins were handmade by him and his son. He was going to do blacksmithing at the Fort but he ended up having to go home because of heart trouble. We never had anybody come on a regular basis. They were getting everything done so the blacksmithing forge could be operated by gas. The thing with gas is you can turn it on and off. You don't have to haul the wood in. You can't do it that way here and be authentic to 1880.



In 2023 LaRue continued to be involved in the Fort activities by giving devotionals, machine quilting, participating in youth conferences and being readily available to missionaries. Ron Bateman photo.

Every time families would build the cabins, the people would come for three days. We would feed them breakfast, lunch and dinner for three days. Then they would have dedication services for the buildings. Most of them brought little kids. They would build the cabins when the kids were out of school. They would even go in the log meeting house with the kids like the pioneer school. They would do fun activities with the kids.

The families have done amazing things. I wish I could tell you more about those. I was always in the kitchen helping with the food. Even when they did the Jens Nielson cabin, I didn't do one thing on it except feed the people that were working. There were great experiences for those people who would come and spend those three days. They had great comradery and they felt the spirit as they put up those cabins and decorated them

As far as the vision for the future, I don't necessarily want to see more things because I think we need to manage well what we have. The bowery is a place where families can come. My vision was to have family reunions come with more families come together in groups. Especially descendants. To use the upstairs while they were trying to have visitors downstairs was nearly impossible. In fact the floors upstairs were plank flooring. When you swept the floor, dirt and dust dropped on the merchandise down below. If someone spilled it would go down below. The first thing Corinne and I did to try to fix the problem was to install the round weather stripping that's in little tubes. We crawled on our hands and knees on every board in the floor and with a screwdriver, we shoved the insulation in every crack. Some of the cracks were wide and some were very narrow. We filled every crack on that floor. We got it all finished and it still didn't work well. So they laid the second floor over the top. The floor

you see now is a nice, good, interlocking top and done well. You would not believe how many days we spent on it. Just old people like us. We were on our bellies and on our bottoms and we would go down every board. It was a painstaking project trying to fix that because the sound was so bad. That's why they put the burlap on the walls in those rooms for sound. They had to do a lot of things as they went along because there was no instruction book on how to make any of it work.

We've had some wonderful donations. The organ was donated by the Redd family. In fact if I went through and took all of the stuff that belongs to me, we'd have some pretty bare spaces. We just all did everything we could to get it going and keep it going.

My vision would be to just take care of what we have and have activities. I know they do the school activities and have all the 4th graders from the county come during the last weeks of April and into May. They show them butter making and washboards, blacksmithing, playing marbles, playing jacks, etc.

In April we do a Founders Day and they do some of those demonstrations during that activity. That would be fun to me. As long as someone else did it! I will sit there and push the treadle sewing machine! That's what I would do! There's no way to stay overnight at the Fort. We've had so many people wanting to rent the cabins. That would be impossible. I'd like to see more families come. With the bowery now, I think that makes it more possible. Reunion people have used our kitchen in the past when we were first getting started and we weren't baking cookies all day long. But when it's open to the public you can't do that anymore because we have a separate space. I hope it keeps going until I die.

Working at Bluff has been an amazing experience from the start. I'm so grateful for all the missionaries and volunteers who have worked here. I still love this place!



LaMar Helquist served on the board of directors of Hole in the Rock Foundation for several years. He served as board president in 2015. He is LaRue's brother.



LaRue Helquist Barton Kirkham giving a devotional at the Fort.

Nearly 500, including LDS Presiding Bishop, attend Bluff Fort dedication

"Nearly 500 people, many descendants of the original Hole in the Rock pioneers, gathered in Bluff on April 9 with H. David Burton, the presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to dedicate the recently rebuilt Bluff Fort.

"April 6, 2005 was the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Hole in the Rock pioneers in Bluff. The dedication is the culmination of several years of hard work by a number of area residents, led by Corrine Roring. In addition to Roring, Lamont Crabtree, LaMar Helquist, Graig Taylor, and Gary and Sharon Guymon contributed to the reconstruction of the Fort.

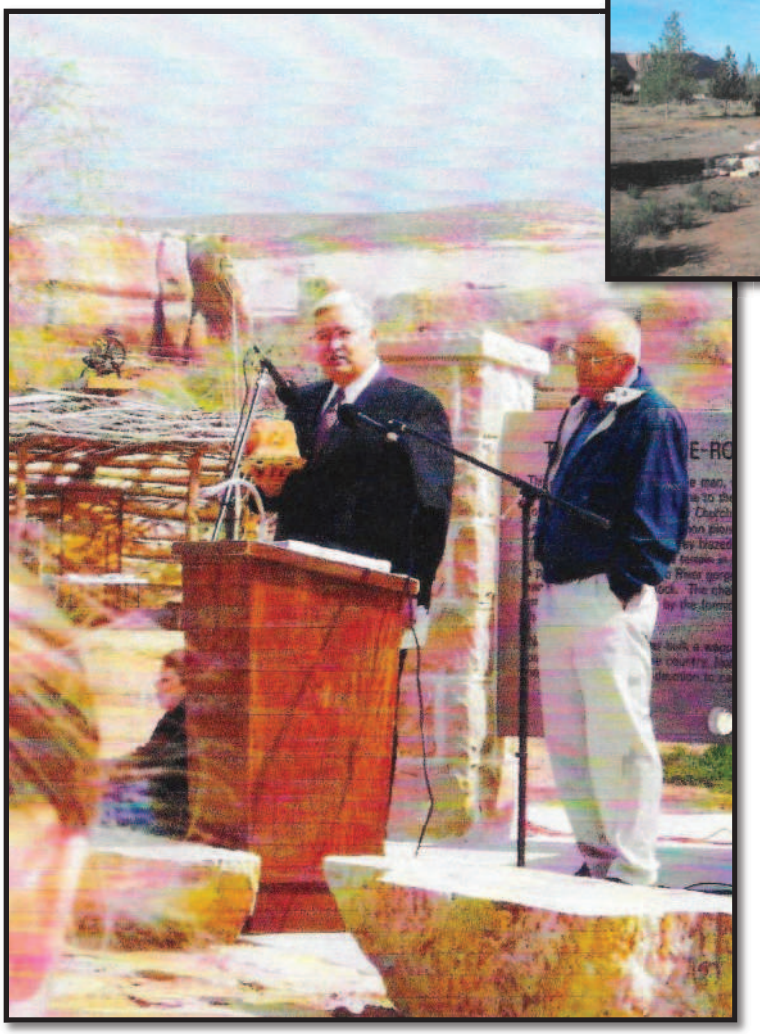
"It was a typical April day in Bluff, with strong gusts and cold winds, however the group of hundreds seemed to enjoy the day's activities.

"In addition to a speech and dedicatory prayer by Bishop Burton, others who spoke at the event include Lamont Crabtree, Corinne Roring, Graig Taylor, John Bickenstaff, LaMar Helquist, along with a traditional Navajo blessing by Curtis Yanito and music by Stan Bronson, Shauna Lloyd and Ruth Kimmerle.

"In addition to the dedication, Bishop Burton enjoyed a bouncy trip to San Juan Hill." (*San Juan Record*, Volume 90 #28, April 13, 2005)



The monument under construction with the Barton Cabin in the background.



Bluff Fort Pioneer Monument Dedication took place April 9, 2005.

Bishop H. David Burton dedicating the Hole in the Rock Monument & Plaza. Corinne Roring photos.





Under construction. UNDC & RS bldg. behind.



In 2005, Bishop H. David Burton came to Bluff Fort to dedicate the Hole in the Rock Pioneer Monument and Plaza. It was a cold, blustery April day and a crowd gathered for the dedication, then quickly left.



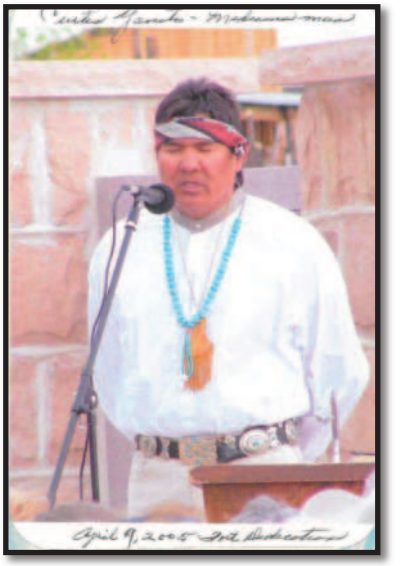
Corinne Roring speaking. Corinne Roring photos

Local singer Stan Bronson sang at the dedication.





Completed Monument to the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. Lamont Crabtree photo.



Navajo Medicine Man Curtis Yanito pronounced a blessing on the Fort.

A Little Bit of Bluff by Terri Winder

"We have a sandpile over there," Corinne Roring, Hole in the Rock Foundation president told the crowd gathered for the newly restored Bluff Fort dedication, April 9th, 2005. "Before you leave, go, and put a little bit of Bluff sand in your pocket."

Then, somewhere, someone evidently seemed to doubt that the hundreds of people attending the dedication would take Roring up on her suggestion, and the wind began to blow, carrying sand with it. No one had to even get near the sandpile, the sand came to them. It blew into hair, eyes and mouths. It sifted through clothes and settled into wrinkles. It had that renowned Jens Nielson stickedy-tuity-ness about it, as it would not easily brush off. By the time the program was over, the participants had a literal taste of what the Bluff pioneers must have experienced, day in and day out.

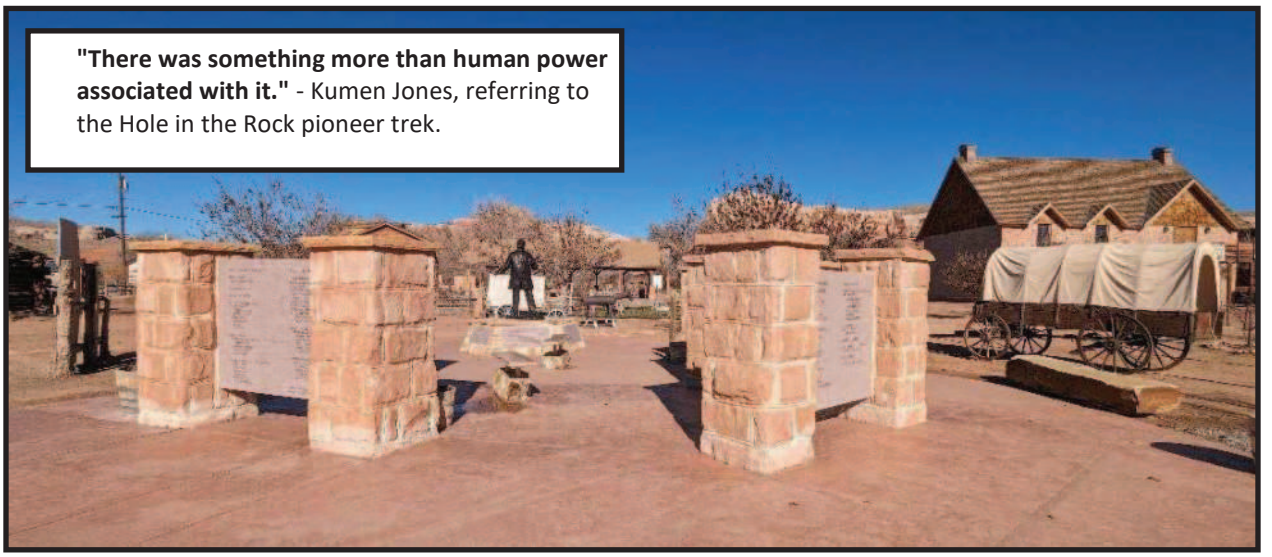
Bluff was not the end of the trail - nor the end of the trial - for the settlers who came through the Hole in the Rock 125 years ago. Building the fort only marked a new chapter in a book filled with hardship and heartache. Bluff's first bishop, Jens Nielson, and his wife, Elsie had been members of the Martin and Willie handcart company. Everyone in this congregation of 240 Saints had given up most of their earthly possessions in order to answer a prophet's call to establish the first community in San Juan County.

Perhaps, this is where the term "true grit" comes from: a reference to those who can survive the grittiness of the weather, as well as the grittiness of unrefined living conditions. Yet, even as sandpaper creates a smooth and refined finish, the Hole in the Rock Bluff pioneers became, by right, some of the most venerated pioneers in Utah history.

Roring, a great-granddaughter of Jens Nielsen, displayed true grit as she undertook the task of preserving Bluff's early history, urging others to do the same. The spirit that prevailed at the dedication was not swept away by the strong wind. Rather, it was reinforced as participants heard and felt the stories of the isolated bluff pioneers, and how they were exposed to raw elements, enduring the constant threat of hunger, disease, and potential misunderstandings with neighboring Indian tribes.

H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, shared his thoughts and gave the dedicatory prayer. One may have wondered why the powers of heaven did not temper the weather for such a highly anticipated and important event. Then an ice storm descended at the close of the dedication, indicating that up to that point, there had indeed been divine intervention.

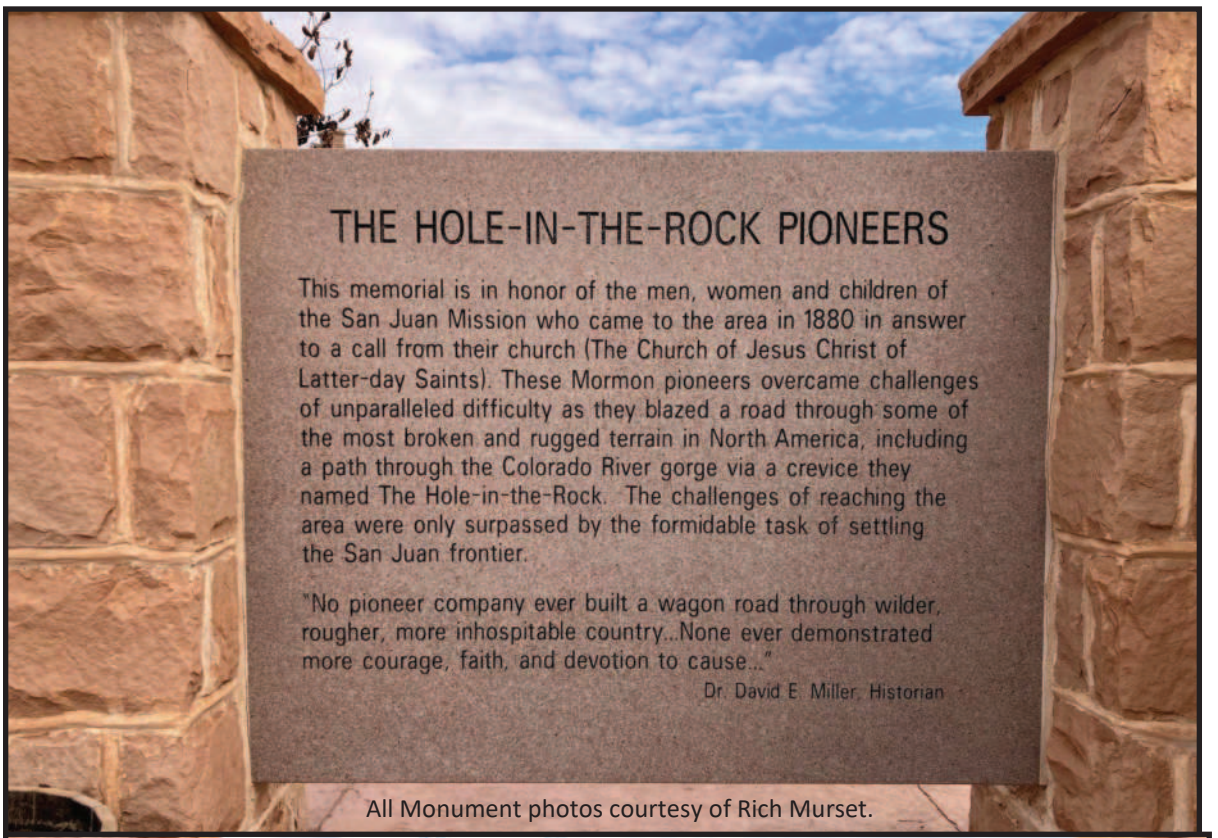
Participants may never recall the dedicatory service without remembering how miserable the sand-filled wind was, or the cold so uncharacteristic of Bluff in April. Even with shielding blankets, small children in the audience cried in discomfort. Were the children of yesteryear more resilient, or did their mothers' exhausted tears mingle with those of their suffering little ones? Amid such conditions, it was easy to imagine the hardships the first settlers of San Juan experienced, engendering a feeling of gratitude for those who came before, for their faith and perseverance against such odds. (*San Juan Record*, April 13, 2005, Volume 90 , #28, page 3)



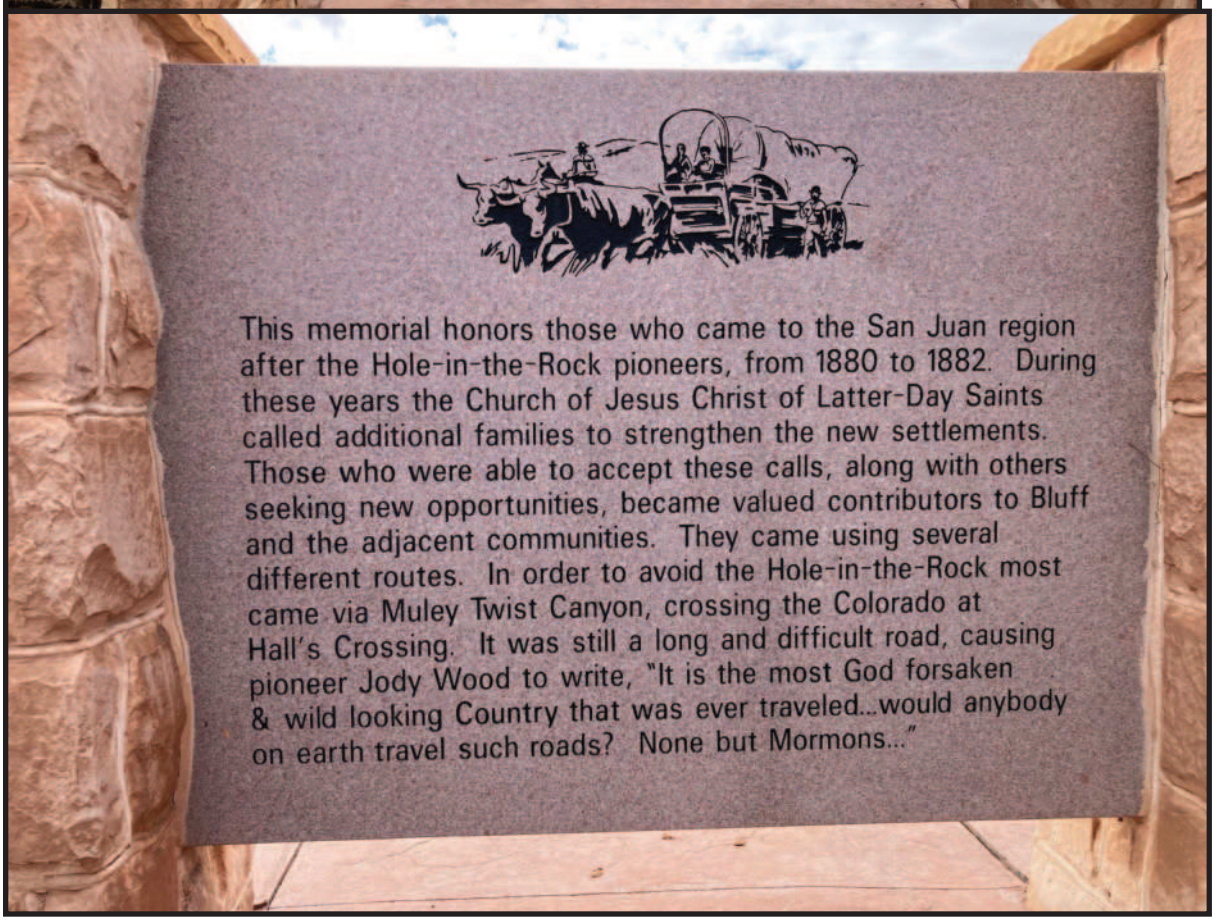
Bluff Fort Pioneer Monument Plaza & John Taylor Monument (added in 2009) looking north.

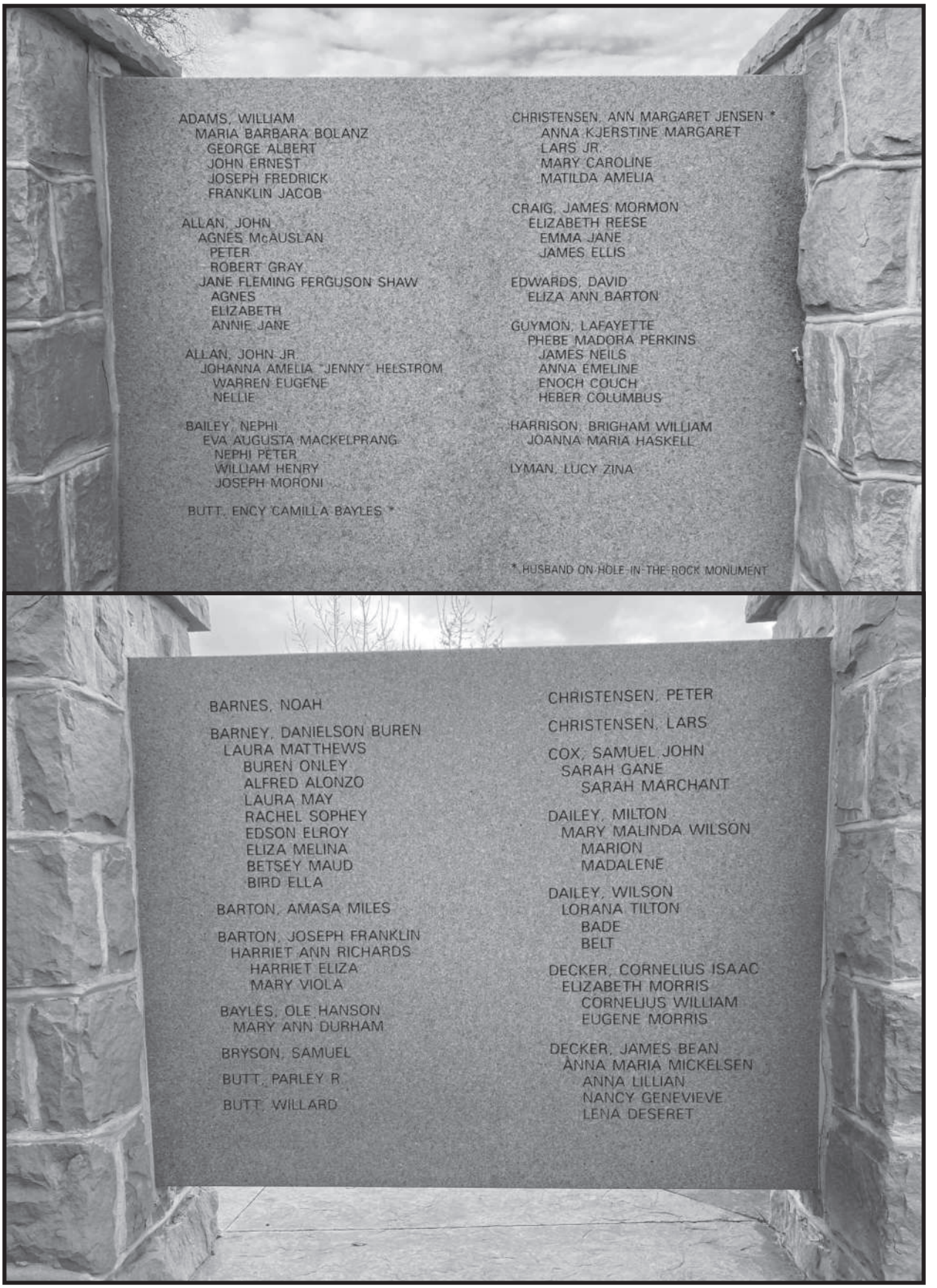


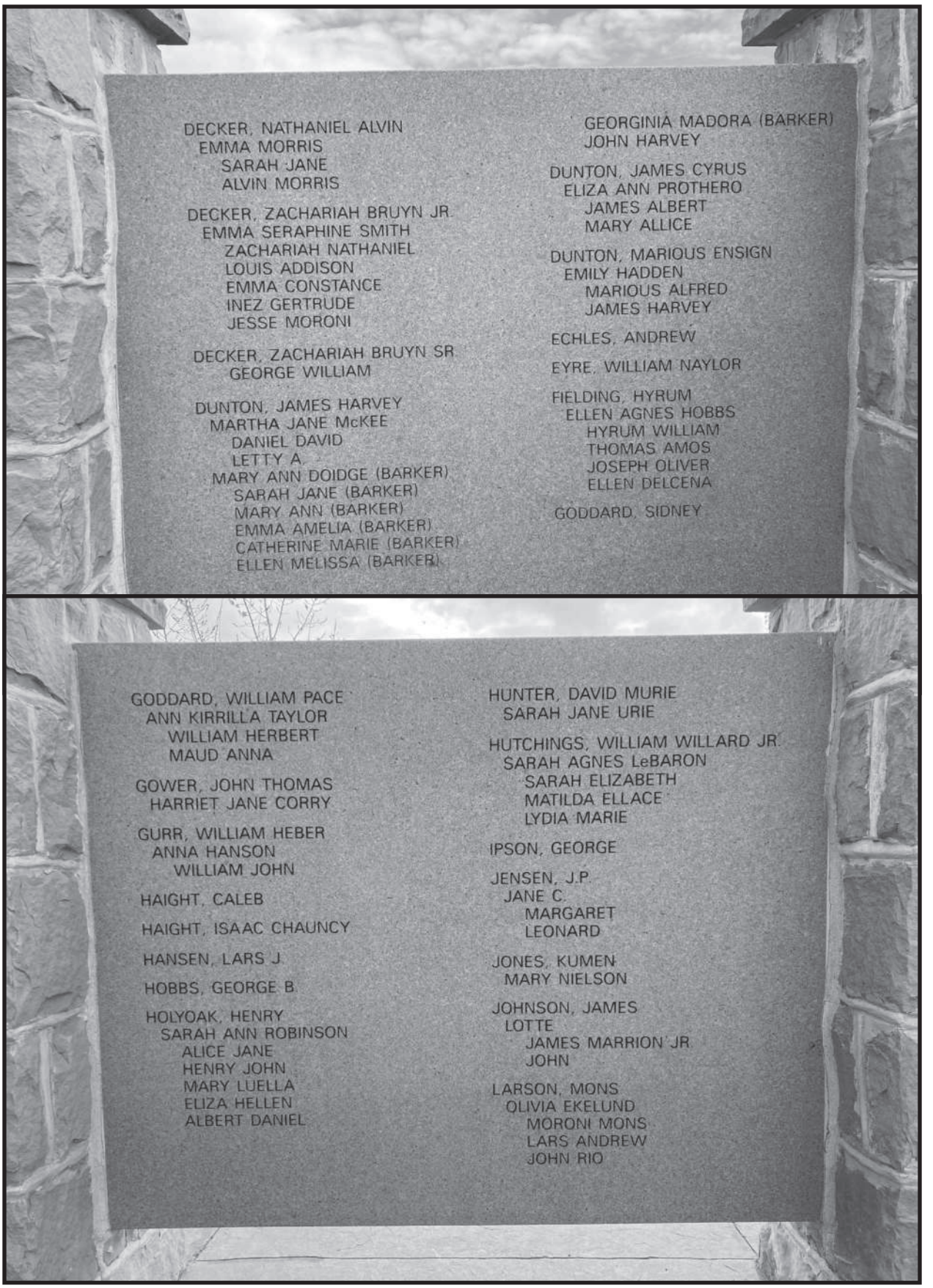
Bluff Fort Pioneer Monument Plaza facing south. Photo Kyle Bateman. Top photo Ron Bateman.



All Monument photos courtesy of Rich Murset.




ADAMS, WILLIAM
MARIA BARBARA BOLANZ
GEORGE ALBERT
JOHN ERNEST
JOSEPH FREDRICK
FRANKLIN JACOB
ALLAN, JOHN
AGNES McAUSLAN
PETER
ROBERT GRAY
JANE FLEMING FERGUSON SHAW
AGNES
ELIZABETH
ANNIE JANE
ALLAN, JOHN JR
JOHANNA AMELIA "JENNY" HELSTROM
WARREN EUGENE
NELLIE
BAILEY, NEPHI
EVA AUGUSTA MACKELPRANG
NEPHI PETER
WILLIAM HENRY
JOSEPH MORONI
BUTT, ENCY CAMILLA BAYLES *
CHRISTENSEN, ANN MARGARET JENSEN *
ANNA KJERSTINE MARGARET
LARS JR.
MARY CAROLINE
MATILDA AMELIA
CRAIG, JAMES MORMON
ELIZABETH REESE
EMMA JANE
JAMES ELLIS
EDWARDS, DAVID
ELIZA ANN BARTON
GUYMON, LAFAYETTE
PHEBE MADORA PERKINS
JAMES NEILS
ANNA EMELINE
ENOCH COUCH
HEBER COLUMBUS
HARRISON, BRIGHAM WILLIAM
JOANNA MARIA HASKELL
LYMAN, LUCY ZINA
* HUSBAND ON HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK MONUMENT
BARNES, NOAH
BARNEY, DANIELSON BUREN
LAURA MATTHEWS
BUREN ONLEY
ALFRED ALONZO
LAURA MAY
RACHEL SOPHEY
EDSON ELROY
ELIZA MELINA
BETSEY MAUD
BIRD ELLA
BARTON, AMASA MILES
BARTON, JOSEPH FRANKLIN
HARRIET ANN RICHARDS
HARRIET ELIZA
MARY VIOLA
BAYLES, OLE HANSON
MARY ANN DURHAM
BRYSON, SAMUEL
BUTT, PARLEY R
BUTT, WILLARD
CHRISTENSEN, PETER
CHRISTENSEN, LARS
COX, SAMUEL JOHN
SARAH GANE
SARAH MARCHANT
DAILEY, MILTON
MARY MALINDA WILSON
MARION
MADALENE
DAILEY, WILSON
LORANA TILTON
BADE
BELT
DECKER, CORNELIUS ISAAC
ELIZABETH MORRIS
CORNELIUS WILLIAM
EUGENE MORRIS
DECKER, JAMES BEAN
ANNA MARIA MICKELSEN
ANNA LILLIAN
NANCY GENEVIEVE
LENA DESERET



DECKER, NATHANIEL ALVIN
EMMA MORRIS
SARAH JANE
ALVIN MORRIS

DECKER, ZACHARIAH BRUYN JR.
EMMA SERAPHINE SMITH
ZACHARIAH NATHANIEL
LOUIS ADDISON
EMMA CONSTANCE
INEZ GERTRUDE
JESSE MORONI

DECKER, ZACHARIAH BRUYN SR.
GEORGE WILLIAM

DUNTON, JAMES HARVEY
MARTHA JANE McKEE
DANIEL DAVID
LETTY A.
MARY ANN DOIDGE (BARKER)
SARAH JANE (BARKER)
MARY ANN (BARKER)
EMMA AMELIA (BARKER)
CATHERINE MARIE (BARKER)
ELLEN MELISSA (BARKER)
GEORGINIA MADORA (BARKER)
JOHN HARVEY

DUNTON, JAMES CYRUS
ELIZA ANN PROTHERO
JAMES ALBERT
MARY ALLICE

DUNTON, MARIOUS ENSIGN
EMILY HADDEN
MARIOUS ALFRED
JAMES HARVEY

ECHLES, ANDREW

EYRE, WILLIAM NAYLOR

FIELDING, HYRUM
ELLEN AGNES HOBBS
HYRUM WILLIAM
THOMAS AMOS
JOSEPH OLIVER
ELLEN DELCENA

GODDARD, SIDNEY

GODDARD, WILLIAM PACE
ANN KIRRILLA TAYLOR
WILLIAM HERBERT
MAUD ANNA

GOWER, JOHN THOMAS
HARRIET JANE CORRY

GURR, WILLIAM HEBER
ANNA HANSON
WILLIAM JOHN

HAIGHT, CALEB

HAIGHT, ISAAC CHAUNCY

HANSEN, LARS J.

HOBBS, GEORGE B.

HOLYOAK, HENRY
SARAH ANN ROBINSON
ALICE JANE
HENRY JOHN
MARY LUELLA
ELIZA HELLEN
ALBERT DANIEL

HUNTER, DAVID MURIE
SARAH JANE URIE

HUTCHINGS, WILLIAM WILLARD JR.
SARAH AGNES LeBARON
SARAH ELIZABETH
MATILDA ELLACE
LYDIA MARIE

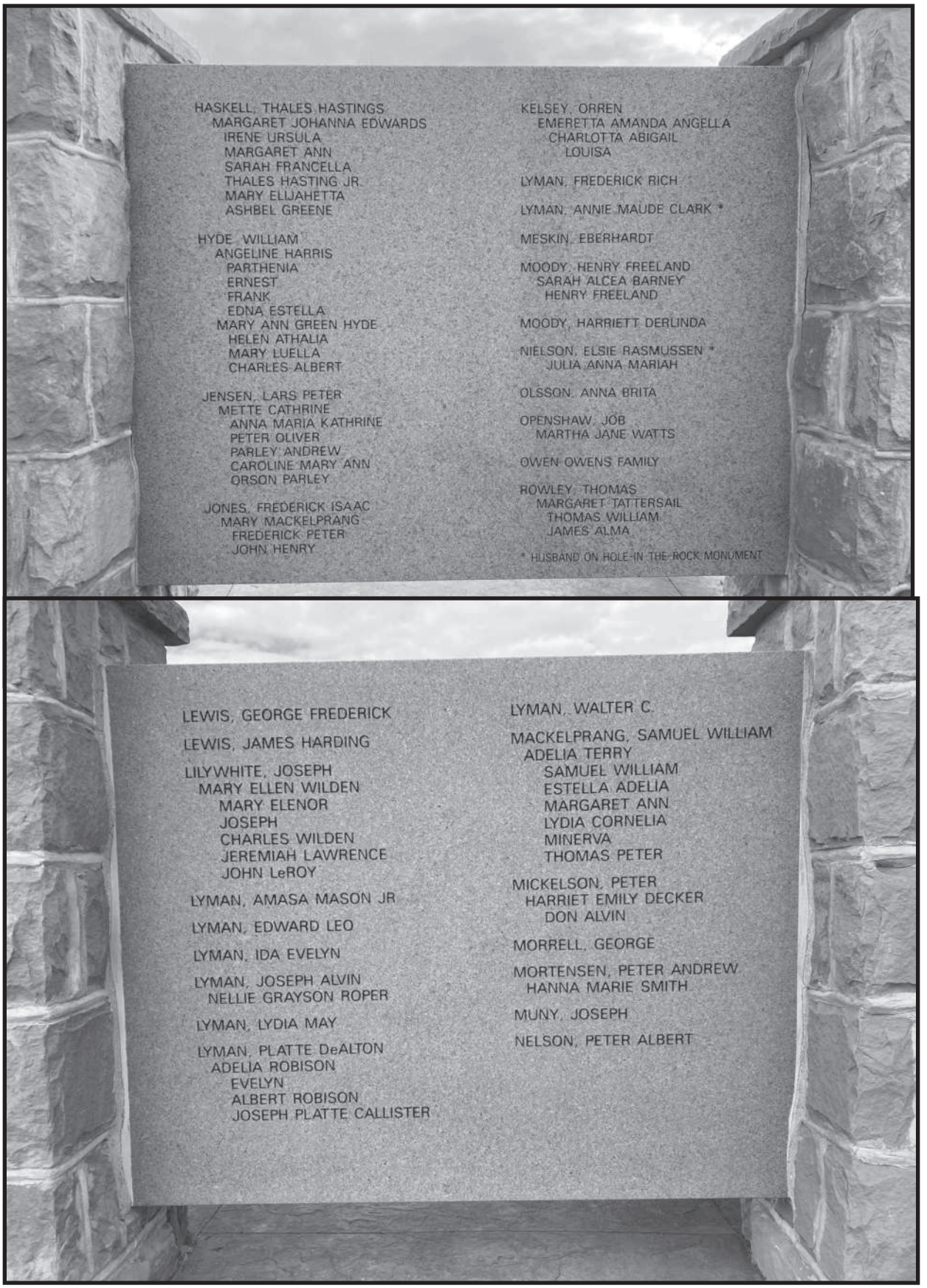
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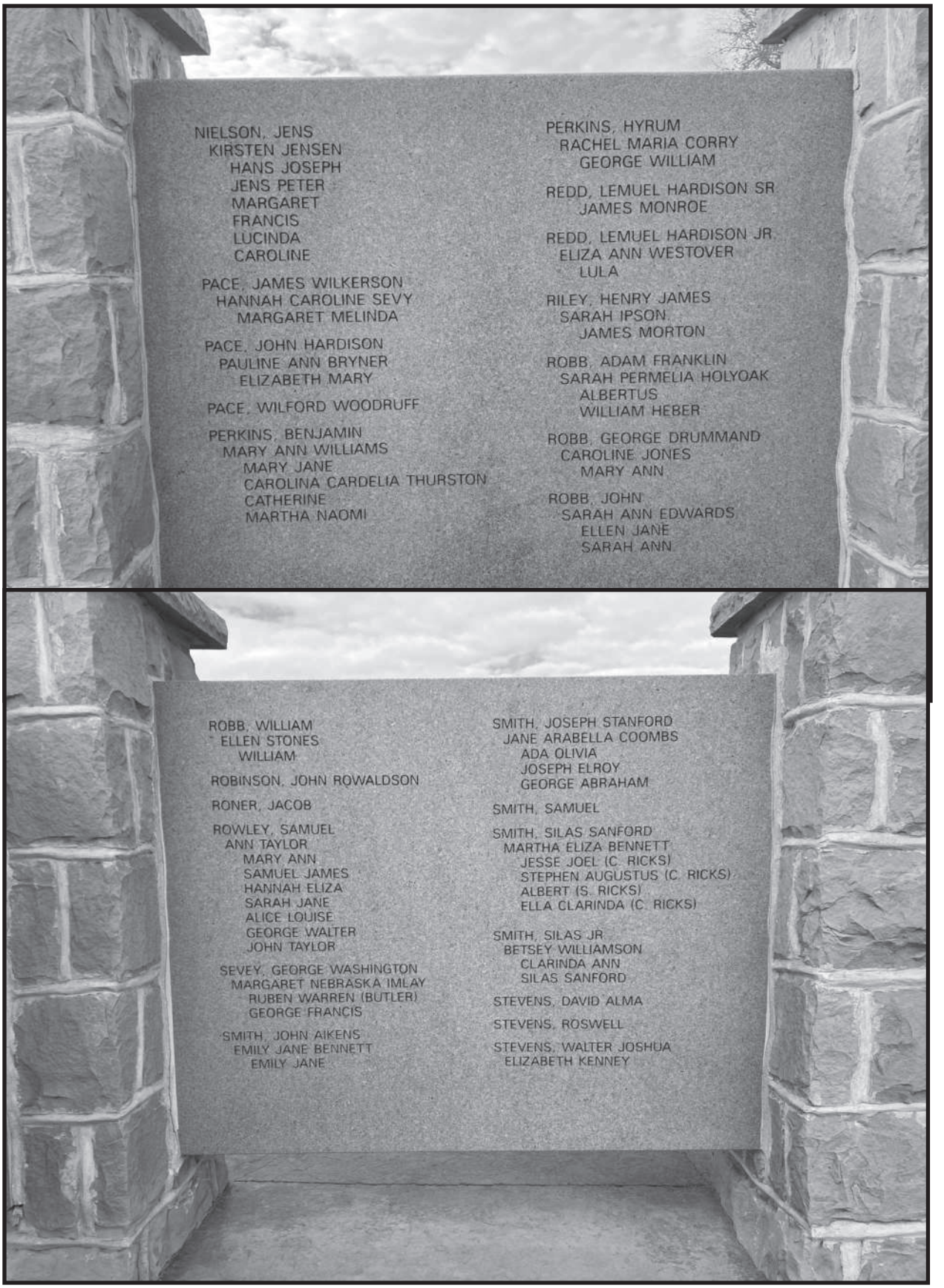
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JANE C.
MARGARET
LEONARD

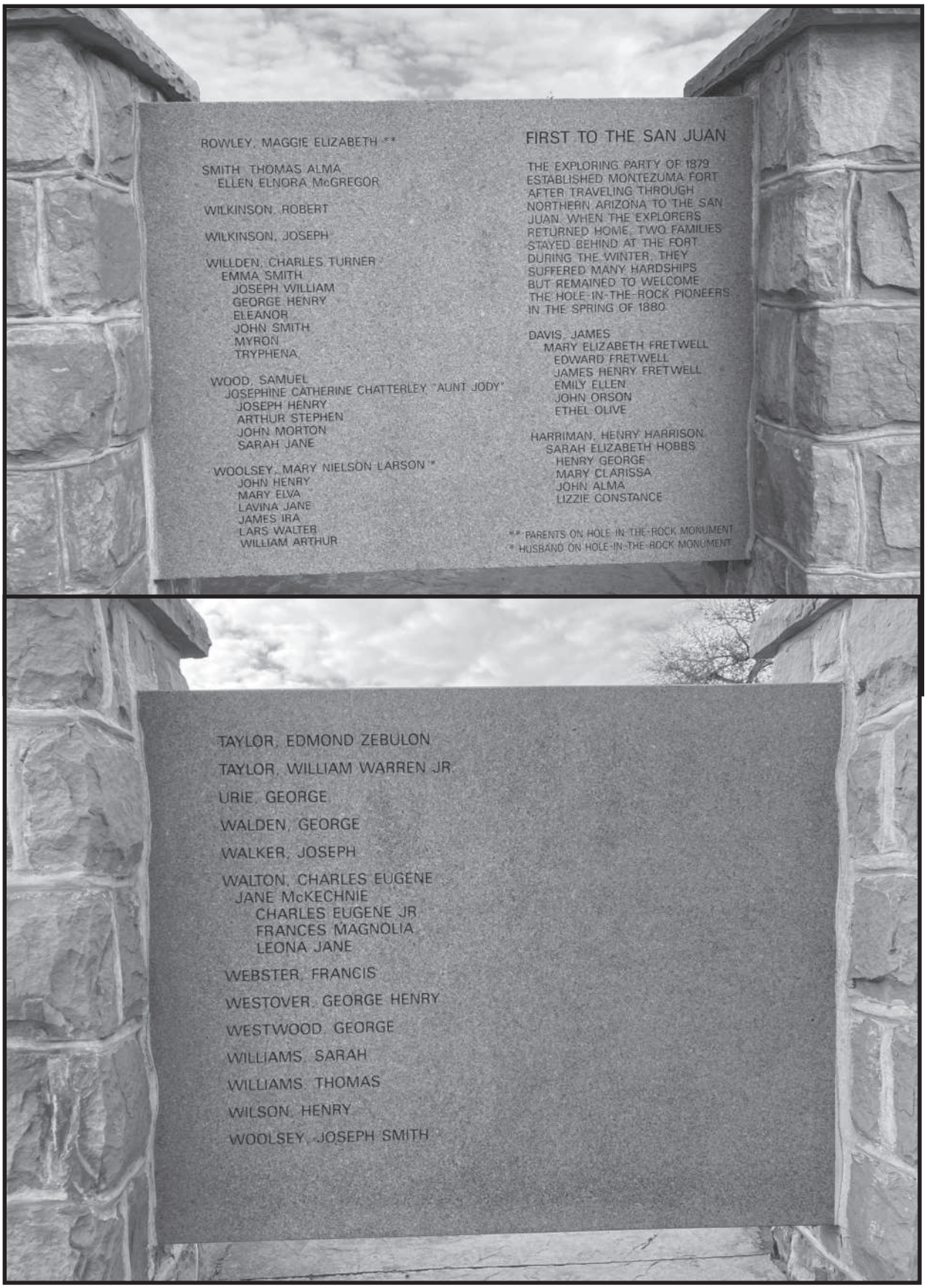
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MARY NIELSON

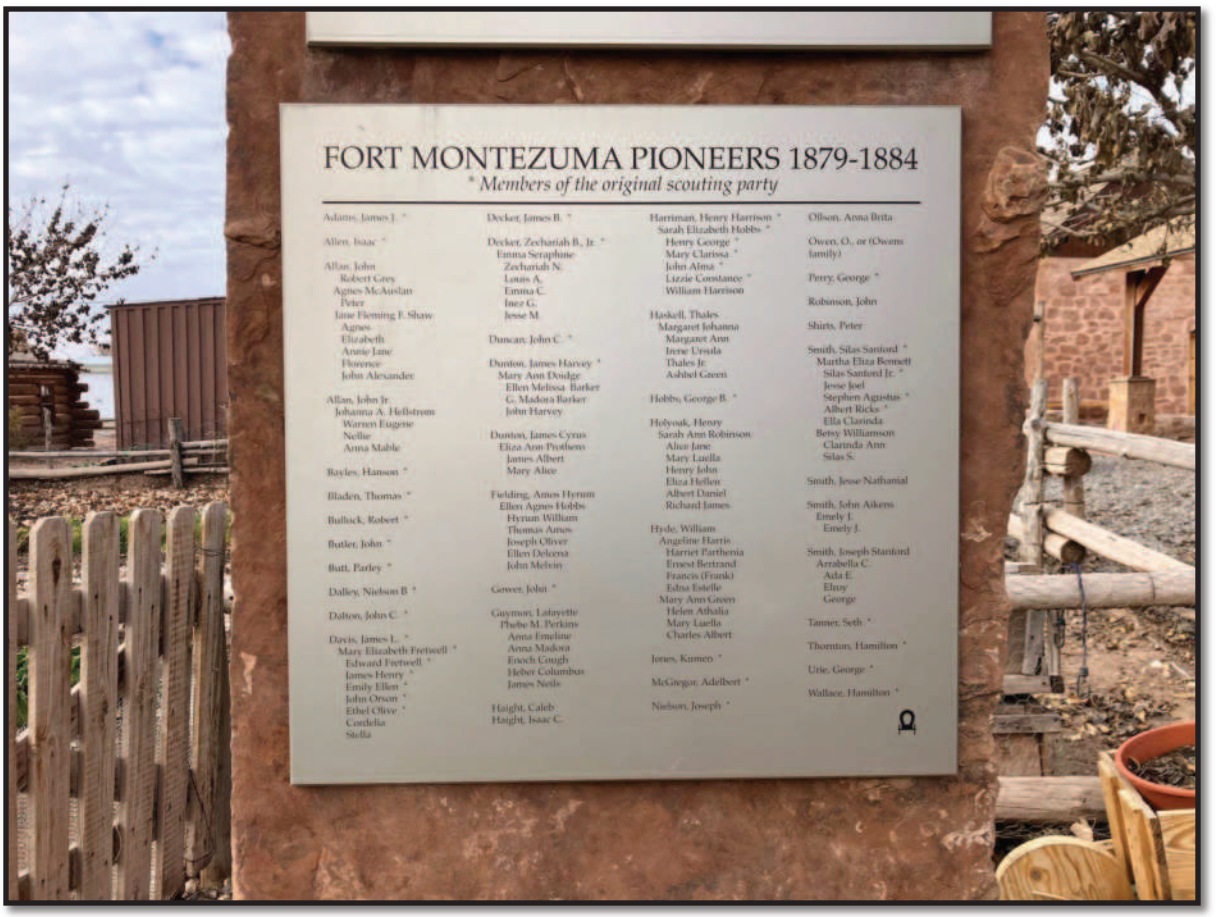
JOHNSON, JAMES
LOTTE
JAMES MARRION JR.
JOHN

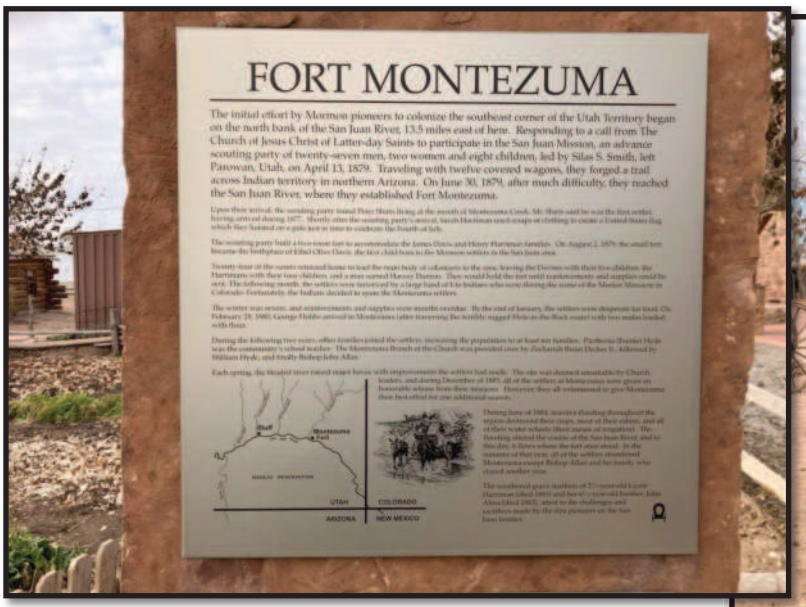
LARSON, MONS
OLIVIA EKELUND
MORONI MONS
LARS ANDREW
JOHN RIO


HASKELL, THALES HASTINGS
MARGARET JOHANNA EDWARDS
IRENE URSULA
MARGARET ANN
SARAH FRANCELLA
THALES HASTING JR.
MARY ELIJAHETTA
ASHBEL GREENE
HYDE, WILLIAM
ANGELINE HARRIS
PARTHENIA
ERNEST
FRANK
EDNA ESTELLA
MARY ANN GREEN HYDE
HELEN ATHALIA
MARY LUELLA
CHARLES ALBERT
JENSEN, LARS PETER
METTE CATHRINE
ANNA MARIA KATHRINE
PETER OLIVER
PARLEY ANDREW
CAROLINE MARY ANN
ORSON PARLEY
JONES, FREDERICK ISAAC
MARY MACKELPRANG
FREDERICK PETER
JOHN HENRY
KELSEY, ORREN
EMERETTA AMANDA ANGELLA
CHARLOTTA ABIGAIL
LOUISA
LYMAN, FREDERICK RICH
LYMAN, ANNIE MAUDE CLARK *
MESKIN, EBERHARDT
MOODY, HENRY FREELAND
SARAH ALCEA BARNEY
HENRY FREELAND
MOODY, HARRIETT DERLINDA
NIELSON, ELSIE RASMUSSEN *
JULIA ANNA MARIAH
OLSSON, ANNA BRITA
OPENSHAW, JOB
MARTHA JANE WATTS
OWEN OWENS FAMILY
ROWLEY, THOMAS
MARGARET TATTERSAIL
THOMAS WILLIAM
JAMES ALMA
* HUSBAND ON HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK MONUMENT
LEWIS, GEORGE FREDERICK
LEWIS, JAMES HARDING
LILYWHITE, JOSEPH
MARY ELLEN WILDEN
MARY ELENOR
JOSEPH
CHARLES WILDEN
JEREMIAH LAWRENCE
JOHN LeROY
LYMAN, AMASA MASON JR
LYMAN, EDWARD LEO
LYMAN, IDA EVELYN
LYMAN, JOSEPH ALVIN
NELLIE GRAYSON ROPER
LYMAN, LYDIA MAY
LYMAN, PLATTE DeALTON
ADELIA ROBISON
EVELYN
ALBERT ROBISON
JOSEPH PLATTE CALLISTER
LYMAN, WALTER C.
MACKELPRANG, SAMUEL WILLIAM
ADELIA TERRY
SAMUEL WILLIAM
ESTELLA ADELIA
MARGARET ANN
LYDIA CORNELIA
MINERVA
THOMAS PETER
MICKELSON, PETER
HARRIET EMILY DECKER
DON ALVIN
MORRELL, GEORGE
MORTENSEN, PETER ANDREW
HANNA MARIE SMITH
MUNY, JOSEPH
NELSON, PETER ALBERT


NIELSON, JENS
KIRSTEN JENSEN
HANS JOSEPH
JENS PETER
MARGARET
FRANCIS
LUCINDA
CAROLINE
PACE, JAMES WILKERSON
HANNAH CAROLINE SEVY
MARGARET MELINDA
PACE, JOHN HARDISON
PAULINE ANN BRYNER
ELIZABETH MARY
PACE, WILFORD WOODRUFF
PERKINS, BENJAMIN
MARY ANN WILLIAMS
MARY JANE
CAROLINA CARDELIA THURSTON
CATHERINE
MARTHA NAOMI
PERKINS, HYRUM
RACHEL MARIA CORRY
GEORGE WILLIAM
REDD, LEMUEL HARDISON SR.
JAMES MONROE
REDD, LEMUEL HARDISON JR.
ELIZA ANN WESTOVER
LULA
RILEY, HENRY JAMES
SARAH IPSON
JAMES MORTON
ROBB, ADAM FRANKLIN
SARAH PERMELIA HOLYOAK
ALBERTUS
WILLIAM HEBER
ROBB, GEORGE DRUMMAND
CAROLINE JONES
MARY ANN
ROBB, JOHN
SARAH ANN EDWARDS
ELLEN JANE
SARAH ANN
ROBB, WILLIAM
ELLEN STONES
WILLIAM
ROBINSON, JOHN ROWALDSON
RONER, JACOB
ROWLEY, SAMUEL
ANN TAYLOR
MARY ANN
SAMUEL JAMES
HANNAH ELIZA
SARAH JANE
ALICE LOUISE
GEORGE WALTER
JOHN TAYLOR
SEVEY, GEORGE WASHINGTON
MARGARET NEBRASKA IMLAY
RUBEN WARREN (BUTLER)
GEORGE FRANCIS
SMITH, JOHN AIKENS
EMILY JANE BENNETT
EMILY JANE
SMITH, JOSEPH STANFORD
JANE ARABELLA COOMBS
ADA OLIVIA
JOSEPH ELROY
GEORGE ABRAHAM
SMITH, SAMUEL
SMITH, SILAS SANFORD
MARTHA ELIZA BENNETT
JESSE JOEL (C. RICKS)
STEPHEN AUGUSTUS (C. RICKS)
ALBERT (S. RICKS)
ELLA CLARINDA (C. RICKS)
SMITH, SILAS JR.
BETSEY WILLIAMSON
CLARINDA ANN
SILAS SANFORD
STEVENS, DAVID ALMA
STEVENS, ROSWELL
STEVENS, WALTER JOSHUA
ELIZABETH KENNEY


ROWLEY, MAGGIE ELIZABETH **
SMITH, THOMAS ALMA
ELLEN ELNORA McGREGOR
WILKINSON, ROBERT
WILKINSON, JOSEPH
WILLDEN, CHARLES TURNER
EMMA SMITH
JOSEPH WILLIAM
GEORGE HENRY
ELEANOR
JOHN SMITH
MYRON
TRYPHENA
WOOD, SAMUEL
JOSEPHINE CATHERINE CHATTERLEY "AUNT JODY"
JOSEPH HENRY
ARTHUR STEPHEN
JOHN MORTON
SARAH JANE
WOOLSEY, MARY NIELSON LARSON *
JOHN HENRY
MARY ELVA
LAVINA JANE
JAMES IRA
LARS WALTER
WILLIAM ARTHUR
FIRST TO THE SAN JUAN
THE EXPLORING PARTY OF 1879
ESTABLISHED MONTEZUMA FORT
AFTER TRAVELING THROUGH
NORTHERN ARIZONA TO THE SAN
JUAN. WHEN THE EXPLORERS
RETURNED HOME, TWO FAMILIES
STAYED BEHIND AT THE FORT
DURING THE WINTER. THEY
SUFFERED MANY HARDSHIPS
BUT REMAINED TO WELCOME
THE HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK PIONEERS
IN THE SPRING OF 1880.
DAVIS, JAMES
MARY ELIZABETH FRETWELL
EDWARD FRETWELL
JAMES HENRY FRETWELL
EMILY ELLEN
JOHN ORSON
ETHEL OLIVE
HARRIMAN, HENRY HARRISON
SARAH ELIZABETH HOBBS
HENRY GEORGE
MARY CLARISSA
JOHN ALMA
LIZZIE CONSTANCE
** PARENTS ON HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK MONUMENT
* HUSBAND ON HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK MONUMENT
TAYLOR, EDMOND ZEBULON
TAYLOR, WILLIAM WARREN JR.
URIE, GEORGE
WALDEN, GEORGE
WALKER, JOSEPH
WALTON, CHARLES EUGENE
JANE McKECHNIE
CHARLES EUGENE JR
FRANCES MAGNOLIA
LEONA JANE
WEBSTER, FRANCIS
WESTOVER, GEORGE HENRY
WESTWOOD, GEORGE
WILLIAMS, SARAH
WILLIAMS, THOMAS
WILSON, HENRY
WOOLSEY, JOSEPH SMITH



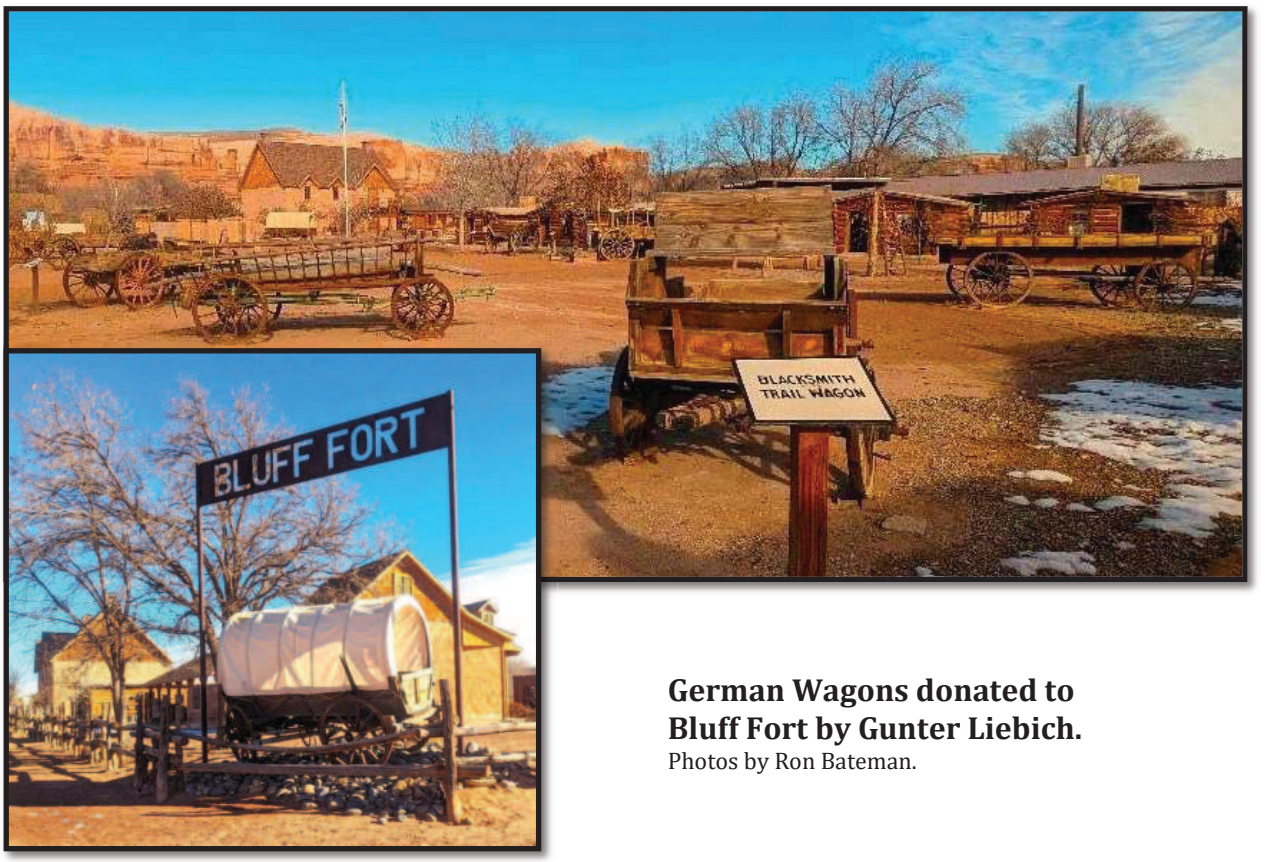




Fort Montezuma Monument near the Fort garden.
Tribute to Josephine Wood, "Aunt Jody."

Photos by Rich Murset, Service Missionary winter 2023-24.





German Wagons donated to Bluff Fort by Gunter Liebich.
Photos by Ron Bateman.

Wagons Join Two Cultures and Two Countries 2007-08

Gunter Liebich, a German Latter-day Saint, could still remember being evacuated from Salzia Poland as a boy after World War II. His father was being held prisoner in a POW camp in France, so his mother loaded all of their belongings into a wagon and moved the family back to Germany. Ever since then Gunter had a real love of wagons. He began collecting them and eventually acquired over 30.

As Gunter grew older, he wondered what would happen to his marvelous wagon collection. He shipped two of his wagons to the U.S. for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint's Sesquicentennial re-enactment of the Mormon pioneers' wagon trek to Utah. Gunter offered to donate his wagon collection to the church, but his offer was declined.

Years went by, and then a small miracle happened. Through a series of "coincidences," Gunter found the Hole in the Rock Foundation. He felt a kinship with the early Bluff pioneers who had been called by President John Taylor to leave their homes and establish a settlement in San Juan County. Gunter Liebich and Steven Pratt, a historical restorationist from Cove Fort, discussed how his collection might help tell two stories of courage and faith, and philanthropist Bert Smith provided the money to ship the wagons to the U.S.

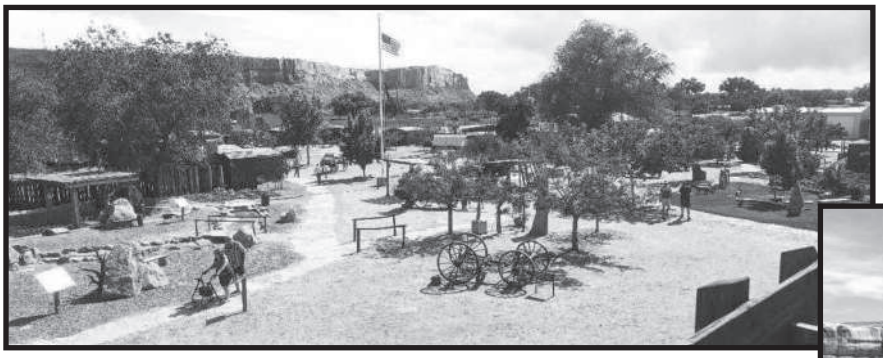
Graig, Grant and Grant's son Mark Taylor, along with Gunter's son Thomi, flew to Hamburg to pack the wagons and prepare them for shipping. However, company regulations, time zones, and holidays all combined to delay the operation. Ultimately, the men had only a few hours to pack 18 wagons, plus additional 250-pound wheels. Dieter Lunning, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ living in Hamburg, offered to help as did local LDS missionaries. In less than four hours the container was packed, the customs officer placed his seal on the container, and it was on its way.

When the container arrived in Utah, the Taylors, along with Rob Briens and John Cox, were ready to unload and reassemble the wagons on a hot day in June. Alex, Patrick and Zeke, local Native Americans, showed up at the fort and offered their help. LaRue Barton, Corinne Roring and her grandson Craig also joined in. Within two hours the container was unloaded, and by evening all of the wagons had been reassembled and placed at the fort.

Corinne Roring, HIRF president, has always said, "When the time is right, it will happen," and it certainly has. When needs have arisen, people like Gunter, Dieter, Patrick, Alex, and Zeke have stepped in and played a major part in preserving Bluff Fort and its history for a whole new generation. Grant Taylor, *Hole in the Rock News*, Volume 4, Autumn 2008, page 4.



Bluff Fort Scenes



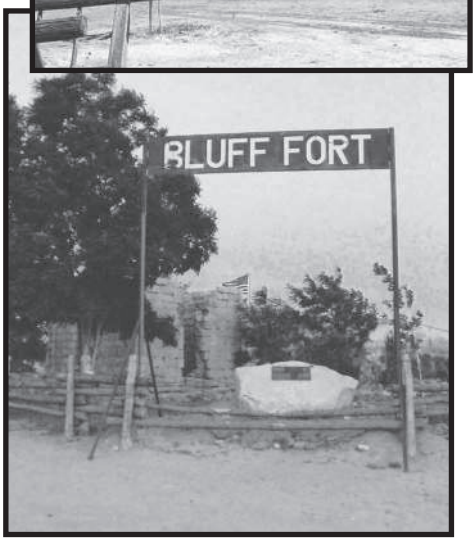
Looking north toward Co-op.
Lamont Crabtree photo below.



Looking southwest from Co-op balcony. Ranae Bateman photo.



Original wagon under shelter near kitchen



Sign by the Kumen Jones Home, 2009. Mike Roring had the tall metal signs made.



Ron Barton, Grant & Graig Taylor installing Fort electrical lines.



The other Grant Taylor, a professional sign painter designed all the Fort signs large and small, with the help of his brother Dell. Photos Erlene Taylor.



October 14, 2009

These photos show the results of the two Grant Taylor's sod laying project. It took them 1 1/2 days to complete. Other workers helped smooth out the ground area.





Above - sod was laid near the Kumen Jones home ruins.
Left photo - new sod in front of the Kitchen/ Cowboy Cabin.
All photos courtesy Erlene Taylor

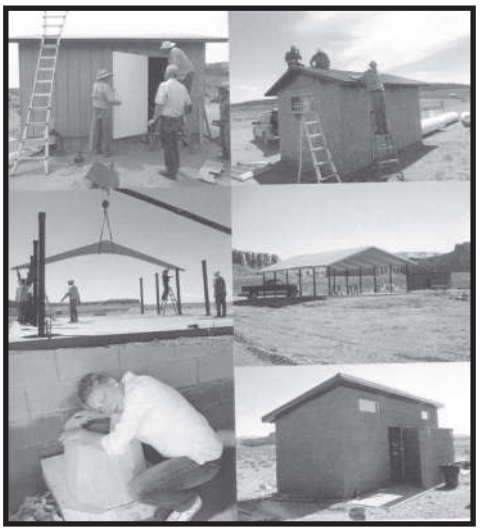




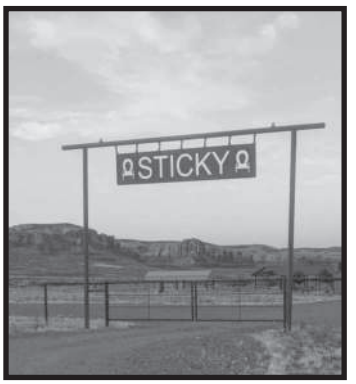
LaRue & Karl Barton were prompted to purchase the Jens Nielson home in 2007. Later they sold to HIRF in 2021. Left– Mary, Erlene and Dell Taylor using the Fort golf cart donated by Mike Roring.

2007 CAMP STICKIE

In 2007, 10 acres of land west of Bluff was purchased from Cleal Bradford. The thought was that youth conferences might come and trek along portions of the Hole in the Rock trail. Bishop H. David Burton had told the Foundation, that Martin's Cove was getting a lot of requests and that we might be able to help relieve some of the pressure there.



In 2007 ten acres of land was purchased west of Bluff. The construction of Camp Stickie youth camp was completed in 2014.
2014 missionary yearbook.



Camp Stickie sign.

Graig Taylor called Martin's Cove to check into handcarts and Mary Taylor answered the phone. In working with her husband Dell Taylor, the first handcarts were purchased from the Cove. Another group of handcarts were donated to the Foundation by an LDS Stake in St George that no longer wanted to be in the rental business, giving us a total of 27 handcarts.

In 2008, a well drilling rig was in the county and Corinne got a permit and the well was sunk at Camp Stickie. Flow from the well we were told would support the 10 acres in grass. A barbed wire fence was constructed around the acreage. Money to purchase the property was given by the Eccles Foundation and the LDS Church Foundation. In 2014 the buildings were built at Camp Stickie after considerable impact studies by the BLM. It fulfilled a dream for a place where youth could experience the life of some of their ancestors; a place where handcarts were the mode of travel and protection from the elements was a thin canvas cover they called a tent.

In 2006, Graig Taylor invited his brother Grant to come and help on a project at Camp Stickie. Grant became a regular on project weekends. John & Brandon Cox, Ron Snowden, Jack Muterspaugh, Lamont Crabtree, Carl McKay and others also came to help.

In 2013 Stuart and Kristi Matheson were called as some of the first missionaries to Bluff Fort. They spent considerable time helping develop Camp Stickie. Stuart later served on the HIRF board of directors. In 2014 the camp restrooms and pavilion were built by Fort missionaries.

Todd and Holly McAllister came with their Richfield ward for one of the first youth conferences in 2016. They then returned yearly as camp directors through 2023. In 2023 they were called as service missionaries in their continuing directors' role.



Todd & Holly McAllister Camp Stickie Directors taken in 2023.
Ron Bateman photos.

Bluff Pioneer Cemetery, Early Impetus for the Fort Development

Freeman Nielson, a descendant of Jens, owned most of the property on Cemetery Hill. Over time, he sold bits of the property, except for the cemetery itself. The hope was that someday some appropriate entity could appear on the scene, take title, maintain and improve the cemetery.

In 1987 four couples signed a quit claim deed to San Juan County for the cemetery property. The four couples were Freeman and Flora Nielson, Donald and Dorothy Adams, Thomas and Richard Peterson, and Robert and Madge Anderson. In 1991 San Juan County transferred the tract to the Bluff City Historical Preservation Association. In 1995 fifty volunteers cleaned the cemetery. In 1997 5.83 acres of land around the cemetery came up for sale for $88,000. The Simpson family filed plans with the county to put a subdivision on Cemetery Hill.

At this point, the Hole in the Rock group got involved in the Bluff Pioneer Cemetery. Corinne Roring went to bat trying to figure out ownership. The Eccles Foundation agreed to front the money for the purchase and required that 50% be paid back within five months.



Bluff Cemetery Scenes. William Adams family gravesite left. Locomotive Rock is in the background.



Bluff pioneer, 6 foot 5 inch Jens Nielson and wives Elsie and Kirsten are buried in the Bluff cemetery.

Photos courtesy Ron Bateman.

Letters were sent out to all descendants and community people asking for generous donations. Quilt sales and other fundraising efforts were done and by October 1997, the $44,000 was raised in time.

Three hundred people attended the dedication of the cemetery. In the ceremony, Winston Hurst said of Corinne “She has been a tireless worker in the effort to save the cemetery.” Ultimately, with the grant from George and Delores Dore Eccles Foundation, two thirds of the cemetery is now owned by the Hole in the Rock Foundation (purchased in 2006).

250 gather to dedicate blustery Bluff’s cemetery hill

By *Deseret News* Oct 20, 1997, 12:00am MDT *Terri Winder, correspondent*

Headstones and umbrellas dotted the top of Bluff's cemetery hill Saturday, Oct. 11, as community residents and pioneer descendants gathered to dedicate the ground recently purchased from private ownership.

Half of the 250 participants sat shivering on metal chairs while others stood at cold attention on the fringes, as an early winter storm blew grit into eyes and mouths, literally giving them a taste of pioneer life in Bluff city. Individuals came from as far away as Chicago to commemorate and celebrate their pioneer heritage in this little community.

A Bluff native, 90-year-old Ila Nielson Sundwall stayed at the Desert Rose Inn, the restored rock home of her grandparents, Jens and Kirsten Nielson. An original settler, Jens Nielson was the LDS bishop of the riverside hamlet for 26 years.

It was at Bishop Nielson's home where women and children gathered in times of threat from American Indians or river flooding. It is said that one mother, Rachel Perkins, dressed her children in their best clothes before taking them to Bishop Nielson's home. When asked why she did that, she is said to have replied, "If they have to be killed I want them to be well dressed and respectable."

The headstones on Cemetery Hill bear silent testimony to the trials the first settlers suffered. Their immortal 1880 Hole-in-the-Rock Expedition through some of the most rugged territory the country has to offer was only a prelude to the hardships they would encounter once they arrived at this isolated outpost.

It is estimated that thousands of Utahns today trace their ancestry to those original Bluff pioneers.

Buried here is the 42-year-old mother of eight, Lydia Mae Lyman Jones, who died from burns received while saving her infant son from fire. One plot holds the bodies of a father, James Decker, and four of his children - all victims of a diphtheria epidemic that swept through the community during the Christmas season of 1901. American Indians friendly to the Mormon settlers are laid to rest here. Other isolated graves hold the bodies of loners who just happened to be in the vicinity when their mortal lives came to an obscure ending: trappers, gold miners and cowboys. Prehistoric graves from the Anasazi period have also been discovered.

The dedication culminated years of fund-raising efforts and acknowledged individuals associated with the San Juan Foundation, San Juan Historical Commission, Southwest Heritage Foundation and the Bluff City Historic Preservation Association.

The George S. and Dolores Eccles Foundation made the latest $88,000 purchase possible by providing an interest free loan and a 50 percent match. "We went way beyond the bake sale scenario," supporter Liza Doran said.

The celebration began, as did the early celebrations of Bluff, with the ringing of a church bell and a brass band. There were speakers representing the different organizations, and musical numbers. The dedicatory prayer was given by Curtis Jones, a descendant of original pioneers.

With a tourist-based economy supplemented by agriculture, present day Bluff is a diversified community with few descendants of the original settlers remaining. Many of the first Victorian style homes have been restored and preserved and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Now the historic cemetery hilltop and surrounding ground will also be protected.



Bluff pioneer cemetery 2023.

Ron Bateman photo.



Winston Hurst welcomed the crowd. He commented "I didn't expect to see so many here, but this is a tribute to the heartiness of you descendants of these pioneers."

Corinne Roring photos.

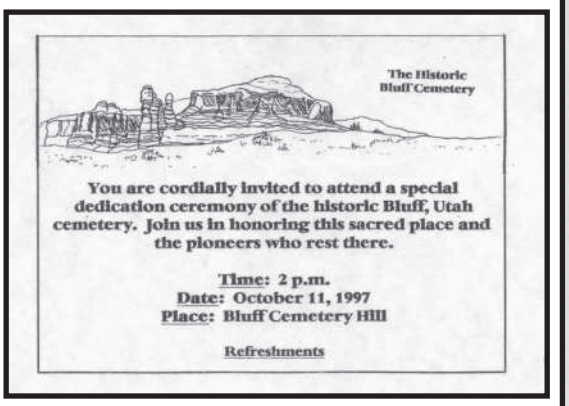


James Decker and four of his children were all victims of a diphtheria epidemic that swept through the Bluff community during the Christmas season of 1901. Ron Bateman photo.



Nearly 300 people attended the Bluff historic cemetery dedication on October 11, 1997.

Corinne Roring photos.





Corinne Roring with the only two surviving granddaughters of Jens Nielson, Ila Sundwall and Helen Wilson.

Nearly 300 'hearty souls' attend dedication of Bluff's historic cemetery

by Neil Joslin

"I didn't expect to see so many here, but this is a tribute to the heartiness of you descendants of these pioneers," commented Winston Hurst as he welcomed nearly 300 people to Saturday's dedication of the historic Bluff Cemetery.

These 'hearty souls' braved the wind, dust and cold to take part in dedicating land adjacent to the cemetery that has recently been purchased to preserve the integrity of the cemetery, keep private development from encroaching on the cemetery, and ensuring room for future expansion.

Hurst explained that the ceremony was celebration of successful efforts to get the cemetery into community hands by securing adjoining property on the hilltop. This, he said, was achieved in a large part through the cooperation of the Bluff City Historical Preservation Association, the San Juan Foundation and the Southwest Heritage Foundation. Also assisting were the San Juan County Historical Commission and the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation, and many private contributors.

In his opening remarks, Hurst told the gathering that Bluff was "established suddenly in the Spring of 1880 by a couple hundred bullheaded, determined, stubborn, tough, resilient, dedicated and tightly organized Latter-day Saints..."Hurst explained that a young son of the Samuel Rowley family, who died of measles almost five years later, was the "first human in recorded history to be buried on this hill."

The afternoon's celebration was ushered in by the ringing of a bell and the sound of trumpets on the hill (by David Blake, Tyler Jack and Danielle Bradford of Blanding), just as early settlers were summoned to town meetings in Bluff.

After a brief history of the cemetery, Hurst described the historic site as, "a place of tremendous integrity and honesty...This is a desert place as honest as death itself, and as tough and windblown and sunburnt and resilient as the pioneers who built it."

Saturday's program also included songs by Lecia Arthur Wright and Myriah Arthur, and Linda Malinsky, of Mancos, Colorado; a poem by Jean Nielson Bayles and an address by Corinne Nielson Roring, whom Hurst described as, "a tireless worker in the effort to save the cemetery..."

Skip Lange, of the Southwest Heritage Fourndation also spoke.

CHAPTER TWO
Miracle of Modern Cabin Building at Bluff Fort

"In this fort there were no doors or windows opening to the outside. All opened into the space in the center. From north to south and east to west a small passageway ran in a gap between houses, permitting teams to drive in. A well in the center furnished water." Mary Jones, *Anchored Lariats on the San Juan Frontier*, page 48

2006 HIRF

Grant Taylor continues his narrative: Annual meetings were held with Bishop H. David Burton, giving him updates of what was happening and in turn the foundation received encouragement from him as to the value of the Bluff Fort project. During those visits, he suggested that we be working with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint's history department.

In 2007, Steve Olsen, Church historian and Elder Rulon Craven came to Bluff. There was concern over whether the LDS Church might want to take over the project. Steve Olsen gave the foundation great counsel. He said that as a private foundation we would be able to build it much quicker than the Church would and that at present the Church was most interested in revelatory sites, and Bluff didn't fit their emphasis. Jenny Lund, Director of LDS Church Historic Sites and Don Enders, Church history employee became a part of the visits. The foundation was encouraged to try and maintain the greatest degree of historical accuracy. They also encouraged us to only tell a short period of history so that we could tell it well. The board chose 20 years from 1880-1900. This decision helped us with other decisions later on that could have altered the strength of the story they told.

In 2007, Cleal Bradford helped the foundation apply for a "Scenic Byways Grant" from Federal highways money. They were funding visitor centers and he thought this would be a good source to help fund the rebuilding of the stone co-op store. The grant was written and submitted and the grant was given; but money would not be awarded until 2011.The grant was for $467,000.



James & Lucinda Redd Family Cabin.
Ron Bateman photos.

2007 Cabins

James and Lucinda Redd Cabin

In October 2007, Joseph Fielding McConkie, Alan and Leslie Layton, and Margaret Pope came to Bluff to see where their grandmother Vivian Redd McConkie was born. Graig loved to attend BYU Education Week and had met up with Joseph there. Graig had encouraged Joseph to come to Bluff. Graig was in Bluff and helped them arrange their tour. They rode 4 wheelers out to San Juan Hill and when they returned Joseph bounded up to Graig and excitedly told him that "They must see it to believe it." Truly, the experience hiking up San Juan Hill changes



Back of James Redd cabin.



Amasa Barton blacksmith shop built in 2008.



Interior of Amasa Barton Blacksmith Shop which was at the southwest corner of the fort originally. **Location description by Albert R. Lyman in *Indians and Outlaws* pg. 85 and on maps of Bluff that Albert prepared in Utah State Historical Society's Bluff Historic District Files.** All cabin photos by Ron Bateman.

Dirt floors required sprinkling at intervals to lay the native dust and tempt the soil to harden. Albert R. Lyman, *History of San Juan County,* 1918.

Factory, an unbleached cotton cloth, was stretched over the ceiling to make that better looking and to catch the water in rain storms—a difficult task as it became badly mud stained." Mrs. Frederick I. Jones, *Saga of San Juan*, pg. 66.





Thales & Margaret Haskell Family Cabin built in October 2008. Ron Bateman photos.

"This ground (speaking of Bluff Fort) is hallowed by the faith and works of its original settlers. Though the elevation is only 4300 feet above sea level, it stands as close to the stars and the heavens as one can get on this mortal earth. It is a magnificent monument to the faith and courage of its original settlers. Monuments are the sanctuary of memory. They constitute the holy mountain from which vantage point we see the vision of the past, present, and future. They are the temple of memory which gives meaning and purpose to all we do." Joseph Fielding McConkie, October 18, 2008





Lemuel & Eliza Redd Family Cabin built in April 2009. Ron Bateman photos.

Graig explained to the McConkies what the Foundation was trying to do and that we wanted to start building cabins to create a simulation of the original "Hollow Square" Fort. Graig told them that each cabin would cost about $18,000 and asked if the family could contribute that amount. Joseph and the others felt confident they could and soon plans were made to return the following October 2008 and build the first cabin for James and Lucinda Redd.

In the spring of 2008, preparations were made to build the first cabins at the Fort. Yellowstone Log Company of Rigby, ID, supplied the first three cabin packages and sent Nick to help oversee construction. Money was raised by the family and after Paul Sondrigger added fill, raising the south side of the property. He then graded the lower portion of the property. Three concrete pads were laid in advance of the McConkie family's arrival.

On October 12-18, 2008, over 150 descendants of James and Lucinda Redd descended on the Fort. The Foundation fed the crew from Thursday noon to Saturday breakfast. Nina Taylor, LaRue Barton and others spearheaded that project. John Cox not only provided the doors for all the cabins, but the recipe for Dutch Oven Chicken and Rice for Friday night's dinner. Over 160 people came to help build the first three log cabins.

Trees and shrubbery arrived on the site delivered by Ed Platt, of Linden Nursery, a Lyman descendant. A sprinkler system was installed to water the new trees and the older ones that Corinne had previously planted. Over 30 trees were planted. Two Japanese boys were riding their bicycles from Canada to Mexico. They stopped and helped plant trees and provided other help where needed. They were fed and camped at LaRue and Karl Barton's.

The projects were divided up. Stan McConkie, of St. George, headed up the trencher and laying the sprinkler lines. Ben and Mary Donaho's two sons loved using Ralph Redd's post hole digger to begin each tree hole. Then they'd get their shovels and clean out the hole, add amendments and then plant the Cottonwood, Locust and Mulberry trees. Mike Redd took some flack from his family for taking over 5,000 images of their work.

Some of the women organized a pioneer school with lots of fun activities for the younger children. They used the Log Meetinghouse for their school.

The logs from Yellowstone Log Company came labeled on the truck. They each had a place to go just like Lincoln Logs. After the ridge beam was set then smaller 3" logs made up the roof. Patrice Pope Tew, attorney by day but roofer by night worked from the ridge beam to lay the roof. A rubber membrane was rolled out and then dirt was loaded on the roof. Nick from Yellowstone Log was a master with his chain saw and cut a door and two window openings. Graig had two windows for each cabin that were purchased at Jones Paint and Glass in Orem. John Cox, a friend of Graig's was ready with hand forged-door hardware and doors. The cabin had been chinked using plaster mesh that had to be cut in long strips with tin snips and then a mortar mix patched inside and out creating the chinking. A tongue and grooved floor was also installed.

Ben Black, of Black Hawk Tours, was contracted by the family and brought down 4-wheelers and on Friday, the family took a break from the work to ride to San Juan Hill and hiked to the top.

The McConkie's had just finished the southwest corner of the Fort with the James Redd Cabin, the Thales Haskell Cabin and the Amasa Barton Blacksmith shop. We were all amazed at how much work and what a dramatic change was now beginning to shape the restored Bluff Fort.

Friday night we ate the famous and miraculous Chicken and Rice. Nina had looked all over Salt Lake for Campbell's Golden Mushroom soup, John's secret ingredient. She ran to the K&C in Bluff for a few things and found the soup in a large quantity enough for 5 14" Dutch Ovens and 1 Deep 16" in which the last of the chicken tenderloins were cooked. The McConkie's ate all the main course and then 3 14" Dutch Ovens with Skor Bar Cake. It was quite a feast.

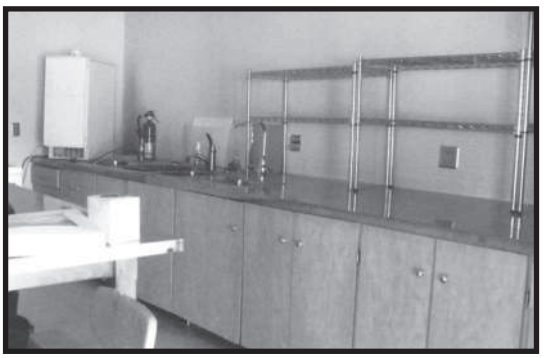
We had asked the family to bring their own chair and where possible a table or two. We attached a large blue tarp on the west of the shed and then pulled it west and used tent poles to hold it up. The only kitchen facility was in the Cowboy Cabin with a three-burner stove and we had two refrigerators. Our kitchen staff pleaded for better facilities to host families.

On Saturday morning a Johnny Cake breakfast started the day. Then a dedication was held in the Log Meeting House. The meetinghouse was bursting at the seams. There was even a large contingent listening at the back door. Oscar McConkie Jr. pronounced the lengthy dedicatory prayer, hymns were sung and the family history rehearsed. The Spirit was strong and the first cabin raising was completed. The family had a great time and still recount their joy as they all became "Bluff Fort Worker Boys." Later Ben and Mary Donahoe donated some furniture, including a bed for the cabin. They also donated the wonderful reed pump organ now restored in Room #3 in the Co-op. Wallets were opened and everyone cleaned out their cash to give to the Fort.

The McConkie family returned again in 2011 to blaze a hike-able trail to the top of Salvation Knoll. This time they came prepared with their own food committee. David Adams spearheaded Stromboli Calzones cooked at the fort and then transported to Salvation Knoll. Quite a crew came to help. A trail was carefully carved, lazily circling the Knoll. The trail had been approved by the Bureau of Land Management and their crew oversaw the construction. No heavy equipment could be used and so some rocks had to be broken; no jack hammers allowed. Before the trail was constructed it was a difficult climb, bush-whacking to the top of the Knoll, but with the creative way that the trail takes you leisurely to the top of Salvation Knoll, it's accessible to young and old.

2008-09 Kitchen and Veranda Construction

We learned that trying to cook for such large groups of people with only a small double sink and a three-burner stove was pretty bleak.



Fort kitchen in 2013. Erlene Taylor photo.

Ron Snowden, a carpenter/project manager, friend of Graig's, designed and built the cabinets for the Bluff Fort kitchen during the winter of 2008-9. A space was prepared by the removal of a large cast iron furnace. The concrete slab had to be leveled and a step cemented for the exterior door. The shed was a post and beam structure. While a tile floor and cabinets were being installed, Paul Sondrigger, Monticello contractor, leveled and poured a concrete apron on the west and north of the shed. Sona tubes were poured to support a shed overhang so that parties and guests could be sheltered from the winds and weather.

Contractor Dale Major, a George B. Hobbs descendant, along with a crew of other volunteers, including a father and two sons from Ogden, no relation to the Fort, came down a week before the Hobbs cabin was raised and built the awning for the veranda. Lighting and fans were added by Corinne, and Nina added pull-down shades to the shelter a year later.

Lemuel H. and Eliza Redd Cabin

On April 16-18, 2009, the descendants of Lemuel Hardison Jr and Eliza Redd came to build their family cabin. Ralph Redd was the leader that pulled off the contribution and the labor force. About 80 family members joined in this project.

Only one cabin was delivered, this time by Caribou Logs, Nephi, UT. A smaller log was delivered hoping to give a more rustic look to the cabins. The family had a wonderful time working and building together. Smaller ancillary projects were organized, but the cabin was the main accomplishment.

Feeding the families was under the direction of Corinne Roring, LaRue Barton, and Nina Taylor. Navajo Tacos were made by local Native Americans and served on Thursday night and then barbequed beef with top ramen salad and rhubarb crisp for dessert. We added johnny cakes for the first time with the Redds. A recipe was devised that would work on today's grills and so, sausage was added to the johnny cakes.

As the crowd was mostly fed that morning, a group of cars arrived in front of the Log Meeting House, and it was learned that Elder Gerald Lund and his group were going to have a short meeting in the church. They were also fed johnny cakes and sausage. Corey Maxwell, of Desert Book and his wife, Karen and his publicist were also in the group, along with family members retracing parts of the trail.

The Fort Speaks- 2010 "We thought this would be a 5-second stop. We have been here an hour and a half."—Florida

2009 George & Julia Hobbs Cabin (George was a scout on the Hole in the Rock mission)

On May 6th-8th, members of the George Hobbs family came to Bluff Fort. The roof over the concrete patio was nearly complete. Dale Major, cousin and contractor by trade had come to Bluff the week before to frame the roof of the Veranda. A Brother Atkinson from Ogden had come by with his two sons on the way to a family wedding in St. George and worked Wednesday afternoon and into the evening. Atkinson, a HVAC man by trade and his sons, jumped up on top and helped complete the laying the tarpaper and cut and nailed the metal roofing.





George & Julia Hobbs cabin built in May 2009.

Hobbs descendants came from California and Denver and the Wasatch front. The Caribou Log company from Nephi, UT, constructed the 14'x15' log box in Nephi from logs obtained on Cedar Mountain.

On a Thursday morning the Hobbs family gathered at the Fort to start erecting their log cabin. They dug in and removed the logs sequentially off the truck. Logs were first screwed to the pressure treated plate and then one by one the log structure began to take shape.

The grandchildren had a great time scouring the property for blue-bellied lizards. They had seven in a bottle at one time. They would watch the rock piles and the cry would go out. Joseph Taylor (8) was the lizard catching king. The log's box was completed by lunch time. A crew with tin snips cut plaster wire in strips to be nailed between the spaces of the logs.

The ridge beam was lifted into place by Kenneth and Karl Taylor and then 2-inch logs were placed to create the roof. A rubber roofing material was placed over the whole roof and then dirt was placed on top of that material. Friday morning a crew set to work mixing a mortar chinking product that they pressed between each log crack both inside and out. It was a pretty messy job and took quite a bit of time.

While the chinkers were hard at work there were two young boys that noticed the water hose dribbling behind the cabin. The water had created quite a nice puddle of mud and they began playing in it. Taylor Lewis (4) and Tyler Jones (6), Grant and Graig's grandsons respectively, began scooping up the gooey mud with their baseball caps and letting it ooze down off their heads and down their bodies. Ron Snowden our volunteer project manager noticed the boys hard at work and yelled to "turn off the water." Graig Taylor went to the

boys and looking at Ron said, “Nothing like this could happen anywhere but Bluff.” The hose was used to make the boys more presentable.

Dinner on Thursday night was Navajo Tacos. This batch of chili was made by Corinne Roring. It was learned that the dry farmed beans available at Dove Creek, Utah made the best chili and that the fry bread had to be made from Blue Bird Flour and Crisco.

Four-wheelers had been rented from Black Hawk Tours for Friday and a number of the family members went out to San Juan Hill to experience the last obstacle along the trail.

Nick, from the log company, cut the door and windows into the side walls of the cabin. Each cabin had two sash windows purchased from Jones Paint and Glass in Orem. John Cox had previously built the door and made the iron hinges and door lock in his forge. John and his son, Brandon Cox installed the door and others helped with the windows. Genan Anderson made curtains for the windows.





Samuel & Jody Wood Cabin





F.I. and Mary Mackelprang Jones Cabin. Ron Bateman photos.

The tongue and grooved floor was laid and final clean up around the cabin was done.

Friday night the group gathered with great food prepared by Nina and Dixie Taylor, LaRue Barton and others. Once again, John Cox shared his “Chicken and Rice” Dutch oven recipe for the dinner. Joana Major, the Hobbs family matriarch, and others talked about the Hobbs family that evening in the Log Meetinghouse. That night there was a campfire.

The children had been searching the Fort for blue-bellied lizards but on Friday night, Nate Taylor added a huge spade-foot toad to his brother Joseph’s collection of Fort wild life. The children had a great time in a pioneer school, chinking and catching lizards and playing with the small handcarts.

Saturday morning the family feasted on Johnny cake pancakes and a great chuck wagon breakfast. The family joined together in a meeting to dedicate the cabin in the Log Meetinghouse about 10 a.m. Singing hymns and remembering the sacrifice of George and his two sisters, Eliza-

beth Harriman and Ellen Fielding and their families made a very nice service. Graig Taylor offered the prayer of dedication. The family all agreed that it had been a great 2 ½ day family experience.

A few months later in a stake Conference in Centerville, Elder M. Russel Ballard talked about grandparents. He said that one of the responsibilities of grandparents was to make memories with their grandchildren. Soon after that talk, one of the little muddy boys, Taylor Lewis came to his grandfather Grant and asked him if he could remember when he was a "Bluff Fort Worker Boy?" With all the fun that he had had, he still felt ownership in the family project.

The Foundation had thought that it might rent cabins for lodging but when family artifacts came to the cabins, it was decided not to do that. Grant found a carpenter from Fremont, Utah who could make antique replicas. He thought that if one of the cabins was staged for other families to see that the cabins would fill with furniture and memorabilia. David Jacobson built the furniture for the Hobbs cabin. The bed was a replica of one he had seen in Orderville, Utah and the settle and dresser were made with dove-tailed joints. He was an amazing carpenter. He also repaired the furniture that was donated by Ben and Mary Donaho, that was placed in the James Redd Family Cabin.

The Platte, Adelia, & Annie; Joseph and Nellie; Walter, Sylvia, Elizabeth, Lucy, & Leah; Edward Leo & Mary Lyman and Hyrum & Rachel, Ben, Mary Ann & Sarah Perkins Cabins

On June 29, 30 and July 1, 2009, the Lyman and Perkins families joined to build two cabins. There were six Lymans that came through the Hole in the Rock and two Perkins brothers that came. They had raised more than the requisite $18,000 per cabin and gave the balance as well. They worked really hard because of the heat, and so the first day they were way ahead of schedule. The second day they had fewer workers, but the work got done and they knocked off at 3 pm. They came back on Wednesday to finish things up and dedicate the homes. Clayson Lyman and his wife Pat had spearheaded the event, but there were many other family members that were key to the fund-raising for the cabin.



Bluff Fort grounds in the spring of 2009 just prior to the Lyman and Perkins cabins being built. Fun Fact: on the Fort there were 21 wagons, 7 covered in 2023.
Erlene Taylor photo.



Cabin representing Platte, Adelia, & Annie; Joseph and Nellie; Walter, Sylvia, Elizabeth, Lucy, & Leah; Edward Leo & Mary Lyman. Ron Bateman photos.

Hyrum Perkins & Benjamin Perkins

Ben & Hyrum were Welch miners who drilled and blasted black powder in building a road through Hole in the Rock. Ben was responsible for Uncle Ben's dugway built along a cliff down to the Colorado River.

Lyman Family Cabin.

Platte was a leader of the Hole in the Rock expedition. He was the first stake president and president of the San Juan Cooperative. Walter founded Blanding, Utah. Joseph was the postmaster and superintendent of schools for San Juan County.





The pioneers roofed the cabins ". . . with thick coats of sand, which feathered out into a crop of runty sunflowers and stink weed, if the seed– had time to sprout before the wind carried the sand away. But whether it raised weeds or blew away, it never turned the rain, which dripped dismally from it long after the sky was clear." Albert R. Lyman, *History of San Juan County*, 1918, unpublished. Utah State Historical Society.



Ben, Mary Ann, & Sarah; Hyrum & Rachel Perkins Cabin.

2009 October, Parley & Ency Butt, Samuel & Jody Wood, and F. I. & Mary Jones Cabins

In 2009, Graig and Grant Taylor guided a second group of Sons of the Utah Pioneers on a Southern Utah, Arizona trip. Dee Resinae hosted the SUP. They visited the wagon museum in Cedar City, and Pipe Springs Tithing Fort. They lunched at Jacob Lake and then bedded down in Page. They took a morning flight to the Hole in the Rock and Grey Mesa and also had a rafting trip down the Colorado to Lee's Ferry. They stayed at the Desert Rose Motel and Cabins and then had dinner at Salvation Knoll, catered Dutch Oven and then time at the Fort. Graig and Grant stayed in Bluff and the tour went back to Salt Lake City.



Ency Butt Memorial.

On Saturday morning June 6th, Graig met Fred Jones on the Fort property. Fred had gotten wind of the cabin building and had come to Bluff. As the two brothers talked with Fred, he said that he was triply related to Hole in the Rock Pioneers. Parley and Ency Butt, Jody and Sam Wood and to F.I. and Mary Jones. He said that he would like to have his family build 3 cabins. They told Fred that it would cost $18,000 per cabin and if he wanted a chimney, it would cost $3,000 more per cabin. Fred said that he wanted to pay for the cabins and just have his family come to help build. Fred asked if they wanted the check that day or were they willing to wait. Fred wrote out a check for $45,000 that day. He also looked over the fort and realized that we were missing ownership of one of the corners and so offered another $50,000 to help us buy the Johnson Property. He promised to continue his friendship. The next year money was needed to put the adobe on the Relief Society Building. Fred was asked and gave $9,000 to finish the exterior of that building.

Fred talked to his aunt Kathern Marks to see if she would be willing to gather the work party. Kathern had just lost her husband but was willing to take up the charge. The Foundation crew had the three concrete pads poured, the week before the raising. Graig and Grant, both legally-blind got on their knees to screed the concrete as the fresh concrete was poured in the forms. They would call out "left, right, left right, and back" to smooth the concrete. LaMar Helquist and Ron Snowden looked on and helped with setting the bolts and final finishing of the pads.

The logs arrived from Nephi late the night before after having mechanical difficulty along the way. The end of each log was labeled and so they were unloaded by each pad and Thursday morning the descendant crew showed up ready for a couple of hard day's work. They had arranged with Ben Black of Blackhawk Tours for ATV rides out to San Juan Hill. Workers were pulled off the crew in turn so that they were all able to make the trek.

Kathern went on an ATV behind Ben to San Juan Hill. She related this story. After the passing of her husband, she missed him terribly. When she was needing reassurance, she would step outside her door and see a contrail or hear an airplane and knowing of her husband's love of flying in a B52 bomber in WWII, airplanes seemed to bring peace and solace to her. She rode out to San Juan Hill and as she and Ben were riding back, Ben stopped to wait for the rest of the crew. Kathern told Ben of how airplanes seemed to bring her peace. She had hoped for some sort of a sign from her husband that he knew of all the work of getting her



Jens, Elsie & Kirsten Nielson Family Cabin was built in May 2010. Jens was the bishop of the Bluff Ward for 26 years.

Jens Nielson Cabin Interior.





Charles & Jane Walton Family Cabin and School Replica—Exterior and Interior. It was built in May 2010. Charles Walton taught school in the Log Meetinghouse. Ron Bateman photos.

"They built their houses joining a hollow square covering, about three acres, with all doors and windows on the inside. Peepholes or portholes in the back of houses to look from the fort in all directions. Four heavy gates wide enough to admit a wagon opened into each corner of the fort, and a log meeting house stood in the north center looking south." Albert R. Lyman. *Improvement Era*, April 1949.



family together, but nothing had come. Ben looked up into the beautiful blue sky and nudged Kathern. There in the clouds, without need for too much imagination, was a cloud that looked much like a B52 bomber. Tears came to her eyes and when she and Ben looked again the cloud airplane was changing shape. Kathern was touched by this experience and knew that she had been blessed with a special experience in San Juan County.





Decker Cabin representing Zechariah & Emma; Zechariah Jr. & Laura; James & Anna; Cornelius & Elizabeth; Nathaniel & Emma was built in October 2010. Ron Bateman photos.

Food was prepared by LaRue, Nina and other volunteers keeping the work crews close by. They worked Thursday getting the logs all laid and spiked together. Doors and window openings were cut and filled, floors laid and roofs completed. Saturday morning they were ready to dedicate the three cabins. The schedule was completed with ease. A pioneer school was held and lots of things to do kept all busily engaged.

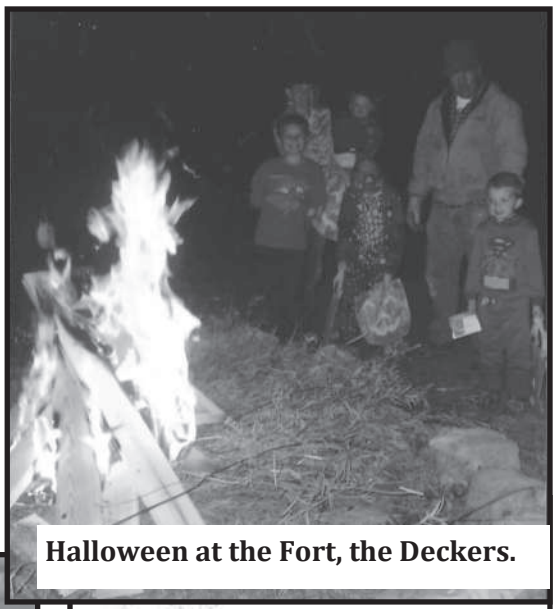
Saturday morning after a Johnny Cake breakfast, the family moved to the Log Meetinghouse. Hymns rang out of the little reed pump organ that had been donated by the Slades, accompanied the congregation. Talks were given and a prayer of dedication offered. Fred Jones commissioned Dave Jacobsen, of Fremont, to build the furniture for the Butt cabin. Other family members brought family furniture and artifacts to furnish the three cabins. Herbs were hung in Jody's cabin to remind of her mid-wifery skills. When cabin messages were being composed, Fred found a diary entry from Parley's daughter that described the events leading up to the death of Ency. Jessica, Fred's daughter was the English voice. Fred procured the obelisk from Ency's original grave marker. Unfortunately, It slipped and cracked. Fred decided to create a copy for the Fort and return the original to her grave site in Verdure, Utah. It was a great family reunion and experience of creating a way to remember their ancestors.

Decker Family Cabin—Built October 29-31, 2010

Miracles began to be pretty commonplace while re-creating Bluff Fort. Corinne told Grant Taylor that he could find a bunch of Deckers around Cortez, CO. Grant was working on getting families to come and build the replica cabins. While skimming down the phone listings for Deckers, Grant's finger stopped on Danny. A phone call was made and Grant explained to Annette what the Foundation was trying to do with the log cabins. She turned the phone to her husband Danny, and Grant asked Danny who might be the patriarch of the family that

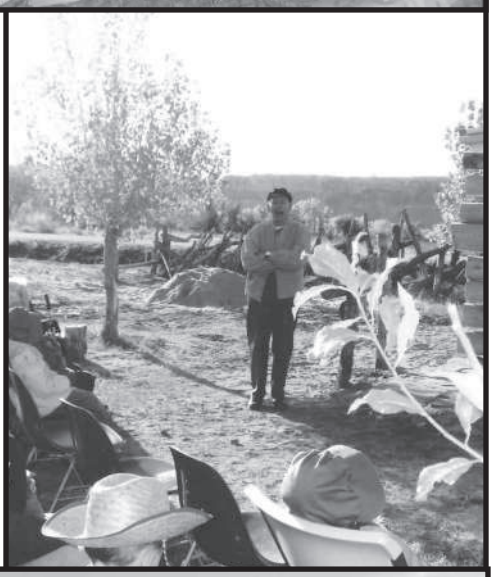


2010 October 28, logs arriving for the Decker Cabin building project.



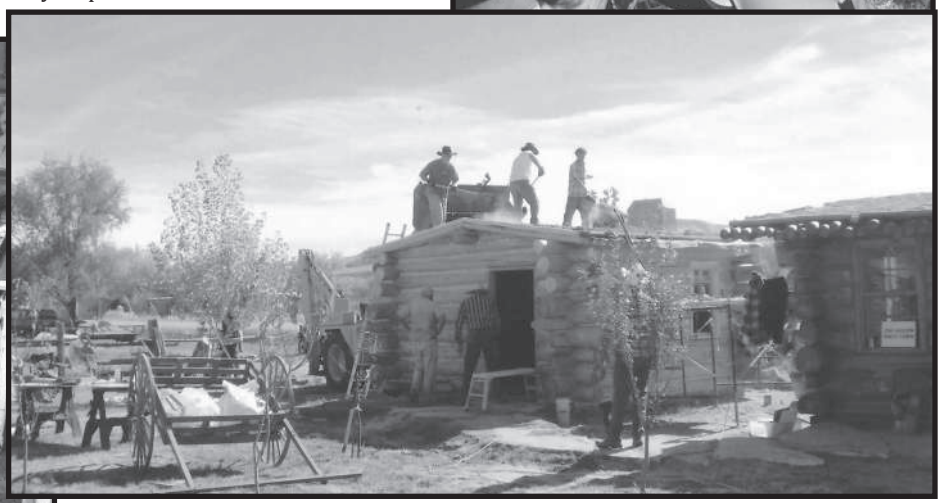
Halloween at the Fort, the Deckers.





Deckers singing "I Am a Child of God." Grant Taylor speaking at the Decker Cabin Dedication.
Erlene Taylor photos.





Left- Sign painter Grant L. Taylor helped with flooring. Deckers applying rubber matting and dirt to the roof.

could help get a cabin built for the Decker's. Danny said, "I guess that would be me."

The Deckers brought their crew to Bluff. They brought so many people that other projects were also planned for them to help with. Additional sprinkler lines were laid to water more trees and shrubbery. One of the Decker boys manned the trencher and made light work of the sprinkler addition.

In review, by October of 2008, three cabin replicas had been raised: Thales Haskell, Barton Blacksmith Shop, and James Monroe Redd cabins. The next year 2009, in April the Lemuel H Redd Jr. cabin was built, George Hobbs cabin in May, and the Lyman (Platte, Walter, Joseph and Edward) and Perkins (Hiram and Ben) cabins were built in June. In October of 2009, unbelievably, three cabins went up, the Frederick Jones cabin; Samuel Wood cabin; and Parley Butt cabin. Everything was finished in time for the dedication of the John Taylor monument on October 24th, 2009. By May of 2010 two more cabins were built by descendants of Jens Nielsen and Charles Eugene Walton, and that fall the Deckers joined forces to honor their ancestors (James, Cornelius, Nathaniel and Zachariah Sr. and Jr.) with their cabin. By spring of 2011 the Bayles family was ready to fill the final spot.





Hanson, Mary Ann, and Evelyn Bayles Family cabin and interior at Bluff Fort.
Ron Bateman photos.

The logs arrived from Nephi on Wednesday night, and Thursday morning the Decker family showed up with gloves in hand, ready for a couple days of hard work. The Decker cabin anchors the south-east corner of the hallowed-square. On Thursday logs were off-loaded and laid up and spiked creating the log box. Door and window openings were cut and installed. Friday chinking, roofing and pine floor installation took place. John Cox of Orem made the door and it was hung with special hardware. By Saturday morning the stone path and hitching post had been installed. One of the family members had made a carved wooden sign. The dedication was held by the cabin. Hymns were sung. Grant Taylor thanked the family for their hard work and determination. Danny dedicated the cabin and the deed was done. It was a remarkable experience for each of the families who came;





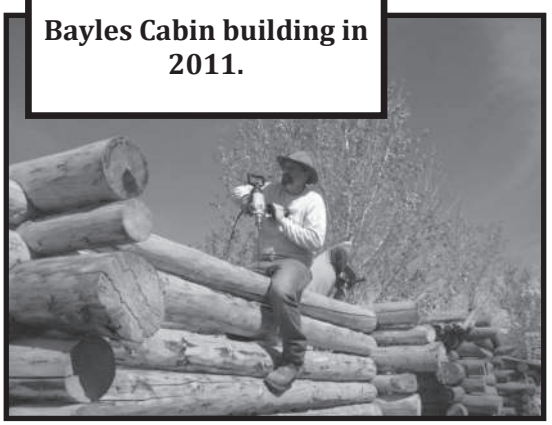
Foundation & mudding the roof of the Hanson Bayles Cabin, April 11, 2011.



Bayles Cabin building in 2011.



Chinking the Decker Cabin.



Photos Janet Wilcox & Erlene Taylor.



Kitchen help to feed the crew– Nina Taylor, LaRue Barton, Corinne Roring.



Laying the cabin floor.

being together with aunts, uncles and cousins and making a place where stories could be told and memories made.

Hanson, Mary Ann, & Evelyn Bayles (pronounced Bayless) Family Cabin

"On the morning of April 21st, 2011, after an early breakfast prepared by the wonderful folks of the Hole in the Rock Foundation, construction began on the Hanson Bayles cabin at Bluff Fort. What turned out to be the work project by Hanson's grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren turned out to be a Hanson Bayles labor of love project. A large number of family members with their construction tools and skills flocked to the Bluff Fort and immediately began to work on the construction as well as doing other tasks to help the effort.

"Grandchildren of Hanson attending were Marion Bayles, John Bayles, Donald Bayles, Lloyd Bayles, Gail Hope Passey, Merene Holt Buck, Willa Ray Holt, Jocelyn Bayles Johnson, Dwayne Bayles, Peggy Bayles Palmer, Joel Bayles and Georgia Bayles Black.

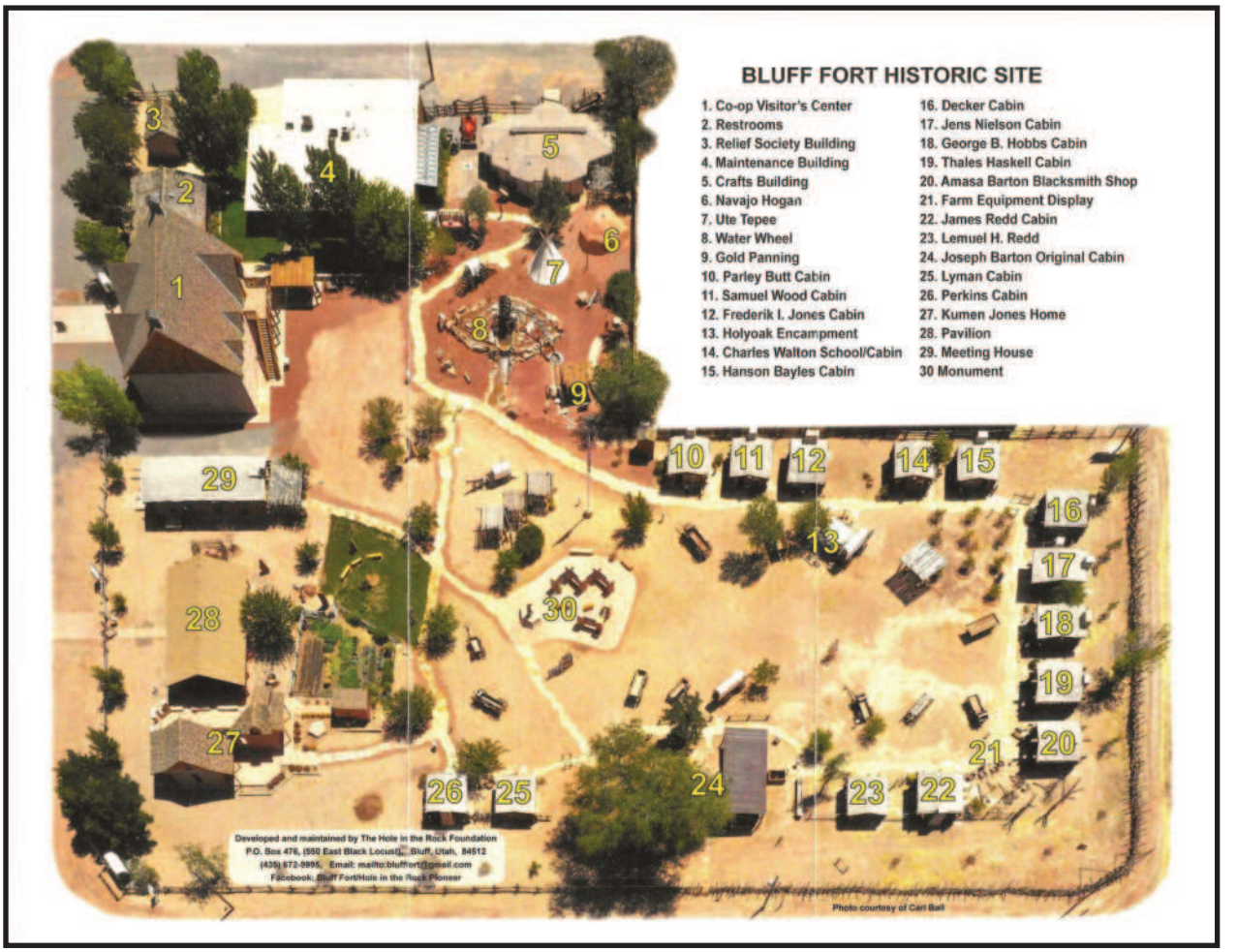
"All family attending had an awesome three-day experience. Everyone was kept busy working on the cabin, helping in the kitchen, working in the garden and on the new restrooms."

"Dwayne 's family outdid themselves entertaining the little ones, keeping them busy with activities—making rag dolls, pet rocks, cowboy hats, listening to stories, playing marbles, making pioneer covered wagons with Twinkies, and working their little hearts out chinking, mudding and staining the logs. The dolls were donated to the Fort gift shop to be sold, which helped with their operating expenses.

"Dwayne Bayles conducted the dedication services held in the meeting house on Saturday morning. Kevin Palmer gave the opening prayer, Lloyd Bayles gave a history of Hanson, Marianne Durham and Evelyn Lyman and their families. Mark Bayles, the first patriarch in his family gave the dedicatory prayer.

"The finishing touches to the cabin made it all come alive with portraits of Hanson, Mary Ann and Evelyn brought by John Bayles. The quilt on the bed was made by Mickey Palmer and she lovingly named it "Aunt Mary's Garden". Before they left, they even heated up the forge at the Barton blacksmith shop and branded the door. No question as to whose cabin it was with the HB brand on the front door. Saturday afternoon the family went to San Juan Hill and also up to the cemetery.

"The Hanson Bayles family expressed a special thanks to Corinne Roring and the Hole in the Rock Foundation for providing us the opportunity to be a part of this spiritual event honoring our ancestor and his families in his calling to the San Juan Mission. Thank you, Corinne, for allowing our family to be a part of your vision of the Bluff Fort. It was an incredible and awesome experience and gave us a chance to get reacquainted with our family. The hospitality was great, and the food prepared by the Hole in the Rock Foundation was the best." By Janet Keeler Wilcox and Peggy Bayles Palmer (Granddaughter of Hanson and Evelyn Lyman Bayles).



Location of the cabins and all other Bluff Fort displays in 2024. (From a brochure.)

"The unity among the people, coming out with no conveniences, and yet they were just as happy as they could be."

-- Sarah Williams

Audio Cabin Messages

Grant was contacted by a company which offered a service allowing visitors to use their cell phones to hear messages around the Fort. A neighbor of Grant's told him about a summer internship through Stanford University that allowed students to work on historical projects. Jonathan Pulsipher came to Bluff and we tried to immerse him in the stories. His family were Hales from the Hale theater people. Jonathan worked up some story scripts, but they didn't quite fit the feeling.

Grant, LaRue and Karl Barton had been talking about a message for the Barton Cabin. Nina and Grant went to visit LaRue at the Huntsman Cancer Institute, and Grant used his laptop as they brainstormed together. After the restoration of the Barton Cabin, Lamont Crabtree made up some story boards which included the great family group picture of the Barton family. Before the passing of Grant and Nina's son Michael in August of 2010, they had taken a picture of their whole family at their son Mark's wedding reception. Grant realized that these two photos had something in common. They were the last photograph of that family when all would be in it. Mike passed six weeks after the photo was taken. Similarly, Harriet Barton passed away within a year of the Barton family photo. LaRue had placed a rocking chair next to the bed in the cabin and this gave Grant the idea of Hannie, the oldest daughter telling the story.

Like many of the stories that Grant wrote, it was almost a revelatory experience. The words just flowed reflecting the oldest daughter talking to her mother in the photo, sharing her loss and the difficulties of taking over the mothering of all those little siblings. It was amazing that Grant and Nina's loss gave Grant the empathy to create this touching pioneer story. A month later Dick Jacobs and Kassie Barton Welch recorded the story. LaRue found a letter that Hannie had written to her grandparents, the Richards, in Paragonah. In the letter she reflected on the death of her mother and there were tremendous similarities in the texts of both the letter and the script. The languages came later.

Dick Jacobs, a retired electrical engineer, formerly employed by the audio-visual department for the LDS Church for over 30 years, helped with all the recordings. We used the descendants' voices of Vinnie Harker (Eliza Redd), Elaine and Frank Rowley (Perkins), Fred Jones' granddaughter Jessica (Ency Butt), Paul, Joseph and Nathan Taylor (Hobbs), Connie Jacobs (RS Building), Mark Taylor (Bayles & other), Jack Powers (Monument and Waterwheel), Burnis Skinner (Meetinghouse) Nina Taylor (Decker), Even Madsen (Jens Nielson) and others. These descendants were so good to help us with recording the stories.

Trudy and John Franco DeAngeles translated Italian. Peter Mueller, Ante Uchtdorf Evans, and Sabastian Buck were our German translators. Adrian Demartin and his wife Beatrice were most of our Spanish voices. Lucas Sosa also helped with Spanish. It required a lot of recording time and then lots more time for Dick to edit the scripts for six languages that he didn't know. His wife Connie would remove the repeats by getting the spacing just right when the audio needed splicing.

I, Grant sat down one evening to write about George Hobbs, my great grandfather. I prayerfully considered the stories that I knew about him and his experiences with the Company. As I began to type the words flowed and so did the tears. I realized that each one of the messages could only be about ½ page single spaced. Well, the words and stories just

kept coming. It was as if Grandpa George was by my side. The idea came to use my oldest son for the first story recordings and then his two young sons, 9 and 11. The two stories that Joe and Nathan recorded are amazing the way they used phrases like “skedaddled down, or high tailed it back.” Buttons #6 and #7 tell these stories.

Fred Jones, when contacted about a story, had just found a letter that Ency’s daughter had written in her journal about the day her mother passed away. Jessica was a great voice for that story and it is a great beginning as the visitors start their visit to the cabins. I worked with Danny and Annette Decker, of Cortez, on the Anna Marie story of losing her husband and children to diphtheria. There were tears and a thinning of the veil experience creating that story with the Deckers.



Audio buttons provide pioneer stories in six languages. Buttons shown are at the Relief Society building door.

Dick Jacobs designed a very effective push button system so visitors to the cabins could listen to stories in their own language. Example below.
Ron Bateman photos.



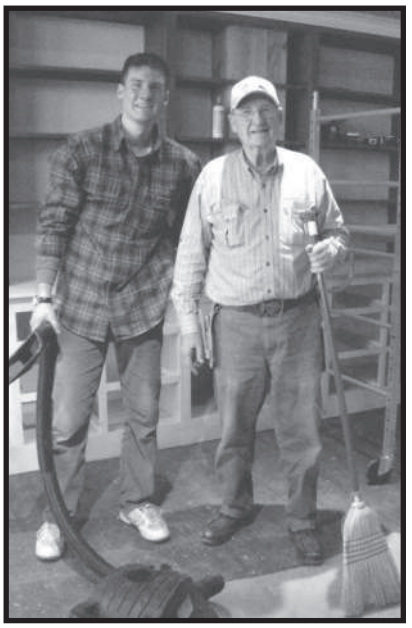
Jack Powers (see more extensive description in Chapter Four Volunteers.)

Jack Powers, Fort carpenter, is the present voice at the monument and John Taylor and the water wheel. Jack's voice has a raspy and mature sound that helps to tell the story.

We tried a cell phone system of listening to the stories for a time, but Dick Jacobs came up with an idea. He annually would go to the Computer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. He found a small amplifier and chip reader. Jack built little boxes in which the components would fit. Dick wired each cabin with an inside speaker as well as a switch to turn on or off an exterior speaker. Jack hid the speaker by the ridge beam of the cabins. Jack and Dick created a button pad with seven buttons. Languages were added to each button over the ensuing years. During the Covid epidemic the buttons were solar sterilized between pushings and so it afforded visitors a way to hear stories even with the Co-op closed.

Jack created so many wonderful items for the Fort. I, Grant asked Don Enders, historical restorationist, who worked for the LDS Church, if there was someone who might know about pottery and tinware used during the 1880's who could help with the cabins. Don suggested that I contact Jack Powers, Jr. Nina and I went to Charleston, Utah to meet with him and he suggested that his dad might want to become involved. Jr was in his early 60's and so I didn't think his dad would be of much use, but I was impressed to call him.

He agreed to help. In a tiny PUD (planned unit development) garage he turned out works of art for the Fort, including a buffet cabinet, two podiums, one with a retractable TV inside, end tables, picnic tables and benches, benches with backs for upstairs and all of the organizational cabinetry in the Co-op Gift Shop. He made packing boxes and small boxes to sit on in Room #2. Trailer after trailer found it's way from Farmington, Utah to Bluff Fort. He was a great friend of the Fort and his wife Vaunna allowed him to build as long as she could park her car back in the garage at night. Most nights it worked and a neighbor across the development allowed him to store wood and finished product in her garage. Jack died in 2023 at age 93.



Jack Powers and grandson.
Courtesy of Erlene Taylor

Sorenson Legacy Foundation

In the spring of 2008, a trip was planned to go into Cottonwood Canyon. Miles Lignell, a friend of Grant's was the leader of the pack, with Graig Taylor, Lamont Crabtree, and Grant Taylor from the HIRF Board. Laurel Casjiens came from the Utah Office of Museum Services. A friend of Miles Fitzpatrick came and brought his friend Joseph Sorenson.

We met up at Lake Canyon under large cottonwood trees. Joe Sorenson pulled up in his late model Hummer. Miles was having mechanical difficulties, and we were late getting off the next morning. Since Graig and Grant are legally blind, they traded off riding with different vehicles. Graig and Grant rode with Joseph. They were both helping to raise funds for the Fort project. Joe learned the story



Dick Jacobs built the new electronics systems to show all three Hole in the Rock movies, one with various languages in both the visitors center and in the Log Meeting House. Photo from 2017 missionary memory book.

Jack Powers made the cabinet that raises and lowers the TV in the Log Meeting House.
Ron Bateman photos.







Jack Powers built and installed counters for the partially hidden cash registers in the Co-op.

Photos from 2017 missionary memory book.



of the San Juan Mission. Grant asked Joe if Graig and he could meet with him when they got back to civilization. Joe agreed. It took Grant about three months to garner courage to make the call. Joe was glad to hear from his jeeping buddies. They met in Joe's office in Murray and talked about plans at Bluff Fort. When Graig told Joe that John Taylor was the prophet that extended the call, he said that he was related to him. In fact, Joe's middle name was Taylor.

Joe said that he thought his mother would also be interested and so arrangements were made to bring lunch to her home from Paradise Cafe. Beverley liked tomato basil soup and turkey cranberry sandwiches for lunch. LaMar Helquist, Grant and Graig Taylor came to the meeting. They met around Beverley's round table and talked about Bluff Fort and what the Hole in the Rock Foundation was trying to do to share the story of the San Juan pioneers. Beverley turned to her assistant, Lisa, and asked if it was too late to submit a grant application for the 1st quarter. It was about December 2nd and the deadline was December 1st. Lisa told Beverley that she could do anything she wanted and so we worked hard over the next couple of days, getting all the paperwork together and submitted a grant. We were astounded when we found out that Sorenson Legacy Foundation was willing to give HIRF $150,000 for Fort development. That was exactly what was needed to help the cabin building phase at the Fort.

The grant acted as a perpetual cabin building fund. Some families didn't quite meet their assessment to build their cabins by the date set for the building project. It allowed the HIRF to continue building 2 to 3 cabins per year even in a recession.

Each year after, projects were defined and voted on by the board and applications for grant monies were submitted to the Sorenson Legacy Foundation. Through their generosity, building projects were completed. Church service missionaries helped stretched the dollars by constructing many projects without paid labor. Projects included: the co-op store/visitor center, a veranda pad and awning at the shed, "If These Walls Could Talk" video, water wheel & gold panning, John Taylor Statue & Monument Plaza, kitchen remodel and laundry room, pavilions at Camp Stickie-ta-Tudy, restrooms at Stickie, an irrigation system and landscaping.

John Taylor Statue Dedication

In February of 2009, Grant was at "Museum Day" at the Utah State Capitol Rotunda. The Hole in the Rock Foundation had a table top display showing the coming of the co-op. Senator Dennis Stowell from Cedar City came by with his friend Stanley Johnson. The senator asked if we wanted to see this small statue of President John Taylor. Stan was an artist from Parowan and had a Marquette of John Taylor. Senator Stowell said that Bluff Fort might need a statue of the prophet who called the San Juan missionaries. I borrowed the statue and took it to Joe Sorenson. He was very proud of his great grandfather and thought it might be appropriate to present to his mother for her birthday. Stan said that it would cost $30,000 to create the statue. He went to work.

One day he came to Salt Lake and we were going to visit Beverley to make sure that the bust looked okay. She had offered two pictures of President Taylor. One was a photograph and the other a painting, a favorite of the family.

Stan and I met Beverley at her home in Murray. The bust had many of the facial qualities of Stan and not John. Beverley suggested that we work on it at her home. We went to Beverley's deceased husband James' north bedroom and worked. Beverley checked in and Stan worked on. Finally, he felt pretty good about changes he had made and the visiting teachers came.



JOHN TAYLOR STATUE DEDICATION OCTOBER 24, 2009

In October 2009, a cement slab was built on which the John Taylor statue was placed.



Dell Taylor, the sculptor Stan Johnson, & a worker getting ready to remove the statue from the truck.
Photos by Erlene Taylor.



Native American girls, who danced for the dignitaries ate under the veranda.



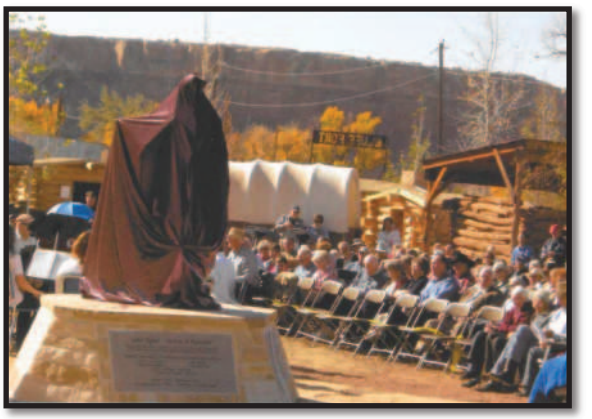
Brothers Grant L. and Dell Taylor, brothers Graig and Grant Taylor, unknown, & Ron Snowden installing the rock slab on which the statue will rest. Having two Grant Taylors at the Bluff Fort provided many fun moments, especially when names were called out and the two men answered at the same time, according to Erlene Taylor.



Installing the mounts & setting the statue on the base.

Beverley invited them to look at the bust and the pictures, and they told her they thought it was a great likeness of her grandfather.

Stan finished the statue in Parowan and then it was cast at the Adonis Foundry in Salt Lake. The Foundation created a plinth for the statue to placed. Graig composed and had a monument company complete bullet points that described President Taylor and his life. The monument company had never done a bullet point on a monument. Graig loved bullet points. Corinne found a stone slab in Monticello that could top the plinth.



A shroud was covering the Taylor statue.

A dedication was planned for October. Beverley thought that a General Authority might be asked to come and dedicate the monument. She suggested Elder L. Tom Perry. His wife Barbara was from the 2nd wife of John Taylor and a good friend of Beverley's.



Elder L. Tom Perry speaking at the John Taylor monument dedication, said "You think you're done, but you are just beginning." Grant Taylor looking on. Covered statue is right of Elder Perry. Erlene Taylor photos.

We had to check find a runway long enough to land their jet, but President Hinckley had come to the Blanding Airport a few years earlier in the Huntsman jet. Governor Gary Herbert was invited to come as well.

It was a beautiful day for a dedication. Ben Black had a nice minibus in which Graig and Grant picked up Beverley, James Jr and his wife, Nina, Joe and Kathleen Sorenson, along with Governor Gary Herbert, and Elder L. Tom Perry. On the bus ride to Bluff, Graig and Grant shared the itinerary for the day. There was not a great entrance to the Fort yet and so they came through the cowboy cabin porch. They were fed breakfast and then some Native American girls danced for them by the veranda. They walked to a few cabins and then it was time for the dedication to begin. Grant Taylor conducted the meeting. A stage was erected out of risers in front of the stone monuments. Stanley Johnson and his wife Polly had a large drape arranged over the statue. Over 650 people were in attendance.

Mary Jane Woodger, a professor at BYU gave a brief bio of the prophet John Taylor (see Appendix). James Sorenson sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief" using the original melody and then the common one used today. He accompanied himself on his guitar. Then the Governor spoke and then Elder L. Tom Perry, Apostle for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints spoke. He said that Beverley had called his wife Barbara and asked what he might be doing the weekend after October Conference. Beverley descends from the 7th wife



Beverley Taylor Sorensen, major benefactor of Bluff Fort. Obituary photo.



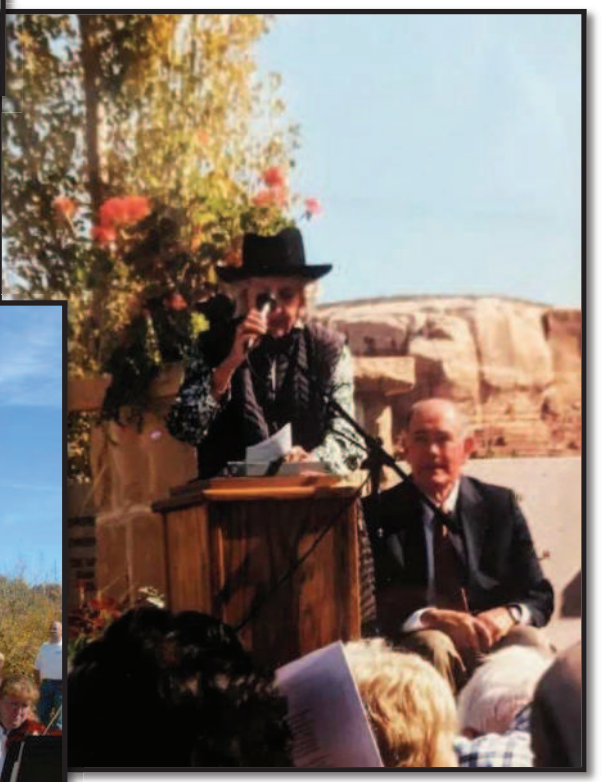
Elder L. Tom Perry, Governor Gary Herbert, & the Sorensen family were fed breakfast on the Cowboy Cabin porch. Photos by Erlene Taylor



Beverley Sorenson after she unveiled the statue. Corinne Roring photo.



John Taylor descendants were on hand to commemorate this tribute to President John Taylor who issued the call to the Hole-in-the-Rock Pioneers in 1879. Elder Tom Perry dedicated the statue. Left to right– Joseph & James Sorensen, Governor Gary Herbert, Beverley Sorensen, Elder L. Tom Perry, and Stan Johnson the sculptor.



Corinne Roring speaking at the dedication. Grant Taylor who conducted is behind her. Erlene Taylor stated that "Corinne is quite the 'young at heart lady.' She reminds me of what Annie Oakley may have been like. Plus, she can outwork any of us volunteers. We really enjoy her company and friendship."



President John Taylor.

wife of President Taylor. Elder Perry knew that he was booked for the dedication. He said that from time to time it is appropriate to raise an Ebenezer to our God. His booming voice with the pageant sound system borrowed from the Blanding Stake was wonderful to hear. After the monument was dedicated by Elder Perry, the Sorenson family gathered around the statue and with a little help, Beverley pulled the drape from the statue.

Pictures were taken and then the dignitaries were ushered back to their bus. Ben Black had two Ford Expeditions and some ATV's for the dignitaries to ride out to San Juan Hill. A lunch was served at the site of the Rincone Trading post, including sandwiches and LaRue's famous potato salad. Pictures were taken at the bottom of the hill. James and Nina were the first ones back to the highway. They did have a good time. They were a little worried about getting back to the plane and to Provo for a BYU football game. Rumor had it that they arrived with plenty of time to make it to the game.

It was a lovely day and the events went off without a hitch, thanks to all the helpers with food, set up and takedown, sound and stage. It was amazing how many cars lined the streets around the Fort. Everyone had come for a fun day. They brought their own chairs and hats to protect from the sun.

Corinne Roring wrote in the 2009 HIRF newsletter: "At the end of the John Taylor Monument dedication day, when all were gone and the Fort was empty, the sky turned into a brilliant, soft red and orange desert sunset. A quiet, calm light fell upon the statue with the hand pointing to the wall of our ancestors'' names, and all was well . . . All was well. I stood there in the twilight of that place with tears falling and a thankful heart for my Jens and Kirsten (Nielson), my Charles and Jane (Walton), my Fred and Mary (Jones) and for you and all yours. I knew it was all worth it, they are worth it. I believe they approve, and that is good. Yes, this humble little Fort was meant to be, and the time is now. And your support and your hard work are making it a lasting memorial to them."



Crowd after the dedication.
Erlene Taylor photo.



Elder L. Tom Perry and Corinne Roring.

Relief Society Building Renovation in 2010

Corinne Roring pulled the framed structure that had been the second Relief Society building in Bluff to the middle of the Fort. She and her grandson Craig took off the asbestos covering and began applying wood shingles to it. The floor was buckled and it looked a site. Some thought it should just be torched, but LaMar Helquist and his brother Lyle wanted to have a go at it. A concrete pad was poured on the northeast corner of the fort. LaMar and Lyle went to work straightening and leveling the floor. It was insulated and sheet-rocked. Joe Branden wired and mudded the rock. Lyle re-worked the cabinet in the building.

We needed money to stone the building and approached Fred Jones. He gave us $9000. Just before we were to stone it, LaRue Barton found a letter from Jens Nielson to Joseph Barton on his mission that said that the Relief Society sisters had the adobe and shingles ready to complete their building. He also said that he donated $50 for chairs. Roy Madison from LaVerkin was helping stone some fireplaces and chimneys on the cabins. He had repaired the Brigham Young Winter Home in St. George, which was adobe. He made the bricks in LaVerkin with a pinkish cast and reported that he had them all done, but we hadn't gotten the money to pay for the project. Fred came on board and the building received its adobe exterior with rock window ledges. Shingles were applied and the building turned into a wonderful little structure. Lamar put in pine plank flooring and pink landscape roses were planted with lilacs on the east to adorn the little building.



The Relief Society Building was moved to the fort on April 11, 2003 from the Clarence Johnson homesite. It was originally situated on the southeast part of the Fort, near the present site of the waterwheel. It was moved to its present site in 2010.



Bluff Relief Society Building was refurbished in 2010. Right: March 28, 2010 adobe brick was added.
Photos by Erlene Taylor.

Bluff Branch President – LeRoy Earl Burnett



LeRoy Earl Burnett, pictured above with his wife, Maurine, was transferred to Bluff, Utah, in the 1950's by the Utah Power and Light Company. His job was installing power to Bluff, White Mesa, and the surrounding areas. Soon after being transferred, he was called to preside over the Bluff Branch. The Branch met in a little one-room rock building that was heated by a pot-bellied stove. Members of the branch would drape a cloth material across the room in an effort to separate it for different classes, including Relief Society.

After doing this for many years President Burnett said, "The sisters need their own Relief Society room where they can leave up their quilts and do Relief Society things." This led to President Burnett, along with his family and a few brethren from the area, building the new Relief Society building.



The sisters now had their own place. It sat behind the old one-room rock church house for years and was used to the fullest. Words cannot describe the love and joy this brought to the sisters and the branch.

LeRoy lost his life two short years later (March 2, 1961), at age 32, wiring the power to the new saw-mill in Blanding. His family continues to reside in San Juan County. The little one-room Relief Society building was remodeled and brought to the Bluff Fort where it continues to be enjoyed today.

- Submitted by Donna Burnett Arthur, daughter

This plaque hangs in the Bluff Fort Relief Society building detailing its' history.

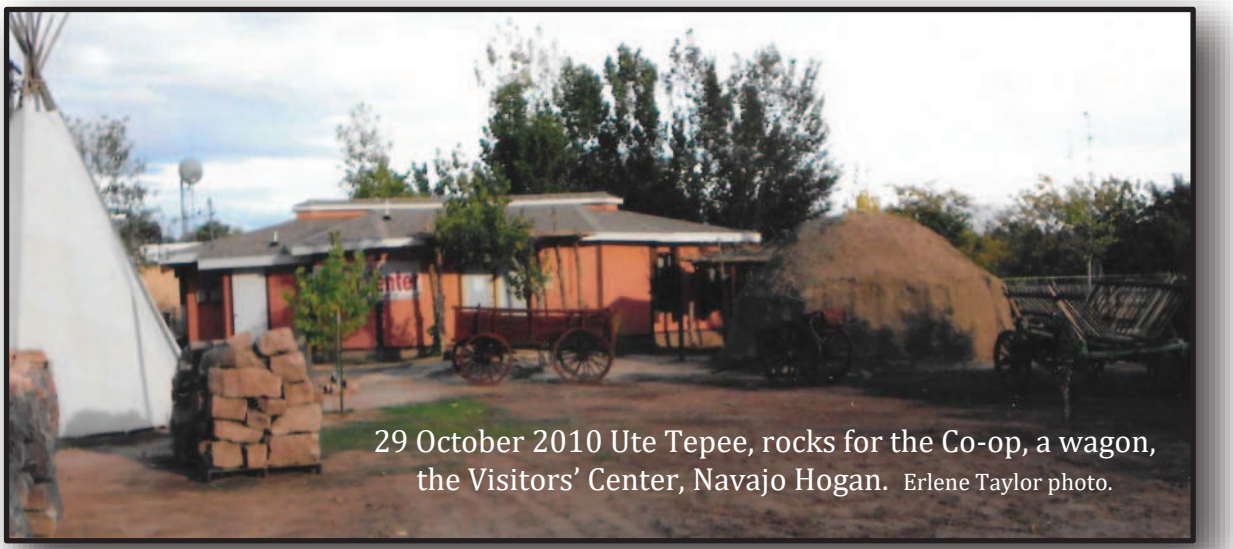


The Relief Society building with one of Grant L. Taylors' hand-drawn, hand-painted signs.

Grant L. Taylor stained the roof of the Relief Society building, also.

Ron Bateman photos.



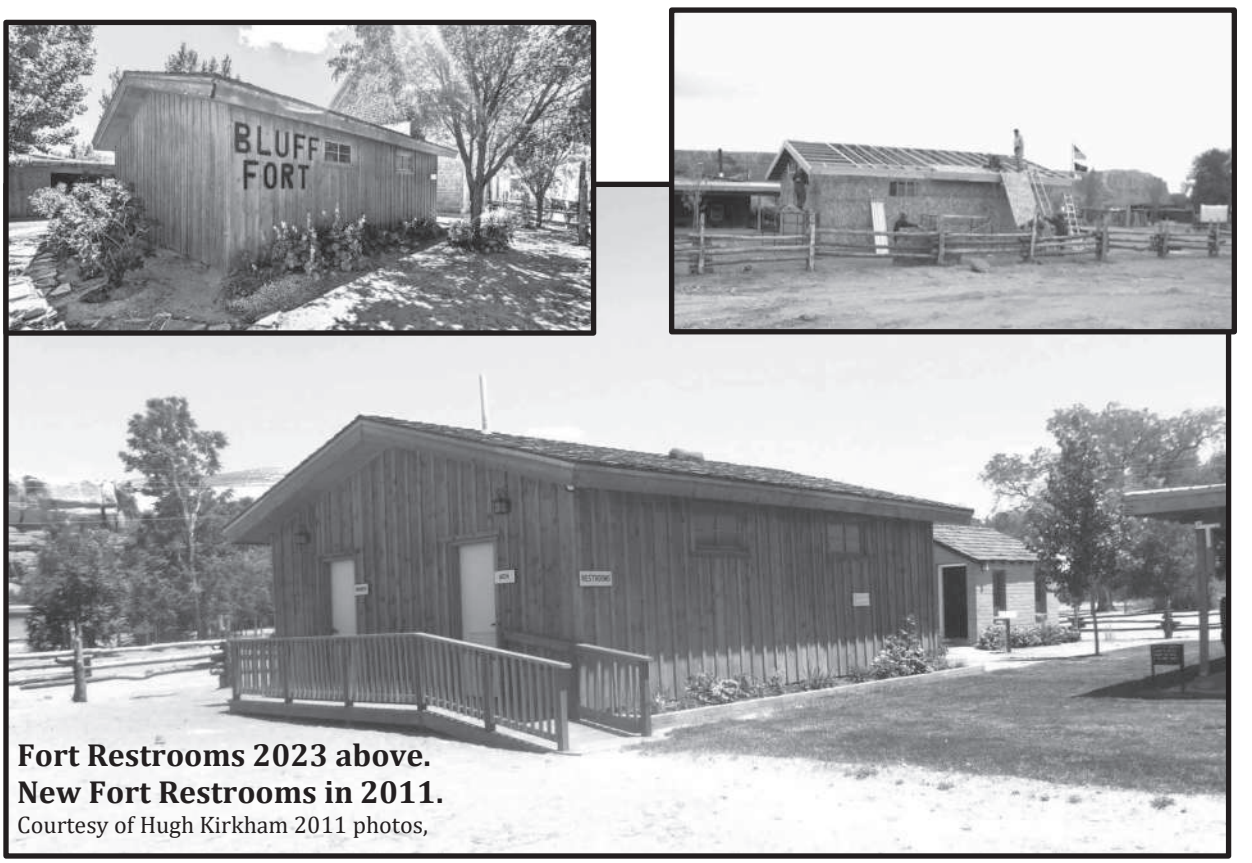


29 October 2010 Ute Tepee, rocks for the Co-op, a wagon, the Visitors' Center, Navajo Hogan. Erlene Taylor photo.

Bluff Fort Provides Pause That Refreshes

It doesn't take flashing lights, carnivals, and donut shops to entice tourists and buses to stop. Having a spacious, clean bathroom facility ranks right at the top of important musts. Imagine how amazed the original Hole-in-the-Rock Pioneers would be to return to San Juan County and find a luxurious bathroom facility at Bluff Fort. Changing tables, running water, and private stalls for both men and women are a far cry from bushes and cliffs where pioneers sought bathroom privacy a century ago. Bus tours, youth groups, families and other tourists who visit Bluff Fort today now enjoy a convenience that was never even imagined 130 years ago.

The restroom foundation and cement slab were built by Hurst construction, and Redd mechanical installed the plumbing. A group of volunteers under the expert guidance of Ron Snowden put up the walls and ceiling beams and covered them with plywood. Construction continued through last winter (of 2011} and then in March when the Bayles family came to build their cabin. Part of the group put up the siding on the restroom. Tiles on the walls and floor finished off the pristine facility, a far cry from the two seaters of earlier times. Its completion can now qualify Bluff Fort as a designated stop for bus tours going through San Juan County." Written by Janet K. Wilcox (http://blandingbitspieces.blogspot.com/2011



Fort Restrooms 2023 above.
New Fort Restrooms in 2011.
Courtesy of Hugh Kirkham 2011 photos,

CHAPTER THREE
Miracle of the San Juan Cooperative
"Jewel of the Fort"

The pioneer co-op store was located on the northeast corner of the fort. The cooperative venture, which provided a means for buying, selling and trading became very successful. The Navajos and Utes also frequented the store, trading their wool, pelts and woven goods. Near the turn of the century, the log structure was replaced with a two-story stone building. The upper floor of the new store was used as the community's dance hall. Jens Nielson said the first holiday dance was held in the co-op in December of 1899. In 1925, robber alias Fred Starr used too many sticks of dynamite when attempting to open the safe. His actions caused the demise of both the co-op and Fred Starr.

Finally, the day had arrived for the long awaited Co-op to be built. Author Janet Wilcox explains:

"Governor Gary Herbert promised Corrine Roring last Wednesday, that not only would he 'polish his dancing shoes' for next year's promised dedication of the Bluff Co-op, but that he would 'start practicing his dancing steps.'



October 12, 2011--Historic day for Bluff Fort Co-op groundbreaking

"Master of Ceremonies and former San Juan County commissioner, Lynn Stevens, introduced Gov. Herbert, as 'Utah's Most Rural Governor' and complimented him on his efforts to represent and visit rural Utah. While in San Juan County, on Oct. 12 Herbert, also spoke to students statewide via the Utah Education Network and visited several local schools, Blanding Visitors' Center, Edge of the Cedars Museum, and others.

"Gov. Herbert reminded the audience of about 100 people at Bluff Fort, that the groundbreaking of the new Bluff Co-op, was a remembrance of those who had come before. 'We are standing on the shoulders of the Hole in the Rock pioneers, whose qualities can still be incorporated today.' The addition of a replica of the first Co-op promises to be the Gem of the Fort, and will once again be the hub of what happens here at the Fort.



Utah Governor Gary Herbert speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Bluff Fort Co-op October 2011.

"The Co-op was one of San Juan County's first successful businesses, where bartering and trading with Native Americans and pioneers alike made it the center of commerce during the years of the gold rush, and first oil boom in San Juan County. In fact, Herbert stated, 'the Co-op paid a 10% dividend to original investors during the first 5 months of existence, and later paid 25% dividends to investors before the first year ended.'

"The Governor told citizens that the state is looking for ways to expand the economy in rural Utah, saying that Tourism and Travel can help. He thanked local residents for 'all you do to raise good families and to run good businesses.' Dignitaries who participated in the groundbreaking, and who were introduced by Mr. Stevens included Wilson Martin



Lynn Stevens, San Juan County Commissioner & Master of Ceremonies.

(Chairman of Utah State History, and Chairman of Four Corners Heritage Council); Shirley Silversmith (Director, Utah Division of Indian Affairs); President Mike Redd (Blanding LDS Stake); Elder Perry Webb (6th Quorum of 70's LDS church area representative); San Juan County commissioners: Kenneth Maryboy, Phil Lyman, and Bruce Adams; Cleal Bradford (Chair of Trail of the Ancients Council, and member of Heritage Council, as well as writer of the original grant of $486,600 to build the new Co-op); Manuel Heart (Ute Tribal Councilman and former Chairman of the Ute Mt. Ute Tribe); and Leigh Von der esch (Director of Travel & Film for Utah).



"In her introductory welcome, Corinne Roring, on behalf of the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation, thanked those who had worked so hard to make her 'distant dream' of 10 years ago, a reality. 'I predict that with the addition of the Bluff Co-op, the Bluff Fort complex will become a must stop and see destination for all those who pass along Hwy 191. . .This would not have succeeded without you.' She thanked all those who over the past four years, had helped to raise the matching money to the original grant; and thanked the Bluff Fort volunteers who 'perform a labor of love' in keeping the gardens and grounds so clean and beautiful.



Corinne Roring speaking at the ground breaking ceremony for the Bluff Fort Co-op.

"She predicted that in 2012 'we'll celebrate the dedication of the Co-op' which will be the 'Jewel of the Fort' by 'ringing the bells,' (as they did in early Bluff when Utah became a state in 1896), and 'with a feast, and dancing 'til midnight – so get your dancing shoes ready. Bluff will buzz with activity again!'

"Following the official ground breaking, many 3rd through 5th grade students from Bluff Elementary also took turns breaking the soil for the new building. A delicious lunch with barbecued meat was prepared by Twin Rocks Café, and salads, cookies, and drinks prepared by the fort volunteers fed the group. It was a delightful end to a beautiful day of culmination, ceremony and hope." Article & photos by Janet Keeler Wilcox "Hole in the Rock News," Volume 11, Winter 2011.



LaRue Barton instructing spring cleaning volunteers gathered in the double hogan visitors' center, 2012. Erlene Taylor photos.





In the time of transition, an April 13, 2013 photo shows products on display for sale in the Log Meetinghouse until the Co-op was completed. The hogan visitor center was being used for costuming for the "If These Walls Could Talk" movie. Below, Jewelry display in the hogan visitor's center in 2010.



The Fort Speaks– A visitor from Denmark wrote "A fine park. A little like being taken back to my childhood where I read Laura Ingalls 'Little House on the Prairie.'"



2012 Squirrels playing on rock pile saved from Kumen Jones home.



Site of new Co-op.

Below: pallets of cut stone for use in new co-op.
Erlene Taylor photos.





2012 April 19 Co-op construction pour.



2012 Co-op-footings.



2012 June Exterior walls going up.



2012 June place support beams.



2012 August continuing on roof joists.



2012 June lifting beams on Fort.

Construction photos of the San Juan Cooperative in 2012-13, taken by Dennis Harvey.





2013 September interior construction of Co op- stairs, roof, siding, & completion.
Dennis Harvey photos.











2013 unfinished interior of Co-op.
LaRue Kirkham photo.

2014 Newly completed Co-op before the sign was added.

Corinne Roring stepped off the exact location of the Co-op long before it was built. She knew exactly where she wanted it.





Corinne Roring loved all the missionaries! She built a house and apartments across the street from the Fort so she could be in Bluff, and have a place for the missionaries to live and to gather. These photos show the home under construction in spring 2013.
Erlene Taylor photos.



Antique reed organ placed at Bluff Fort in 2013.

Co-op Pump Organ by Grant Taylor

This reed pump organ is probably over 100 years old. This type of organ was available through the Sears and Roebuck catalog. They were about $100 and then $10 for shipping.

Ben and Mary Donaho were dating in 1971 and decided to go to an auction in Springville, Utah. This organ came up on the block and Ben asked Mary if she would like it. I think he was trying to woo her and so began bidding. Ben thinks it was well over $100 that he punched it for.

It was moved a couple of times and pieces to the upper portion of the organ went missing and other portions were damaged.

In 2009, Ben approached Grant Taylor, a HIRF board member, to see if Bluff Fort would want the organ. Grant did some research and found a firm in Salt Lake that would repair the organ but wanted $7,000 to do the work. Money was scarce then and so finally it was removed from that warehouse and Robert Poll Organ Works in West Jordan Utah did work on the organ and pedals.

Jack Powers Sr., who built much of the cabinetry and many other pieces of furniture for the Fort, was asked to see if he could repair the top with missing finials and other broken parts. Jack wasn't excited about the job, but it was winter, and he began work in his shop and within a couple of months called Grant. Sure enough, Jack had done a masterful job in restoring the missing pieces and still had all ten fingers.

The organ was finished just days before a reed organ was needed to accompany the congregation in the video presentation showing in the Co-op. Its nice warm sound permeates room #3 each morning for devotionals.

We were so pleased to have so many pieces fall into place for its' restoration and now active use again in adding to the spirit of meetings in the Bluff Co-op. Today's value would be over $6,000.

A spectacular painting by Farrell Colette, entitled "The Hole in the Rock" is on display at the Bluff Fort. The story behind the painting is worth retelling. On February 28th, 1980, the *San Juan Record* ran a story about a painting that DeMar Perkins and Norma Perkins Young purchased from Farrell Colette, entitled "The Hole in the Rock." Collette was a well-known artist and Dean of the Department of Art at Weber State University for many years. He was a descendant of Reuben Collette, one of the Escalante scouts for the expedition. He died in 2000.



Paul & Diane Redd, Jerri Nielson, LeiMomi Sampson.

Norma Young saw the piece at the BYU Museum of Art and spoke to Farrell Collett about it. Norma explained that 1980 was the 100th anniversary of the Hole in the Rock Pioneer trek from Escalante to Bluff. Collett felt that the painting belonged in San Juan County and agreed to sell it for much less than what he could sell it for on the New York market. Damar and Norma were anxious to take it to San Juan to see if the county would purchase it. No one seemed interested in purchasing it, so it hung in the bank in Monticello for a time and then in the Blanding Library. It was displayed at several other places for short intervals.

Finally, DeMar took it home and eventually sold it to Paul Redd in 1998. It is a very impressive painting - 36 inches by 48 inches - plus the frame. It is a rare painting for his portrayal of Uncle Ben's Dugway which was used to help get the wagons through the Hole in the Rock and down to the Colorado River.

When Norma heard the new visitors' center was in the planning stages at Bluff, she told Corinne Roring that the painting would be very much at home there. Corrine approached Paul to obtain the painting for the visitors' center and he told her they would talk about it when the center was done. Paul and his wife Diane had become attached to the painting and were reluctant to sell it, but they were willing to have it copied as a gift to the Bluff Fort.

Copying the painting was a process. They first asked an excellent photographer to photograph the painting, because of lighting it could not photograph successfully. So, after seeking out the artist, permission was granted to copy the painting. Paul and Diane took the painting off the wall, wrapped it carefully and drove it to Pixels Photo and Frame in Salt Lake City to have it copied and printed on canvas.

Some barn wood to make the frame was secured from some Blanding "Rockers" who were glad to donate the wood that had been on an old shed owned by the David L Guyman family (Bev Black, Verdon Blake, and Elaine Rowley's father).

Keith and Jerry Nielsen drove the wood to Paradox so Paul could take it to Pixels to be made into a frame. Farrell Colette had originally had his painting framed in barnwood to give it the rustic feel the painting portrays.

On Friday October 11th, 2013, the day before the dedication of the wonderful new co-op visitor center, Paul and Diane drove the new painting to Bluff and helped install it in the proper place to share with the visitors at the Bluff Fort. Many descendants of the San Juan Mission pioneers worked together to get this painting in the co-op in time for the dedication. Now it is on display for all to see at the Bluff Fort Visitor Center. Article & photo by LeiMomi Sampson.



A copy of a spectacular painting by Farrell Colette, entitled "The Hole in the Rock" is on display at the Bluff Fort. Ron Bateman photo.

The Co-op Construction

Grant Taylor picks up the narrative again: Then in 2012, LaRue was back in the visitor center. Dennis and Loraine Harvey, Perkin's descendants felt like they were needed at Bluff Fort and so they pulled their RV trailer from Arizona and went to work. Dennis said to Grant that he didn't know why he had come. Grant reassured him that he would soon find out.



Gary Spears framed the room divisions to accommodate the new video.

The foundation was laid for the Co-op in 2012. Dennis took photos to keep us all updated as to construction of the Co-op.

Ron and Loraine Barton, who were Joseph Barton and L. H. Redd descendants came to find out what was happening at the Fort. They parked their trailer and began helping out at the Fort. They spent almost two years. Ron ran an electrical line behind the cabins, giving each a plug which was later used for the audio button message amplifiers.

Frank and Elaine Rowley, brother-in-law and sister to the Harvey's spent some time at the Fort in 2012. They were asked to be the directors in 2013, serving two full years. Mark & Terry Williams, Charlie & Linda Jones, Arvin & Helen Rudd, along with Lorraine & Dennis Harvey, Gary & Starla Spears, and Carl & Evelyn Larsen served at the Fort in 2013 as the first LDS Church service missionaries.

Cleal Bradford of Blanding, had helped write a grant for Federal Scenic Byway monies to help build the Co-op. The grant was awarded in 2007, but not funded. Funds were finally to be released in 2011.

Planning for the construction began with the Board. Lamont Crabtree created a foam mockup of the building. Charles Goodman photographs were used, and measurements made using a photo of a group in front of the Co-op. It was decided to increase the size of the original building by a few feet each way.





Above: piles of stone ready for the new Co-op building. October 16, 2010, left: "In less than two days over 83,000 pounds of rocks were cut into 7 inch thick stones. The machine cut the brick as easy as you would cut a pie."
Erlene Taylor photos & quote.

Archplex was the firm used to design the building. They were told that we had about $600,000 to build the building and when the first bids came in they were for over one million dollars. The Board was amazed, and we tried to figure how we might cut something from the construction. The basement was nixed and Lynn Stevens, now serving on the board of directors worked with Joe Hurst from Tri-Hurst Construction. They were able to reduce the construction price. It still meant that Grant and Graig had to go to work getting additional funds for the building.

Sorensons, Eccles and Millers all helped out. Lynn Stevens made a presentation before the 2012 Utah Legislature for a $50,000 appropriation. He told the group that they had not asked for money since 1880 when Silas Smith had asked for highway construction money. Only $25,000 was awarded and that was used for the AV system for the video presentation in the Co-op.

Dennis continued photographing the progress. Since it was a federally funded project, there were some amazing hoops that Tri-Hurst had to jump through. Screws and bolts, hardware and other items all had to be made in America. They had to send the timbers for the interior structure to Washington State to be fire-treated. It all added to the construction time. As the building was nearing completion, we realized that there wasn't enough money to add a stone façade. Discussion was held about just applying stone to the front, but that was vetoed. Stucco was applied as an interim cover for the building. A brick ledge was left for stoning in the future. Gary and Starla Spears came in February and Gary began making the room divisions to accommodate the new video. Gary was at the Co-op by 6 am every morning and worked by himself. He worked 12 hours a day making the alterations. We got in a little trouble making these alterations to the building before we had taken final possession of the building. The architecture firm had to add our divisions to the plan, costing us a whole lot more money. Archplex costs were about $80,000 for the project. Luckily, Gary had taken pictures during his construction. There was talk that wall covering would need to be removed to pass inspection, but because of those pictures the project passed inspection.

When we finally took possession of the Co-op we could tell that the sound transfer was going to be a real problem. Insulation was stuffed into the cracks of the plank second floor. This helped minimize dust and dirt from coming into the room, but it still sounded like a herd of elephants when someone walked across the floor. Gary Spears, joined by his son, laid a beautiful pine flooring and finished it, as well. Gary had fallen from scaffolding while working on the room divisions, hurting his back. He worked through the pain and finished the project.

Dick Jacobs came on board and planned all the wiring that needed to be done to support the videos and sound in the three areas. Dick suggested sound-deadening panels, that were added to both rooms #2 and #3. Gary did a beautiful job with wainscoting in room #3, and the interior of a barn look in room #2. He also did the division for the talking wall. Gary had fun building the loft and window/video in the corner of room #2. We purchased the 9' Douglas fir doors to match the rest of the building. They were over $2,000 per door.

A ribbon cutting was held in May for the opening of the Co-op.

The video presentation was not completed when we took possession of the building in April of 2013. Lamont Crabtree's video was shown until the film was installed in 2014.

In 2014, Vance Seeley worked under the license of Joe Hurst as our stone mason. The Simpsons, Steve and Barry, gave us additional stone that we needed for the project. The larger



Corinne Nielson Roring cutting the ribbon to the front door of the Bluff Fort Co-op in May.

stones were loaded on a low-boy trailer. The stone were hauled to Colorado where they were cut and placed on pallets and shipped back to Bluff.

Vance set up the scaffolding and worked for over 6 months applying the stone to the building. There are two courses of larger stone known as 4-man stone and then a couple of rows of 2-man stones before the pattern becomes more random. The 7" veneer gave a great look. It was wide enough at the window and door openings that it truly gives you the impression that the building was built from full stones.

Vance used photos that Charles Goodman had taken of the Co-op and tried to create some of the same patterns that were in the original facade of the Co-op. The stone made the Co-op truly, the "Gem of the Fort."



Grant Taylor beaming at the ribbon cutting. Corinne Roring photos.

Dick Jacobs had overseen the wiring of the area for the presentation. The closet under the stairs was used as a computer closet. Dick and his son, Joel, worked to create all the special effects that are part of the presentation.

The wiring went into the walls that would wire the speakers, video screens and projector. A 60" TV monitor was set on its' side for the talking wall. Alan Peterson's editing crew had to meet Dick's specifications to make the characters fit the space. Two speakers in stereo were wired for the picture wall. A hidden button was wired to begin the presentation, when the docent was ready for Ada, Abner and Lizzie to come to life. We copied this from the San Diego Mormon Battalion Visitor Center. We worked with the coloration to make sure that the sepia tones matched the surrounding historical photos. When the button wall comes to life, then a message is sent to a computer box, called Brightsign and the background farm sounds turn on in Room #2.

When visitors moved from the photo wall to Room #2, they heard the chickens and other animal sounds. The 2nd room is staged to look like you are in the interior of a barn. A wagon on the north is depicted of being in the process of being loaded for the expedition. Various boxes and barrels are set about, which also double as seating for the video. There is a work bench with pioneer tools on the top and harnesses hanging on the wall. There's a little doll buggy and a beautiful dress on a form waiting to be packed or not. In the southwest corner of the room is a 60" video screen that comes to life when a button on the wagon is pushed. There is also a push button by the ladder up front. After this presentation, visitors exit barn doors into a room with benches covered in leather for seating. There is an organ, donated by Ben Donaho. Frank Rowley found a taxidermed fox, and some other wood that makes a base

for the projected wall. (Frank Rowley also gives first-hand details in his director's report in Chapter Five.)

Outside in the gift shop a 12" monitor starts a countdown counter that tell docents when the next group can begin at the photo wall. There is also a timer that shows when the missionary/docent should return to Room #3.

Dick has the lights in the two rooms dimmed through Brightsign digital software and so they cycle up or down as part of the experience. The projector in Room #3 turns off automatically if not being used, but then begins to warm up when Room #2 is activated. It's all a bit crazy that you would find that degree of expertise in little old Bluff.

The computer closet houses two amplifiers to run Room # 2's five speakers and Room #3's seven speakers, including a large subwoofer.

The push button controller was upgraded to an android touch pad. "If These Walls Could Talk," and "The Impossible Journey" in 7 languages are all at the docent's fingertips. There is an air conditioner vented to the outside to keep the components cool. Just looking at the tower of electrical equipment is pretty cool.

In 2016, Randy Bunker one of senior service missionaries created a birds-nest office in the top of the Co-op art gallery upstairs over the restrooms. The staircase mimics the stairs going from the gift shop to the gallery. The building also has an elevator if you have time to take it. We were lucky that the first elevator company Tri Hurst was going to use went bankrupt before we gave them money they had requested. We were guided and didn't want to pay until it was delivered. They wanted the money up front. We were blessed.

Jack Powers and Grant Taylor worked with Don Enders, Church History Department, to try and figure out the look of an 1880 general store. The board visited the Manti Tithing Office replica at "This is the Place State Park. It had a thin stone veneer and the shelving was too rustic for our needs. The Board took a trip to Farmington to look at a cabinet that Don Enders had built for his home. The color and the simple lines gave us great ideas.

Jack and Grant took a trip to Chesterfield, ID and were hosted by their crew who showed two different store ideas. One store had a seed counter that Jack and Grant liked and so Jack replicated that for Bluff.

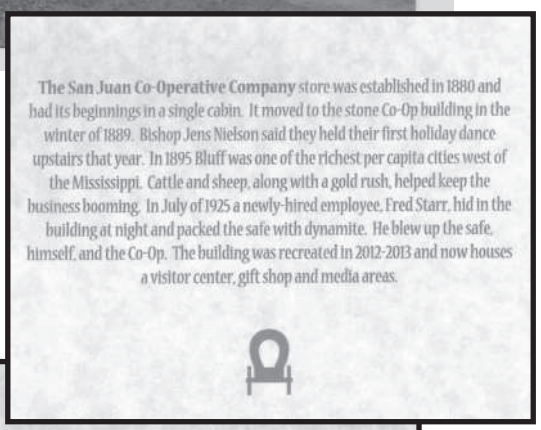
Jack found a soft yellow pine plank that had a rough side and a milled side. He used it to our advantage to make things look older. Jack had served a mission in Kirtland. Ohio and was familiar with the Newell K. Whitney Store there. Grant had been there in 2006 with his wife and friends. They decided that it was that Kirtland look that they wanted. Grant researched and found milk paint at the Boston Milk Paint Company. They had been producing this powdered paint for over 200 years.

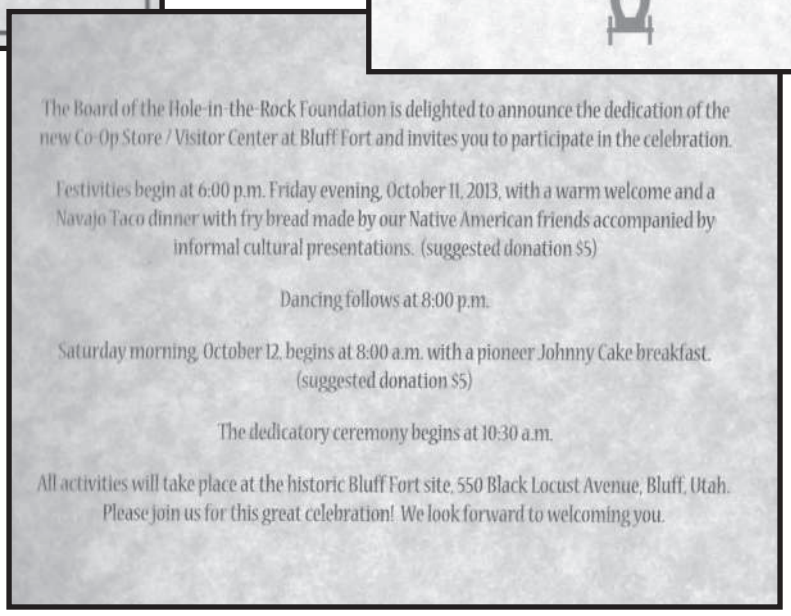
Jack constructed cabinets the winter of 2012 in his PUD garage, and then stored the finished cabinetry in his neighbor's garage. When we could fill a covered trailer, a trip was made to Bluff. The cabinets were stockpiled, until the building was ready. Jack and Grant made several trips back and forth and when possession of the building was given to the Foundation, Jack went to work installing the cabinets.

Dell Taylor, from Martin's Cove and his brother Grant L. Taylor offered to paint the cabinets. Jack and the Taylor's tried to stay out of each other's way getting the installation complete.









Co-op store and Visitors' Center dedication invitation and Fort wagon advertising the dedication.

Erlene Taylor Collection

Grant had visited Old Town San Diego and had seen a way of hiding the monitor and computer from the public eye, but still being efficient. Jack took the idea and hid the cash registers from direct public view.

Dale Black made a mining cart to load up with rocks. The tin on the cart came from an old mine in Arizona. It was lighted and really cool.

Craig Simpson heard that we were looking for a safe for the store and found us a 1950's post office safe that Grant L. Taylor re-painted, and then added a gold filigree with "Bluff Fort" to the safe. We had the safe combination for a couple of years, but it's come up missing. Nina's niece, Julie Longie, came to Bluff with her family and helped us figure out the retail layout of the store. Julie had worked for Nordstrom as a manager and had been trained in aspects of retail. Julie helped us plan and it has all worked really well.

The idea for our glass topped cabinets came from Twin Rocks Trading Post. Over the years a few changes have been made, which include mostly enclosing the counter area, and allowing for two register checkouts. Another addition is a tiered T-shirt stack.

We have visitors comment on what an amazing experience they have had at Bluff Fort. We are so proud of how the work of our volunteer force has created such a world class visitor site. We strive hard to share the stories of the pioneers in such a way that visitors come away with an understanding of the difficulty, but also the faith, courage and determination it took to settle this portion of the Southwest. We seek to give them a great first experience with members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to feel the sacred ground on which the Fort is built.



Co-op store dedication crowd. Corinne Roring photo.

2013 CO-OP STORE DEDICATION

On October 12, 2013, the Co-op was ready for dedication. We hoped for an Apostle, but Elder Marcus B. Nash, a 70 attached to the Church historian's office, came with his wife, Shelly. A Johnny cake breakfast with sausage, fruit and juice was served on the veranda. When the Nashes arrived, Grant took them to the front of the Co-op. They entered the 9-foot Douglas fir doors. Much research and care had been taken to try and replicate the color and fixtures in shelving that would look like the Newell K. Whitney store in Kirtland, Ohio. When Elder Nash entered the doors, he turned left and right, and then to Grant and said, "Kirtland." The Nashes loved the Co-op and were excited to be with us for the dedication.

A stage was set just outside the back door of the Co-op. It turned out to be a warm day with plenty of sunshine. Luckily, hats and water had been placed under each of the chairs on the stage. Grant Taylor conducted this dedication and when he introduced Corinne Roring, the president of the Foundation there was a standing ovation. Corinne was truly touched by the

recognition. She was presented a little bee brooch by Maureen Smith, international president of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, for all of the hard energy that she had poured into the construction of the Co-op and Bluff Fort.

Doug McPherson talked about the history of the Co-op movement in Bluff. He used as his premise, "Who da thought." It was amazing all the "Who da thoughts" thoughts he came up with. Then Bishop Keith B. McMullin, emeritus general authority talked. He made a prophetic pronouncement that the Hole in the Rock Foundation had only just begun the work of telling the stories of the Hole in the Rock pioneers.

Elder Nash spoke briefly and then said a prayer of dedication. In the prayer, he dedicated not only the Co-op, but the Fort and the people and lives that would be blessed because of the re-creation of Bluff Fort. Shelley Nash bore her testimony the next day in their Centerville ward telling of her experience at Bluff Fort, and how amazed she was with the experience there.

Programs were made by Christie Matheson. The Donahoe pump organ was moved outside, and miked so that Evelyn Larson could play "Firm as the Mountains Around Us." Dick Jacobs worked with the sound. Lloyd and Prilla Tilt, friends of Grant and Nina moved to the seat of the wagon which was sheltered from the sun to view the proceedings. After the dedication, Elder Nash went into the audience and found Craig Roring and talked with him about goals and aspirations for his life.

It turned out to be quite warm and many had a little bloom of sunshine on their faces after the dedication.



Elder Nash & Corinne wearing Letty Jones' hat.



A meal was provided after the dedication. Corinne Roring in the middle.



After the dedication services.
Photo -Ensign Peak Foundation.



2014- Seven-inch thick stone was added to the exterior. Corinne Roring photo album.

The Old Bluff Co-op Store

The San Juan Cooperative store was organized April 24th, 1882, with Platte D. Lyman, president; Jens Nielson, vice president; Charles E. Walton, Kumen Jones and Hyrum Perkins, directors; L H Redd, secretary; and Benjamin Perkins, treasurer. The store opened June 11th, stocked to meet the needs of the people in the Fort and to trade with the Indians. Joseph A. Lyman was the salesman.

The store was incorporated on December 18th, 1886, remaining organized for 20 years serving the community in many useful transactions. At one time, the capital stock was $100,000. It was successful from the first.

In a letter to Joseph F. Barton dated January 16th, 1900, Jens Nielson wrote, “Our Co-op store is now so far completed that we can pile goods in the lower part, and we had all our holiday dances on the upper floor. The store also houses the post office. The building cost $2700 to date and will cost about $300.00 more to finish it.”

The Bluff valley did not have enough land for all the families and the uncontrollable flooding river made it necessary for most families to move away. In 1919 John and Martha Hunt purchased the store. Unfortunately, the Bluff Co-op store was blown up in 1925 during a robbery attempt. The robber, alias Fred Starr, used too much dynamite when attempting to break into the safe, blowing up both the coop and himself. Thus ended the Bluff San Juan Cooperative store.

During the ensuing years the hand-hewn sandstone rock of the building was eventually used in other places in Bluff. The land surrounding the store was sold by pieces to different parties for various purposes. However, in 131 years, no major buildings occupied the Fort block. It was being kept for the old fort and the old co-op store to be rebuilt to tell later generations about the people who chiseled their way to San Juan and lived for a time in the beautiful valley by the river.

Every newlywed couple in Bluff received gifts purchased from the Co-op store. At their wedding celebration party, Floyd and Clara Nielson received a complete set of silverware for 12, a gift from Kumen and Mary Jones, China dishes, and many more nice gifts from others all purchased from the Co-op store. Clara used this silver and China only for dinners, with white linen tablecloths and napkins. Bluff families appreciated nice things and took care of them. Children were taught good manners. What an asset the Co-op store was to the people of Bluff and surrounding areas.

My father, Floyd Nielson, and my Monticello neighbor, AJ Redd, both raised in Bluff, told me this tidbit regarding a Navajo lady that worked at the store with Mary Nielson Jones. Mary asked Sally, a Navajo girl to go back to the rock granary and get a £50 sack of flour for a customer. After filling the customer's order, the girl was not back, and Mary became concerned. Finally, she came back into the store sweating and exhausted, but with no flour. “Aunt Mary,” she said,” There ain't no fishty pound sacks of flour, they're all farty eight.” She had lifted every sack of flour, stacked high in the stockroom, and they each weighed 48 lbs. The faithful girl was truly a devoted worker, and good help for Mary in the store. There was reciprocal respect and love between Kumen and Mary Jones and the Bluff Navajos.

When Kumen and Mary Jones managed the Co-op store, Kumen would get up early each morning and go make a fire in the store, while Mary cooked mush for their family of eight children. When he came back, he always brought one piece of candy for each child to have after breakfast. Maybe to break the sameness of eating mush most mornings. The children anticipated his return home each day. After breakfast, Mary mixed her eight-loaf bread recipe before going to clerk in the store. It took eight loaves of bread every day to help feed this big family. Mary was a good manager, a good cook, and a good mother.

Lydia May Jones, the second wife of Kumen had eight children when she died from burns when her dress caught fire. Mary Nielson Jones, the first wife of Kumen, became their stepmother and Lydia’s children loved Aunt Mary, as they called her. With Mary and Kumen’s one son Leonard, it made a family of nine children. Aunt Mary was indeed one of Bluff’s strong and valiant women. By Corinne Roring, *Hole in the Rock News,* Vol 11. Winter 2011.

Chapter Four Miracle of Volunteers at Bluff Fort

"To find real happiness, we must seek for it in a focus outside ourselves. No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellowmen. Service to others is akin to duty, the fulfillment of which brings true joy."

-President Thomas S. Monson

"In the annals of the West, replete with examples of courage, tenacity and ingenuity, there is no better example of the indomitable pioneer spirit than that of the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition of the San Juan Mission. No pioneer company ever built a wagon road through wilder, rougher, more inhospitable country...None ever demonstrated more courage, faith and devotion to cause..."

David E. Miller, Professor / Historian

In 2005, Bishop H. David Burton came to Bluff Fort to dedicate the Fort and the monument commemorating the pioneers who came through the Hole in the Rock before arriving in Bluff. It was a blustery day, but many descendants and townspeople came to mark the dedication. Before Bishop Burton left the Fort, he gave the Hole in the Rock Foundation Board some counsel. He was excited with our plans to rebuild Bluff Fort. He said we needed to make sure that visitors had a positive first experience meeting members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

He also suggested that we should push forth with our idea for youth conferences and that we could help to take pressure away from Martin's Cove as the story of the Hole in the Rock Pioneers was also compelling.

As a board we met once a year with Bishop Burton who helped us connect with the Church History Department, including Elder Steven E. Snow, Steven Olsen and Jenny Lund.

Elder Steven Snow reiterated the importance of giving the visitors a positive impression of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This was particularly important as we have visitors each year from all 50 states and as many as 85 foreign countries. Of these visitors, 85% are not Church members. Only 12% of our visitors come from Utah. Our video and audio presentations are translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Chinese so that visitors can hear the story in their own language. He also enjoined us to make sure that the Church service missionaries had a positive experience serving at Bluff Fort. We think we have succeeded with that as our past missionaries have frequent reunions, go on cruises and trips together and often come back to check on the progress at the Fort. We have been blessed with more than 100 missionaries that have served at the Fort to date.

This is the statement made by Will Redd, Bluff Fort Director 2022-2023: " . . . I told the departing missionaries . . . that their Bluff Fort Missions would be one of the greatest parts of their lives. Peggy and I have served two member leader support missions and one service mission on a Church owned ranch. While every mission is a great experience, serving at Bluff is special."

Steve Olsen taught us to engage our visitors with the stories of the faith, courage, and determination to follow their prophet. Because of this, most of the visitor experiences around the Fort are interactive. Many visitors report on Yelp, Trip Advisor, Google, and our visitor log that they have felt a wonderful spirit while visiting the Fort.

Jenny Lund gave great advice to us at the Fort. She gave us names of retired Church personnel who might be interested in our project. As a result, Gary Cook, who had written scripts for many Church productions and historic sites, was the writer for the movie we show at the Fort. As per Jenny Lund's advice, we aligned ourselves very closely with the format of The Mormon Battalion Historic Site. We also recruited Dick Jacobs, past electronics engineer for Church History sites, visitors' centers, and temples to create the sound, light, and video experience at the Fort. In a closing interview with her before she retired as Director of Church Historic Sites, she said the reason that she enjoyed working with us was because we had listened to her advice and then tried hard to implement it in our guest experience.

Elder L. Tom Perry came to Bluff Fort in 2009 to dedicate a full-size statue of President John Taylor, the prophet that made the call to the San Juan Mission. Elder Perry urged us to continue our cabin building and re-creation of the San Juan Cooperative stone building. He visited San Juan Hill along with other dignitaries for lunch and he commented that he felt the sacred ground of the Hole in the Rock trail.

In 2013, Elder Marcus Nash, then attached to the Church History Department came to dedicate the stone co-op store. He reaffirmed again what Bishop Burton and Elder Perry had given us in a charge to give visitors a great experience with senior service missionaries that were then serving at Bluff Fort under the auspices of the Church History Department.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, emeritus by that time, also spoke at the dedication and his comments made it sound like we had yet to fulfill the measure of what Bluff Fort might affect in the lives of visitors yet to come.

With no direct priesthood line, we have striven to pattern our site after other Church historic sites. The board prayerfully considers one couple that has served previously at the Fort and determines a director to serve for a time. The director and his wife work with scheduling, managing different departments and maintaining a spirit of love and kindness at the Fort. Prayer meetings are held 6 days a week. Missionaries share in the stories that are told of the San Juan. Daily assignments are made, and the missionaries go off to work.

"P" days and group days off are a part of the schedule. County volunteers cover shifts so that group activities such as temple attendance in Monticello, tracing the Hole in the Rock Trail, and trips to nearby national parks and monuments and even searching out Native American sites can occur.

The missionaries create a real framework for the Bluff Branch which is a dependent branch under the direction of the Blanding Utah Stake. The missionaries gladly accept additional Sunday responsibilities to support the local church unit. There is truly a special feeling in the Sacrament Meetings at the Bluff Branch.

Because of our all-volunteer board and hundreds of volunteers that have come to help, Bluff Fort rose again to make sure that the faith, courage, and determination of those original pioneers was not forgotten. The story never gets old and there are always more journals or histories that come forward to back up the amazing faith and what Jens Nielson, the company chaplain and then Bishop for 25 years of Bluff said, "If we just have enough stickie-ta-tudy, we cannot fail."

- Hole in the Rock Foundation Board of Directors

Jack Powers

Jack Powers was another miracle at the Fort. Going back just a bit, in 2008-11 cabins were being built and we were trying to create a historically accurate look in the cabins. We were searching for items to furnish the cabins. Grant Taylor had been working with the LDS Church History Department and was introduced to Don Enders, a long-time history employee. Grant asked Don about furnishings for the cabins. Don took Grant to a church storage facility and showed him a lot of items that had been donated to the church. Don thought there might be some items that the Church could loan to Bluff Fort. He also suggested Grant talk with Jack Powers Jr., from Charleston, Utah. Jack Jr. and his father had repaired and restored much of the furniture for Cove Fort.



Jack Powers sweeping.
Erlene Taylor photos.

Grant made an appointment to visit Jack Jr. at his shop in Charleston, Utah. During the discussion, Jack Jr. suggested that his dad, Jack Sr., might be interested in helping out, building furniture for the Fort.

Grant called Jack and they got together at Jack and Vaunna's PUD (planned unit development) home in Farmington. Jack and Vaunna were 2nd marriages and Vaunna and Jack had an arrangement about their garage. Jack had his tools set up all around their single car garage. Vaunna allowed Jack to pull out his shop tools and work all day as long as her car was parked in the garage at night.

Jack said yes to helping the Fort. Jack started off by making little rustic end tables for the cabins. Then we moved on to picnic tables and benches and the list goes on . . . buffets and hutches that could be used in the cabins or the visitors' center for store fixtures. Jack was building different styles and types and was doing a great job!

He purchased wood from his favorite lumber store in Heber and would load up his little white F-10 pickup with wood. His single neighbor across the street allowed him to use the sides of her garage for storage. Lumber was stored on the west and finished items were stored on the east side. When the east side was filled a trip to Bluff was scheduled.

Jack agreed to build but didn't want to paint. He finished and sanded his creations ready for stain or paint.



Jack and Vaunna Powers in the Co-op.

Jack and Grant would get together and look through Jack's books and woodworking magazines and think what period furniture might be needed in Bluff. After the completion of the veranda off the west side of the shed, Jack and Grant went to "This is the Place Heritage Park" and looked at their 4-post tables. They noticed that by dragging the tables, they had become weak. Jack got out his books and researched. We had been to a couple of historic places by now together and he decided that an X frame structure under the table would be the strongest



Grant L. & Dell Taylor painting one of Jack Powers' sturdy tables.

over time. Large lag screws were used to hold the tables and benches together. He built them pretty heavy, so it took two people to move them very far.

Jack and Vaunna had served a mission to Kirtland, Ohio and Jack had built benches that are used at the John Johnson Farm. The benches were of similar design. He had built more than 30 benches in Kirkland and knew that we would need similar benches in Bluff. He produced 18 benches and 6 tables that were brought to Bluff. Jack did some of his best thinking about the project about 2 a.m. in the morning.

Jack built a great 3-door buffet cabinet for the Log Meetinghouse to store brochures and copies of the Book of Mormon.

Corinne Roring got a little worried about all the furniture coming to Bluff, but she had accepted cast-offs from the county which included 100 Herman Miller, fiberglass chairs. Grant was going for an 1880 look and so discussion was held about those chairs adorning the Fort. Long story, but a few years later, service missionaries found out that each of the chairs were now worth about $80, and so they were all sold and a more serviceable folding chair was acquired with the money.

In 2008, Ben Donahoe donated an old reed pump organ. The top part of the organ and light shelf were in disrepair and parts were missing. Grant asked Jack if he would be willing to repair it. Jack said he wouldn't, but Grant asked if he could store it at Jack's neighbor's for the winter. A few months later, Jack called Grant and said he had something to show him. Sure enough, Jack had replaced all the broken parts and repaired the shelf. The finials and missing parts had to be turned and then fit together with the original pieces. The organ's bellows and pedals were repaired by Poll Organ. The refurbished organ was sent to Bluff and is used almost daily for devotionals in the theater room in the visitors' center.

The sawdust really started to fly when co-op construction began. Jack and Grant went to a number of pioneer sites, i.e., Chesterfield, Idaho, "This is the Place Heritage Park," and Kirtland, Ohio. Jack had served a senior mission at Kirkland and Grant had visited Kirtland in 2007. Don Enders was asked to help determine the degree of rustic look for shelving and help with paint colors as well as style of cabinetry. Research found milk paint at a firm in Boston, Massachusetts. The board visited the Manti tithing Office at "This is the Place Heritage Park" and Don Ender's home to see a cabinet that had the style we were looking for in the cabinets.

Jack came to Bluff to measure the spaces he needed to create cabinetry for. He pulled out Vaunna's car and went to work. When the cabinets were done and the east side of the garage was full, Jack loaded up a box truck and trailer to come to Bluff.

The Co-op was nearing completion and the contractor, Joe Hurst gave us the go ahead to install the cabinets. LaRue Barton would host the crew at her home. Grant L. and Dell Taylor joined in the fun when the cabinets began to be installed. All the cabinets were pre-painted with a mix of milk paint powder and water. Then Jack would install the cabinets. The east wall

cabinets and shelving spanned the space. Jack hauled down the 12' long seed counter that he had copied from one seen in Chesterfield's General Store.

Jack created a U-shaped checkout counter and the counter allowed for a monitor and keyboard set in bins tied in the counter. There was room for the computer and printer under the counter. Grant had visited Old Town San Diego and had seen how they lowered the monitor in the counter and wrapped three sides, so that it wasn't as visible to the public eye. They were trying to keep it looking 1890's.



Jack Powers installing Co-op cabinets. Erlene Taylor photo.

Julie Longie, Grant's niece, a Nordstrom trained manager now working at Jacob Lake, came and helped layout the cabinets in a flowing grid.

Once the Co-op was done, a dedication was held in October of 2013. Elder Marcus Nash, LDS Church History Department came to dedicate the building. The morning of the dedication, Grant was alerted that Elder Nash and his wife, Shelly, had just arrived. Grant met them and took them to the front of the Co-op, and they passed through the 9' Douglas Fir doors. As they walked in, they stopped and looked left and right and then Elder Nash turned to Grant and said "Kirtland." Elder Nash didn't know that the theme was the Newell K. Whitney Store, but those were his first words. Grant and his crew were really chuffed that maybe they had created a likeness to what they had worked so hard for.

When we were setting up the video for the Co-op, we tried to use ideas that had been seen at the Mormon Battalion Visitor Center. They had one room where you had rocks to sit on in a forest type setting. Another room was the quarter master outfitting room. So, in our film, "If these Walls Could Talk," they are talking about getting ready to leave Parowan, and so we

hauled in a wagon made from a German wheelbase brought across the pond by Grant and his brother Graig. John Cox had fitted it out with all the trimmings, and it was just the right size. The interior had a clap board finish, so we tried to make it look like the interior of a barn. Gary Spears worked on the interior, hiding a video monitor and John Cox made two great looking barn doors. Jack built a great work bench to place donated pioneer tools on.

We needed seating and so nail keg barrels were ordered and Jack fitted a round wooden disc in the top of kegs, making them a little more comfortable. Jack also made wooden pack boxes of varying sizes that were stained and used for seating in Room #2.



Covered wagon in the Co-op.



Pioneer tools on work bench built by Jack Powers. Note the barrel keg with a round wooden disc seat & the box used for seating that Jack built. Ron Bateman photos.

The most whimsical creation was a chicken crate that fits beneath the wagon. Grant's family had raised chickens for a few years and Grant remembered this doweled crate that Jack re-created from Grant's memory. Stuffed chickens were added along with a soundtrack of farm animal noises which prominently included chickens clucking. It all worked so well together. He also made to order a couple of benches that are used in the gathering area where the talking photographs begin the video presentation.

Jack continued to work for the Fort. Once the gallery floor was planked with a pine tongue and grooved floor, seating was needed for "Friday Night at the Fort." There were some folding chairs, but benches were built to try and keep the period look. Jack had to re-work the benches because they were too hard. He added a back and they were painted with the milk paint.



On the gallery (2nd) floor, Jack Powers re-worked the benches and added backs because they were too hard.

Other projects that Jack worked on included restoring a wardrobe that Don Enders gave the Fort for the L. H. Redd Cabin. Jack built a mount for a bell that Grant brought home from Germany when he went to get wagons for the Fort. Axel Fahl had given Grant the 6" lost wax bell. The bell is by the kitchen on the veranda and calls workers to lunch or to their ice cream break which always begins at "0 Dawn thirty," according to Mark Nielson, service missionary. Jack also came down to help Ron Snowden build the Fort restrooms. Vaunna was great to come with Jack on most of his visits to the Fort.

The buffet cabinet was moved to the Log Meetinghouse to house or be a base for a TV monitor that would be used for overflow of visitors. The buffet housed electronic equipment and gave a base to the 60" monitor. Any of the videos can be viewed on that monitor.

Dick Jacobs and Grant were working on the audio messages for the cabins and other locations around the Fort. Dick had found the components for the sound systems for each of the cabins but needed a box to put them in. Jack and Dick got together and took measurements. Jack also built wooden surrounds for the speakers both inside and out. Jack built a small touch pad that Dick added buttons to that are used to push the language of your choice and hear a message at the Fort. They were stained and blended in with the historic surroundings.

Grant noticed that the Log Meetinghouse had been turned into a video room. Service missionaries had applied black-out to the windows and a screen was permanently pulled down to show the videos to bus groups. Grant had served in the Salt Lake Temple as an organist and he told Jack and Dick Jacobs how TV monitors were hidden in the rostrum railing and when training was being held, the monitors would hydraulically raise up and the presentation was made. Dick and Jack went to work on the idea. Dick found the lift and Jack squeezed it in a rostrum-looking cabinet that was placed in the Log Meetinghouse. A 60" monitor was also installed in the cabinet. The remotes were accessible to the missionaries and the Log Meetinghouse returned to its' original purpose. Elder Gerald Lund once said that the Log Meetinghouse "was a very sacred place."



Movie being shown using the Log Meetinghouse rostrum.
Alan Peterson photo from Bluff Fort video.

When Jack turned 90, Dick and Connie and Grant and Vaunna went to Chick-fil-A to celebrate. Vaunna always liked to talk with other guests and several Viewmont High School kids came in to eat. When the celebraters were done, they decided to sing "Happy Birthday" to Jack. The high-schoolers joined in and were alerted to the name to end the song with.

Jack and Vaunna moved to Farmington Legacy House retirement community and so Jack sold off much of his equipment, some coming to the newly expanded Bluff Fort Shop. Jack later moved to live with his daughter, Cathrine Evans in Murray. Vaunna stayed on at Legacy in their memory care unit. Jack passed away in 2023.

Grant and Jack continued to lunch together as often as time permitted. Jack truly was an amazing "Bluff Fort Worker Boy." It would have been fun to record the board feet of lumber and bead board that Jack created as period furniture for Bluff Fort. It's fun to walk around the Fort and see all of his handiwork. You can also hear Jack at two of the audio messages: the Water Wheel and Monument Plaza. Jack's mature voice adds to the stories that he tells.

In May of 2021, the first volunteers at the Fort gathered for a couple of days to have a video record made of their experiences at Bluff Fort. Jack and his son came to the event. Jack remembers sitting at dinner across from Joe and Kathleen Sorenson. Joe is just a regular kind of guy and Jack didn't realize until later in the meal that Joe had contributed so much to the building of Bluff Fort and had paid for much of the lumber that he had turned into history for Bluff Fort.

As Grant and Nina were leaving after the video event, Grant slipped around the shed to trade Costco candy for some Bluff Fort cookies. Cindy Embleton, the director was trying to turn on the video screen that had been added because of Covid. There was a man and a woman with a walker there and Grant tried to fill their waiting time with a story. They told him that they had visited with a very nice man out on the Fort property. He had told them the whole story. They said that he had told them about how he had built most of the Fort furniture. Grant immediately knew they had been talking with Jack Powers. He was always good for a story, but he really loved to see and show off his efforts at Bluff Fort.

Jack truly was one of Bluff Fort's miracles. His time, craftsmanship and love of Bluff Fort truly will live on at the Fort. It had to be an amazing project to become involved with, and to be of so much value with his contributions. We are sure that his Fort salary will bring forth the blessings of Heaven. We love you, Jack!

Dell & Mary Taylor and Grant L. & Erlene Taylor

Graig Taylor called Martin's Cove to place an order for some handcarts. Mary and Dell Taylor were serving at Martin's Cove at the time. Mary answered the call. Graig told Mary the story of Bluff Fort and the Hole in the Rock expedition. Graig invited her and her husband to come to Bluff after they were released. Mary and Dell came to Bluff and soon Dell became involved in different work projects at the Fort. Dell also brought along his brother, Grant and his wife, Erlene.

Graig found out about Grant's ability to paint. Grant had worked for the LDS Church Paint Department for a number of years. Grant began painting signs to guide visitors around the Fort. Then Grant painted signs for each family cabin. Additional signs included the Relief Society Building sign, exterior visitor signs with arrows, and the largest sign welcomes visitors. It was situated on the property line on the south side of the Fort by the Decker cabin on Highway 191.



Grant L., Mary and Dell Taylor.
Erlene Taylor photo.

When the Co-op was nearing completion, Grant and Dell were invited to paint the cabinetry









Grant L. Taylor made all the signs for the Fort & gold-leafed the safe. His brother Dell assisted. Erlene Taylor & LaRue Barton above center.





Dell & Grant L. Taylor used milk paint on all the furniture and shelving. Photos courtesy of Erlene Taylor.

The San Juan Co-op sign was painted at Taylors' home. Below is first visitor center sign outside the current sewing building.





Bluff Fort Historic Site sign.
Alan Peterson photo from Bluff Fort video.

in the Co-op. They worked with the powdered milk paint and water to come up with the desired intensity of color, and paint color. We all bunked at LaRue's and accepted her hospitality. They applied a great pioneer-looking stain to the counters for the cabinets that Jack Powers had built. Grant made some small signs to put on the top rail of cabinets to tell customers what products were available.

Craig Simpson, of Twin Rocks Café, offered us an old Post Office safe. Grant L. decided that it needed some gold filigree and a painted Bluff Fort on the front. The final sign that Grant painted was the one to go on the face of the Co-op Store. This took some board discussion, but when finally installed all were glad to have it there. Grant and Dell would visit the Fort from time to time and would bring their brushes to touch up the signs they had painted.



Pioneer Orchard sign painted by Grant L. Taylor.

Mary and Erlene were great at helping in the kitchen and making sure everyone was well visited. Erlene brought her camera each time they came. She compiled them into 4 extra-large photo albums. Many of the photos were scanned by Ron Bateman and included in this history.

Dick and Connie Jacobs

Grant had been working with Jenny Lund, director of LDS Historic Sites. Jenny had told Grant to "Steal from the best," meaning that we should take the best ideas from other visitor sites that we had visited. When the Fort was working on ideas for a filmed presentation, Jenny suggested a trip to the San Diego Mormon Battalion Visitor Center in Old Town, San Diego. Nina and Grant headed off and visited the Center. They watched the film presentation a couple of times with different docents. The 7-room progression told the story of the Mormon Battalion in a very engaging way. Grant's great grandfather on his father's side had served in Company A.

Jenny told us that this LDS visitor site had more nonmember visitors than any other site in the Church historic sites. She said the interactivity and personality of each of the docents made it a real success.

She suggested that Grant contact Gary Cook, a former Church employee, who had written many of the scripts for their sites. Grant went to visit Gary and realized that Gary was a college chum from USU. Gary and Grant talked about the story of the Hole in the Rock pioneers and Gary said that the format at San Diego worked better than any script he had written. He accepted the task of writing a script.

Our space was limited and so we worked on three separate areas to tell the story. Dividing the west third of the Co-op main floor looked like a real possibility. Gary and Starla Spears had just signed on as Church service missionaries. Gary and Starla agreed to come in February 2012 to make the divisions.

As the script progressed, discussion was held about a director for the film. Jerry Cravens and TC Christensen were approached. Gary suggested Alan Peterson, of Flying Leap Films, as a

possible director. Alan lived in Grant's ward in Centerville. Small world. A price was agreed upon. Alan went to work on production, and Grant and Nina went to work raising funds from Sorenson, Eccles, and Millers for the presentation.

After further discussion, Gary talked about the amount of computerization that would be needed to run the video. Gary suggested that Grant call Dick Jacobs, a former LDS Audio Visual employee. Grant gave Dick a call.

Just two weeks earlier Dick and Connie had returned from a road trip to California. On this trip they had been listening to a book on tape by Elder Gerald Lund, "The Undaunted." When Dick talked to Connie about getting involved, she really thought he would have fun helping us at Bluff Fort.

Dick and Connie came to Bluff and looked over the space and began working with Gary Spears with his AV needs in the space. The framing was going up. Dick was given a small closet under the stairs with enough electricity. He was also given carte blanche as to what his monetary needs might be.

Lynn Stevens took a proposal to the Utah State Legislature. He told them our story and how in 1880, the mission had asked for $5,000 to help with road building expenses. He said that since we hadn't come back and asked for additional funding for over 140 years that we were now asking for money for the computer electronic part of our presentation. They awarded us $25,000, half of what we asked for.

Dick shopped well. He for years had kept his skills sharp by attending the International Consumer Electronics show in Las Vegas. Dick was able to get all the equipment we needed for $25,000. It included: speakers, subwoofers, two 60" TV monitors, computers, amplifiers, Raspberry Pie drivers and a cooler for the closet. Dick worked with Gary Spears getting the wiring where he needed it. Dick also worked on sound deadening to minimize sound bleed into the adjoining rooms. Gary installed the deadening product and then in Room #3 covered it with burlap. The product was also installed between ceiling joists.

Dick and his son, Joel, came to work on the installation. Alan gave us a great video and so Room #1 became the "Talking Wall" like San Diego. However, we made sure that our video characters had a sepia coloration like the other static photos on both walls. It is more of a surprise when Abner starts to snore. Abner became quite a character. He continued to start snoring intermittently of his own accord. Dick and Ben Wilson tried to mute him a number of times. The video was formatted in such a way that the TV monitor could rest on its' side and was hidden in the wall. A small button was wired to fire up the system. Timer countdowns and delayed switching were added using Raspberry Pie, an electronic control system that costs less than $100. Gary and Alan worked together to get the right format for each of the rooms. Initially, the 2nd room was mostly audio, but we realized that visitors wanted it more visual and so additional money was raised, and Alan went back to "This is the Place Heritage Park" to film the segment, which included a wagon and a buck board, and filming was also done in the church.

Knock on wood, but the computerized system that Dick created has been working about 99% of the time.

Cabin Audio Messages

Dick figured out a sound system that was installed in each of the cabins. Grant had tried using a cell phone system to play back recorded story scripts at each of the cabins. The system didn't work great because of spotty cell service in Bluff, plus it was in the beginning of cell phones and so you were charged by the minute used instead of having a phone. So, Dick's little system seemed like the ticket. Jack built little boxes that would house the components to the system amp and playback unit. Jack also built little wooden boxes with a metal screen to house each of the little speakers. The whole system for each cabin costs less than $100.

Scripts came from diaries, letters, family stories, or Grant. Once the scripts were edited for correctness and length, then we found someone to record the message. Harriet Barton's great granddaughter narrated the Barton script. Vinnie Harker read the Eliza Westover Redd Script and Grant had his son and two grandsons tell the stories that he had written for George Hobbs (See appendix for a more complete set of scripts and identification of the voices).

Dick and Grant went on the road recording the messages in English, trying to find family descendants or friends of the Fort to record the messages. Then Dick would take the recordings and edit them seamlessly together and burn them onto a SD card ready for installation. Service missionaries helped run the wires and hide the systems in each of the cabins. Jack also built little wooden button pads that had seven holes. Dick and Grant hoped to record the messages in other languages. The system worked great and so other friends were found to translate the scripts into French, German, Italian, Spanish, and in 2018 Chinese.

Visitors were so glad to come and hear the stories in their native tongue. This meant a huge amount of man hours of recording and then editing. Dick turned multilingual in the process because it was hard to cut and paste the script when he didn't know the language. Dick was blessed and the SD cards kept getting upgraded and holes were filled where messages had been missed. When the scripts are all printed out and in one pile, they are over one inch thick.

We also worked with Lamont Crabtree, director and producer of "The Impossible Journey," a documentary about the Hole in the Rock. His script was also translated with written embedded words as well. Those recordings were created in Lamont's basement. One night Lamont had to go ask his neighbor to stop mowing his lawn, promising to finish it after we were done recording.

Grant's Grandpa Lloyd Hobbs had visited Europe in 1954. Lloyd had not enjoyed that trip so much because he couldn't understand the languages. Grant felt that if our international visitors were welcomed with their language that they would have a much better time learning the stories of the Hole in the Rock. Grant brought down the French DVD of Lamont's video when the Craft Center was the visitor center. He remembered the faces of the two French couples as they began to hear the story in their language. They were so pleased. There is still one more button left that is open. Still to be determined what language.

Dick and Jack worked together on more projects. Dick hid the sound box in a pedestal that the Erastus Snow bust rests on. The plaster bust was donated to the Fort by Ortho Fairbanks.

Dick and Jack put their heads together when Grant wanted a rostrum built to house a TV monitor to show the films in the Log Meetinghouse. Grant had seen a similar thing in the chapel of the Salt Lake Temple. The TV monitors were on either side of the podium and could be called to rise up when needed for leadership training.

Dick went to work and found a remotely driven hydraulic lift that the TV could be bolted to. We all visited in Jack's garage with the 60" monitor as well and in a couple of weeks Jack had completed the cabinet that housed the system. This meant that the windows in the Log Meetinghouse could be open to light and an old screen could go away. The monitor can raise up when buses come to the Fort, but returned to looking like the Log Meetinghouse between showings.



Ben Wilson, electronics expert.

Dick found a buddy, Ben Wilson in 2019. Ben had worked with Jack for a short time with LDS Audio Visual. Ben had then gone on to design electronics with Hammond Engineering. The amplifier used in most Latter-day Saint ward chapels was designed by Ben and produced by Hammond Engineering.

Ben came to Bluff and helped Dick clean up some things in the visitors' center and was amazed at the system that we had in Bluff, Utah. They continued to find ways to make the system better. They added countdown timers for the video presentation. Pushing the button at the picture wall also turns on the farm sounds in Room #2. It checks to see if the projector is on, or if it has timed out. It will turn it on so it's ready to go as the group follows through the 3 rooms. Lights dim and come back up when the movie begins and ends. It is really an amazingly complex but simple system. Dick and Ben then became film producers.

We do have to mention Connie and how wonderful she was to the crews that came to work at the Fort. Connie and Dick would load up vast quantities of meals. She and Dick were amazing car packers. She would pack a lunch to eat in the car while traveling, usually egg salad sandwiches, popcorn and mandarin oranges peeled. Dinners included "weinies" and rice, great soups and just good food. She took such great care of Dick making sure that he had his thermos filled with Kool Aid or something good to drink. Dick would get up at 4 am and then would head off to work by 5:30 or 6:00 so that he could do things in the Co-op before visitors came. Grant would go over about 7:00 and then they would come back for breakfast at 8:00 and then back for prayer meeting at 8:30. It was quite a schedule.

Church History Department

As the Board began the process of trying to figure out how to tell the story and what to build, Steve Olsen, past Church Historian, and Elder Rulon Cravens came to Bluff in about 2007. Graig had invited them and set up the meeting. Graig showed them around. Steve gave the Foundation some really great advice in the beginning. He said that we needed to treat funds donated to the foundation with care and that we should squeeze every penny donated.

When telling the story, don't tell it but try to engage visitors. He said that visitors would come away with a much greater feeling and understanding of the Trek and their determination to follow a Prophet of God.

Steve also said that many smaller museums try to tell too long of a story. He said that we should choose a period to tell the story and suggested that we choose just 20 years (1880-1900). He claimed that by telling a short time period that we could focus the story and that our "take away" would be much easier to understand.

Steve said that it would actually be better not to turn the project over to the Church because we could re-create the Fort much faster. He said that the Church was focusing on revelatory sites and that Cove Fort, the Brigham Young Winter Home, Jacob Hamblin Home, Martin's Cove and a few others were the only exceptions. He counseled us to keep the greatest degree of historical accuracy as different projects came along.

He also stressed that museums such as ours get lost in trying to tell too much history. Keeping the visitors in mind was really important. So, projects like the "Best Restrooms in San Juan County," cookies and ice cream, benches and shade all came out of this discussion. Steve really helped move the project along.

The list of helpers is pretty long. Jenny Lund, director of church historic sites became involved at the very beginning in 2007. She helped us determine how many cabins might be built. Graig and Grant would regularly meet with Jenny, so she became an invaluable resource keeping the project on task.

Jenny gave great advice including choosing a period of history to cover that would best tell the story. She said that we should steal ideas from the best visitor sites we had seen. Grant and Nina had been able to see a number of sites in their travels before becoming involved with Bluff Fort. Jenny talked to us about the importance of restrooms and came to Bluff to help us figure out the most strategic place for a restroom that would also accommodate buses quickly. Studies were made on visitors' abilities to listen and learn, and bladders were part of that learning. We had talked about a midsection location when we were thinking about renting cabins and Jenny was needed to help the Board understand the why's and where's.

Grant had told Ben Pykles about Jenny's help with the restroom and jokingly told him it was referred to as the "Jenny Lund Memorial Restroom." Of course, the story got back to Jenny. Grant was very concerned that this might offend Jenny, but she had told other historians of this great honor. A small plaque was made and installed between the restroom doors in 2022 before Jenny's retirement. She said she was very pleased to be remembered.

Jenny stressed the accuracy of messages placed around the Fort. Because of this advice stories were checked by a broader group to make sure they were historically correct before being used in some way to tell the story at the Fort. Jenny reviewed the script and made suggestions for the movie/video presentation "If These Walls Could Talk." She had told us to ask Gary Cook if he might help us write our screen play.

Jenny became a great resource to bounce ideas off. In one phone conversation with Grant she said that she enjoyed working with us because we listened to her advice and ran with it. Jenny said that in her 35 years of history telling experience that some people had asked for advice and then told her that it wouldn't work. Jenny's help kept the board "toeing the line" so that we didn't go off base.

Jenny encouraged the use of a handbook so that guidelines from the Board were followed by service missionaries. Because of her encouragement, we annually review the Bluff Fort Handbook making sure that we continue to move in the direction the Board has decided.

Jenny Lund retired in December of 2022. Grant was able to sit down with her and thank her for her wisdom and guidance. Jenny told him what a pleasure it had been working with the Taylor brothers and Bluff Fort. Grant asked her why she had stuck with them, and she reminded him that we had listened and where possible followed her advice as a long-time historical professional. Jenny gave Grant her personal phone number and e-mail so she continues to be a resource to the Foundation.

Several General Authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have visited the Bluff Fort over the years.

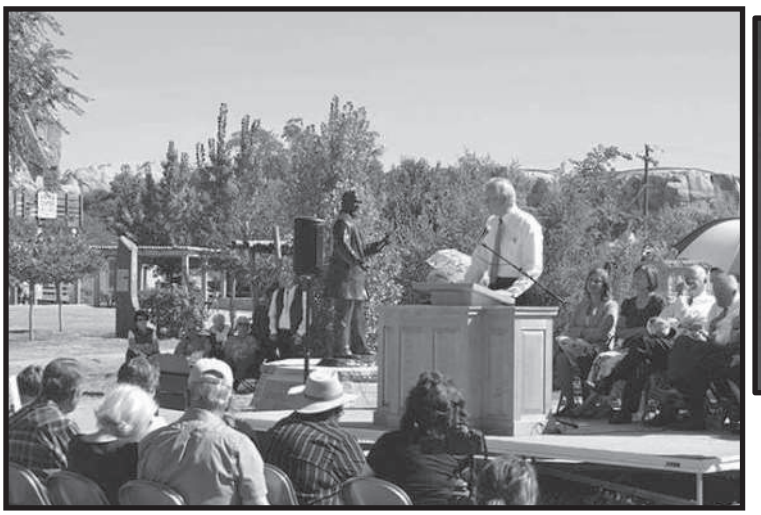


Service missionaries with Elder & Sister Dieter Uchtdorf in 2018 at Bluff Fort.



Craig Roring & Elder Marcus B. Nash at the Bluff Fort Co-op dedication October 12, 2013.
Corinne Roring photo.

Several General Authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have visited the Fort. Bishop H. David Burton to dedicated the pioneer monument in 2005. Elder L. Tom Perry dedicated the John Taylor Monument in 2009. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf visited in 2018 with his wife. Elder Steven E. Snow participated in a second dedication to pioneers in 2015. Elder LeGrand R. Curtis Jr., Director of Church Historical Sites visited in 2021. Others have been Elder Marcus B. Nash to dedicate the San Juan Co-op building along with Bishop Keith B. McMullin, and Elder Rulon G. Craven. In 2024, Elder Jose L. Alonso and Elder Michael A. Dunn visited the Fort as President and Second Counselor of the North America Southwest Area presidency on separate visits.



Elder Steven E. Snow speaking at Bluff Fort in 2015. He dedicated the two Montezuma Creek panels near Monument Plaza.



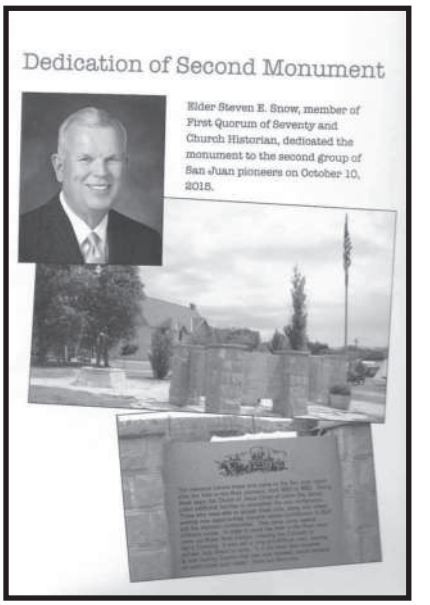
Elder LeGrand R. Curtis Jr. visited the Fort in 2021.

Don Enders

Don Enders was introduced to Grant and Graig by Steve Olsen. Don had worked in the LDS Historical Department his whole life. With Don's construction experience, he talked about stabilization of the Barton Cabin and wished that he could have rebuilt the old section for us. He helped us figure out how to furnish cabins and offered suggestions of products to use to stabilize the cabins. Don was able to offer some items given to the Church to help us decorate our cabins. He brought a van down to Bluff with a number of items including antiques that he gave to us out of his personal collection. Jack Powers and his son helped bring life to some of the items. Jack Jr. took a box with a bunch of dowels and a seat and after a couple of years it returned re-assembled. Hugh Kirkham went online and learned the art of caning and finished the little chair's restoration. Hugh also built the receiving room, later paint room shop addition.

When we were working on the interior cabinetry construction and colors, the Board visited Don in his home in Farmington. Don had a cabinet wall that had been stained with milk paint and he offered his suggestions and how a similar look to the Newell K. Whitney store might be appropriate. Jack Powers was also in attendance and having served one mission in Kirtland and three in Nauvoo, he was in sync with what Don was suggesting. Up to that time the board had been in a quandary and having a tough time coming to a consensus. Don was able to help us over that hurdle.

Elder Steven Snow and missionaries at Bluff Fort


Dedication of Second Monument

Elder Steven E. Snow, member of First Quorum of Seventy and Church Historian, dedicated the monument to the second group of San Juan pioneers on October 10, 2015.

In 2009, Graig and Grant Taylor began working trying to see if it were possible to get senior missionaries to serve at Bluff Fort. In about 2010, a meeting was held with Elder Steven Snow, Church Historian. Elder Snow's middle name was Erastus being named after his Great grandfather who was the Apostle with responsibilities over southeastern Utah.

After a lot of thought and deliberation, Elder Snow made it possible for senior church service missionaries to come to Bluff. Elder Dwayne Ladell was serving as a missionary working with Elder Snow and was given responsibility to ride herd on Bluff Fort.

Elder Ladell and his wife Mowana came to the Fort and stayed at LaRue and Carl Barton's home. They kept watch over us for a number of years.

Our first senior couple came in 2011.Then in late 2012-2013, Frank and Elaine Rowley served as the first directors and three couples served in 2012 that Graig found wintering in Arizona. The missionaries just kept coming. They brought amazing skills to the Fort from contracting, cooking, sewing, gardening and beyond. Each year more couples would come that had even more skills than we could believe.

In 2017, Burnis and Lana Skinner were serving as directors. They only had eight missionary couples that year that signed up to come. It made things pretty difficult. We met with Elder Snow hoping to figure out a way to get more missionaries, and also figure out a line of priesthood authority.

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis Jr.

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis Jr. was called to replace Elder Snow. The Board hurried to meet with him and establish a friendship. Stuart and Kristi Matheson had moved a little forward of the Foundation and met with him a week or so earlier seeking help with the idea of youth conferences being held at Camp Sticky. Elder Curtis continued his support of Bluff Fort and as numbers of senior service missionaries serving each year increased, he allowed us to have them come.

Elder Kyle S. McKay

Elder Kyle McKay replaced Elder Curtis and so Grant arranged a time for the Board to meet with Elder McKay. Elder McKay attempted to figure out the system of calling and how it all worked, but in the end decided that if it was working, leave it alone. He is from Huntsville and so was not as knowledgeable about the Hole in the Rock story. We left him a David Miller "Hole in the Rock" book and a DVD.

Benjamin Pykles

In January of 2023, Benjamin Pykles was named as Director of Church Historic Sites. Ben had already been to Bluff previously for a public land build and Grant had ridden with him for that conference. They had plenty of time to share stories and Grant learned much. Ben also lived in Grant's oldest son's ward and a trip to Cottonwood Canyon was executed. Families joined together and felt the sacredness of the trail.

When Grant met with Ben there were questions that he had. Grant learned that the senior service missionaries for Bluff Fort had been moved under the direction of the Office of the Seventy. Ben went through meeting notes on his computer that involved HIRF. Jenny had really gone to bat for the Foundation helping to retain the senior service missionaries.

Ben said that the Church was studying the "Bluff Fort Model" of a visitor center. He said that having ownership and operation not by the Church was a very positive point. He said that some other non-historic sites were difficult to man and hard to manage physical repair and upkeep. They said that the Church was very happy with the way things worked at Bluff.

We had struggled for years trying to figure out a line of authority for the senior service missionaries at Bluff. Ben said that proselyting mission leaders are beginning to also be responsible for senior service missionaries in their mission boundary. The program seems to be working well and will be rolled out further in other missions.

Many of the missionaries wondered where priesthood keys were coming from to serve at Bluff Fort. We continued to fly under the radar, hoping that no one would ask too many questions about how we got missionaries.

In 2023, Benjamin Pykles replaced Jenny Lund as director of the Historic Sites Division in the Church History Department. He asked a couple of questions of the missionary department, and we were now in plain sight and there were General Authorities that didn't understand how Bluff Fort could have missionaries and not conform to other Church history sites.

The missionary applicants seemed to find Bluff Fort. We worked out a system of filling out the forms and getting permission. A large percentage of the missionaries, the Board thinks were sent directly from God, cutting out the middleman and giving us great missionaries to serve at the Fort.

Grant told Ben that President Magleby of the Farmington New Mexico Mission was bringing his proselyting missionaries to Bluff twice a year for a zone conference. Grant encouraged Ben to press forward with the idea of having the Bluff Fort missionaries under the direction of the Farmington New Mexico Mission because it wouldn't be too much trouble for the mission leader to take a little more time on his visit to interview each of the senior service missionaries and hold a special meeting with them.

Ben asked how the director of the Fort was called and Grant told him that usually a couple had served a few months and then when it was time to select a new director the Board prayerfully considered the possibilities and a decision was made. Ben was good with that.

Grant discussed with Ben how sales in the gift shop covered all maintenance costs at Bluff Fort. Ben said that other sites were also adding a gift shop. Housing was also discussed, and Grant told him of miracles that had happened that made it possible for missionaries to have a trailer or RV to come and serve. Ben marveled at the miracles happening at Bluff Fort.

Further discussion was held in a number of different offices, but it finally boiled down to a meeting that Grant Taylor was invited to attend at the Church Administration Building on Wednesday, January 17, 2024. In that meeting the North American Southwest Area Presidency, along with members of the senior missionary department attended.

Discussion was held and questions asked about how it might work for senior proselyting missionaries serving at the Fort. Grant was asked if there was anything in the by-laws of the Foundation that would preclude them from serving. Discussion was also held about senior medical insurance and proselyting at the Fort.

Grant explained that missionaries were told to answer all questions posed to them but did not bear testimony or pass out copies of the Book of Mormon. He explained that if the visitors wanted more information, they were given a pass-along card to fill out and send into the Church.

Elder Michael A. Dunn, 2nd Counselor in the area presidency, said that he had recently been to Bluff Fort and loved the facilities and the manner in which the pioneer message was shared. He said it was more of a soft sell and that no one was pressed.

Elder Jose L. Alonso commented that he thought it was wonderful what had been happening at Bluff Fort and that it was good that the Church was re-calibrating their relationship with Bluff Fort because he said he knew there were many wonderful things yet to happen at the Fort.

The meeting ended with a feeling that now having the Bluff senior missionaries serving under the leadership of the Farmington, New Mexico mission president, would be a great alignment. Art Johnson, senior missionary department, talked with Grant afterwards letting him know that their office would be glad to work with the Foundation in the future.

From the beginning, Elder Steven E. Snow had charged the HIRF Board to make sure that visitors were given a great first impression with members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that the missionaries who came to serve had a great, meaningful and fun time while serving at Bluff Fort. The missionaries and docents serving at the Fort share their light of the gospel through their eyes and each have had some wonderful experiences with visitors from around the world.

Other "Bluff Fort Worker Boys"
John and Brandon Cox

John was retired military and lived in Utah County. He and his son Brandon started coming to some of the earliest work projects at the Fort. When we started building cabins, John was there for the first three cabins. He claimed that his recipe for chicken and rice was amazing. The Friday night when the McConkies came to build their cabins and help with the other two, John's recipe was used by the kitchen crew. Nina Taylor had tried to come up with all the ingredients that John's recipe called for. Unfortunately, the Campbell's Golden Mushroom Soup was nowhere to be found. Nina ran to the gas station in Bluff and there on a row was the Campbell's Golden Mushroom Soup. They made 5 14" Dutch ovens with the chicken and rice and then filled a deep 16" with the rest of the tenderloins. There was not a smidge left after all had dined.

We needed doors and John made the cabin doors using rough sawn lumber in his work-shop at home and brought one down for each of the cabins. He also played with his forge and made the door latches or knobs to open each of the doors. When it came time to build the barn doors to divide rooms #2 and #3, John brought those down as well. He also worked on a couple of the German wagons helping to give them a more American West look. I think the wagon in Room #2 was one that John had worked on. John and Brandon were right there when we needed them.

Jack and Carol Muterspaugh

In 2007, Jack and Carol Muterspaugh dropped by the Fort on a 4-wheeling trip. Jack learned what was going on and wanted to become a part of the action. He was the district parts manager for the Larry Miller Car Group. Jack came down on a number of our guy weekend trips to Bluff.

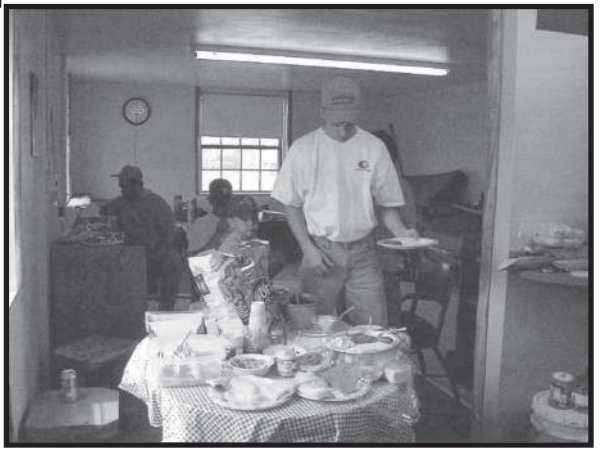
The Cowboy Cabin had been turned into a dorm by Corinne Roring. A bathroom had been installed with a very small shower. There were five log single beds with extra cushions underneath when there was a larger group. Guys would come and work till they'd drop and then Corinne would make her amazing chili or we'd shower off and head to Twin Rocks Café. Corinne would fill the refrigerator with milk, eggs, bacon and sandwich stuff. She'd always supply the guys with Half and Half for their cold cereal.

Jack became a regular. One day Larry Miller called him and asked him where he was. Jack told him what we were doing, and this opened a door for the Foundation to ask the Millers for money for the Co-op.



Old state truck shed housed the workshop (back left), the kitchen (white doors in middle and the "Cowboy Cabin" on right).
Erlene Taylor 2009 photo.

Jack and Carol were not sealed in the temple and late-night discussions about religion and the importance of eternal marriage was a part of those discussions. Jack and Carol were sealed in the temple a few months into Jack's help at the Fort. Larry Miller was one of the witnesses at their sealing. Larry passed away a few months later.



2003 Lunch time in the "Cowboy Cabin" for the north fence builders. Corinne Roring photo.

Leon Jones & Cherie Jones

Leon Jones and his wife Cherie came as service missionaries to Bluff Fort in 2018. Leon had begun writing a biography of his great-grandfather Kumen Jones. Leon helped with furnishing the Jones home and landscaped the area around the home. Candice and Jed Lyman, DeAnn Ivans, Leon and Cherie Jones went on shopping sprees to furnish the home.

Another project Leon was asked to do by director Wayne Embleton, was to create an equipment display. There were just a few pioneer tools at the Fort. Leon placed them between the blacksmith shop and the Redd cabin. He then met Melvin Gaines, a resident of Bluff, who owned a large collection of pioneer farm equipment. Melvin donated all of his older pieces to the collection. During that process Leon and Melvin talked about the Gospel and Melvin was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Leon provided photographs and wrote the script for a permanent sign, naming and explaining the tools. Lamont Crabtree, Fort historian, finished the graphics, and oversaw the construction of the sign.

Grant and Nina Taylor had visited "Four Mile" a weigh station outside of Denver, Colorado. This pioneer stagecoach stop catered to school visitation. One exhibit was a wagon encampment. Leon used their ideas to create a wagon encampment exhibit for the Fort. All of the Bluff settlers had various occasions to use their wagons as their homes. This exhibit shows visitors a typical wagon and camp kitchen. The display is now used as a teaching station for school groups who visit the Fort. Extra boxes and log stumps also provide seating near the fire ring. The encampment is now a great addition to the Fort. Leon drafted a sign for the display and Lamont Crabtree finished the graphics for the construction of the sign.

Shortly after the cabins were built, temporary signs were created by Lamont Crabtree for the Barton, Jones and Hobbs cabins. Grant Taylor had envisioned making signs for all the

cabins. Grant later shared the idea with Leon, while on his mission, and he later took on the project after leaving the mission. Leon researched and drafted the historical signs to accompany each cabin. The drafts for the signs were sent to families for feedback. Lamont Crabtree then created a template, performed final édits and photo enhancements for the signs which were installed in 2024.

Leon Jones is just one of many who are given the opportunity to be a part of this marvelous work and a wonder in San Juan County, Utah. It is inspiring to see how people with specific talents needed at the Fort are brought together and given the opportunity to make a difference.

David L. and Joanne Walton, Orem, Utah

David was an elementary school teacher (1974-1987) and school district administrator, leading school library and technology departments, 1987-2003. He retired following a stroke in 2003, then returned to special technology/teaching assignment in Alpine School District, 2003 thru 2010. Joanne has been a stay-at-home mom.



David and Joanne Walton. David Walton photo.

As a Hole in the Rock descendant who grew up in Los Angeles, Bluff was mostly an unknown to Dave, beyond the story of Benjamin Perkins, Dave's maternal great-grandfather. His cousins, Elaine Guymon Rowley and Beverly Guymon Vowell Black sought technical advice in 2013 regarding the portraits to be displayed in the 'Talking Wall' exhibit at the new Co-op. This led to assisting with the website and newsletters, and eventually to an invitation to make application to serve as Bluff Fort service missionaries.

Just as the call to serve in Bluff was issued, his local church assignments were suddenly extended by leadership calls in a branch presidency serving a retirement/care facility. Negotiations ensued with directors Dale and Bev Black to allow local church service to continue, while serving Bluff Fort remotely. Dave received the assignment for gathering and publishing pioneer histories on a newly designed web page, remote due to the poor internet service in Bluff.

David and Joanne traveled to Bluff for new missionary training weeks and introduced the missionaries to the BluffFort.org web pages, assisted in computer training for family history, and gathered new materials for the web page. Slide (PowerPoint) presentations were also developed to relive Bluff as it was pre-1900. Publishing and mailing, later emailing, periodic newsletters became another remote service opportunity. Editing and publishing brochures, DVDs and books for the visitor center were other assignments we undertook. These Bluff-related assignments continued into 2024.

Gary Cook

Gary Cook had worked for the Church History Department and had been lead writer on many of the visitor center videos. He had retired early because he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Jenny Lund, Director of LDS Church Historic Sites suggested that Gary might help us with our script for the video presentation in the Co-op. Grant realized that Gary and he had been members of an LDS Institute sponsored singing group called the Sounds of Zion at Utah State University.

Grant visited Gary at his home in Sandy, Utah and they talked about the story. Gary had written much of the script for the San Diego Mormon Battalion Visitor Center. He said he would be delighted to help us with the project.

Gary wrote the majority of the script, "If These Walls Could Talk." Gary arranged for Alan Peterson of Flying Leap Films to meet Grant at Gary's home. Grant found out that Alan lived in his ward in Centerville and the deal was struck for Alan to direct the video.

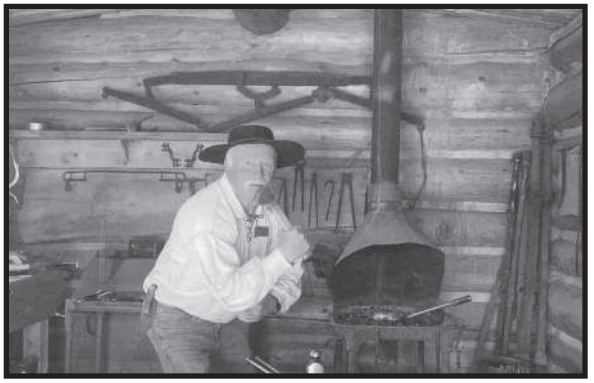
Gary and Alan worked closely together. Alan finished tightening the script.

When Alan had a rough cut complete, we showed it to Gary and he said that it was 90%. He said that we really needed to take footage at the Hole in the Rock crevice to give the impact to the video.

Gary knew just what our visitors were looking for and helped us create a memorable experience for visitors coming to learn the story of faith and courage of the Hole in the Rock Pioneers.



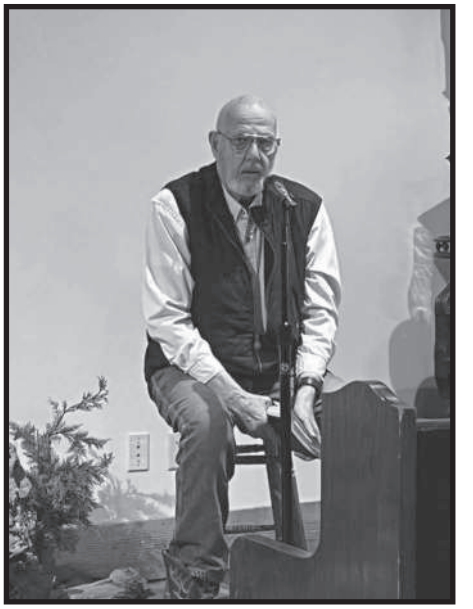
"If These Wall Could Talk" DVD movie is shown on large screen TVs at three locations and projected on the wall of room #3 in the Co-op. It is sold at the Fort and given to tour bus guides for showing in transit.



Scott Christensen, volunteer senior service missionary (2022-23), Fort blacksmith and storyteller. Not a weed could be found anywhere on the Fort, or even near it while he was there.

Lynn Stevens

Lynn Stevens seemed to be groomed to serve on the Hole in the Rock Foundation Board. His grandfather was Walter Joshua Stevens who honeymooned for 6 months with the original Hole in the Rock company coming to Bluff. Lynn spent 33 years of his life on active duty in the United States Army and retired with the rank of Major General (two-star general). He was also vice president of Northrup Grumman. He returned home to San Juan County and served two terms as a county commissioner. While he held the office of San Juan County Commissioner he worked closely with the Blue Mountain Hospital development project. He also served on the board of directors of Blue Mountain Hospital in Blanding, Utah. He willingly used his leadership experience by serving on ten different state and local boards and committees as an uncompensated board member.



Lynn Stevens presenting a devotional message to Bluff Fort Missionaries. Lorie Rasmussen photo.

Lynn said that Corinne Roring was literally at his door the day he retired from the county commission in 2010, asking him if he would serve on the Hole in the Rock Board as liaison for government relations.

Lynn stepped in when the bid for the co-op building was being considered. The desired bid was higher than the funds the Foundation had available. He got together with Tri-Hurst Construction owner Joe Hurst, along with a representative of the Utah Division of Facilities Construction and Management, and the building architect to see what might be pared down so that the building could be built. By dropping some of the higher cost items and eliminating a basement, Lynn was able to help them meet the budget available to the foundation so construction of the Co-op could begin.

Lynn also worked on expanding the Camp Stickie property. The San Juan County operated a trash transfer station adjacent to the 10 acres the Foundation owned. Blowing trash was a problem so Lynn worked together with the county to trade acreage that would square up the camp property boundaries. The Foundation raised funds to re-build the transfer station in another location for the county. When Bluff City incorporated, it became responsible for its' own trash.

Lynn also worked on acquiring a half section of land adjacent to Comb Ridge (also known as Comb Reef). This area had been previously used during youth conferences. Lynn worked with the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) and money was raised to buy the property. When it came time for the land auction, the money raised allowed the Foundation to bid, but when the bidding began Lynn could see other bids were higher than what the Foundation could afford. The winning bid was made by Lyman Family Farms. The owner of Lyman Family Farms, Joe Hunt assured Lynn that the Hole in the Rock Foundation would be allowed to access the property for youth conferences and other outdoor activities.

Lynn became president of the Hole in the Rock Foundation Board of Directors in 2016 after LaMar Helquist retired as the board president. Lynn continued to serve as president of the foundation at this writing in 2024.

CHAPTER FIVE
Miracle: We Continue To Do Hard Things At Bluff Fort

"The future history of San Juan will be more thrilling than the past. I would very much like to stay and watch its glorious development, but who knows that I shall not still be watching it even from a better vantage point than I have ever had hitherto?" **Hole in the Rock pioneer Albert R. Lyman in Preface to "Indians and Outlaws."**



Photo courtesy of Frank and Elaine Rowley.

Bluff Fort Directors
Frank and Elaine Rowley
2013 - 2014

In 2010 , while attending the Blanding 4th of July Celebration Elaine and I (Frank Rowley) received a call from Lamar Helquist requesting an opportunity to meet with us. We were staying at Beverly Vowell Black's home in Blanding. The nature of the business was for Elaine and I to come the following year and work at Bluff Fort. My response was that I was currently serving as bishop of the Coolidge 2nd Ward in Coolidge, Arizona where we currently lived. Graig Taylor, who was with Lamar, was persistent and wanted the name and phone number of our stake president. A couple of months later we received a call to meet with our stake president. Guess what? I received a release from my being the bishop so we could serve at Bluff Fort.

In 2011, Elaine and I made plans to spend the summer working at Bluff Fort. Elaine had an income tax business so a few days after April 15th, we made our journey. We joined Ron and Lorraine Barton, and Dennis and Lorraine Harvey. Ron had been called to volunteer his time to install electrical power to all the new cabins and Log Meeting-house. Dennis and Lorraine assisted in this effort.

During the summer months the men spent hours cutting weeds, making the Fort presentable for guests who stopped by. The women worked in the craft center with LaRue Barton greeting visitors and working on crafts and quilts.

On October 12, 2011, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Co-op building occurred, as previously described.

In 2012 Grant and Graig Taylor approached the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Mission Headquarters about providing service missionaries for Bluff Fort. Their success is what has made Bluff Fort a "Tourist Destination" today.

In the fall of 2012, Frank and Elaine Rowley were called to be the new directors for Bluff Fort. Elaine was given $10,000 to purchase items to sell for the new Co-op Building. Elaine, LaRue, Beverly Vowell and Grant Taylor visited the trade shows in Las Vegas, Nevada and Phoenix, Arizona.



Corinne Roring was President of the Board of Hole in the Rock Foundation.
Janie Roring Lauritzen photo.

During the winter of 2012, Gary and Starla Spears were called to serve at Bluff Fort. Gary, a homebuilder by trade, was assigned the task of building the interior structure for the Co-op Building. There would be three rooms where tour groups would move through, each telling part of the Hole-in-the-Rock journey.

The Co-op building construction commenced October 12, 2011, and Tri-Hurst Construction Company began work. On May 1, 2013 the ribbon cutting event was celebrated.

In 2013, it was evident from the beginning that housing for missionaries was going to be a major problem in Bluff. By 2014, Corinne & her son Mike Roring had completed a new apartment complex to help resolve this situation.

With the completion and dedication of the new Co-op center came the responsibility of decorating the rooms where the film would be shown. Grant had talked about hiring a professional crew to do this work.

But as the new director, I (Frank Rowley) felt each room should depict the story which was told in the film and have a personal touch. Gary Spears had done a marvelous job constructing each room. I had been receiving some very strong impressions as to what the story of each room should tell. As I started gathering items for display, I knew exactly what was to be displayed in each room.

Room One was pictures of those original pioneers and the video Grant developed through Alan Peterson.

Room Two was the room entitled "Preparation to Leave." The message was "Tell the story about leaving precious things behind and taking only essentials." That's where the story of the dress comes in. I wanted a beautiful dress similar to the time period. Kristy Matheson was asked to find that dress. On her return trip from the Salt Lake Valley area, she reported that it was not possible to find anyone who had the time to make such a dress. I stressed to Kristy that it was critical that we needed a dress before we started showing the video. On her next trip to the Salt Lake Valley, she returned with a dress that we thought would work. I never asked if someone sewed a dress, or if it was a donation, or if it was purchased somewhere. It didn't matter; it would work.

Then there was the issue of the freight wagon which was in Room Two. It was so large that its' presence overwhelmed the room. I had expressed my concern to the missionaries wondering what could be done.





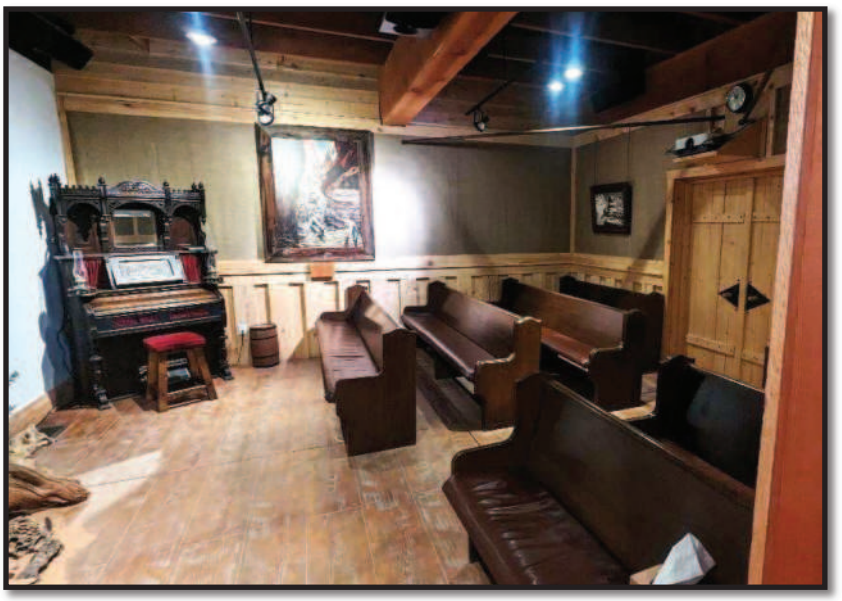
Room two "Preparation to Leave."
Rich Murset photos.



"The Talking Wall "has framed, sepia-toned photos (middle three) that come alive and introduce the video presentation. It was patterned after an exhibit at the Mormon Battalion Historic Site in San Diego, California. Rich Murset photo.



Room One - Alan Peterson produced and directed the movie shown, entitled "If These Walls Could Talk."
Ron Bateman photo.



"On the Plains" Room Three is where videos are shown to visitors. Also, the missionaries and volunteers meet there each morning for devotionals and instruction.

One day Carl Larsen asked me to walk with him to look at a smaller covered wagon. When I saw it, that was exactly what we needed. So we took the freight wagon apart, moving it out of Room Two and replaced it with the smaller covered wagon, PERFECT!

Now decorating the room began! Quilts, chickens, cookware, gunny sacks that had the name of "Escalante" printed on them and then stuffed stools, hand tools, harnesses; it just came together!

Room Three represented "On the Plains." Dead Tree! The dead tree came from a trip we took with all the missionaries to Doll House Ruins. I was impressed to take my pickup, not my "side by side" RZR.

Coming home, all of a sudden, there it was just sitting by the side of the road, a gorgeous dead tree. Firewood to most people, but decorative to me. "Brethren, let's load that tree in my truck." It is on display in Room Three. Now I needed some decorative rocks. Not just rocks, decorative, unique kind of rocks, but where can I find them! A thought came to mind, go see Madge Shumway. She has lots of rocks. She is also Corinne Roring's good friend. So to her home in Blanding I went. Lynn Shumway, Madge's daughter-in-law went with me. The answer was "Yes, if you can find what you need, take them to the Fort!" The rocks were absolutely perfect!



Room Three contains rocks, a dead tree, brush, weeds, sand, and a fox, representing "On the Plains."

Now we had everything, except I wanted a stuffed coyote. One of our missionaries, JoLynn Mason had returned home because of some family issues. I received a call from her, "Frank I have found a stuffed fox, will that work?" "Yes, indeed!" was my response.

Once everything was put in motion, merchandise displayed, video functioning, visitors stopping, we had a major problem. The upstairs floor was rough-sawn lumber with cracks. Dust and dirt was falling on the newly displayed merchandise. Gary Spears and his son went to work on the problem. They installed tongue-and-groove wood flooring. Problem resolved.

What a blessing! A few days prior to his son's arrival, Gary had fallen off the scaffolding where he was working in Room Three. He was really hurting. The installation of a new floor was essential. The saying, "We Do Hard Things" was exemplified.

The original co-op building was stucco on the outside but had a three-inch lip on the footing. It was there so stone could be added later. By 2014, Corinne had the stone in place. Vance Seely did the stone work. Much of the stone used was from the original Co-op.



"Vance Seeley was a wonder as a brick & rock layer and such a pleasant man." He did the stone work on the new Co-op.

Erlene Taylor photo

Visitors' Center

Everything was really coming together. Visitors were coming. "Friday Night at the Fort" was a great success. Maybe because we gave free ice cream! But there was a problem, the room echoed, especially when a microphone was used. How can we fix that? Something needs to be done! One day Mark Williams came to me, "Frank, I have an idea! We have a bunch of packing material, shaved aspen pads (I think). Maybe that might work." So, we wrapped the pads in burlap, built a frame, hung the new fixtures. "Wah La" they worked. Echo stopped!

12 Days of Christmas

The visitors' center was a huge success. Lamont Crabtree's film of the "Trip to the San Juan" was shown. Visitors loved to walk the grounds and visit the historic cabins. Merchandise was going out the door with excited visitors. Then came the idea; "Let's do the Twelve Days of Christmas in July." What? JULY? Elaine and the missionary sisters went to work. Ideas emerged. "Frank, I want 12 short stories about the journey or life in the Fort!" That was Elaine's request. So, twelve short stories were written. About 30 boxes were assembled and the "The Twelve Days of Christmas" had life. They were all sold in just a few days, with many requests for more. The answer, "We'll try again next year, but we are so busy right now that we are unable to do more." Next year came and the same scenario occurred. Somewhere those people have a very unique gift box from Bluff Fort!!!

2014 Season

Knowing that the 2014 Season would be Elaine's and my last year, I had a desire to leave behind something that would be lasting and memorable. I finally decided to build a pavilion just outside the back doors of the visitors' center where visitors could eat and drink and enjoy the setting of the Fort. Shade was the essential element. I designed it so the roof boards would slant to provide shade and air flow. It turned out very well.

Also, we had a problem in the spring with blowing sand. It would cover the lawn in front of the shop and Cowboy Cabin building. Each year we would shovel and wash the sand off the lawn, only to have the next windstorm cover it again. So one of our 2014 projects was to build a rock retaining wall to control the blowing sand.

The project was double-width rock with a flagstone cap. The cap was a couple of inches wider than the wall so the sand would drop in front of the retaining wall, not on the grass behind. It worked well.



The arbor and rock retaining wall were built just outside the Co-op in 2014. Pictured is missionary Lynn Feinauer adding the information sign in 2023.

The major project for 2014 was Camp Stickie. Kristi and Stuart Matheson had scheduled a Youth Conference for the first week in June. A large pavilion needed to be assembled. Vault toilets needed to be built and shower stalls. How is all this going to happen? Lynn Stevens hired his nephew Kendall and Tyson Shumway and crew to pour the cement floor for the pavilion. The missionaries erected the building. Kristi Matheson took charge of the vault toilets. The missionaries installed the roof and partitions and Vance Seeley constructed the block walls. Lynn Stevens came up with the shower facility. Mike Roring took charge of the earth work and graveling the roads. The missionaries built a pump house over the well and WHEW, WE WERE READY!

SITLA Parcel History (by Grant Taylor)

As our youth conferences began to grow in numbers, we realized that we needed more venues for additional activities on sacred ground that would help the youth better understand the story of these hardy Hole in the Rock pioneers. The progress on our BLM permit application was slow, and we were met with significant opposition. We realized we were not going to get anything near what we needed for access to the Hole in the Rock trail.

We began to explore other areas and came across a parcel of land that contained part of the original pioneer trail. It was ideally suited for some of our activities; specifically "Find the Route." This parcel was located adjacent to the highway near Comb Ridge and was owned by the Utah State Institutional Trust Land Administration (SITLA).

We began the process of acquiring the parcel which was eventually put up for public auction by SITLA in October of 2016. Following spirited bidding, the parcel was purchased by another entity – Lyman Family Farms.

The Lyman Family Farms group has ties to the Hole in the Rock pioneers and has been extremely supportive and generous in allowing us to use this property for our youth conference activities. As a result of this miraculous benefit, thousands of youth and their leaders have been inspired by the "Find the Route" activity, and the Hole in the Rock pioneer story.

The "Find the Route" activity resembles an actual exploring process of the pioneers. The

the possibility of a route, they reconvene, counsel together, and decide which route to follow.

The property encompasses Hobbs' Wash, a significant obstacle. The experience of finding the best route helps them understand the difficulty the four scouts had determining the best route the wagon company should take.

We truly counted this as a Bluff Fort Miracle because the $300,000 we had committed by donor fell short of the final $450,000 that Lyman Family Farms paid for the property. The HIRF now pays a nominal lease payment to LFF for access to the 260 acres.

Missionaries

Bluff Fort could have never emerged, if it was not for the Church missionaries and the local docents that came to serve, each bringing unique capabilities and the desire to be there. Each has a story, but I want to tell you about a young man named Austin Gorham.

We received word that an autistic young man with his grandparents (Barbara and Barry Meekins) were coming to serve at Bluff Fort. My anxiety level was beyond description. How is that going to work? When they arrived, Elaine and I took their missionary badges to them As Elaine presented Austin his missionary badge, he pinned it on and then he went to a full-length mirror and stood there for several minutes. My anxiety left. It was going to be OK.

One day Austin was working in the visitors' center and a man came in with a t-shirt that had "swear words" printed on it. Austin grabbed the man by the shirt stating, "What are you doing, wearing a shirt like this?" The man was totally taken back and awestruck by the event, but soon relaxed somewhat when he realized Austin's autistic situation.

Elaine's phone started ringing. A frantic voice greeted her, "Hurry, Austin just grabbed a man by his shirt!" Elaine was on the run to the visitor's center. When Elaine asked Austin, "What are you doing?" Austin's response was, "I just wanted him to repent!" Apologies were made and the man understood. Elaine visited with Austin and his response once again was, "Sister Rowley, I just wanted him to repent!"



Bluff Fort special missionary Austin Gorham.

Austin also loved to plink on the upstairs piano. Austin's practice times and length needed to be set for the visitors' sake. One day, a thought came to me, "Have Austin learn a song." Then the hymn came to mind, "God Be With You." Kristi Matheson worked with Austin. Progress came quickly. At our "end-of-year going away party," Austin played "God Be With You Till We Meet Again." All of us sang, or I should say "tried to sing." With tears running down our faces, choked voices, we said our goodbyes!

Submitted by Frank Rowley, 2013-14 Bluff Fort Director

Names of Key People Frank & Elaine Rowley Worked With in 2013-2014

Gary and Sharon Guymon – Original purchasers, trail markers, Barton Cabin

LaRue and Karl Barton – Jens Nielson home, board members, old Visitors' Center

Lamont Crabtree – Hole-in-the-Rock Trail, historic research, film, Barton Cabin

Graig Taylor – Land purchase, restoration, trail & Bluff Fort site, Barton Cabin, meeting house, Salvation Knoll

Grant Taylor – Land purchase, audio visual, film, dedications

Corinne Roring – Board President, visionary and persistent, Barton Cabin

Mike & Craig Roring – Following Corinne's dream, Mike - board member

Gene & Mary Foushee – Local supporters, labor, trail markers, trail locations

Lamar Helquist – Board member, research, trail markers, John Taylor Monument

Helquist Family – Support

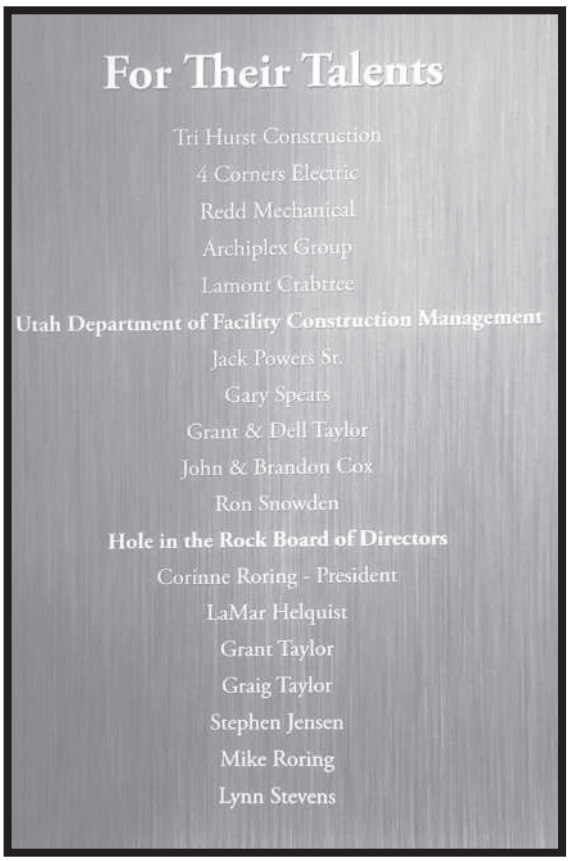
Grant & Dell Taylor – Paint, sign & cabinets for Co-op

Dick Jacobs – Automation

Jack & Vauna Powers – Cabinets Co-op

Gary & Starla Spears – Co-op, interior rooms, stairs and upstairs flooring

The Fort speaks: "One of the most amazing places seen in our lifetime!" Visitor from Italy, 2014.



These two plaques hang inside the front door of the San Juan Cooperative.

For Their Talents

Tri Hurst Construction, 4 Corners Electric, Redd Mechanical, Archiplex Group, Lamont Crabtree, Utah Department of Facility Construction Management, Jack Powers Sr., Gary Spears, Grant & Dell Taylor, John & Brandon Cox, Ron Snowden, Hole in the Rock Board of Directors— Corinne Roring— President, LaMar Helquist, Grant Taylor, Graig Taylor, Stephen Jensen, Mike Roring, Lynn Stevens.

In Grateful Appreciation

Sorenson Legacy Foundation, George S & Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation, Karl and LaRue Barton, Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation, Utah Department of Transportation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Foundation, State of Utah, San Juan County, Ester Foundation, Lettie Jones Foundation, Fredrick and Barbara Jones, Vivian Redd McConkie Family, Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, Gunter & Christa Liebach, Bert and Kathy , Charles Redd Foundation, and many other Friends of Bluff Fort



Missionaries 2013

Dennis & Lorraine Harvey
Helen and Arvid Rudd
Terry and Mark Williams
Gary and Starla Spears
Elaine and Frank Rowley
Gianfranco & Trudy DeAngelis
Evelyn and Carl Larsen
Kristi and Stuart Matheson

Docents 2013

Marcia Shores
Karen Dufur
Bernice Perkins
VerDonne Blake
Judy Lyman
Shauna Hurst

Missionaries 2014

Frank & Elaine Rowley, Directors
Joe & Maureen Brandon
Gianfranco & Trudy de Angelis
Rex & Patty Edwards
Bob & Sylvia Healey
Tharon & Kathy Judd
Royce & JoLynn Mason
Barry & Barbara Meekins
Austin Gorham
Keith & Jerri Nielson
Jim & Vicki Orr
Stuart & Kristi Matheson
LaRue Helquist Barton

Docents 2014

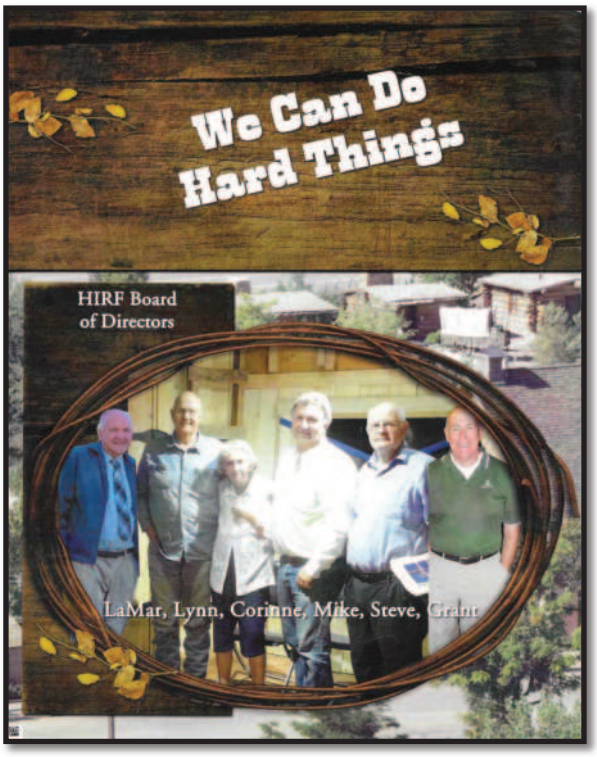
VerDonne Blake
Alyson Christensen
Brent & Susan Flavel
Shauna Hurst
Steve Keele
Katy Kirk
Toni Lacy
Austin Lyman
Candice Lyman
Judy Lyman
Leslie Nielson
Marcia Shores
Gayle Shumway

First contingent of Church service missionaries at Bluff Fort in 2013.











Joe Brandon, Keith Nielson, Royce Mason, Dale & Beverly Black, Robert Healey, Rex Edwards, Jim Orr, Frank Rowley, John Austin Meekins Gorham, Theron Judd, ? , Barry Meekins. Front: Maureen Brandon, Jerri Nielson, Jolynn Mason, Sylvia Healey, Patty Edwards, Vicki Orr, Elaine Rowley, Kathy Judd, ? , Barbara Meekins.
From "Miracles Happen . . . When the Time is Right." Bluff Fort 2014 yearbook, p 100.



Pictured is Frank Rowley, 2013-14 Bluff Fort Director roping a wooden calf.

The Fort Speaks: "It was a dream to learn how to catch a cow. I learned it here. Thanks!"
Visitor from France, 2014 yearbook, page 17.



Early missionary volunteers Dennis & Loraine Harvey in 2011.





Dale & Beverly Black
Bluff Fort Directors
2015 to 2016



Dale Black created and built the ore cart used in the Fort Co-op while on a honeymoon in the desert with his wife, Beverly.



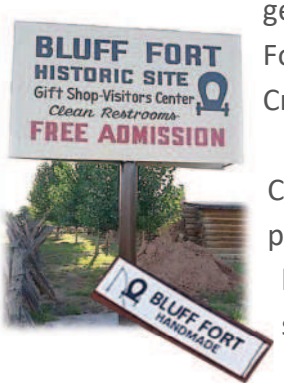
Dale designed the Bluff Fort waterwheel. There were 10 known pioneer water wheels in the area of Bluff. Alan Martindale photo.



Back row: Ron Gray, Roger Paystrup, Royce & JoLynn Mason, Jim Orr, Kayleen & Jim Miller, Grant Taylor, Casey Fox—Middle Row: Evelyn Gray, Randy Bunker, Ron & Belva Poulsen, Vicki Orr, Joanne Walton, Sylvia Healey, Sandra Bradshaw & Mary Fox – Front Row: Dale & Bev Black, LaRue Kirkham, Carol Barton, Dave Walton, Bob Healey, Ruth Bunker.

Dale and Beverly Black, 2015 Bluff Fort Directors, exclaimed as they were first called to serve: "We had an amazing experience as we interviewed prospective Bluff Fort Service Missionaries. While interviewing one of the 2015 missionary couples, Jim Miller ended his interview by saying, "If we have a chance to serve at the Bluff Fort, we will be willing do anything you ask us to do." That was music to our ears and the statement pretty well summed up the attitude of those sweet pioneers that came to Bluff in 1880 on the San Juan Mission."

Two of the many goals Dale wanted our missionaries to accomplish our first year was to get a great, BIG sign painted that invited people to "Come visit the Bluff Fort" and to place a Bluff Fort label in all handmade items created in the Craft Center. As you can see both of these were accomplished.



It was a great privilege to wear both the Bluff Fort badge and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints missionary badge. While shopping out of town we have had many strangers look at our missionary's badges and say, "Where is the Bluff Fort?" That has opened the door to share bits and pieces of "the story." Yes, there is "power in the badge."

Our first year serving, we had people ask us, “What do old people do on a Church service mission? The following were some of our replies:

- Plant “Gospel Seeds” by sharing the story of the Hole in the Rock journey and the San Juan Mission.
- Develop appreciation for those who have gone on before us.
- Build things with a hammer and nails (like expanding the work shop or building a new office).
- Learn to smile at all times, and “Let your light shine.”
- Sew bonnets, aprons, quilts, rabbit skin pouches, write a book about topsy-turvy dolls, weave rugs.
- Learn to be on the same page as your companion (your spouse.)
- Develop love in your heart for all of God’s children.
- Rely on our Heavenly Father for help and learn to listen to the Spirit of the Holy Ghost.
- Exhibit patience for all the different personalities that you work with.
- Learn to forgive people who offend you and try not to offend others.

For the first 5 1/2 months of our service in 2015, the Bluff fort directors’ office was located inconveniently behind the piano on the 2nd floor of the Co-op. On the positive side, as visitors would come upstairs to see what the Co-op social hall looked like, Bev had the opportunity of getting up from her desk to greet them.

One day as Bev approached one of the guests visiting from Sweden the guest said she had just finished watching the video presentation downstairs. Bev said, “I’m glad you enjoyed the video.” The woman said “It was more than enjoying. There was something that deeply touched my heart.” She placed her hands over her heart. She asked “What is it?” Bev said, “It was the spirits of those pioneers telling you that the story you heard was true!” Tears came to her eyes and she knew exactly what I was talking about.

Missionary Randy Bunker built a very unique, but efficient, small office at the 3rd level of the Co-op, at the top of a long flight of stairs. Up to this point, there was no designated office. The prior directors, Frank and Elaine Rowley, used the Corinne Roring condo across the street where they were living for their office.

Under the direction of missionary Casey Fox, the men more than doubled the size of the Bluff Fort woodshop. Jolynn Mason wrote and published a darling book, with illustrations by Toni Lacy about the topsy-turvy dolls they made in the sewing room.



During our two years of service, Dale guided the Bluff missionaries on several memorable RV excursions.

THE BLACK'S 2ND YEAR OF SERVING AT THE BLUFF FORT – 2016

"If you want to know the Lord, go to work for HIM."



Burnis & Lana Skinner, John & Jean Weiss, Bob & Kristy Coombs, Charley & Karen Weaver, Mike & Cheryl Deming, Larue & Hugh Kirkham, Betty & Stewart Lewis, Mark & Valerie Nielson, Cathy & Lee Wright, Kathy & Tharon Judd, Mark & Gayle Berrett, Belva & Ron Poulson, Bev & Dale Black – Missing in the photo: Bob & Sylvia Healey, Joe & Carol Barton, Bryce & Cathy Redd.

New Attraction under Construction

Dale Black, Bluff Fort Director wrote the following in a Bluff Fort 2016 Newsletter:

The Bluff Fort Church service missionaries are currently engaged in constructing a new water feature. It will consist of a 13 foot 'noria' water wheel which will have 16 buckets and will draw water out of a simulated river and dump it onto higher ground. The purpose of this water wheel is to demonstrate one of the methods used by the early San Juan settlers to draw water from the San Juan River to irrigate their crops. Black Locust, which is the hardest wood in this country and the most rot-resistant wood, will be used to construct the water wheel. This lumber was shipped in from Colrain, Massachusetts. A 6,000 gallon concrete tank has been buried and will be used as the water storage and recirculation tank.

A 3,000 gallon concrete open-top tank is being used to simulate the San Juan River. Water flows 'downstream' and returns to flow into the water wheel tank and then runs down a simulated river and (into) the storage tank. The buckets will pick up water as the wheel turns and dump it into a flume which will then direct the water to an irrigation ditch that will flow to a small garden.

The water feature will also include a water table which will provide an opportunity for children to understand the fragile nature of structures along the river such as diversion dams which can get washed away. There will also be a gold panning area, representing the early 1890's gold rush along the San Juan River near Bluff.



The 2016 Missionaries labored with all their hearts to get the Water Wheel Project completed.



While Dale's main 2016 goal was to complete the water wheel, Cathy Wright wrote & published the book "Jody's Journal." Bev's goal was to have the missionaries build a chicken coop. The missionaries made amazing wooden toys, leather phone holsters, leather purses, dolls, aprons, quilts to name a few.

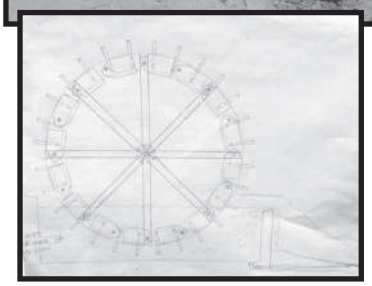


Theron Judd's herd of wooden horses was also a hit!

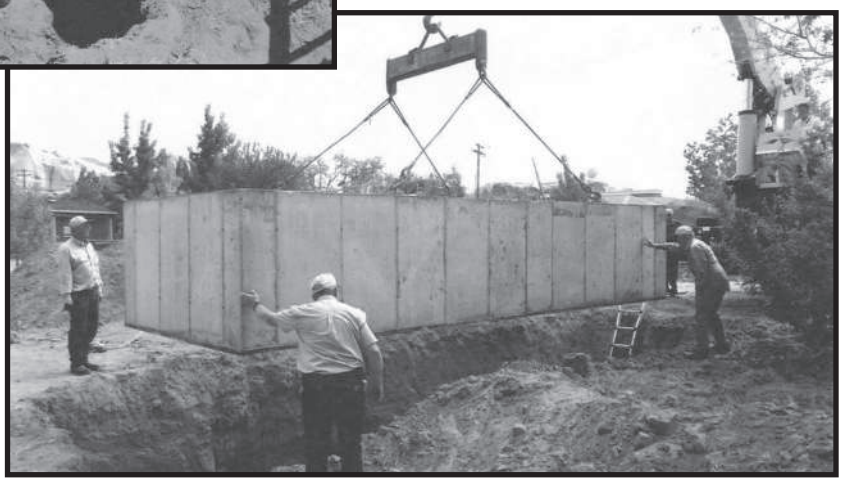
2016 Fort Water Wheel Project

Dale Black spent over a year coming up with a plan before implementing it.





First a hole was dug.



Lowering the water tank into place.



Installing the lid on the tank of the water wheel.



Water Wheel axle support was installed.

Photos are from the 2016 missionary yearbook.



Cutting pieces in the shop for the Water Wheel. Black Locust was used in construction of the water wheel because of its' durability. It is a hard, strong wood that is rot resistant.

Assembling pieces for the first half of the water wheel next to the Fort kitchen.





Assembling the water wheel under the porch shelter of the Cowboy Cabin.

Mike Roring hoisting the water wheel in place with a crane.





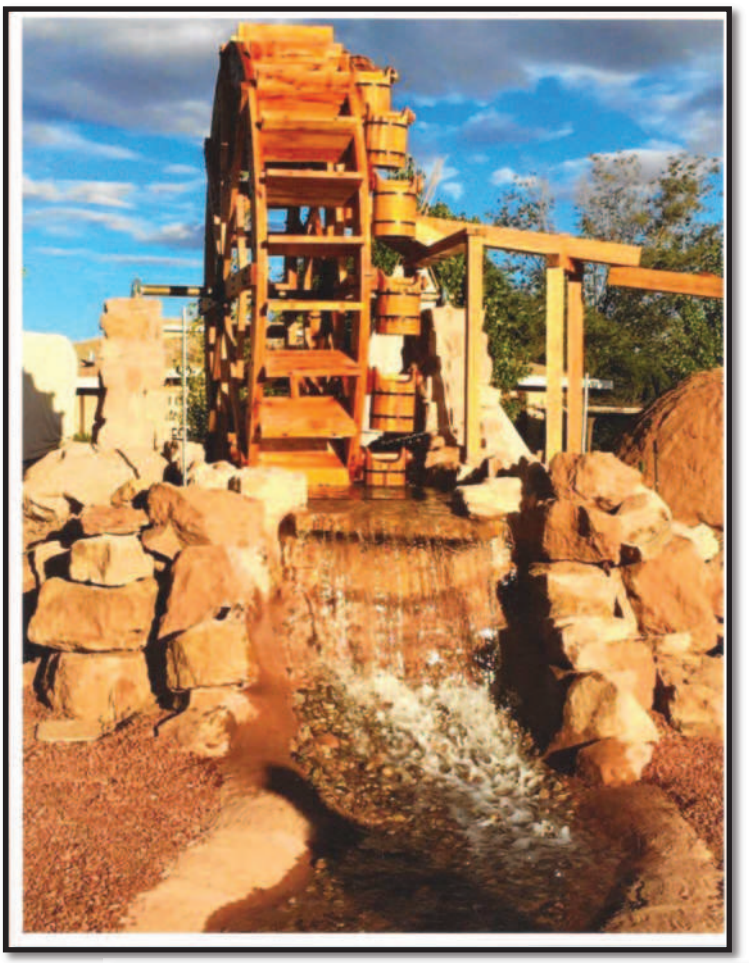


Attaching the water wheel to the axle.

Placing landscape rocks into place.

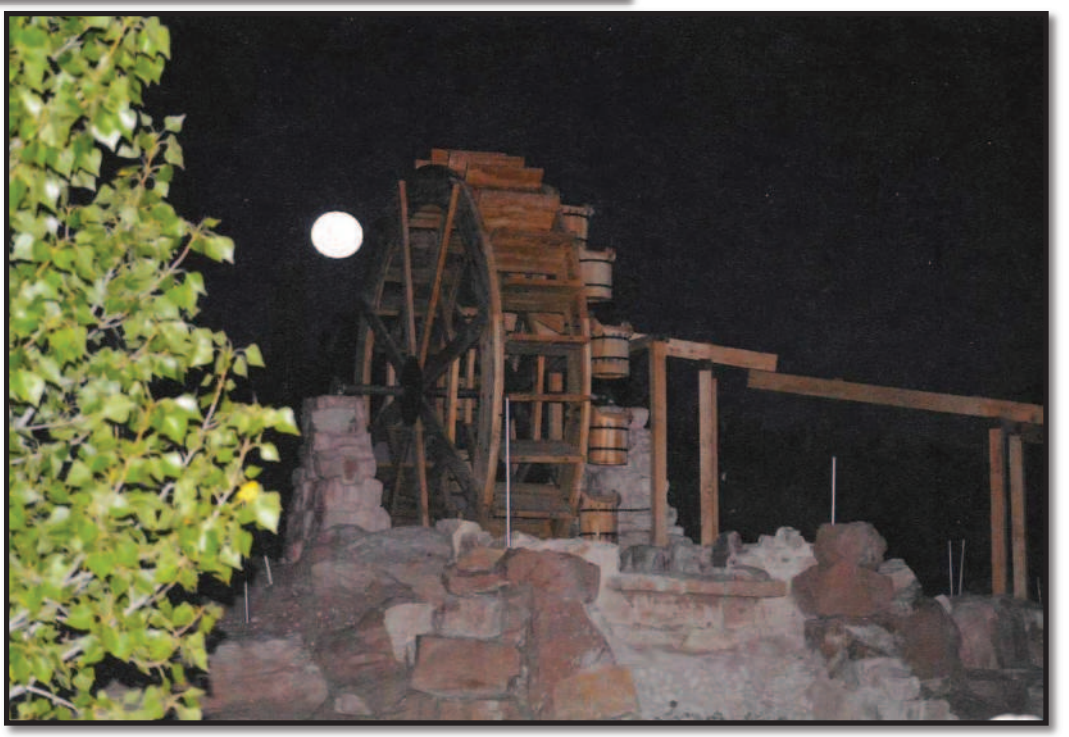
Almost finished!





Completed Bluff Fort Waterwheel.
Courtesy of
Erlene Taylor

Pioneers Henry and Sarah Holyoak tried using a waterwheel to lift water out of the San Juan River to a ditch that flowed to their crops. Water truly was gold and the only way the settlers could survive the harsh summers in the San Juan.

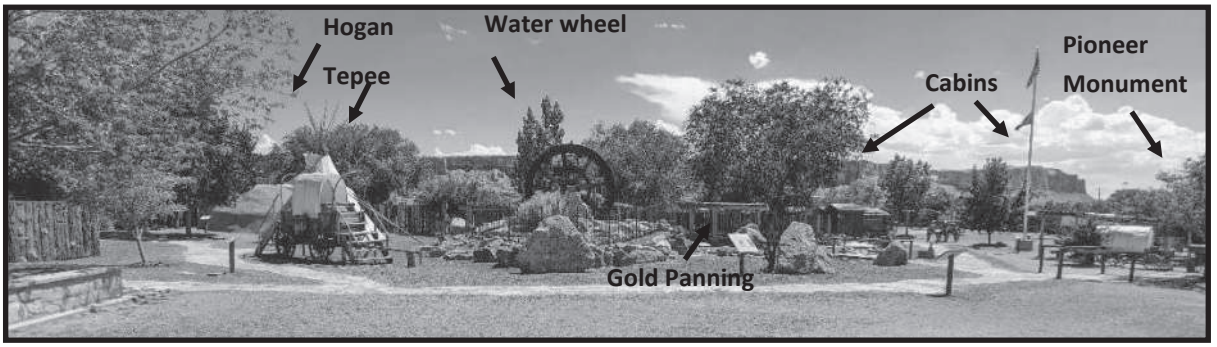


Water wheel on a moon-lit night.

WATERWHEEL DEDICATION

The waterwheel dedication took place April 6, 2018. Graig Taylor began the work and design for a waterwheel to be constructed at Bluff Fort. Grant Taylor met with the Holyoak family in Moab to talk with them about plans for the waterwheel. Roberta Knudsen and Joe Holyoak were the key individuals that helped get a $12,000 donation to help build the waterwheel. A grant from "Utah Museums" to help with a plan was received and Blake Weighdahl and David Stroud from Thanksgiving Point came to Bluff to scope out the setting. Their design crew was going to help design the wheel, but then fell through. LaMar and Grant worked with Dale Black, Director of the Fort in 2015-16. Dale worked hard on the plan and ultimately was able to see the project through to completion.

The Holyoak family joined together in the Log Meetinghouse at 1 pm and Grant Taylor conducted the dedication. Roberta Knudson played the pump organ and the opening hymn was the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." After the invocation, a descendant family sang "Come, Come Ye Saints." Then David Holyoak spoke about being covenant people, like Henry and Sarah Holyoak. Ron Holyoak dedicated the waterwheel and exhibit. The crowd moved out to the water wheel and Sarah Ann Wagner age 89, daughter of Albert Holyoak, age 6 months on the trip, flipped the switch starting the waterwheel. "We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet" was sung as the closing hymn and a benediction. Pictures were taken and Roberta and her sister took off their shoes to wade in the stream. There were over 100 people in attendance. By Grant Taylor





The water wheel is a center attraction when visitors step out the back door of the Co-op. A soothing Native American flute plays near the hogan and tepee.





The gold panning stream is a popular area for children on the Fort. It is located next to the water wheel.

SUMMER 2015

DALE & BEVERLY BLACK (DIRECTORS)	BLANDING, UT
JOE & CAROL BARTON	MONTICELLO, UT
SANDRA BRADSHAW	GOODING, ID
RUTH & RANDY BUNKER	SPANISH FORK, UT
CASEY & MARY FOX	NAPA, ID
RON & EVELYN GRAY	ST. GEORGE, UT
BOB & SYLVIA HEALEY	MT. PLEASANT, UT
ROYCE & JOLYNN MASON	AURORA, UT
JIM & KAYLEEN MILLER	TAYLORSVILLE, UT
JIM & VICKI ORR	MORGAN, UT
ROGER & JERRIE PAYSTRUP	TOOELE, UT
RON & BELVA POULSEN	AMMON, ID

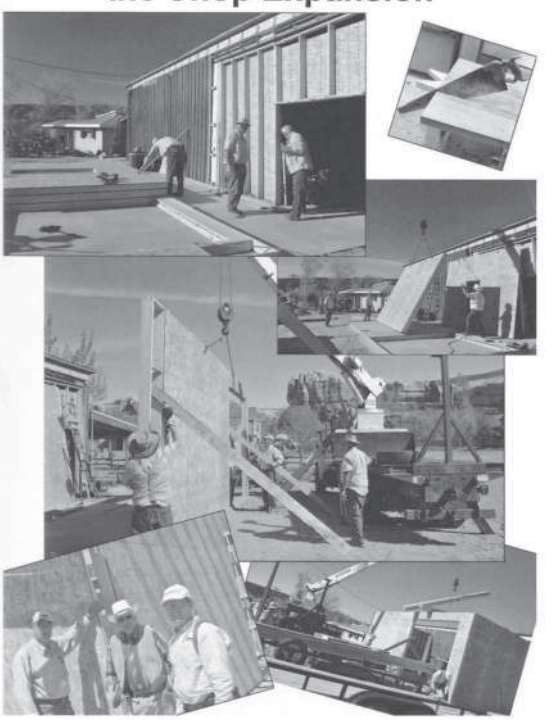
WINTER 2015

DALE & BEVERLY BLACK (DIRECTORS)	BLANDING, UT
JOE & CAROL BARTON	MONTICELLO, UT
RON & DIANA ESTES	OGDEN, UT
BOB & SYLVIA HEALEY	MT. PLEASANT, UT
ROYCE & JOLYNN MASON	AURORA, UT
ROGER & JERRIE PAYSTRUP	TOOELE, UT

SUMMER 2016

DALE & BEVERLY BLACK (DIRECTORS)	BLANDING, UT
JOE & CAROL BARTON	MONTICELLO, UT
MARK & GAYLE BERRETT	HOWELL, UT
BOB & KRISTY COMBS	NAUVOO, IL
MIKE & CHERYL DEMING	MAPLETON, UT
THARON & KATHY JUDD	OREM, UT
STEWART & BETTY LEWIS	SNOWFLAKE, AZ
BRENT & RAMONA MCALLISTER	ST. GEORGE, UT
MARK & VALERIE NELSON	IDAHO FALLS, ID
RON & BELVA POULSEN	AMMON, ID
BRYCE & CATHY REDD	BLANDING, UT
BURNIS & LANA SKINNER	MENDON, UT
CHARLEY & KAREN WEAVER	SAFFORD, AZ
JOHN & JEAN WEISS	OREM, UT
LEE & CATHY WRIGHT	ST. GEORGE, UT

the Shop Expansion



the Shop Completed



From the 2015 Missionary yearbook.

THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE SERVED AT THE BLUFF FORT 2015 & 2016

Service Missionaries 2015-2016				Blanding Docents 2015 & 2016
Name	Year	Address		Name
Barton, Joe & Carol	2016-17	Monticello, UT		Adams, Lynette
Berrett, Mark & Gayle	2016	Howell, UT		Begaye, Marie (Bluff)
Bradshaw, Sandra	2015	Gooding, ID		Benallie, Robin
Bunker, Ruth & Randy	2015	Spanish Fork, UT		Black, Lewis & Claudia
Combs, Bob & Kristy	2015-16	Nauvoo, IL		Black, Naida
Deming, Mike & Cheryl	2016	Mapleton, UT		Blake, VerDonne
Fox, Casey & Mary	2015	Napa, ID		Byrd, Eva & Stan
Gray, Ron & Evelyn	2015	St. George, UT		Christensen, Alyson
Healey, Bob & Sylvia	2014-15	Bluff, UT		Flavel, Susan
Judd, Tharon & Kathy	2014 & 16	Orem, UT		Franck, Sallie
Lewis, Stewart & Betty	2016	Snowflake, AZ		Helquist, LaMar
Mason, Royce & JoLynn	2014-15	Aurora, UT		Kirkham, Hugh & LaRue
McAllister, Brent & Ramona	2016	St. George, UT		Ivins, Keith & DeAnn
Miller, Jim & Kayleen	2015	Taylorsville, UT		Jack, Don & Shirley
Nelson, Mark & Valerie	2016-17	Idaho Falls, ID		Johnson, Marcia
Orr, Jim & Vicki	2014-15	Morgan, UT		Keele, Steve
Paystrup, Roger & Jerrie	2015	Tooele, UT		Kirk, Katy
Poulsen, Ron & Belva	2015-16	Ammon, ID		Lacy, Toni
Redd, Bryce & Cathy	2016	Blanding, UT		Lyman, Austin & Kathleen
Walton, David & Joanne	2015-17	Orem, UT		Lyman, Jed & Candice
Weaver, Charley & Karen	2016-17	Safford, AZ		Lyman, Judy
Weiss, John & Jean	2016	Orem, UT		Nielson, Leslie
Wright, Lee & Cathy	2016	St. George, UT		Palmer, Mary Helen
				Powell, Shirley
				Redd, Cathy
				Seibert, Joanie
				Shores, Marcia
				Shumway, Gayle
				Slavens, Jim & Karen
				Stringham, Greg & LaNell



Utah Senators Mike Lee and Orrin Hatch visited the Fort at different times in 2016. Beverly Black & Mike Lee in photo.





Lana and Burnis Skinner
Bluff Fort Directors
2016-2017

The following report came from an interview conducted in May 2021 at Bluff Fort & from the 2017 missionary yearbook.
Burnis Skinner photo.

We visited Bluff Fort in the summer of 2015 and when we came here, I was very touched by the things that were here. Burnis had always wanted to serve a mission and I wasn't too excited about it. I thought while we were here and out in the craft center that maybe this might be a place where I might be happy serving a mission. I quickly forgot about it because we had obligations with tending to grandchildren and other things, and then all of a sudden, things just started falling into place.

Our daughter and her husband who were living in North Dakota were transferred to Cache Valley for their jobs. They could move into our house. The grandchildren we were tending; their father decided to come back into their life. He was more involved and working to help take care of them. One day, we said something to Burnis' sister Valerie Nelson that we were coming on a mission, and she said, "Mark and I want to go." They signed up and came with us. We had the most wonderful experience here. I realized that if you make a decision to serve the Lord, things are going to fall into place, and it can work out for you.

So, we came to Bluff Fort. We came for eight months. Little did we know that the Hole in the Rock board of directors had different plans for us, and we stayed another full year. It was the highlight of our lives to be here.

In 2015, we came down here. I brought my 90-year-old mother here because she'd never been to southeast Utah. We were looking for things to do while we were here. Susan Flavell is a friend of my son-in-law's sister. So, we called her, and she said, "Well, you need to go to Bluff Fort." We had never heard of Bluff Fort. A tremendous amount of people in Utah have never heard of it. It is so sad.

So anyway, we came down and decided the Fort is really neat. All these cabins and everything. It's really fun. We were enjoying it. Lana and my mother were downstairs shopping. I was upstairs looking at the pictures of the settlers who came here. It was a special feeling that



New canvas covers were installed on the wagons.



New chinking for the cabins.



UPS & FedEx shipments came directly into the Co-op, interfering with visitors inside. Therefore, a receiving room was built adjacent to the woodshop in order to alleviate the congestion. Later on, it was converted into the paint room, and the Cowboy Cabin was converted into the receiving room. Burnis Skinner photos.



2017 missionaries installing walkways near John Taylor sculpture.

you can't describe. This is a special place. As we learn more about the stories from the cabins and all else that is just done so well. That feeling became prominent.

We needed to come back here, so we worked on coming back. We did come back. And that's the first time that I really recognized the value of historic sites. To me, this one's different. Bluff Fort is different. it's not commercialized. Other places you go, you pay to go see anything you do. Continually we have patrons come here and say 'Are you kidding? We don't have to pay anything.' You just come here, and you enjoy it because it's based on history. Those settlers sacrificed so much to be here, and to stay here. That it has become so spiritual, so sacred and so special. There's no place like it, there's no historic site like Bluff Fort." We had the opportunity to serve in the Toda Haidakaani ministry on Sundays. We as missionaries developed a great love for many Navajo people and we loved to visit with them. We served out at Toda for the full 18 months we were here.

Elder Neil A Maxwell said *"Though we have rightly applauded our ancestors for their spiritual achievements and do not and must not discount them now. Those of us who prevail today will have done no small thing. The special spirits who have been reserved to live in this time of challenges and to overcome will one day be praised for their stamina by those who pulled handcarts*."

It was a dirty, little old building. We had to clean it every Sunday before we could meet. We put up folding chairs and a white tablecloth on a classroom table. We transformed that little building into one of the most spiritual places I have ever been on a Sunday. And the few Navajos that came were stalwarts and such dear people. We grew to love them so much and there are some Sundays now when I'm sitting in church and we'll sing a certain song and tears just start to fall, because I remember singing that song out in Toda. It was just a great blessing. I was thankful that we were given our last Sunday there, our last Sunday on our mission. They closed the little Toda, a twig out there. And I was sad. I was glad we were leaving because I could not have born not to have been able to continue to go out there.

At the Fort, the docents did beautiful work such as the quilts they sew. The craft center supervisor was La Rue Kirkham. Two of the docents, Elder and Sister Stringham left for a mission to Germany during the year. They were greatly missed on Tuesday mornings. There were 38 docents who came regularly and four substitute docents.



The Bluff Fort missionaries participated in the Founders Day parade. It included a Grand Marshall, people riding in buggies, a Boy Scout with the American flag, and descendants of the various



Hole in the Rock pioneers marching in the parade with banners honoring their ancestors. There were also wagons, Navajo Queens and cowboys on horses. Many activities were held at the Fort on that day. Also, there was a quilt show. People went all around the Fort and enjoyed gold panning, pulling hand carts and dressing up as pioneers. Crafts, quilting and rug making were also demonstrated during Founders Day.

On Pioneer Day July 24th the missionaries held a pioneer handcart parade on the Fort grounds. The Bluff Fort missionaries enjoyed a field trip to Hole in the Rock. The first night they enjoyed a great dinner catered at the dinner theater in Escalante, Utah. They visited Devil's Garden where they saw amazing rock formations. They stopped at Dance Hall Rock and tried their square-dancing skills. They were led in the Virginia reel. They needed a little more practice to be able to miss the landmines left by the cattle. The view from the top of Hole In The Rock over the lake was grand. The cactus flowers were awesome. It was totally unbelievable, but beautiful. Everywhere they went, there were always beautiful flowers. They also traveled to the Hole in the Rock by water. They looked up the Hole from Lake Powell. Some of them hiked to Uncle Ben's dugway where the pioneers hung a road on the side of the cliff. They saw Rainbow Bridge and checked out the snow on Navajo mountain. It's all beautiful reflections from the sun onto the rocks. The lake was incredibly smooth. On other field trips the missionaries went together to Fry Canyon, Goosenecks, Gouldings at Monument Valley, Mule Canyon Ruins, Salvation Knoll, Valley of the Gods. They could then speak with first-hand knowledge about these areas when asked by visitors.

Another day missionaries made a field trip to Bears Ears. They gathered as a group for a photo op between the Bears Ears. They had activities with San Juan County school children including an Easter egg hunt. The children had fun hunting for easter eggs. Other school field trips were organized to the Fort, and the Fort missionaries provided them learning opportunities. The missionaries participated in



Missionaries compacting the tepee floor.

Junior Achievement at Bluff Elementary.

During the summer Friday night at the Fort was held. The entire Mapleton choir came and sang, all dressed in tuxedos and black gowns. The Atcitty singers were a group of Navajos who came and performed.



The Utah Symphony came to Bluff at Camp Stickie.



Jerry Fullmer kept the skunks out of the chickens!

They heard from the Magpies and the Keele family. Randy and Heidi Powell gave a delightful performance. They were the son and daughter-in-law of docents Ted and Shirley Powell. James Michael, country singer entertained us with his music and poetry.

The missionaries held family home evenings where they enjoyed the activities. Charlie and Karen Weaver led the group in an imagination story. They enjoyed fun evenings with the Smiths as they taught us how to make pies and bacon. Lucille Hunt taught them how to make Navajo fry bread.

They were busy throughout the year with regular duties such as firing up the ice cream machine at the start of the tourist season. Some had duties cleaning the restrooms. They refurbished and added more rock sidewalks. Repairs were made on the water wheel and the gold panning pumps. a new water hand pump was added near the panning for gold. Some of the elders, Dennis, Keith, Gary and Jerry really got into Native American dancing as they compacted the floor for the teepee. They helped in finishing the tepee floor. Roger Jensen was busy making tic tac toe games since he and Betty arrived at Bluff Fort. Jerry Fullmer shoveled in the last of the red rock on top of the bedrock at the chicken coop. The skunk will never be able to get into the chicken coop again. The game is over, skunk!

Dick Jacobs built the new electronics to show all three Hole in the Rock movies, one with various languages in both the visitor center upstairs and in the log meeting house. Jack Powers made the cabinet that raises and lowers the TV in the log meeting house. The new countertop and cabinet addition were made by Jack Powers and his son.

In the craft room a scrappy quilt was sewn by the sister missionaries for the directors' Burnis and Lana Skinner. It was machine quilted by LaRue. During the winter the missionaries enjoyed quilting together. And everyone enjoyed watching Marie Begay weave her rugs. There were many homemade items from the craft center that adorned the gift shop.



800 cookies baked for the Utah Symphony concert.

The Utah Symphony

performed at Camp Stickie near Bluff, Utah on August 31st. The missionaries were able to participate. 800 cookies and brownies were baked and ready to be sold at the Utah Symphony concert. Speaking of cookies, the new cookie and brownie display case and cabinet was made by Gary Smithson. The bakers loved it. Verdonne Blake gave a lesson to the missionaries on how to make English toffee. Even some of the guys came to the class. Gary Smithson and Dean Gunther made a batch. The Smithsons arrived in February with fresh lemons, grapefruit, and oranges, too. The Fort bakers juiced and zested enough lemons for an entire season of zucchini cookies! The missionaries and the town benefited.

The Bluff missionaries participated in Kris Poff's baptism. The Bluff Branch kitchen has a baptismal font underneath the floor. Burniss Skinner performed the baptism and Mark Nelson performed the confirmation according to what Kris wanted. The following is the interesting story of her conversion as told by Lana Skinner.

Lana Skinner related the story of Kris' conversion. She said Mark and Valery Nelson were living at Coral Sands RV Park and they met Jim and Kris Poff. She was from Texas. They became friends with them. Valery said "You should come to Bluff Fort and come into the craft center and see what we do there." And so one day, Kris came. She stayed and she kept coming every day. She made rugs. She made some round rugs for us to sell in the visitor center. She'd been coming there for a couple of weeks when one day, she said, "Are you girls all Mormons?" And we said, "Yes, we are." She said "Well, I've been to this church, and that church, and everybody else's church, and I thought that if I ever joined a church, it would be the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons." It just so happened that the young full-time elders were on the fort that day. Someone ran out and got them and they came in and they talked to her. She started taking the missionary lessons at the Nelson's trailer. About two months later, her husband's job transferred them back to Texas. We were just sick because she was doing so well with her discussions.



Kris Poff (middle) was baptized at the Bluff Branch by Burnis Skinner.

One day she called and she said, "I drove around one day. I saw a church and I went there and there were two sister missionaries, and I am now taking the lessons." A couple months later, she called and she said, "I'm getting baptized and I'm coming back to Bluff." She says, "I want Burnis to baptize me and I want Mark to pray over me." She didn't know it

was called confirmation. She just said, “Pray over me.”

She and Jim came back to Bluff, and she was baptized in the little Bluff chapel. A few weeks after that, they went back to Texas. She called one day and exclaimed “I have to speak in Sacrament meeting. Can you help me with the talk?” So, we gave her some ideas for the topic that she was given.

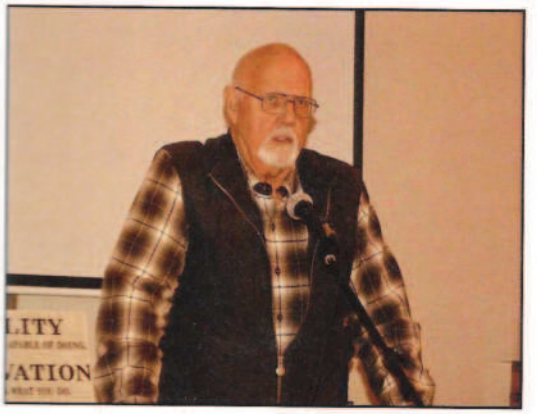
And a few weeks after that, it was “Can you guys help me? They want me to do a presentation in Relief Society about Bluff Fort.” So, we sent her videos and information, and different things that she could use for her Relief Society thing. And it wasn't long after that, that she called and said “I'm being called as a counselor in the Relief Society.” And at that time, I never thought I would serve a proselyting mission. But we did, we baptized her. It wasn't just the sister missionaries. It was the spirit of Bluff Fort. And it was the message that was here. And the spirit that Kris felt here. She was a heavy smoker, and every week we got a report. “I’m seven days without a cigarette.” “I'm 18 days without a cigarette.” She felt that spirit here and it touched her life, and it has changed her life forever. That is an experience from here that I will always treasure, that we were able to bring some one as sweet as her into the Gospel. It is such an amazing experience to be here, Lana concluded.

Another thing that really makes this place special is the board of directors. They are all descendants of those folks who came here. The settlers who came here. Burnis Skinner stated that from his viewpoint as a director, “Their support is absolutely unbelievable.” He said: “It wasn't long after I was a director, I noticed we received a lot of shipments coming directly into the visitor center while people were in there, looking around, and here comes a UPS and FedEx shipment with loaded carts being pushed in there. It was hard to get in and out.” At one of the board meetings, I said,” We need to have a receiving area.” I said, “We could build it out here by the shop.” They okayed it and we built it. So, everything we wanted to do, they supported 100 percent. We had the opportunity to build that receiving room. It's still enjoyed. We have to work at the fort to do those kinds of things that make it appealing for people to come and enjoy it. What a blessing. What a privilege.

Senior missionaries who served at Bluff Fort in 2017 included Ken and Gloria Decker, Jerry and Anne Fullmer, Dean and Deana Gunther, Mark and Valerie Nelson, Burnis and Lana Skinner, Gary and Kathleen Smithson, Charlie and Karen Weaver, Keith and Lois Ann White, Dan Seegmiller, Roger and Betty Jensen, David and Joanne Walton. Docents who served included: LaRue Kirkham craft center supervisor, Hugh Kirkham full time docent, Brent and Susan Flavell, Leslie Nielsen, Vicki and Tony Lacey, Johnny Seibert, Shirley Jack, Patsy Shumway, Lynette and Adams, Greg and Lanell Stringham, Joe and Carol Barton, Ted and Shirley Powell, Marion Nielsen, Kathleen Lyman, Dianne Ivans, Marsha Johnson Robinson, Mary Helen Palmer, Beverly black, Jared and Candace Lyman, for Don Blake, Stan and Eva Byrd, Karen Karchner, Austin Lyman, Sally Shumway, Marsha shores, Steve Keele, Karen and Jim Slavens, Hardy and Sunny Redd,. Substitute docents were Katy Kirk, Robin Benali, Claudia Black, and Judy Lyman.

The Hole in the Rock Foundation Board of Directors in 2017

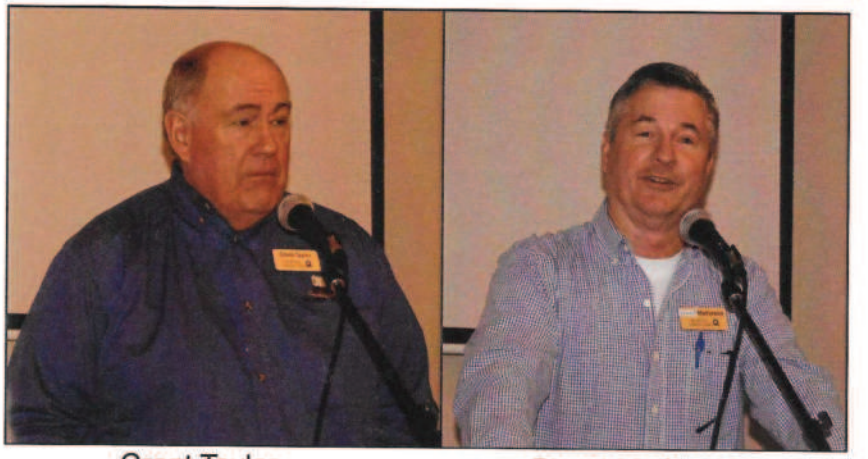
HIRF Board of Directors



Lynn Stevens - President



Mike Roring - Vice President



Grant Taylor

Stuart Matheson



Donna Jensen



Jed Lyman



2017 Bluff Fort Church Service Missionaries- Dennis & Melody Ivie, Charley & Karen Weaver, Mark & Valerie Nelson, Burnis & Lana Skinner, Hugh & LaRue Kirkham, Jerry & Ann Fullmer, Ken & Lois White, Ken & Gloria Decker, Dean & Deana Gunther, Gary & Kathleen Smithson. **Photos taken from 2017 Bluff Fort Missionary Yearbook.**



Dan Seegmiller arrived July 14th.



Roger & Betty Jensen came September 1st.

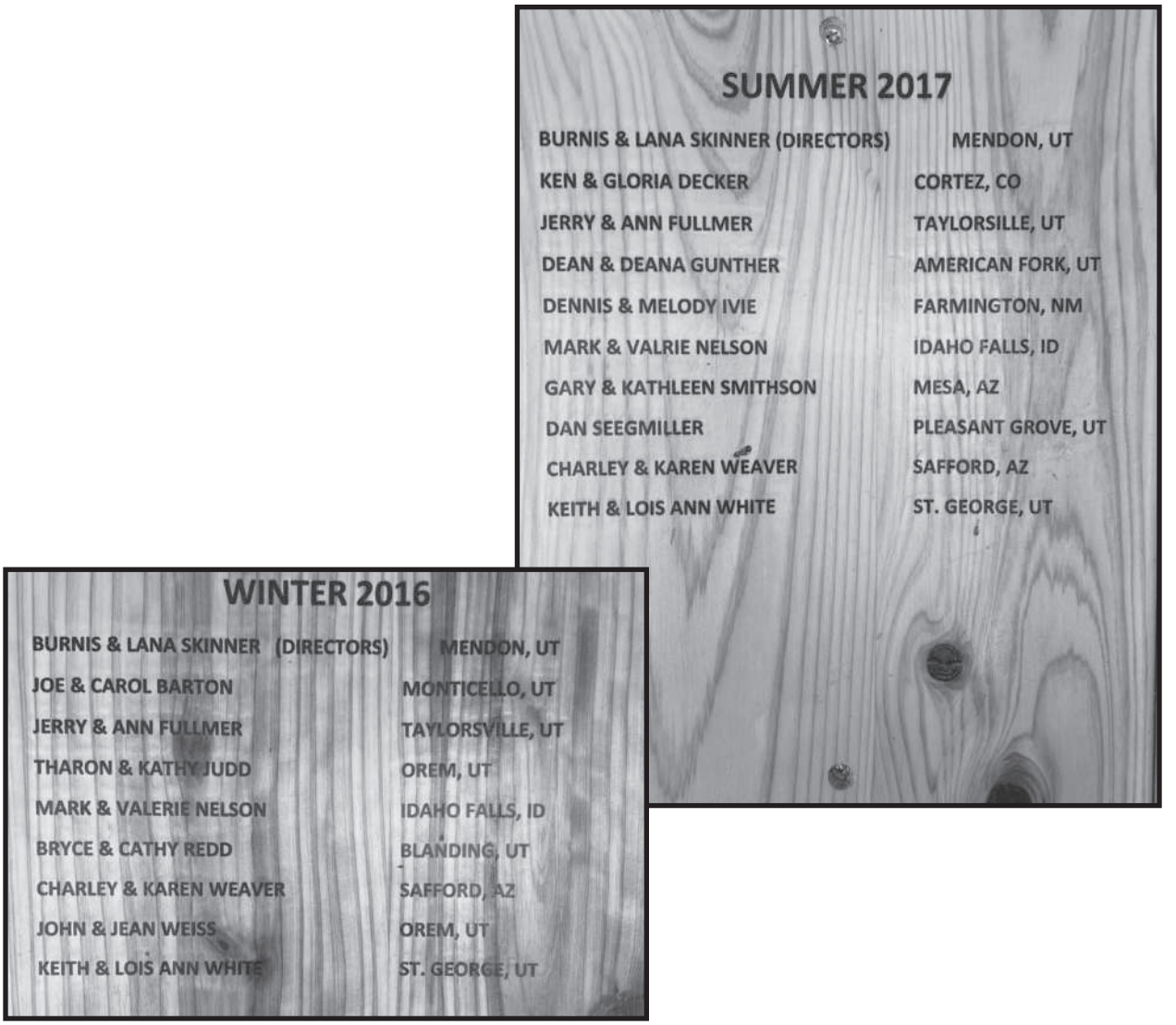


David & Joanne Walton served from home as webmaster and Trip Advisor monitor while also serving as leaders in the Summerfield Manor Retirement Center Branch at home.

Senior Service Missionaries Winter 2016 to Summer 2017

Winter 2016
Burnis & Lana Skinner, Directors Mendon, Utah, Joe & Carol Barton Monticello, Utah, Jerry & Ann Fullmer Taylorsville, Utah, Tharon & Kathy Judd Orem, Utah, Mark & Valerie Nelson Idaho Falls, Idaho, Bryce & Cathy Redd Blanding, Utah, Charlie & Karen Weaver Safford, Arizona, John & Karen Weiss Orem, Utah, Keith & Lois Ann White St. George, Utah.

Summer 2017
Burnis & Lana Skinner, Directors Mendon, Utah, Ken & Gloria Decker Cortez, Colorado, Jerry & Ann Fullmer Taylorsville, Utah, Dean & Deanna Gunther American Fork, Utah, Dennis & Melody Ivie Farmington, New Mexico, Mark & Valerie Nelson Idaho Falls, Idaho, Gary & Kathleen Smithson Mesa, Arizona, Dan Seegmiller Pleasant Grove, Utah, Charley & Karen Weaver Safford, Arizona, Keith & Lois White St. George, Utah.





Bluff Fort Directors
Vicki and Jim Orr
2017 to 2019

"I was privileged to have several conversations with Corinne Roring, founder of the Fort. She talked often of the miracles that happen at Bluff Fort."
Jim Orr



Corinne Roring photo.



Ron Bateman photo.

Kumen Jones Home Ruins in 1997 & after restoration. It was completed under the direction of Jim Orr. Missionary Roger Jensen designed, drew the plans, and led the finished project of the partial roof building.



Ron Bateman photo.

2018 Construction of the bowery was by Alan Pace, master electrician who just happened to be called as a missionary when this project came along.
2018 Missionary memory book photos.





Restored Kumen Jones Home.
Lamont Crabtree Photo



New pavilion built in 2018.

We served at Bluff Fort for two eight months sessions. And then we had a year away. Then we were called back as the directors from 2017 to 2019.

I was privileged to have several conversations with Corinne Roring, founder of the Fort. She talked often of the miracles that happen at Bluff Fort. She was absolutely convinced the Lord's hand was involved in the work that we do at the Fort. I totally agree with her observations. When the Fort needs certain skills, the Lord inspires those members to come and contribute.

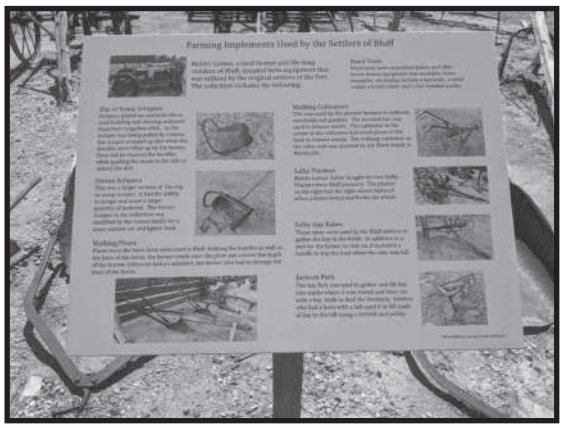
Each year we build on the inspired leadership of past directors and their team as the Fort gets ever more relevant to the story we tell to our guests. As this years' group of missionaries came into Bluff Fort for the first time, everyone came to an unofficial get-together at Twin Rocks. I remarked to Vicki that this was going to be a good group who will have a positive experience. They did not disappoint me with their willingness to serve.



Farm Equipment display donated by local resident Melvin Gaines.

When I first interviewed the missionaries who were coming, I said because of all of the construction had been done here, really, it's pretty much going to be maintenance that you're going to have to do here.

There are a few little things that we did; some were outside and some we did inside the Co-op. We built the bowery. The missionaries under our watch took care of all of the audio visual, all of the electrical and the misters in the bowery. We completed the Kumen Jones home. We had some things that needed to be done with electrical as well as the stained glass work on our watch. There was a big rock out in the northwest corner. The plaque on it talked about the Kumen Jones home. I felt like we should move that rock. We replaced it with a wagon because our visitors go around the block and



Farm implements used by the settlers of Bluff

Hand tools; slip or scoop & Fresno scrapers; walking plows; walking cultivators; sulky plows & hay rakes; Jackson Forks. Ron Bateman photos.

pass it there. It made it look more like a frontier fort and maybe more enticing to come in and see what's here. So we did that.

In addition to that, we had a chicken coop and they had a lot of chickens previous to our becoming directors. I was concerned that when we put on plays in the bowery, we'd have a lot of chicken odor. We repurposed that into a storage shed and moved it over convenient to the bowery; so we put equipment in there. Now we were able to take all of the chairs from upstairs and store them,



Navajo Hogan at Bluff Fort was remodeled.

In the corner, by the blacksmith shop, we were fortunate enough to get some used farming equipment, mostly donated from a local named Melvin Gaines. We put up a display for our visitors coming through. They often have very little idea of what the pioneers went through to set up the irrigation necessary to farm. A lot of visitors are city slickers and a lot of them are foreigners. And so, we set up the display.

In addition to that, in talking to Grant Taylor, we decided to create a display of what it really looked like when the pioneers first came here, an encampment. We call it an encampment. Some pioneer families lived out of their wagons, for almost two years. They used the wagon as a shed and they slept in the wagon also. We completed that.

Another item that was during our watch was changing the flow of the water in the gold mining area which is a very popular area. We made it look like the water is coming out of the rock.

The Navajo hogan always looked like a dirt pile. We had all kinds of trouble because of the erosion on the hogan. We were able to make some improvements there. We took all of the dirt off. We put chicken wire over it, then we put masonry over, then we put coloring on top of that and it's worked really well. We tried a few different things; first with re-mudding and covering with clay. We added all kinds of things such as plastic in it and then it

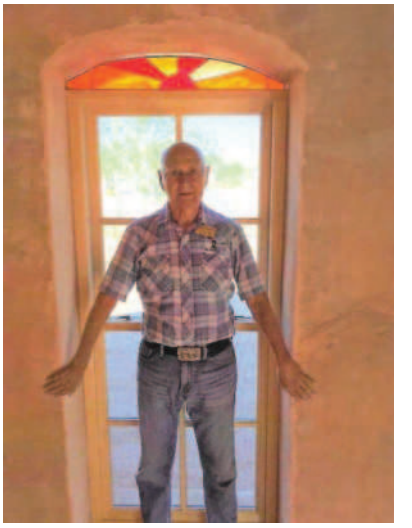


"The Encampment." The Holyoak Family lived in their wagon for three years at the Fort. Ron Bateman photos.

finally worked. So, this version has worn very well. We longer have to continually re-mud the stuccoed Hogan.

In a process of interviewing the missionaries that were coming here we found one of those individuals was a candy maker and we didn't have any candy at that time that we were selling. We encouraged him to bring all of his supplies, which he did and so we started selling candy, including very, very good caramel. We had some toffee and some peanut brittle, but we didn't have any caramels. So that was very successful.

In addition, I encouraged all of the missionaries to think creatively because we had this great woodshop that previous directors had built, but it wasn't being utilized very well. We encouraged them to think creatively and make things out of wood. In that process, they were incentivized. We had about 37 different products that came into the store that were brand new. Not only the woodshop, but some from the craft center from the ladies, making things like Cozys and a few other things. Most of them were very successful in selling.



Ruben Garnica created the stained glass windows in the Kumen Jones home. 2018 Missionary memory book photo.



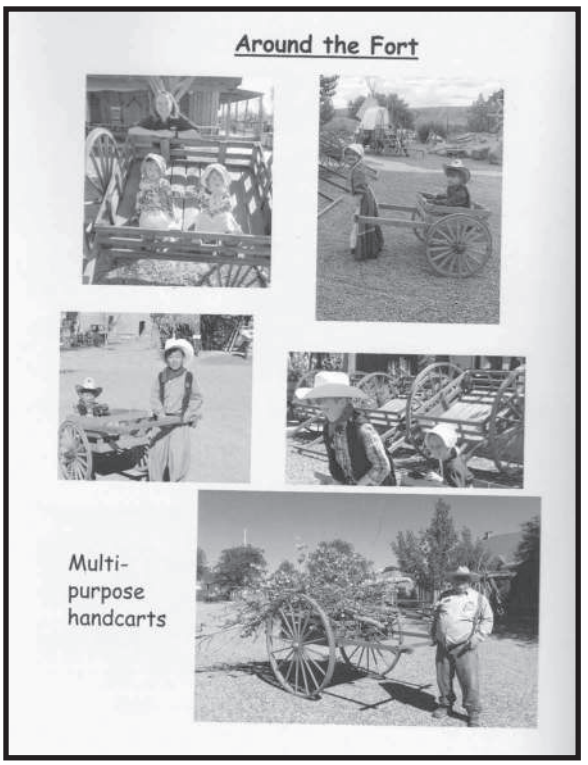
Missionary Jerry Allred took nine months to carve this diorama of horses & wagons struggling up San Juan Hill. Ron Bateman photo.

We found out one of the missionaries, Jerry Allred was a nationally-known wood carver. I asked him “Can you build a diorama that shows San Juan Hill and all the horses it talks about in the movies?” He said, “Oh sure.” The project took him about nine months. In his first go-around of it, all the horses were on a level path. I said Jerry, “That's not going to work. They're going up the hill.” So he started over, bless his heart. The final solution you can find in the co-op.

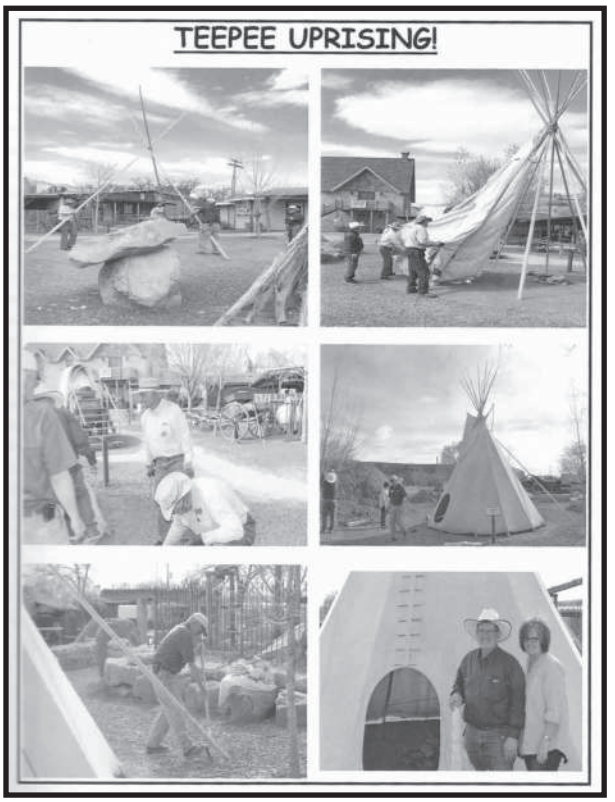
Jerry Allred carved, every little piece, every rock. He carved as he put the horses together. He glued blocks of wood together and he carved them all, every little piece that you see, in the diorama. It is all hand carved. It was very successful. And we were really happy about that.

We had some wonderful missionaries. And we really got along well together. It was a pleasure to have been here and to serve.

We served eight seasons, which is the longest of anybody. So, we got a lot of missionaries over time. Sometimes we got along really great. you could tell if the missionaries were going to mesh together or not by the way that they acted around each other. When we first came to serve, everybody went out to dinner. And so numerous times that group all went out to dinner.









Photos & quote are taken from 2018 Bluff Fort service missionary yearbook.

2018 Docent & former Fort director Beverly Vowell Black said *"I cannot deny it- Bluff Fort blood runs through my veins. For the past two summers I have been coming to Bluff (with my girlfriends) most Wednesday mornings to work in the craft center. No, I don't sew bonnets or aprons or make rag rugs or topsy-turvy dolls. I quilt. If there's ever a time that I wonder 'Why do you think you need to go to Bluff this week?' My thoughts quickly turn to my 19 year old Great Grandmother Sarah Williams Perkins and how she was willing to climb up on the seat of a covered wagon, take the reins of a horse (something she had never done before) and drive that wagon from Cedar City to Bluff, Utah in 1879 (a trip that took six months to complete). Coming to the Bluff Fort to work a few hours each week is a small sacrifice for me to make!"*

Beverly Black's Rules of Quilting are: 1. Don't bleed on the quilt. 2. Its not a mistake. It's a creative opportunity. 3. There are no quilt police.

As you're the director, you're not one of the group. We were one of the group because we served twice before. But when you're the director you're kind of put aside. You're not always included and sometimes you don't want to be always included because those missionaries need to interact with each other. You make friends for life. When we had just served here we went on a trip to Alaska with five other missionary couples. We drove the Alcan highway and those are our forever friends. We talk to them on the phone. It's not like we've forgotten what it's like to be here.

Now (2021) we live in Blanding and we volunteer as substitute docents. And Vicki comes to the craft center just to be around the ladies for the camaraderie. You can just feel it has a special spirit. You just feel it here.

As directors, we served just like our regular missionaries. We took turns in the co-op. We worked on Sundays. On Sundays, it was really special to meet visitors that hadn't ever met church members and didn't know what we were about. They thought we wore funny clothes and they thought we looked different. When they found out we were just like they were, I think that would be an opening for missionaries in their country to visit with them.

We always tried to watch the movie with our visitors. Now that we have so many visitors, you can't really stay in the visitor center with your visitors. you would just feel that they understood what happened and they would see the hardships of the pioneers. A lot of times I'd be crying and they'd be crying. You could feel their spirit and you could feel that they felt something special.

We had a lot of French people come. They'd come by the bus load. We made some good friends with the French. They were very receptive and open and enjoyed themselves very much. Before Covid came, we put them in cowboy clothes and took good pictures, and it was a great hit, you know? So, good things happened.

Vicki Orr reminisced that her favorite experiences were with foreign visitors dressing up in the Craft Center. When they put on our pioneer clothes they love how they look in a bonnet or bandana. It gives them the feel for how pioneers dressed and felt in 1880.

Many mothers remind their daughters that they are dressed just like Laura Ingalls of "Little House on the Prairie." They giggle and twirl in their pioneer dresses. There is a special twinkle in our visitor's eyes as they sit out in the wagons or walk around the Fort taking pictures in the pioneer clothes.

One foreign visitor tried on several dresses until she found one that would suit her. Then she walked around to all of the cabins and had her husband take pictures in different settings. She returned to the craft center hot but happy, saying how wonderful it was to be at the Fort. (Editors note: the preceding narrative was taken from an interview with the Orrs by Grant Taylor and Lane Palmer on May 12, 2021)

Church Service Missionaries 2018

Jim and Vicki Orr, Doug and Chris Allen, Dan Seegmiller, Jack and Cathy Baxter, Ken and Gloria Decker, Rex and Patty Edwards, Wayne and Cindy Embleton, Ruben and Kathy Garnica, Roger and Betty Jensen, Lannie and Dalinda Jolley, Bill and Jeanne Kille, Floyd and Ann Ledford, Alan and Frances Pace, Bruce and Sherrie Ann Slack, David and Joanne Walton.

2018 Docents
Beverly Vowell Black, Claudia and Lewis Black, Marie Begaye (handmade Navajo rugmaker), Stan and Eva Byrd, Isaac (Ike) and LouNell Chamberlain, Gianfranco and Trudy DeAngelis, Colleen Eldredge, Brent and Susan Flavel, Keith and DeAnn Ivins, Karen Kartchner (a vital peanut brittle maker for many years), Hugh and LaRue Kirkham, Mike and Toni Lacy, Jed and Candice Lyman, Mary Helen Palmer (made 50 rugs on the Union loom), Joanie Seibert (was three years in charge of beautifying the grounds and flowers), and flower helper Dee Street.

Summer 2019 Church Service Missionaries
Jim & Vicki Orr (Directors) Blanding, Utah, Jerry & Paula Allred, Tremonton, Utah; Carl & Julene Ball, Hamer, Idaho; Timothy & Gail Black, Eagle Mountain, Utah; Ken & Judy Coffman, Klamath Falls, Oregon; Wayne & Cindy Embleton Bluebell, Utah; Kelly & Karla Jensen, Alamo, Nevada; Loen & Cherie Jones, Riverton, Utah; Glen & Sherrie Kelsch, St. George, Utah; Craig & Sue King, Nampa, Idaho; Alan & Marla Martindale, Mesa, Arizona; Marc & Jinell Willardson, Koosharem, Utah.



Director Vicki Orr reminisced that her favorite experiences were with foreign visitors dressing up in the craft center. "When they put on our pioneer clothes they loved how they looked in a bonnet or bandana. It gave them the feel for how pioneers dressed and felt in 1880."

Photo from the 2018 missionary memory book.

Remodel of the Water Wheel in 2019 by Alan Martindale

In 2019, we were having erosion issues associated with water leaking from the water dump box and the flume. I, Alan Martindale ordered EPDM sheet rubber similar to what is used for roof waterproofing and installed it inside the wooden structures where it couldn't be seen but would control water leakage.

We were also having problems with the original buckets leaking. I used EPDM rubber to make bands with the hope that the stretchy tension would make it less leaky. The bucket interior was also coated with Flex Seal, a liquid rubber sealant coating. A noble try, but this didn't reduce the leakage enough! Probably the way it was operated where buckets were always going through wet and dry cycles contributed to the problem.

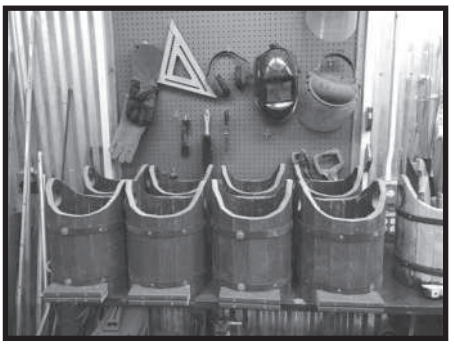
As a trial, I duplicated the design of the original bucket using Trex decking material as a replacement for the original wood. I used strips of the EPDM rubber to hold it together and look like the original metal bands. I glued the buckets together using clear flexible sealant. The trial bucket worked very well so after a few weeks I made replacements for all the buckets and one spare. Also at this time, I installed PVC pipe bushings on the wooden dowels that supported the buckets as the rotation was eating them up.



Lining the wooden flumes with EPDM sheet rubber.



Testing the wooden bucket using rubber bands



New Trex wooden buckets ready to install.



Testing the new Trex deck material bucket running next to old wooden bucket.

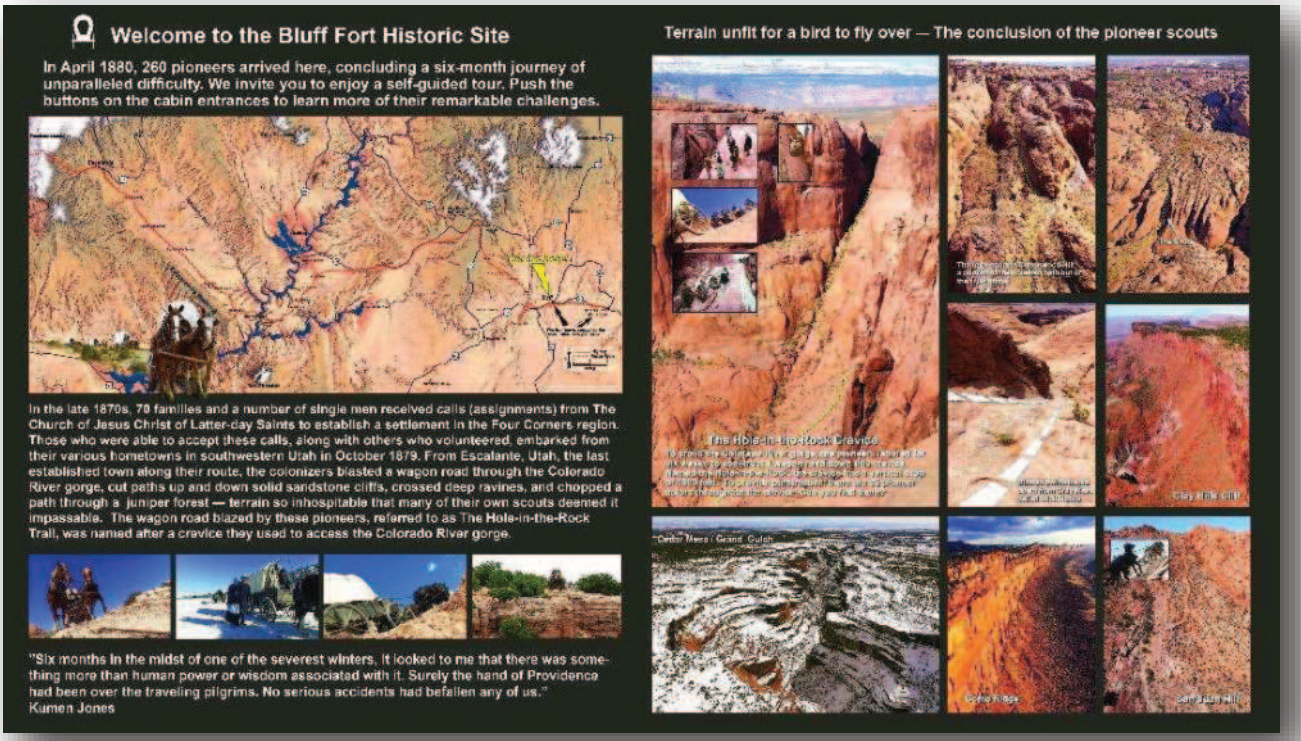


Attaching the buckets to the water wheel in 2016. Dale Black photo.



Alan and Marla Martindale in front of the Fort waterwheel.

Alan Martindale photos.



Narrative and storyboard photo courtesy of Lamont Crabtree.

Lamont Crabtree derived the storyboard sign for the Fort in 2019 from three large interpretive signs he created for the U.S. National Park Service. They were to be installed at the bottom and at the top of the Hole-in-the-Rock crevice. After four years and fabrication of two of the signs at the Hole in the Rock Foundation's expense, the U.S. National Park Service killed the project and planned to place a very small sign with only the map on it at the top of the crevice.

The graphic storyboards were located in two places at Bluff Fort. One hung inside the Co-op on the north wall of the store, across from the talking wall. The second storyboard was outside on the east fence of the building, kitty-corner from the restrooms and on the path leading to the kitchen and the rest of the Fort. In February 2024, a rigid, six-foot-wide version of the sign outside the Co-op replaced the original 2019 Fort's vinyl version.

The service missionaries and docents effectively utilized the boards constantly to explain the arduous journey of the Hole in the Rock pioneers.

WINTER 2017

JIM & VICKI ORR (DIRECTORS)	BLANDING, UT
DOUG & CHRIS ALLEN	MONTICELLO, UT
KEN & GLORIA DECKER	CORTEZ, CO
WAYNE & CINDY EMBLETON	BLUEBELL, UT
ROGER & BETTY JENSEN	MANILA, UT
DAN SEEGMILLER	PLEASANT GROVE, UT

WINTER 2018

JIM & VICKI ORR (DIRECTORS)	BLANDING, UT
CARL & JULENE BALL	HAMER, ID
TIMOTHY & GAIL BLACK	EAGLE MOUNTAIN, UT
WAYNE & CINDY EMBLETON	BLUEBELL, UT
GLEN & SHERRIE KELSCH	ST. GEORGE, UT
CRAIG & SUE KING	NAMPA, ID
MERLIN & SUEZAN MORGAN	BLACKFOOT, ID
ALAN & MARLA MARTINDALE	MESA, AZ

SUMMER 2019

JIM & VICKI ORR (DIRECTORS)	BLANDING, UT
JERRY & PAULA ALLRED	TREMONTON, UT
CARL & JULENE BALL	HAMER, ID
TIMOTHY & GAIL O. BLACK	EAGLE MOUNTAIN, UT
KEN & JUDY COFFMAN	KLAMATH FALLS, OR
WAYNE & CINDY EMBLETON	BLUEBELL, UT
KELLY & KARLA JENSEN	ALAMO, NV
LEON & CHERIE JONES	RIVERTON, UT
GLEN & SHERRIE KELSCH	ST. GEORGE, UT
CRAIG & SUE KING	NAMPA, ID
ALAN & MARLA MARTINDALE	MESA, AZ
MARC & JINELL WILLARDSON	KOOSHAREM, UT

2019 Service Missionaries

New, or continuing, in November, 2018





Because of their skills and testimony, this amazing group of missionaries set the tenor and focus for the new missionaries who arrived in March.

Taken from 2019 Bluff Fort service missionary yearbook.



Ruben Garnica designed and installed new canvas tops for the Fort wagons. 2018 Missionary memory book photo.



2018 Bluff Fort senior missionaries – Front Patty Edwards, Ruben & Kathy Garnica, Dalinda & Lannie Jolley, Gloria & Ken Decker with Chris Allen in front, Colleen Eldredge, Bruce & Sherry Slack, Alan & Frances Pace. Back –Rex Edwards, Cindy and Wayne Embleton, Floyd & Ann Ledford, Jack & Cathy Baxter, Bill & Jeanine Kille. Photo courtesy of Cindy Embleton.



2019 Bluff Fort senior missionaries - Front: Carl & Julene Ball, Leon & Cherie Jones, Suezan & Merlin Morgan. Next: Craig & Sue King, Alan & Marla Martindale, Glen & Sheri Kelsch. Next: Tim & Gail Black, Wayne & Cindy Embleton, Jim & Vicki Orr, . Back: Marc & JiNell Willardson, Kelly & Karla Jensen, Jerry & Paula Allred. Photo courtesy of Cindy Embleton.



Wayne and Cindy Embleton
Bluff Fort Directors
2019 to 2021

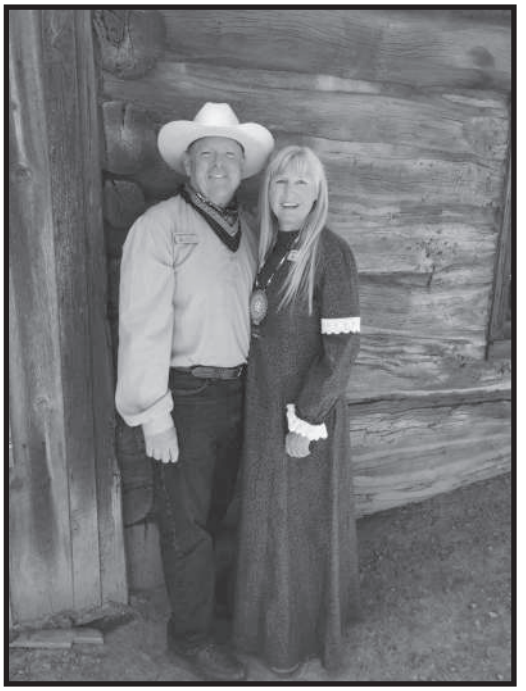
Wayne and Cindy Embleton Fort Directors Report (from a recorded interview May 12, 2021)

We're Wayne and Cindy Embleton. We're from the metropolis of Bluebell, Utah. We read the book "The Undaunted." That changed our life. We went on a vacation to Arizona. And we wanted to see the area we were reading about. We went to see the Hole in the Rock from the Escalante side and enjoyed our visit. We later drove through the town of Bluff, Utah on our way to Arizona in October of 2017. We did not know the Fort existed! What a spirit we felt! We learned we could serve as missionaries there. We filled out the paperwork, bought a used 5th wheel trailer and began our mission at Bluff Fort on February 15, 2018.

We weren't expecting to be there long. We signed up for eight months. In 2021, we were still there and loved every bit of it. It was a terrific place and time to be serving our first "Senior Mission."

We lived in a trailer at Coral Sands RV Park for two years. And then we were asked to be directors. So, we moved to an apartment right by the Fort. We've had some really good times. We appreciated, loved and respected those we worked with. The spirit of the pioneers was palpable there. We would encourage couples & singles to seriously consider this mission where they would be able to feel of the special spirit which exists there.

Our time here, especially as directors was marked by Covid. We weren't expecting that. Of course, nobody was expecting that, and that was rough on us. It was rough on all the missionaries. It was emotional because we were confused. We didn't know exactly how to handle it. What were we to do when we were asked by our mission coordinator to send some



Wayne & Cindy Embleton, Fort Directors.

people home?

That was tough. We had a leadership team. We prayed, we fasted and we got together. We decided we weren't going to pray about who's to leave. We decided we were praying about who's staying. That became the focus of our fasting and prayers. When we met again to make that list, some of our leadership team said "We haven't had enough time. We haven't had an answer yet." So, we postponed it longer.

We got back together again, discussed our options, and discussed the different missionaries. We had a very spiritual experience in the bowery (pavilion), where we asked the missionaries to meet with us to discuss all this. The bowery is where the ones that were going home, learned that they were going home.

Some of them had just gotten there two weeks before. We talked to our mission coordinator and said "Elder, this is not right? Some of these just got here, two weeks ago." He said the same thing was happening in Nauvoo, Illinois at that visitors' center. It was a hard thing.

We reflect on that experience; we both have some emotions because we tried to do things right and by the spirit. Those that were in attendance at the meeting had a good experience even though some of them were asked to go home. There were some that did not attend the meeting and didn't get to feel that spirit when they were told later. And it didn't go as well. Most of those missionaries were able to come back and serve. Some because of circumstances in life were unable to return.

The visitors' center was closed for just a little over a year. It was amazing. There was a time when we were absolutely totally closed for about two or three months. When Covid first started, everybody was confused. We were under strict social distancing. So, the whole fort was closed. We had gates closed. We had closed signs on everything. During part of that time people were allowed to come in. We did have our kitchen open.

We brought the ice cream out to the visitors because they couldn't come in the co-op to get the ice cream and cookies. We also showed the movie outside. Our cookie bakers started cooking and the ice cream machine started roaring again. We started selling while keeping six feet apart.

Some asked "Why do you have this big



The visitors' center was closed for a little over a year. Cindy Embleton photos.



Our cookie bakers started cooking!

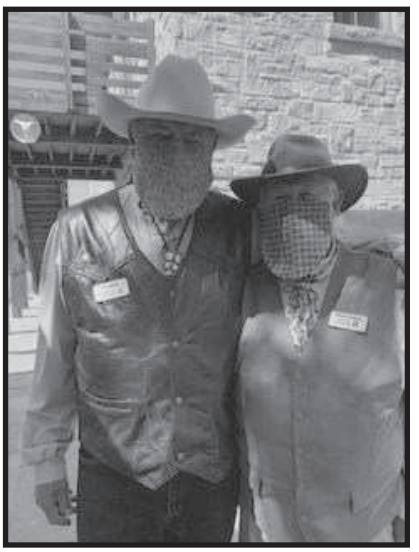


Cindy Embleton photos.

barricade in front of us?" And we explained it was to keep us safe. We sold out of the kitchen. We told the pioneer story and we placed somebody outside so they could help tell the story. In that way, we welcomed the guests in. We kept our masks on, and it was starting to feel good again. We opened the visitors' center again in April 2021. People just kept coming; they just kept coming.

After about two or three months, we checked the donation boxes. We hadn't had visitors, but we thought to check them anyway. We discovered that people had been coming into the fort to look around even though our cabins were closed. We had about $300 in donations, from people sneaking into the fort and looking around. We were amazed at the generosity of whomever they were.

Let us tell a couple of experiences that we had with guests at the Fort. A German couple came in with their small daughter, probably about six years old. The mom and dad spoke English. The little girl did not. I, Wayne happened to be in the visitors' center that day, and I was wearing a cowboy hat. I had my hat and my "Giddy up," we call it. She kept looking at me and I started teasing her. We have free rocks we gave. I'd get on my knees, and I would play with her a little bit. We were having a great time and the parents loved it. They went out back outside and did some things out there. We showed them the gold panning. We had a really good time, and they thanked us.



In "Giddy ups" & masks.

The next day I wasn't dressed in my cowboy clothes. I was in my work clothes to do work in the yard. So, I looked a little bit different. Well, they returned. And the parents came to me and said, "Our daughter couldn't stop talking about how much fun she had last night, and she wanted to give you a gift." This little girl wanted to give us a gift. I looked different and she didn't recognize me, and she clung to her dad's neck because she was bashful and afraid. And finally, I started teasing her again. Like I did the day before and she started opening up a little bit again. She had picked up a rock. It was long and skinny; it was just a black rock. It looked like a

plastic horse, kind of like a unicorn that she could paint herself. She painted it the night before, and she gave me her plastic horse. She had so much fun. It still touches my heart to have interacted with the little girl and her parents from Germany. I'll remember that for the rest of my life. I still have the rock.

Another experience involved a couple from the southeast part of the United States. They came in and watched our video. When the video was over, I came in to answer any questions they might have. The man had tears, just streaming and no noise, just tears. I asked him if he was okay. He said, "Yeah, I'm okay but I don't deserve to walk on the same ground, they walked on." I smiled and said, "Look, I know what you're experiencing right now. This is the time when you need to go out back and experience more of it. You go out there and you walk on the ground the pioneers walked on and you look at the things and you listen to those histories. I know what you're feeling and now's a great time for you to continue that."

He was very moved by that video and the pressures and the trials these pioneers had. He and his wife ended up spending hours here and then he talked to me as they were leaving and we had a great talk about the history of the pioneers. It was wonderful and that touched my heart, also.

Cindy related her favorite story which happened in the Log Meetinghouse. It was a Sunday which was one of the best times to be at the fort. The feeling is much different. It's peaceful. It's just relaxing and peaceful. There was a couple from Holland. They came in and watched the movie. He did not speak much English at all. Her English was very good. She talked and she would translate for him. She asked us, "What is this feeling?" And we said, "Oh, that's the spirit of the pioneers. They're touching your heart." We were able to have a short discussion. They left after feeling that peace. They took that with them. They will never forget it.

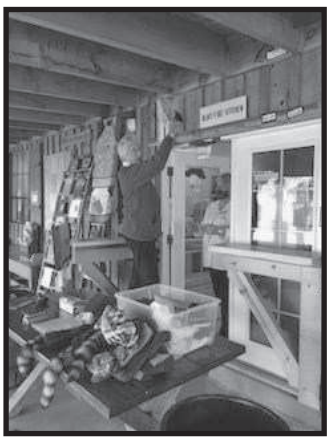


Missionaries Paul & Eva Tippets. Paul was severely burned during a cemetery cleanup and spent 30 days in the U of U burn center.

In October of 2020, we had a cleanup project at the Bluff Cemetery. We used fire and it got out of hand; we lost control. One of our missionaries was severely burned and had to be life flighted out. He spent 30 days in the University of Utah burn center in ICU. He had to wear a body suit for a year. We were all blaming ourselves. He found out about that. His name is Paul Tippets. He found out that we were all blaming ourselves. He ended up writing us letters from the hospital. Telling us to knock it off. He was so good. He was the one that got burned badly and he's writing us letters trying to make us feel better about ourselves. He returned with his wife to Bluff Fort nine months later to finish his mission. He went through a lot of pain, a lot of suffering but he never blamed anybody.



Some Bluff homeowners' property was damaged in the fire. Cindy Embleton photos.






Photos courtesy of Cindy Embleton.

2020 service missionaries installed an 1880's style fence along the south border of Bluff Fort. They stained the Co-op building trim. Jerry Allred completed his amazing diorama of San Juan Hill. It was covered with a protective glass case, shown below.










Finally, brownies could be made again.





Covid outside devotionals and programs.



Covid-made aprons. Cindy Embleton photos.

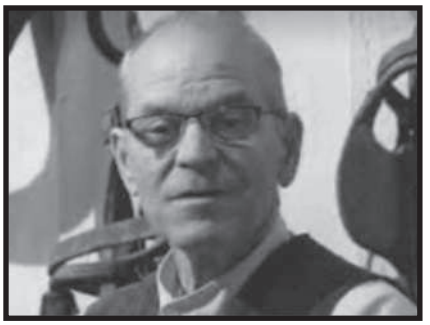


Service project at the church.

That was a hard time for us. There was damage to some landowners' properties, some of their sprinkler systems were destroyed and some of their plants. We fought the fire hard. The volunteer fire department came and put it out, but we were all involved. We appreciated everybody that was helping us.

The townspeople of Bluff, the homeowners whose property was damaged, and the town council got on us a little bit. They did it with respect and dignity. We were very pleased with the people of this town. We took the criticism because we deserved it, but they did it in a very dignified manner. We worked with the landowners to restore their land and put in their irrigation systems again. At Christmas time, they brought us gifts. We developed a good relationship with them, and they were very pleased with the reaction they've gotten from us. They were happy we followed through on helping restore their damaged property.

We had a missionary named Mitchell Smith from Mesa, Arizona. He was here for a year and a half. He was a single brother. He had a great sense of humor. He kept things lively. We loved him. He went in for quadruple bypass surgery. We said our goodbyes. He was planning on coming back. He didn't make it back. He passed away a week or two after the surgery. His body just couldn't take that surgery and we weren't expecting that. We were expecting him to recuperate for a while with his family and come back. He didn't make it. His family later came and picked up his belongings. They were a happy crew. They knew where their dad is now. We had a dinner with them and we helped them pack up. It was a shock to us, too. We lost Mitchell and we weren't expecting that. It wasn't supposed to happen.



Missionary Mitchell Smith passed away while serving.

In May of 2021 the Fort was open. We were selling more than we ever sold before. We had more people than ever. Spring came and the purple robe flowers were out and the days were beautiful.

We have made lifelong friends with the missionaries and the other volunteers we've served with. They are hard workers and kind. We have had a lot of fun. There are wonderful people that we met over the last three and a half years that we've been here.



A chair in the arbor is dedicated to the memory of Mitchell Smith. Cindy Embleton photos.

Senior Service Missionaries Who Served

Winter 2019 -Wayne and Cindy Embleton, Jerry and Paula Allred, Sid and Jana Ashcraft, Timothy & Gail O. Black, Eric & Alison Dastrup, Jim and Ladawn Jacob, Kelly & Karla Jensen, Glen & Sherrie Kelsch, Kay and Lorie Ann Miller, Mitchell Smith, Paul & Eva Tippetts.

Summer 2020- Wayne and Cindy Embleton, Carl and Julene Ball, Timothy & Gail O. Black, Eric and Allison Dastrup, Al & Jeri Drummond, Merle & Lorna Guffey, Glen & Sherrie Kelsch, Rex & Anne Marie Kemp, Bryce & Maxine Larsen, Dean & Dixie Phillips, Dan Seegmiller, Mitchell Smith, Gary A. & Susan V. Smith, Paul & Eva E. Tippets. Doug & Lauri Powell, Bruce & Lorrie Riches, Barry & Bonnie Riggs, Chester & Linda Seivert, Mitchell Smith, Brad & Tammy Spencer, Bill & Tricia Spere, Paul & Eva Tippetts.



Winter 2020 Bluff Fort Historic Site senior service missionaries. Front: Kelly & Karla Jensen, Paula Allred, Gail Black, Cindy Embleton, Eva Tippetts, LaDawn Jacob, Allison Dastrup, Lori Ann Miller, Jana Ashcraft, Sheri Kelsch. Back: Jerry Allred, Mitchell Smith, Tim Black, Wayne Embleton, Paul Tippetts, Jim Jacob, Eric Dastrup, Kay Miller, Sid Ashcraft, Glen Kelsch.





Masked missionaries, more outdoor devotionals with safe distancing, and a masked BBQ.







Preparation for new lawn & sprinkler lines near the garden.



Covid night at the movies!





Missionaries practicing social distancing.



B L U F F F O R T 2 0 2 0 *C(ovid)* in missionary mask formation!!

Cindy Embleton photos.

October 2021

Dear Missionaries of the 2020-2021 Winter and Summer Sessions,

Cindy and I express our feelings of love, awe, and respect for each and every one of you. You are all choice followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Your efforts, abilities, service, endurance and spirit have been an inspiration to us.

As volunteers/missionaries we arrived at different times during the summer session. Quite often a new couple would join our group every month. We were gladdened with this as we started the session with a low count of missionaries. The training was a bit discombobulated. You handled it well and continued on. We thank you for your patience. We thank you for taking your assignments to heart and fulfilling them. We thank you for seen and unseen acts of service. We thank you for your kindness, humor, humility, spirit and testimony.

Wow, this group has accomplished a lot! We have sewed, quilted, stitched, constructed, painted, created, gardened, mowed, weed, cooked, and changed many operations of the fort for the better! You have worked tirelessly, with enthusiasm, and a determination to do your part and more.

We have also given and received blessings to and from each other. We have been through a bit of the COVID situations which you handled with patience and kindness.

You are "UNDAUNTED"! We want you to know that you mean a lot to us. We appreciate the examples you set and the goodness of you hearts. May the Lord bless us all as we continue in His service...where-ever that may be.



Sincerely,

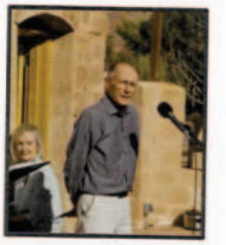
Wayne and Cindy Embleton

Directors

Dedication of the Kumen Jones Home
September 25, 2021



Lynn Stevens



Dr. Val Jones

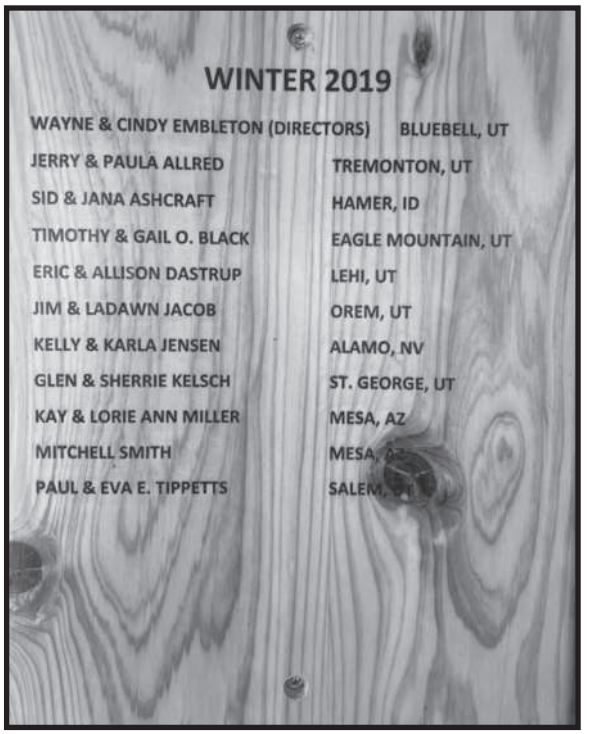
Dedication Program

Welcome-Lynn Stevens-The Hole-In-The Rock Foundation Board President
Masters of Ceremony-Dr. Val Jones (Leonard)
Chorister-Donna Slade (Thomas)
Accompanist-Marcia Camcron (Leonard)
Opening Song- "Love One Another"
Opening Prayer-George Jones (Alma)
Bluff Missionaries:
Roger Jensen
Dan Segmiller
Tribute to Kumen Jones-DeAnn Ivins (Mamie Adams)
Musical number-Rusty Jones, Clay Jones (Marvin), Devan Ryan And Julia Jones (Francis)
Life History of Mary Jones -Susanne Anderson (Leonard)
Life History of Lydia Jones-Candice Lyman (Mamie Adams)
Musical number-Rusty Jones, Clay Jones (Marvin) Devan Ryan, Julia Jones, and Diana Lockwood (Francis)
History of Kumen Jones-Leon Jones-(Marvin)
Dedication of the Jones home-Layne Jones (Marvin)
* Closing song- "Oh My Father"
Closing Prayer-Fred May (Thomas)

"O My Father" was one of Kumen's favorite songs.
This hymn was sung at his funeral.
Fred May created the Jones Home slideshow
Food is provided by the local Jones family members, and the Hole-In-The Rock Foundation.







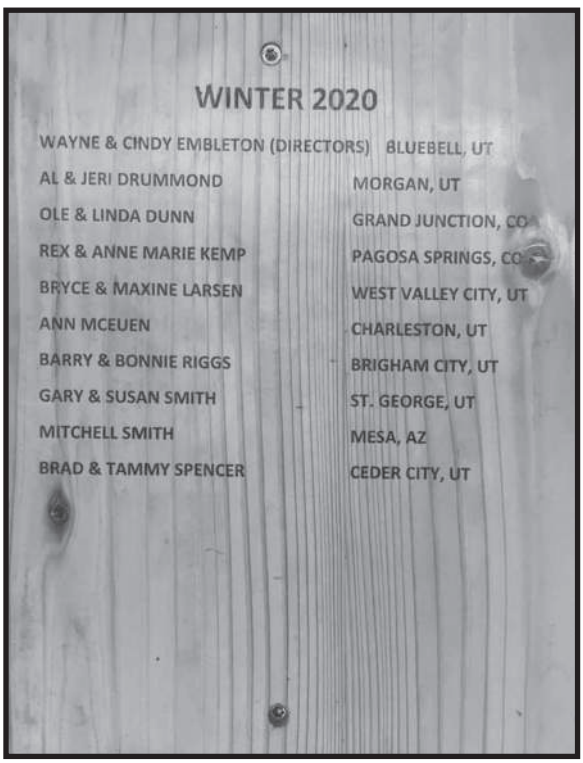
WINTER 2019

WAYNE & CINDY EMBLETON (DIRECTORS)	BLUEBELL, UT
JERRY & PAULA ALLRED	TREMONTON, UT
SID & JANA ASHCRAFT	HAMER, ID
TIMOTHY & GAIL O. BLACK	EAGLE MOUNTAIN, UT
ERIC & ALLISON DASTRUP	LEHI, UT
JIM & LADAWN JACOB	OREM, UT
KELLY & KARLA JENSEN	ALAMO, NV
GLEN & SHERRIE KELSCH	ST. GEORGE, UT
KAY & LORIE ANN MILLER	MESA, AZ
MITCHELL SMITH	MESA, AZ
PAUL & EVA E. TIPPETTS	SALEM, UT



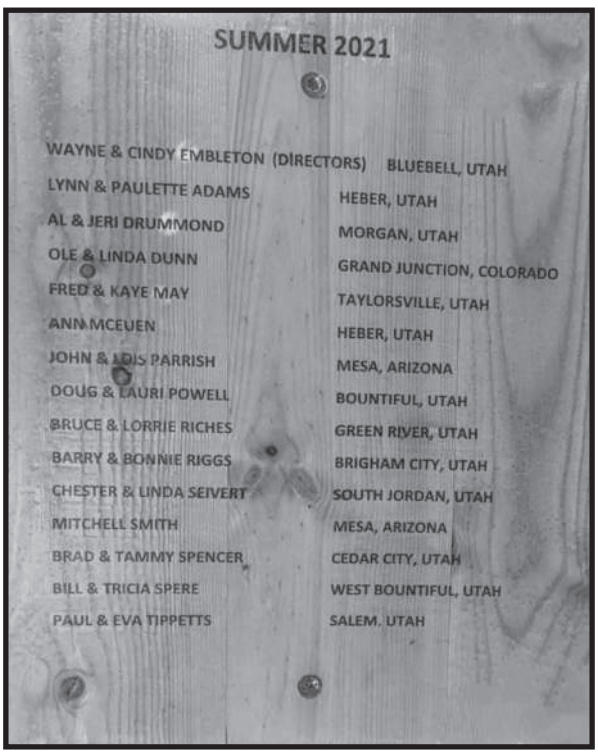
SUMMER 2020

WAYNE & CINDY EMBLETON (DIRECTORS)	BLUEBELL, UT
CARL & JULENE BALL	HAMER, ID
TIMOTHY & GAIL O. BLACK	EAGLE MOUNTAIN, UT
ERIC & ALLISON DASTRUP	LEHI, UT
AL & JERI DRUMMOND	MORGAN, UT
MERLE & LORNA GUFFEY	PLEASANT VIEW, UT
GLEN & SHERRIE KELSCH	ST. GEORGE, UT
REX & ANNE MARIE KEMP	PAGOSA SPRINGS, CO
BRYCE & MAXINE LARSEN	WEST VALLEY CITY, UT
DEAN & DIXIE PHILLIPS	PIMA, AZ
DAN SEEGMILLER	PLEASANT GROVE, UT
MITCHELL SMITH	MESA, AZ
GARY A. & SUSAN V. SMITH	ST. GEORGE, UT
PAUL & EVA E. TIPPETS	SALEM, UT



WINTER 2020

WAYNE & CINDY EMBLETON (DIRECTORS)	BLUEBELL, UT
AL & JERI DRUMMOND	MORGAN, UT
OLE & LINDA DUNN	GRAND JUNCTION, CO
REX & ANNE MARIE KEMP	PAGOSA SPRINGS, CO
BRYCE & MAXINE LARSEN	WEST VALLEY CITY, UT
ANN MCEUEN	CHARLESTON, UT
BARRY & BONNIE RIGGS	BRIGHAM CITY, UT
GARY & SUSAN SMITH	ST. GEORGE, UT
MITCHELL SMITH	MESA, AZ
BRAD & TAMMY SPENCER	CEDER CITY, UT



SUMMER 2021

WAYNE & CINDY EMBLETON (DIRECTORS)	BLUEBELL, UTAH
LYNN & PAULETTE ADAMS	HEBER, UTAH
AL & JERI DRUMMOND	MORGAN, UTAH
OLE & LINDA DUNN	GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO
FRED & KAYE MAY	TAYLORSVILLE, UTAH
ANN MCEUEN	HEBER, UTAH
JOHN & LOIS PARRISH	MESA, ARIZONA
DOUG & LAURI POWELL	BOUNTIFUL, UTAH
BRUCE & LORRIE RICHES	GREEN RIVER, UTAH
BARRY & BONNIE RIGGS	BRIGHAM CITY, UTAH
CHESTER & LINDA SEIVERT	SOUTH JORDAN, UTAH
MITCHELL SMITH	MESA, ARIZONA
BRAD & TAMMY SPENCER	CEDAR CITY, UTAH
BILL & TRICIA SPERE	WEST BOUNTIFUL, UTAH
PAUL & EVA TIPPETTS	SALEM, UTAH

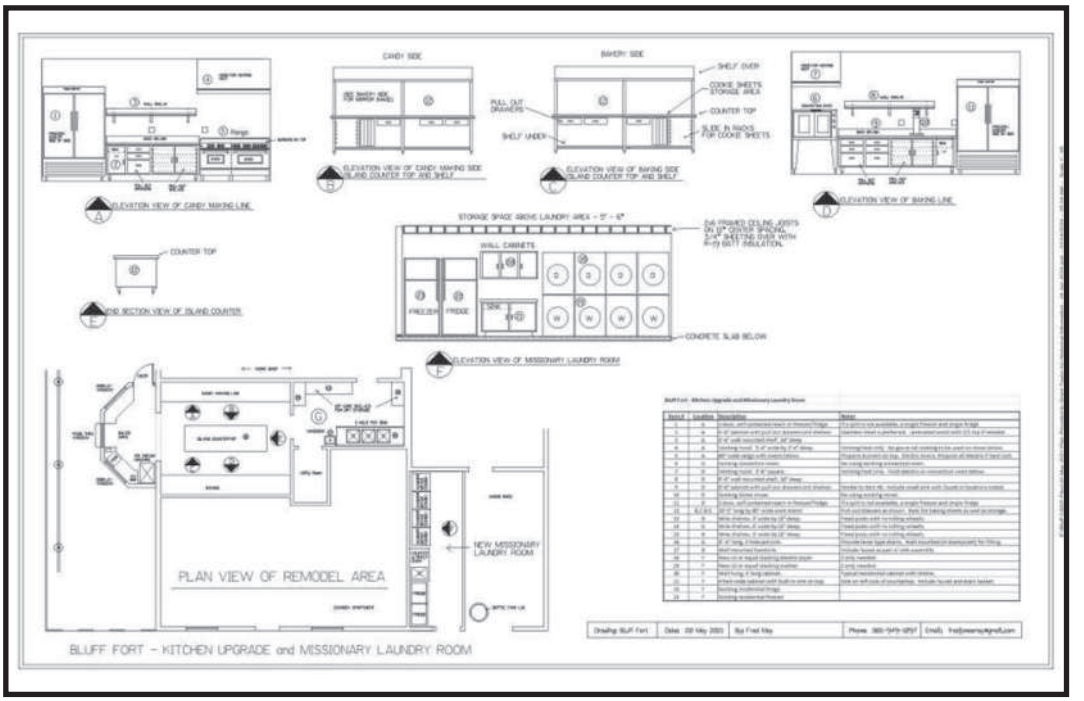


May 24, 2021

Items created in the kitchen were no longer able to be sold to the Fort due to the visitors' center being closed as required by Covid guidelines. The alternative was to sell items using social distancing by using a picnic table located in the patio area of the Fort. With outdoor sales the kitchen area was subject to the cold winter temperatures as well as the blowing winds experienced in the Bluff area.

It was obvious that the kitchen area needed to be remodeled and updated to accommodate the changing times.

(This section on the kitchen remodel and building of a Fort laundry is by Fred May)



May 24, 2021— Remodel plans were created with areas being identified where the needed changes would take place. The existing kitchen area was shared with the missionary laundry and fridge/freezer area. Additionally, the laundry/fridge/freezer and kitchen area were subject to the noise and dust created in the woodshop because of the door passing from the woodshop into the laundry area.



May 25, 2021—The existing kitchen area was congested due to lack of flat table space needed for baking and candy making. Baking and candy making were always crossing paths to the point that the work schedule almost needed to have the two processes occur at separate times. Also, the dishwashing in the kitchen area required much of the work top space. The new plan would allow the separation of baking and candy making as well as much more open table space. The ability to be more productive would be needed due to the anticipated increase in visitors coming to the Fort.



Left side



Back side

May 25, 2021- The east end of the kitchen area was the location of (2) stacked washer and dryers that were used by the missionaries who lived in the areas around the Fort who did not have laundry facilities near their apartments or trailers. An upright fridge and freezer were also located in this area to allow missionaries to have storage space for food items. To access the area, missionaries had to unlock the woodshop, walk thru the woodshop area, and enter the laundry room thru the door shown in the left side photo. During work hours the door shown was usually in the open position. To alleviate sound and dust issues in the kitchen a new laundry area was created. The new laundry would include (4) stacked washers/dryers anticipated to handle the increasing number of missionaries that would be serving at the Fort.



May 25, 2021- A new missionary laundry room was designed to occupy the westside of the existing woodshop material storage area. The compressor along with the storage shelving and materials was removed and relocated as needed to free up this space for the new laundry room. Much of the seldom-used materials would be stored above the new laundry room in the loft area being built as part of the laundry room ceiling.





July 6, 2021 – The left side photo shows a view of new concrete placed on the floor of the wood material storage area. July 15, 2021 – the new laundry room framing was completed. Items remaining on shelves in the new laundry area were later removed and relocated.
July 26, 2021 – Underground plumbing and all rough electrical was completed. Drywall was installed. Following the painting of the laundry room space, all the required dryer venting was installed and routed to the exterior wall of the building. (As the room had not been painted at this point, vent piping and drain system are not shown.)





August 17, 2021—The first set of stacked washer/dryer were installed. Painting along with finished electrical and mechanical work had been completed. October 5, 2021 A recessed section of the laundry room wall allowed for a drop-down folding table to be installed (made by Brad Spencer, pictured with the table). Due to space restrictions the use of the table makes it a user-friendly space.





September 23, 2021—The exterior "bump-out" of the kitchen area was framed and finish sheeting was placed over the framing. A new access door to the kitchen was provided on the north side of the bump-out which allowed kitchen workers to access the kitchen area without the need to walk through the woodshop area. The bump-out included a large display window on each side of the service window allowing interior shelves and display to show the baked items as well as candy. A sliding service window prevented the kitchen area from being open to the harsh elements that can exist at times in Bluff. The bump-out exterior walls were completed and oiled and stained to match the look of the rest of the buildings at the Fort. An extension of the concrete patio in front of the bump-out was discussed but it was decided to leave it for later completion as visitor increase would require the added space in front of the service window.





October 30, 2021—The new remodeled kitchen includes: all new cabinets with stainless steel tops. The right side of the kitchen area is dedicated to candy making and the left side is dedicated to baking goods. Work traffic is no longer an issue and production has been increased substantially. Each side of the kitchen has its own reach-in fridge/freezer. Wall shelves and a gas stove were not installed at the time of this photo. The rear of the kitchen includes a newly created dishwashing area that replaced the old missionary laundry room. The kitchen area remodel also includes new LED lighting installed in both the kitchen area and dishwashing area.

"Bruce (Riches) enjoyed putting his construction skill to use as he worked alongside Fred (May) building the new missionary laundry room and remodeling the kitchen." Lorrie Riches in "Bluff Fort 2021 We Are Undaunted" missionary yearbook.





October 14, 2021—The left side photo shows the interior of the bump-out area at night. Warm lighting is used in this area as warm light is more appealing with food than the bright white light used in the kitchen area where the work is performed. The ice cream machine has been located to the bump-out area due to the high demand from visitors for soft serve ice cream.

October 30, 2021—A view from the candy side of the kitchen looking out into the bump-out is shown in the photo on the right. The double doors of the old kitchen have been deleted and the opening has been trimmed in wood to match the finish of the bump-out. The sales area and the working area of the kitchen are now combined which allows the missionaries to walk freely between both areas. All photos and narration provided by Fred May.

Bluff Fort Directors Doug and Laurie Powell Winter 2021 - April 2022



Laurie and Doug Powells' term of service was cut short due to Doug's cancer. Photo from 2021 Bluff Fort missionary yearbook.





2021 Bluff Fort Historic Site senior service missionaries. Front: Bill & Tricia Spere, Linda & Ole Dunn, Barry & Bonnie Riggs, Bryce & Maxine Larsen. Upper left: Lois & John Parrish, Brad & Tammy Spencer, Doug & Laurie Powell, Ann & Dan Seegmiller, Al & Jeri Drummond, Cindy & Wayne Embleton, Fred & Kaye May, (behind Mays right) Bruce & Lorrie Riches. Upper back: Paulette & Lynn Adams. Photo courtesy of Cindy Embleton



Summer Group—2021 Parrish, Seegmiller, Riggs, Spere, Riches, Drummond, Tippetts, Embleton, Dunn, May, Spender, Adams. Photo courtesy of Fred May.



Peggy and Will Redd. Heather Johnson photo.

Bluff Fort Directors Will and Peggy Redd
Feb 2022 - Feb 2023

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

The visitors' center received a major revamp providing better product exposure to our guests and an increased line of native products as well as our own manufactured products for sale. New signage helped orient the visitors to the various areas of the Fort. The visitors' center and receiving office were ably managed by Sunny Feinauer.

The Kitchen continued to provide cookies and ice cream to our guests under the direction of Lois Parrish and later Peggy Redd. Sales were consistent with last year and the products were well received.

The sewing center continued to be a center of social and productive energy for the sisters of the Fort. Sales were up 50% over 2021. Hot items were the Topsy Turvy Dolls and Tammy Spencer's denim potholders. Jenene Maybury replaced Paula Adams as coordinator in April.

The wood shop benefitted from a major renovation including a new dust handling system and several new pieces of equipment. Creative efforts added to the variety and uniqueness of the pieces manufactured there. The new laser



Water wheel at sunset. Will Redd photo.

engraver was used extensively to create cool, new imaging. Sales more than doubled over the prior year. Lynn Feinauer and then Brad Spencer coordinated the wood shop.

The grounds remained a main attraction to visitors. The Ute tepee received a new cover. Gravel was added along the walkways to minimize sand drifting and contact with mud on wet days. A better screening system was added to the waterwheel stream and the original wagon was moved out from under the awning to provide additional shade for visitors.



The original wagon was moved. Sunny Feinauer in photo. Will Redd photos.



The Ute tepee received a new cover.

Summer Term

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



Remodel of the Cowboy Cabin into the receiving room.

Incoming Missionaries

Carl and Julene Ball	Hamer, ID
Scott and Bev Christensen*	Laverkin, UT
Angela Gallacher	Riverton, UT
Deanne Jefferies	Queencreek, AZ
Don and Heather Johnson	Barnwell, Alberta CA
Bruce and Jan McBride	Mesa, AZ
Will and Peggy Redd	Draper, UT
Tim and Sherri Spens	Morgan, UT
Max and Donna Swenson	Anchorage, AK

*Later arrival



Hiking Salvation Knoll. Sunny Feinauer photos

These newcomers were welcomed and supported by the ongoing missionaries: Karen Aldridge, Lynn and Sunny Feinauer, Walt and Jenene Maybury, John and Lois Parrish, Doug and Laurie Powell, Brad and Tammy Spencer, and Bill and Tricia Spere.

Doug and Laurie Powell

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



Brad & Tammy Spencer, Don & Heather Johnson, Tim & Sheri Spens, Angela Gallacher, Karen Aldridge, Walt & Jenene Maybury, Sunny & Lynn Feinauer, Will & Peggy Redd, Max & Donna Swenson, Scott & Bev Christensen, Bruce & Jan McBride, Trisha & Bill Spere, Julene & Carl Ball. Missing: Doug and Laurie Powell, John & Lois Parrish, Deanne Jefferies.

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

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



HIRF Apartments. Will Redd photos.

Jens Nielson Property Acquisition

In the fall of 2021, HIRF acquired the Jens Nielson home and surrounding property from Hugh and LaRue Kirkham. This addition secured a historic building for preservation by the Foundation and provided four additional living spaces and two RV hookup sites for the missionaries serving at the Fort. The main house continued to be rented to an outside tenant. The remainder of the spaces were rented to the missionaries. This has been a nice addition to the HIRF.

Minor upgrades to some of the apartments were completed in the winter of 2021-2022 including new couches and dressers, and construction was started for an additional apartment in the fall of 2022.





HIRF acquired the Jens Nielson home & apartments in 2021.
Photos by Ron Bateman



Lynn Feinauer and Scott Christensen in the new mechanical shop. Photos by Will Redd.

Mechanical Shop

An existing carport was enclosed to provide space for a welding and mechanical workshop for the Fort. In addition to adding space for woodworking and removing a potential fire hazard, the new shop provided an excellent area for metal and mechanical projects and Fort maintenance. Electrical upgrades had to be installed by trenching in a new line from the house. Unfortunately, the trenchers severed the lawn irrigation control wires at the Jens house, and this was not diagnosed until the lawn had suffered some significant damage.

The mechanical shop was not heavily used the first year, but the safety factor and the space to undertake projects were very beneficial.



Lynn Feinauer & Bill Spere.

New Apartment

With the conversion of the Cowboy Cabin into a receiving area, the HIRF Board of Directors approved the construction of an additional living space on the recently acquired Jens Nielson property. The Initial intent was to upgrade an existing adobe and wood storage shed (the tack shed) into a living space by using the adobe room as a bedroom and adding minimal additional living space. It was initially hoped that this process could be done without the need of obtaining city and county permits.

In order to avoid creating conflict with our Bluff partners and neighbors, we decided to apply for a building renovation permit. Renovation permits are



Will Redd & Lynn Feinauer at apartment construction site.

exempt from the property line setback requirements required for new construction permits.

Unfortunately, our permit application expanded the footprint of the original structure and was therefore rejected because the existing structure did not meet the new construction property line setback requirements.

Thanks to the generous support of Bluff Mayor Ann Leppanen and the negotiating skills of our board president, Lynn Stevens, approval was granted for construction of a new structure of the same floor plan, after adjusting the location to meet the setbacks. The delays in approval and other construction delays set back the completion of the apartment until November 2023. However, the final result was a very satisfactory new missionary apartment.



Lynn Feinauer standing by remodeled storage unit or "Tack Shed."



Jean & Ted Demars with Lynn Stevens.

Fortuitously, at the end of February, 2022, Ted and Jean Demars, one of the departing missionary couples, donated their fifth wheel RV to the HIRF. This generous donation not only was a financial blessing to the Fort, but also a godsend for accommodating the missionaries during that interim period. Thank you, Ted and Jean Demars!

The old storage shed, which had been partially demolished in preparation for the renovation, was subsequently rebuilt to provide storage space for the missionaries personal items. Individual electrical meters were installed on each of the residential sites and the electrical service was upgraded.

Meanwhile, several construction projects were undertaken at the original Fort site.

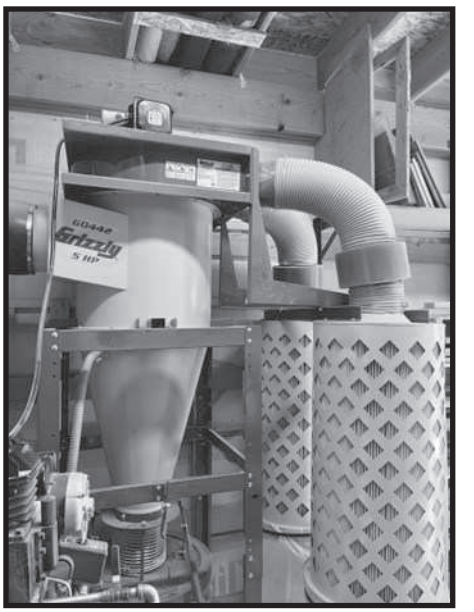
Kitchen Remodel

A major remodel of the Fort Kitchen was completed in late 2021 under the direction of the Powells. New industrial grade stoves,



Peggy Redd in remodeled Fort kitchen.
Will Redd photos.

fridges, and preparation areas were installed and an extension to the outdoor serving area was added to facilitate serving of Fort guests. This project has added measurably to the functionality of the kitchen.



Wood Shop Improvements

Another of the Powell's undertakings was the upgrading of the existing wood shop. The paint and finishing operations were moved from the main wood shop into the former receiving area to provide a cleaner environment for finish wood work and free up space in the main wood shop. The welding and metal working equipment was moved to the new shop created on the Jens Nielson property. In addition to adding space for woodworking, this removed a potential fire hazard and made a much cleaner environment for wood working.

An upgraded dust collector was added to the wood shop and improved ducting was installed. Utilizing the additional space, the workstations were rearranged and an additional lathe, band saw, belt sander and sanding table were installed. Continued emphasis on safety and clean-up helped enhance the productivity and the fulfillment of working in the area.



Woodshop-Tim Spens, Todd & Lori Spencer.

The purchase of a laser engraver for the paint and finishing area was another key addition to the wood shop. It has been used extensively to engrave artwork, lettering and the Fort logo on the products manufactured at the Fort. The missionaries have been very creative in the use of this piece of equipment, enhancing the Hole in the Rock image of the Fort.



New laser engraver-Will Redd.
Will Redd photos.

Sales of products manufactured in the wood shop more than doubled in 2022 with stock moving off the shelves almost as quickly as it is available.





Sunny Feinauer & Lori Spencer in the new receiving office. Lori Spencer in adjoining office.
Will Redd photos.

Receiving Offices

Since the receiving operations were displaced by the creation of the new paint and finishing room, the area that used to be known as the Cowboy Cabin was renovated under the direction of Lynn Feinauer, creating new receiving and clerical offices. The kitchen cabinetry was removed and the dividing wall was modified to create additional inventory storage space. Interior closets were installed in the office area and a new exterior door was added to the receiving area. Worktables and storage shelves were installed. Shipping and receiving access was moved to the south side of the building including an improved sidewalk and entrance gate. New paint and flooring completed the project. The added work space for negotiating purchases, receiving, pricing, tagging and inventorying purchased items has resulted in a much more functional operation.

Camp Stickie

Rolling overhead doors were installed on the large pavilion at Camp Stickie to provide shelter from inclement weather. This was done under the board's direction and the Fort had very little to do with it. Also the board approved the appointment of a Camp Stickie missionary couple relieving the Fort of most responsibilities at the camp. Todd and Holly McAllister serve that role part time as camp stewards. Jed Lyman assumed the leadership role for the camp. Three youth conferences and two family groups utilized the facility during the summer of 2022.



Upgraded cabinetry and shelving was added to the sewing center during the winter of 2021-2022. Janene Maybury & Tammy Spencer sewing.

Normal Operational Activity

Various activities were undertaken as part of the normal operation and maintenance of the facility. Significant Co-op store

layout changes were undertaken by Laurie Powell and her staff to better display and market Fort merchandise. Audio-visual improvements were periodically conducted by Ben Wilson and company. Re-staining of buildings, cabin floors and fences was completed. On-going maintenance of landscaping, irrigation equipment and general buildings was carried on by the missionaries. New power transformers were installed at both the Fort and the Jens Nielson properties. Individual electrical meters were installed on the residential sites on the Jens Nielson property and the electrical service was upgraded to the shop and the new apartment. Several trail improvement projects were undertaken, including repairs to the Salvation Knoll trail, new styes on the Cedar Mesa Trail, new trail markers on the Cedar Mesa, Twist and San Juan Hill trails.



Cleaning and maintaining the water wheel was a constant challenge. Will Redd photos.



Fort missionary family home evening at the Hoodoos.
Carl Ball photo.



Lorie Rasmussen cleaning atop a Fort freezer.



The awning on the west side of the kitchen was extended to the south to accommodate additional shaded, outside picnic area for Fort visitors.



Brad Spencer & Tim Spens installing Cedar Mesa Trail stye.

Computerized Inventory Management System

On May 31, 2022, an update to the QuickBooks inventory management system was rolled out. Considerable effort was spent in getting accounting of inventory up to date.

Winter Term

At the beginning of November we said goodbye to five missionary couples and three single sisters and welcomed six new couples and three new single sisters to the mission.

Departing Missionaries	**New Arrivals**	
Karen Aldridge	Ted and Jean Demars	Liberty Lake, WA
Carl and Julene Ball	Marlene Elgaaen	Layton, UT
Angela Gallacher	Alan and Ann Grow	Idaho Falls, ID
Deanne Jefferies	Kathleen Madsen	St. George, UT
Don and Heather Johnson	Jack and Lorie Rasmussen	Franklin, ID
Bruce and Jan McBride	Dianne Robbins	Payson, UT
John and Lois Parrish **	Todd and Lori Spencer	Highland, UT
Doug and Laurie Powell**	Brian and Kaylyn Wilson	Pleasant View, CO
Bill and Tricia Spere		
Max and Donna Swenson		

**Early Departure

The departing missionaries are deeply loved and dearly missed. The arriving missionaries have wormed their way into our hearts and the shoes that were left behind by their predecessors. The Fort transitioned to a winter schedule with a full slate of projects,



Alan & Ann Grow, Tim & Sheri Spens, Brian & Kaylyn Wilson, Walt & Jenene Maybury, Will & Peggy Redd, Sunny & Lynn Feinauer, Ted & Jean Demars, Brad & Tammy Spencer, Scott & Bev Christensen, Marlene Elgaaen, Diane Robbins. Back row- Jack & Lorie Rasmussen, Todd & Lori Spencer, Kathleen Madsen. Will Redd photo.

activities and hosting assignments. In spite of the reduced numbers of visitors at the Fort, many choice experiences were enjoyed with those who visited the facilities.

Docent Service

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

Docent Volunteers

Jean Bayles
Robert and Relva Bowring
Gary and Dorine Eberhard
Brent and Susan Flavel
Joe and Ruth Glass
Jim and Beverly Harris
George and Donna Jones
Norman Johnson
Susanne Johnson
Steve and Pam Keele
Don and Becky Larson
Mike and Terry Liechty
Jed and Candice Lyman
Greg and LaNell Stringham
Tom and Terri Winder

Board Support

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

Other Notable Supporters

Many other Hole in the Rock Pioneer descendants and interested parties have contributed to the success and operation of Bluff Fort. Notable among them is LaRue Kirkham, who lived in the Jens Nielson home for many years and has been engaged in the development of the Fort almost since the beginning. LaRue did all the quilting for the sewing center until 2024 and continued to share her historical knowledge of the Fort.

Community Service

Several community events were hosted or participated in by the Bluff Fort missionaries. Friday Night at the Fort was reinstated again after a covid hiatus with eight outstanding performances accompanied by free ice cream. Community activities supported by the Fort included the annual Easter Egg Hunt, the Fireman/Emergency Services fundraising breakfast, the Balloon Festival, community Thanksgiving dinner at Twin Rocks Restaurant, etc. The Fort missionaries also hosted school groups and family reunions. Highway cleanup and other community service as well as support to our Navajo neighbors was rendered by the Fort missionaries.

Missionary Activities

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

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

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

We had an enjoyable day trip up to the Needles Overlook, Church Rock, Jail House Rock, the Monticello Visitor's Center and other points of interest guided by our own area expert and historian, Scott Christensen. We were also able to climb San Juan Hill, ride the Dripping Springs trail, hike the Cedar Mesa trail and see many other points of historic and geological interest.

Conclusions

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

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

Bluff Fort and the Hole in the Rock expedition is a story for all times. It is a story that deserves and needs to be heard around the world. It is a story of miracles and undaunted faith. To be privileged to be part of the preservation of that story is a blessing to all who serve here. —Will Redd 2022-23 Bluff Fort Director

Below is an amazing example of service performed at Bluff Fort. Lynn Feinauer's service at Bluff Fort from November 2021-November 2023. Many others have given similar service over the years.

Co-op - Built the red table by the front door, numerous dividers in drawers, numerous shelves in cupboards and in the Native arts cabinet. Painted all the baseboards. Built and hung the quilt ladders with Lynn Adams. Built the bookshelf display. Built the wall display for the kid's toys and shelf for the covered wagon. Reworked snap and zipper bag display. Made display boards for wood knives, bread boards, wood clocks and necklace display, and a display for the wooden ducks. Hung artwork in room #3. Made twined rug and loomed rug stand. Made wood tissue boxes for cage and room #3. Made a new storage area for the branding irons in the closet and hung a rack for coats. Reworked a table into a cabinet with doors and 3 drawers. Hung hooks for infinity scarves. Reworked the bench under hanging clothes and put 3 drawers in. Sanded, stained and varnished the long counter with Ron and Kyle Bateman. Painted the green cabinets red, and repainted blue counters. Rehung the Hole in the Rock art etc. on the north wall of room #1. Made two new pointer sticks for helping point out pictures etc. In the cage -Built dividers in several drawers, several shelves for storage, shelf unit for paper and folders, pull out wrapping station drawer. Reworked the tissue drawer. Sanded and stained the counter & added board to corner on counter. Items made -cutting boards, rolling pins, spoon rests, spoons, oven rack pulls, wood knives (3 kinds,) rifles, pistols, candy machines, ducks, marble game, rolling pin rests, tissue boxes, biscuit cutters, clocks for missionaries, cutting boards for the docents and missionaries.

Outside -Helped Will Redd construct the grate on the stream. Built the fences around the two propane tanks with Don Johnson. Helped maintain the waterwheel the first year. Extended the kitchen patio roof \metal roofing with Brian Wilson, Ron and Kyle Bateman. Put a new door in to the wood room. Helped with the new concrete walkway at the end of the porch, widened the gate, and remodeled it to swing both ways. Built the horse with harness under the paint room window. Moved the outside door to the woodworking room to be flush on the north side of the building. Made the green flower boxes on the kitchen windows. Made additional map boxes & built the two benches outside by the TV.

Sewing room - Extended the cutting table. Put up two rods for the batting bolts. Made several dividers in the drawers. Remodeled and put shelving in the front and back storage rooms. Installed new shelves in the sewing room. Made holes in the tables for the electrical cords and foot pedal rests for some sewing machines. Built red bench storage for each sister, a shelf for spray bottles & installed the new counter for office and sergers. Built under the counter storage and shelving.

Kitchen -Trimmed out the doorway going into the sink room, made shelf for baking papers\small cookie sheets, trimmed wood counter, large doorway, and window, made stand for the computer, holder for the paper bags. Assisted Brad Spencer with the installation of the wood counter. Brad made the countertop.

Office and receiving -The men assisted him in tearing out the cowboy cabin. He did the framing of the inside, electrical and sheetrock. He put up shelves, built closets, laid additional flooring, put in a new door to receiving, hung closet doors, made the counters out of cutting board slabs. Made a safe box for jewelry and the table for the lamp.

Paint room -Took out double doors on west side and put in a window, built shelves, put in sink, installed drying rack, built a counter, and installed a door into the woodworking room. Did the electrical.

Fort laundry room -Put up hanging rod and shelf, hung cabinet. Helped with the air-conditioning and the exit fan.

Metal shop—Framed the metal shop, put-up batten and board siding, and put in a new door.

Tack room Storage - Framed the roof, sided the walls with bat and board, hung the door, installed the metal roof with Brian Wilson, and put in shelving.

Jens Nielson apartments - In apartments #2 & #3 built storage by the side of the stoves, increased hanging storage upstairs, built shelves in the bathrooms. In apartment #4 made a new hanging closet rod and shelf upstairs and installed a handrail down the stairs. In apartment #5, installed garbage bin in kitchen cabinet and cabinet knobs his last day of service.

Roring apartments In the directors' apartment, installed cabinets over the fridge and over the desk. Installed knobs on bathroom cabinets, a coat rack by the front door, and a shelf under the desk area, and shelves above the toilet. In Roring Apartments laundry, made hanging counter and hanging rod and shelf, built more under counter shelves, and extended the counter over the sink. Maintained the courtyard grass.

In apartment #3 installed knobs on the kitchen and bathroom cabinets, put up a rack of coat hooks by the front door, put in a shelf under the counter by the fridge, shelves above the toilet. In apartments #1 & #3 put in additional shelves in the pantry. In all three units, put in hanging microwave shelf, made and installed a door under the counter for back access to shelves. *(Lynn's wife Sunny compiled this list for his personal history, and was asked to provide it as an example of one missionary's extraordinary service.)*

SUMMER 2022

WILL AND PEGGY REDD (directors)	DRAPER UT
KAREN ALDRIDGE	MONTOUR ID
CARL AND JULENE BALL	HAMER ID
SCOTT AND BEVERLY CHRISTENSEN	LAVERKIN UT
LYNN AND SUNNY FEINAUER	BEAVERTON OR
ANGELA GALLACHER	RIVERTON UT
DEANNE JEFFERIES	QUEENCREEK AZ
DON AND HEATHER JOHNSON	ALBERTA CANADA
WALT AND JENENE MAYBURY	THATCHER AZ
BRUCE AND JAN MCBRIDE	MESA AZ
JOHN AND LOIS PARISH	MESA AZ
DOUG AND LAURIE POWELL	BOUNTIFUL UT
BRAD AND TAMARA SPENCER	CEDAR CITY UT
TIM AND SHERI SPENS	MORGAN UT
BILL AND TRICIA SPERE	W BOUNTIFUL UT
MAX AND DONNA SWENSON	ANCHORAGE AK



Carl Ball photos.



Topsy Turvy Dolls made by Deanne Jefferies.

Winter 2023

Will and Peggy Redd (directors)	Draper, UT
Scott and Beverly Christensen	Laverkin, UT
Ted and Jean Demars	Liberty Lake, WA
Marlene Elgaaen	Layton, UT
Lynn and Sunny Feinauer	Beaverton, OR
Alan and Ann Grow	Idaho Falls, ID
Kathleen Madsen	St. George, UT
Walt and Jenene Maybury	Thatcher, AZ
Jack and Lorie Rasmussen	Franklin, ID
Diane Robbins	Payson, UT
Brad and Tammy Spencer	Cedar City, UT
Todd and Lori Spencer	Highland, UT
Tim and Sheri Spens	Morgan, UT
Brian and Kaylyn Wilson	Pleasant View, CO



Directors Lorie & Jack Rasmussen.

Bluff Fort Directors
Jack and Lorie Rasmussen
Spring 2023– Winter 2024

The past year was a busy one at Bluff Fort highlighted by the opportunity that we had to share the story of the San Juan pioneers with over 52,245 total visitors between January 1st and December 31st in 2023.

In terms of visitors, Utah of course, continued to be our largest domestic draw with Arizona, and Colorado coming in second and third. California, Texas, Idaho, New Mexico, Washington, and Florida round out the top states, but we have welcomed visitors from every state in the union. Internationally, France topped our visitor list with Germany, Italy, England, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, and Australia following in that order. Visitors from 85 different countries were represented on our sign-in sheets including the following new countries: Philippines, Myanmar, Samoa, Iran, Moldova, Jamaica, Laos, Cyprus, Slovakia, Saudi Arabia, Belarus, Brazil, Malta, Thailand, Namibia, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Slovenia, Serbia, Singapore, Guatemala, Uruguay, Russia, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, New Caledonia, and the Ukraine.



View from the arbor of our energetic director Lorie running near the kitchen.

We've included a couple of Google reviews from recent visitors because we thought it was important for you to know that we volunteers here at the Fort are both adorable and passionate.

"Hey, nice surprise in the small town of Bluff, which is really a passing town with a few 100 inhabitants and a single gas station. A place that explains well the crazy epic of the Mormon pioneers towards this city through the Hole in the Rock. Animation by adorable and passionate retirees who explain all this to you with beautiful videos in French and above all a reconstruction of the time thanks to the descendants of the pioneers. Very interesting, we spent at least an hour there. The shop is full of locally made pieces at very low prices, including quilts and patchwork. Five stars"

"Unbelievably well-polished and presented. The story is interesting and can be told to you by one of the staff. They

are all extremely knowledgeable and eager to help or impart the story/ specifics. But their desire is twofold: impart a powerful true story... and to reiterate their belief that it was the hand of the Almighty that allowed these brave determined pioneers to accomplish what they did. Please understand that this was no hard-sell or push to recruit. It was simply a subtle nod to their beliefs. I enjoyed it all. Five stars!"

Friday Nights at the Fort

Friday Nights at the Fort in 2023 was well received with excellent performances each night. Friday nights at the Fort over the summer included performances by Dale and Aaron Major, Craig Crippen, Arabella, Alan and Leonie Hunt, Denver and Kristen Smith, the Grayson Girls, and the grand finale by Dallyn Bayles, who performed to a packed house of approximately 170 guests. Fort Director Lorie Rasmussen worked very hard in getting the acts scheduled for each night. The free live music was performed upstairs in the Co-op each time and free ice cream was served on the lawn after each evenings' act.



Community Outreach

Community outreach Involved Adopt-a-Highway trash removal over a two mile stretch in Bluff City limits in April. In September the Fire Department/EMT Breakfast fundraiser drew 131 persons with involvement of Twin Rocks café, and the town manager Erin Nelson, and Mayor Ann Leppanen. The missionaries also participated in serving a free Thanksgiving meal at Twin Rocks Café in conjunction with owner Steve Simpson and café manager Frances van der Stappen. Missionary Craig Miller led our community outreach program.

The Fort participated with Bluff City in planning for a solar eclipse on October 14th which was expected to bring 20,000 observers to the area but most stayed in outlying areas such as Valley of the Gods. In reality, we had a record 453 visitors on the Fort to watch the eclipse. We participated in the Bears Ears Marathon and Half Marathon on November 4th, helping with the finish line activities; such as handing out refreshments, etc.

We were very visible at the Blanding "Tree-For-All" Christmas Fair on December 2023. We sold over $1000 in items and had one of the best displays there, in our opinion of course.



Service missionary Ted Hill completed a switch to Shopify point-of-sale software in August 2023.

What's new?

We learned in the spring of 2023 that support for our point-of-sale software QuickBooks would be discontinued.

Will and Peggy Redd, the previous directors spent considerable time and energy working to get control of spending and inventory management. We continued that effort seeing positive results. As of Saturday August 12 2024, we successfully switched over to Shopify POS and had no software or hardware issues. Ted Hill, our resident techie completed the final stages of cleaning up of some inventory issues, and developing the necessary linkage between Shopify and QuickBooks online. The directors were able to use the inventory tracking features of QuickBooks to determine what products to buy and in what quantities. Kudos to the Redds for their work in this area the previous year.



Missionary Bill Hansen, our resident artist meticulously painted a new photo-op.

We had 12 missionaries leave at the end of October and eight new ones arrived. We were adequately staffed over the winter season and a strong group prepared to handle the missionary change over, the 1st of March

Our missionaries continued to be wonderful, and cheerful, and always willing to be doing the things they were asked to do. We had many visitors' comments on the awesome grounds, buildings, and this place, as well as the beautiful hand-sewn and handcrafted products.

Fort upgrades included new rain gutters along the north front and west side of the wood shop /kitchen building, and of course, the new ice cream machine, with a generous donation from a donor. Our old ice cream machine struggled when we made more than seven or so cones in a row, while this one cranks out 30 cones plus without any drop in quality of product. We put in new locks on the restrooms so the cleaning lady could get in! We have a beautiful new hand-painted photo-op which our resident artist, Bill Hansen painted for us. He also was foreman as we installed a new sidewalk leading to the log meetinghouse and the kitchen area with an extended kitchen veranda width. Also, Lynn Feinhauer assisted by Don Johnson built 1880 fences around two propane tanks on the Fort.

Upgrading cabin signs

In February 2024, we replaced upgraded exterior interpretive signs at Bluff Fort. Leon Jones and Lamont Crabtree provided brief historical summaries for each of the families represented by cabins at the Fort.

These interpretive signs added a whole new level of understanding of life in the 1880s.There are stories and quotes that have only been available in the histories. Bringing them visibly to the Fort gave visitors an even fuller understanding of the faith, grit and courage of the San Juan missionaries.



New Barton Cabin interpretive sign.

Bluff Fort Promotional Video Produced in 2023- Article by Grant Taylor

We were pleased to present a short video that explains what, why and where is Bluff Fort. I was traveling with grandsons on the East Coast a few months ago and found that some historic sites didn't have friendly websites that invited us to come and see.

This video short is born out of that experience. Persons can scan the QR code or copy/ paste the link in their browser to watch the seven-minute video presentation telling what to expect when visiting Bluff Fort. Alan Peterson, of Flying Leap Films, Inc. produced the video, with some great photography from Alan and service missionary Ron Bateman, the footage was born.

The hope is that people will share it with friends. People can also find the link on our website, at TripAdvisor, and on Google. It is on YouTube and can be watched on television at home. Our hope in producing this short video was that many people will see the video and want to come and experience the story, buy comestibles at the pantry, or an item from the gift shop. If people watch the video, they will know what to expect and hopefully this will attract more visitors. We hope that all will share the video with family and friends on their favorite social media path platform and maybe share experiences at the Fort.

We recently (2023) had a couple from France that said the reason they came to Bluff was because of their neighbors' dog, named Bluff. Yes, we know we now have a dog named Bluff roaming the streets of Paris. They said their neighbors told them they had to stop at Bluff Fort; that it had been one of the best highlights of their entire trip to the US.

We know that lives are being changed as visitors come, and experience and feel the sacredness of the ground. That indomitable spirit of the pioneers continues to bless the lives of all who come.

Change of Missionary Status

A January 17, 2024 meeting at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Administration Building resulted in a change of status of the Bluff Fort missionaries (pending approval of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve). The change was a final outcome of several meetings over time. Those serving were previously designated as church service missionaries. The Southwest Area Presidency of the Church Seventies office made the decision to place Bluff Fort missionaries under the direction of the New Mexico Farmington mission president. HIRF Board member Grant Taylor represented the HIRF board at the meeting. Those called will be senior missionaries through the regular application process, instead of as service missionaries. This was a significant change with clear lines of priesthood authority in place. (See Elder Steven Snow, Bluff Fort Missionaries in Chapter Four for a more complete history of the missionary program at the Fort.)

Modern Bluff Fort Historic Site History

Grant Taylor wrote a history of the development of modern Bluff Fort. In cooperation with missionary Ron Bateman, the history was edited and compiled with many photographs and input from numerous participants into a book form. The plan was to provide the book electronically on the HIRF website, where the information can be preserved, added to and accessed for reference. Copies may also be available for those desiring printed format through a commercial outlet such as Amazon.



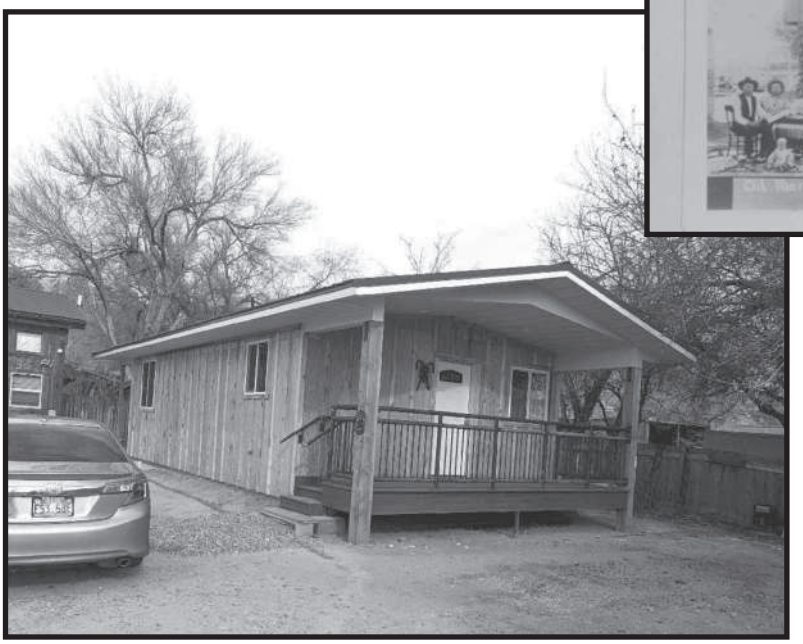
Kendall Shumway's crew roofing the cabin apartment.





Apartment #5 was completed October 31st of 2023, which provided accommodations for one additional missionary couple.





The board and batten siding at Bluff Fort is similar in design to the Bluff City Oil Exchange, shown in this 1908 photo by Charles Goodman.
https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p16003coll5/search/searchterm/charles%20goodman



Lynn Feinauer, assisted by Don Johnson on left installed 1880's type fence around two propane tanks on the fort. Lynn completed numerous, untold projects on the fort over two years including benches, apartment cabinets & shelving, roofing, signs, etc.



Diane Robbins and Marlene Elgaaen welcome the new ice cream machine in August.



Mike Johnson completed new 1880s style pricing signs outside the kitchen, despite major injury to his hand in the woodshop. He was assisted by Todd Spencer and Lynn Feinauer. He also tended the water wheel and singlehandedly removed a ten year old, unsightly pile of wooden beams left from the Co-op construction. It had been neglected on the east side of the Relief Society Building.





Sharee Merkley, Bev Bateman, Lisa Hill, Ranae Bateman, Judy Hansen showing off their handcrafted aprons. Marlene Elgaaen photo.

Craig Miller, Scott Christensen, Jack Rasmussen preparing for highway cleanup service project. Note the newly poured concrete sidewalk and veranda extension completed under the direction of missionary Bill Hansen.

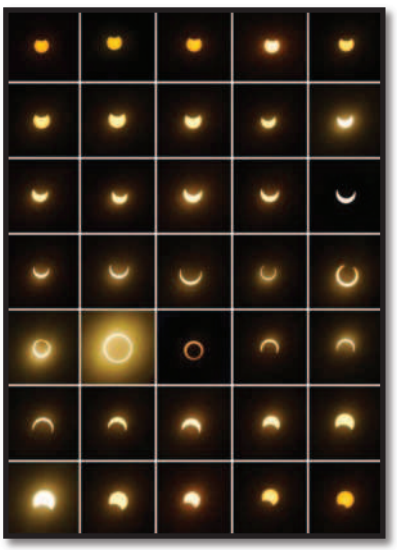


A total Eclipse of the Sun as viewed at Bluff Fort on October 14, 2023. Missionary Scott Christensen furnished the evolution photos of the total eclipse below. Early predictions of a crowd of up to 20,000 entering the city area didn't materialize, but still we set a record exceeding 450 visitors at the Fort.



The Fort darkened near the totality of the eclipse.







Bluff Fort Service Missionary Monticello Temple Excursion & Dinner at the Homestead Steakhouse on August 25th.

Below front– Kathleen Madsen, Beverly & Scott Christensen, Sunny Feinauer, Lori Spencer, Judy & Bill Hansen. Second row– Marlene Elgaaen, Ranae & Kyle Bateman, Lynn Feinauer, Todd Spencer. Third row– Diane Robbins, Shirlee & Craig Miller, Ron & Bev Bateman. Back row– Ted and Lisa Hill, Steve & Sharee Merkley, Sherry & Steve Johnson, Don and Heather Johnson, Lorie and Jack Rasmussen.





Front: Kathleen Madsen, Diane Robbins, Marlene Elgaaen, Ted & Lisa Hill, Lorie & Jack Rasmussen, Bev & Ron Bateman. Back: Steve & Sharee Merkley, Lynn & Sunny Feinauer, Don & Heather Johnson, Todd & Lori Spencer, Bill & Judy Hansen, Sherry & Mike Johnson, Ranae & Kyle Bateman, Shirlee & Craig Miller, Bev & Scott Christensen, Holly & Todd McAllister. Photo courtesy of Brooke Pehrson



Summer 2023

Jack & Lorie Rasmussen – directors -	Franklin, Idaho
Kyle & Ranae Bateman	Ibapah, Utah
Ron & Beverly Bateman	South Jordan, Utah
Scott & Beverly Christensen	LaVerkin, Utah
Marlene Elgaaen	Layton, Utah
Lynn & Sunny Feinauer	Beaverton, Oregon
Bill & Judy Hansen	Barnwell, AB, Canada
Ted & Lisa Hill	Mesa, Arizona
Don & Heather Johnson	Barnwell, AB, Canada
Mike & Sherry Johnson	Kimberly, Idaho
Kathleen Madsen	Henderson, Nevada
Steve & Sharee Merkley	Herriman, Utah
Craig & Shirlee Miller	Cardston, AB, Canada
Diane Robbins	Payson, Utah
Todd & Lori Spencer	Highland, Utah



Winter 2024

Jack & Lorie Rasmussen – directors -	Franklin, Idaho
Kyle & Ranae Bateman	Ibapah, Utah
Ron & Beverly Bateman	South Jordan, Utah
Ted & Lisa Hill	Mesa, Arizona
Steve & Sharee Merkley	Herriman, Utah
Craig & Shirlee Miller	Cardston, AB, Canada
Diane Robbins	Payson, Utah
Todd & Lori Spencer	Highland, Utah
Bryce & Laurie Fifield	Logan, Utah
Don & Cheryl Griffiths	Sacramento, California
Rich & Carolyn Murset	LaVerkin, Utah
Monte & Melodie Rasmussen	Cardston, AB, Canada



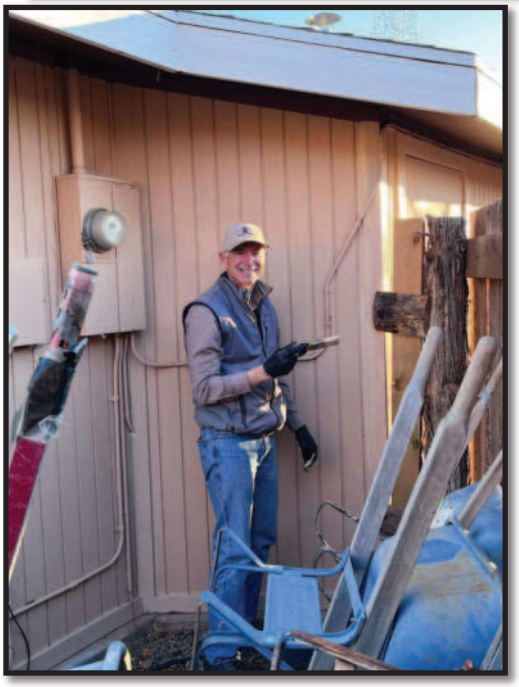


The Bluff Fort exhibit at the Blanding "Tree for All Festival" was colorful. It was also very profitable. All the quilts shown in the photo sold, along with other handmade items. Bev Bateman, Lori Spencer and Shirlee Miller with the exhibit.





Carolyn Murset performed her "Tales of Tila" during the Bluff International Balloon Festival.



Several of the senior missionaries helped launch balloons for the Bluff International Balloon Festival. Shirlee Miller and Laurie Fifield were invited to ride. It was held January 12-14, 2024.



Montey Rasmussen and Rich Murset installed new windows in the sewing center. Ron Bateman helped with the outside caulking and Ted Hill painted the exterior.



In February, Craig Miller, Jack Rasmussen, and Todd Spencer installed a new solid, story board on the east side of the co-op. The signs were designed by Leon Jones & Lamont Crabtree.



Ron Bateman, Montey and Melodie Rasmussen created a pioneer Nativity to celebrate the birth of the Savior.
Ron Bateman photos.



Jack and Lorie Rasmussen conducting a morning devotional.



Don Johnson hoeing the carrots in a prolific 2023 garden.



Christmas party given by the Rasmussens.



A rare winter snowstorm at Bluff Fort.
Lorie Rasmussen photo.



Men of Bluff Fort, February 2024. Rich Murset, Montey Rasmussen, Don Griffiths, Todd Spencer, Jack Rasmussen, Craig Miller, Kyle Bateman, Ted Hill, Steve Merkley, Bryce Fifield, Ron Bateman.



Women of Bluff Fort, February 2024. Carolyn Murset, Melodie Rasmussen, Cheryl Griffiths, Lori Spencer, Lorie Rasmussen, Shirlee Miller, Ranae Bateman, Lisa Hill, Sharee Merkley, Laurie Fifield, Diane Robbins, Bev Bateman.



2024 Winter Missionaries at Bluff Fort Historic Site. Rich & Carolyn Murset, Montey & Melodie Rasmussen, Don & Cheryl Griffiths, Todd & Lori Spencer, Jack & Lorie Rasmussen, Craig & Shirlee Miller, Kyle & Ranae Bateman, Ted & Lisa Hill, Steve & Sharee Merkley, Bryce & Laurie Fifield, Diane Robbins, Ron & Bev Bateman.

Bluff Fort Historic Site Winter Missionaries



2024 Bluff Fort winter missionaries started in November of 2023. The summer missionaries who stayed were: Kyle & Ranae Bateman, Ron & Bev Bateman, Ted & Lisa Hill, Steve and Sharee Merkley, Craig & Shirlee Miller, Jack & Lorie Rasmussen, Diane Robbins, & Todd and Lori Spencer.

Montey and Melodie Rasmussen



Rich & Carolyn Murset



Don & Cheryl Griffiths.

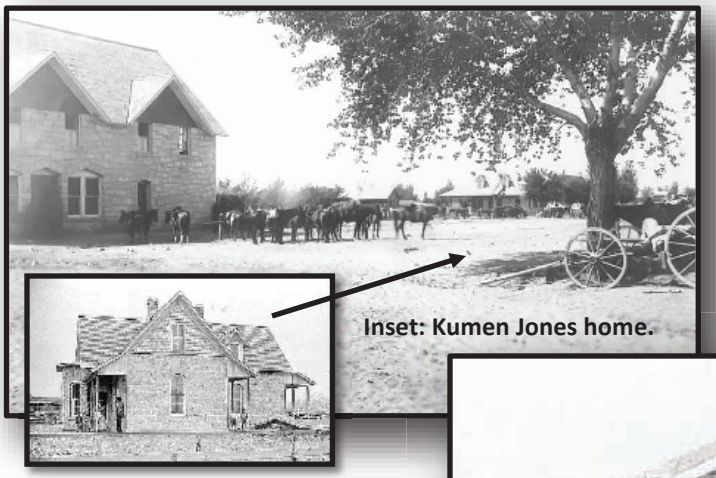


Bryce and Laurie Fifield were called as the 2024 Bluff Fort Directors, starting March 1st.

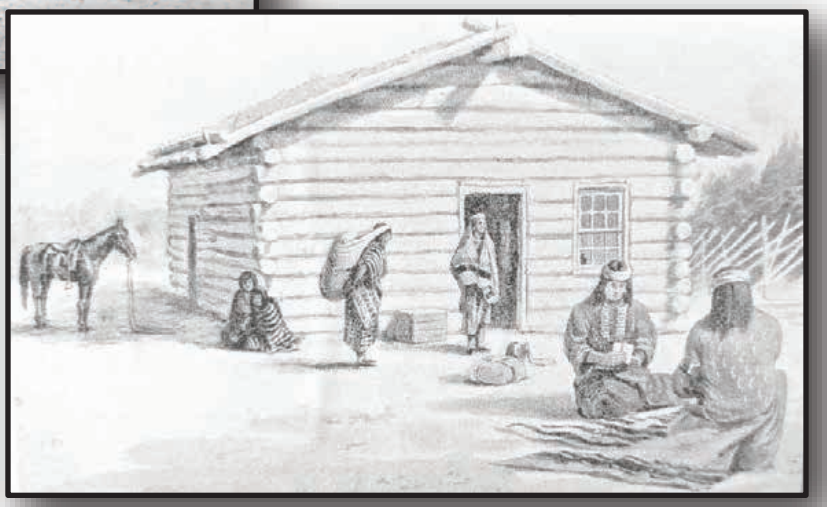
Spring 2024 Missionaries

Bryce & Laurie Fifield Bluff Fort Directors Logan, Utah; Larry and Christa Barker, Santa Clara, Utah; Steve & Denise Christensen, St. George, Utah; Don & Cheryl Griffiths, Sacramento, California; Larry & Cheryl Lowry, Cardston, AB, Canada; Curtis & Valerie Mahon, St. George, Utah; Mike McConkie, Kaysville, Utah; Peggy Moffat, Mesa, Arizona; Jack & Julie Monnett, Firth, Idaho; Rich & Carolyn Murset, LaVerkin, Utah; Montey & Melodie Rasmussen, Cardston, AB Canada; Diane Robbins, Payson, Utah.

APPENDIX



Early photo of Bluff Fort Cooperative with Kumen Jones home in far right background. The log meetinghouse had apparently been torn down.

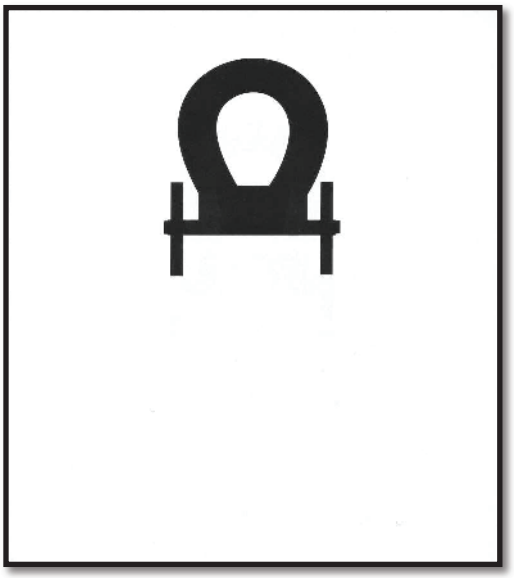


Drawing of the first Bluff Fort Co-op is found upstairs in the museum.





Original San Juan Cooperative Store photos taken by Charles Goodman Circa 1899.



Bluff Fort Covered Wagon Logo, designed by Lamont Crabtree in 1995.

Lamont Crabtree stated the following: "With respect to the wagon logo, in the early 1960s the BLM and David Miller (University of Utah historian) drafted a preliminary trail marking plan. In this document a smaller/ simpler wagon symbol was defined. The wagon symbol was burned onto trail markers with a branding iron. Only scarring the wood, the symbol did not last long. You can still find some of these markers on the trail. They are short (3' high), 4"x4" wood posts cut at the top on a 45 degree angle. The wagon symbol was applied onto the 45 degree cut. However, the wagon logos have long since disappeared.

"In 1995 I designed and proposed the current wagon symbol. See the last pages of the attached BLM document. The last few pages refer to my "Hole-in-the-Rock Trail Logo and Marking Proposal". . . . . Since I designed and proposed the current logo to the BLM and Park Service, we saw no issue in adopting it for the Fort/ Foundation's logo.

Agreement draft and graphics by Lamont Crabtree, finalized by Craig Sorenson, Escalante BLM Office.



Preserving the History and Sharing the Legacy
San Juan Mission / Hole in the Rock Expedition

In addition to the restoration of Bluff Fort, The Hole in the Rock Foundation is dedicated to historical research on the pioneers of the San Juan Mission and Hole in the Rock Expedition. Our main objectives are to identify available historical sources, construct biographical sketches of participants and publish this information on our website (www.hirf.org). There are two key areas in which we need your help.

Collecting Family Records

The Foundation is directing its efforts in gathering valuable historical records from the descendants of the San Juan Mission and Hole in the Rock pioneers. Specifically, we would like a copy of family records, journals, photographs, newspaper articles, or anything of historical value.

If you are interested in sharing your family records, please contact:

Cora Jones
CSM Jones LLC, Family Heritage Consulting
jones4929@msn.com
435-649-4929

Monetary Donations

The Foundation is collecting funds to help support our research efforts. Research and acquisition of historical records and writing biographical sketches is ongoing. With over 250 participants, this is a big undertaking for which we have sought the assistance of professional historians and genealogists. Your donation would help to support this important endeavor.

If you are interested in making a tax-deductible donation, please contact the Hole in the Rock Foundation:

HIR Foundation
PO Box 476
Bluff, UT 84512
inquiry@hirf.org

HIRF promoted historical research on the pioneers of the San Juan Mission

THE HOLE IN THE ROCK FOUNDATION, A 501C3 NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

OBJECTIVE/MISSION (2009): To preserve, perpetuate and promote the historical legacy of the Hole-in-the-Rock/ San Juan Mission Pioneers.

Shortened version: Preserving the History and Sharing the Legacy of the Hole-in-the-Rock/ San Juan Mission Pioneers

MOTTO:

The San Juan pioneers accomplished the seemingly impossible through unwavering commitment and devotion.

Shortened version: Accomplishing the seemingly impossible.

SCOPE:

I. The Hole-in-the-Rock Trail:

1. Conduct/support Hole-in-the-Rock Trail research and preservation.
2. Support trail identification and marking projects.
3. Develop/install interpretive signs/kiosks at significant trail locations.
4. Provide information along the trail and via the internet, including maps and interpretive literature.
5. Support trail excursions by providing trial information/maps, suggested points of interest, and as applicable provide handcart and water buffalo rentals.

II. The Bluff Fort:

Underlining Guidelines for the Fort's Development

a. Time Period: Bluff's first 20 years, primarily the years of 1879-1899

b. Human Focus: Interpretive projects/ Information is to focus on the story of the pioneers rather than artifacts.

1. The Barton Cabin: Preserve and protect the Barton cabin –the oldest pioneer structure in San Juan County and the only remaining cabin built by the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers.
2. Procurement of Property: Pursue the acquisition of properties that comprised the original fort boundaries and appropriate/related properties.
3. Semblance of the Original Fort: Create a semblance of the original Bluff Fort through the construction of some of the fort's original log structures including the log meetinghouse, blacksmith shop, log co-op store, and log cabins. Cabins are to be patterned after the Barton cabin.
4. Pioneer Artifacts: Collect and display pioneer artifacts including wagons, farming implements, blacksmith implements, and cabin/meetinghouse furnishings that are from/or a replica of the late 1800's, provided that said artifacts are applicable to the telling of the story of the Bluff Fort or its original residents.
5. Landscaping: Develop landscaping that is period appropriate, including the planting of trees and a small orchard representative of Bluff's first orchards.
6. Public Conveniences: Develop public restrooms. Until restrooms are in place portable facilities will be rented when major events are held at the fort.
7. Visitors' Center: Develop a visitors' center at the Bluff Fort that is patterned after the design

and location of the original stone co-op.
8. The Bluff Ditch: Develop a water feature to convey the story of Bluff's ditch, Bluff's residents' greatest challenge.
9. The Native American Story: Develop interpretive displays that convey the Native Americans' culture and history as they relate to the Hole-in- the-Rock pioneers.
10. Displays/kiosks: Develop displays and interpretive information throughout the site to convey the remarkable challenges and accomplishments of the Fort's/Bluff's first inhabitants.
11. Kumen Jones Ruin: Phase I: Secure and preserve the ruin walls to the extent that is possible and safe. Phase II: If the wall can be secured/stabilized, a small amphitheater will be developed. The ruin with the ruin wall serving as a backdrop. The small amphitheater is to be used for fireside chats, programs, etc. Phase III: When funds become available, rebuild the home.
12. Other Complementary Structures: Structures that were not part of the original fort will be considered when it is determined that a pertinent pioneer story or stories cannot be told within the forts log structures or visitors center.

III. Pioneer Histories/Stories:
Collect and share histories and photographs pertinent to the Hole-in- the-Rock /San Juan Mission and other related stories of the 1879-1899 period.

IV. Education and Communication
1. Regularly publish and distribute a newsletter (print and electronic media) that highlights the foundation's projects and conveys the pioneer stories.
2. Develop and enhance a website that provides trail information and perpetuates the stories of the San Juan pioneers.

V. Fund Raising
1. Apply for grants and seek donations from individuals and organizations to support the foundation's projects.
2. Sell items at the welcome center that will help visitors take memories of the fort home, as well as sustain the fort's operating expenses.
3. Provide services which will also contribute to the visitors' total pioneer experience and which will help cover the annual operating costs of the facility. These services may include such things as handcart rentals and refreshment sales.
The above mission and scope statement was last updated and ratified by the board of directors on Nov. 21, 2009. (From the HIRF website)

FIRESIDE 7:00 PM AT BLUFF FORT ON APRIL 6, 2008 COMMEMORATING THE PIONEERS ARRIVAL IN BLUFF IN 1880. By Corinne Roring

Welcome to you all to our first fireside in the log meeting house 1880 to 2008 - 128 years. We are grateful for a calm day! I want to welcome Karl and LaRue Barton to our great project of rebuilding Bluff Fort. They have acquired the Jens Nielsen house. So great to have their interest and talent here. To work in the Fort is to bond with the Fort.

BLUFF FORT IS JUST MEANT TO BE. By that I seriously say that every project undertaken here has materialized when it was supposed to happen and not before. Someone seems to be pushing or slowing until the time is right. I have learned to press on but not to worry - if the time is right it happens! Hard work yes, but a joy. Except for the weeds and ants that love this Fort. I am officially known as the weed and ant killer, but I am losing the battle.

FORT BEGINNINGS: I apologize if some of this seems too personal, but my assignment is to keep the fire going. My neighbor asks me," why are you doing a Fort?" As they point to my head, etc. the only answer is that one is "out in the night", a little loony" or just plain crazy. It all fits! I blame it on the sunburns acquired in Bluff in earlier years. many summers I would ride the mail truck from Blanding with Dorothy Butt to swim in the Bluff pool, and to float on a big board and watch the white clouds move over the high cliffs and feel the warmth of the sun until by the third day I would be beet red and burning. Dorothy would tan beautifully but for me the freckles would blend some and then burn. Still the process was repeated summer after summer. Oh, the hills of Bluff- so peaceful and quiet that only the bark of a dog broke the silence. I could go on and on. Maybe some of you here were so lucky back then. When I heard my father talk about growing up in Bluff and feel the love he had for the people in the place, I realized how in a small way what he meant. He always said when he got rich, he was going back to Bluff and rebuild the Fort for he knew where everything was and where everyone lived. The seed was planted, and bonding to the fort is easy and fun and hard. But when was any project easy in Bluff?

Thanks to Gary and Sharon Guyman who owned about 2/3 of the Fort block and wanted to see it returned to a Fort. They sold it to the little Letty Jones foundation with me as trustee. This property is now deeded to HIRF. Other smaller pieces also became available. The first season we spent hauling truckloads of debris and trash off this property. Weeds had free reign for 90 years making dry, deep build up. We fix that; we burned! The next spring here they came back fierce and strong and green. We had only fertilized!

Next out of the blue came a call from Graig Taylor, the grandson of George Hobbs, the scout for the Hole In The Rock expedition, expressing an interest in preserving the Joseph Barton cabin. The only cabin left of the Fort. A work week was set, and after I had tons of dirt and bushes hiding the cabin removed, Craig came with two helpers and with Gary and me the Gopher and my little grandson Craig, and in a hard week the cabin and breezeway roof was on.

My grandson Craig spent his 8th birthday shoveling and spreading the dirt on the Barton cabin roof because he weighed much less than any of the men. The little guy really worked! I might add he has spent every June 11th birthday working on the Fort. He really got a little burned out and so on his 17th birthday he came to the Fort but only to check it out. Now it is his birthday tradition, and he is trained as the next generation. Isn't that the way it works?

Surveying the finished roof Graig Taylor turned to me and said what next Corinne? Now I had company

we both were a bit loony, but the fire was burning. The log meeting house of course. We do lots of telephone brainstorming.

THE LOG MEETING HOUSE!! Impossible! Could never cut a tree on the river as the pioneers did. Gary came up with a solution the dead cottonwoods on the old irrigation canal north of Blanding! David Kimberly just happened to have logging equipment, and bless him, he cut, loaded, sawed and moved the heavy logs four times. With only one picture of the meeting house to work from we built this cabin, which we think is a good copy. Let me read how Albert Lyman who also grew up in bluff, described the Cottonwood houses in early Bluff:

“Our houses were built of the Rams-horn breed of Cottonwood trees, and walls both in and out with wonderful irregularity, and chinks ranged from nothing to a foot wide. Roofed with thick coats of sand, which feathered out into a crop of runty sunflowers and stinkweeds, if the weed seed had time to sprout before the wind carried the sand away. Whether it raised weeds or blew away, it never turned the rain, which dropped dismally long after the sky cleared. These houses had doorways without glass, and floors which required sprinkling at intervals to lay the native dust and tempted the soil to harden. In 1890 all of Bluff’s approximately 25 families lived in log houses and all the public buildings parentheses which included the post office, hotel, church, and schoolhouse were built of logs. With our roof we cheated, and it has a membrane on the log roof, then sod then dirt. The doors of this LOG MEETING HOUSE have never been locked by us. It is here to be of service to this community. We appreciate your interest in closing the doors when it's left open or blown open by the wind. We had our first marriage in this building in October 2007.

The next project was the MONUMENT, the heart of the Fort, to put in granite the names of our dear pioneers that made the incredible trek to San Juan in 1879-1880. They're call from the LDS church and their journey was impossible, but they made it, just as many of them had made it pulling handcarts to Salt Lake in an earlier trial period if life experience refined one, these faithful ancestors have truly been through the refiner’s fire. The drive to raise the money for this monument was spearheaded by Curtis and Paula Jones and Norman and Ruth Nielsen. Descendants and friends contributed $30,000 for this project. Go read the inscription on it by David Miller, then go visit Cemetery Hill where many made their last journey, remembering their sacrifice and hardships, and we have a piece of cake!

The lumber covered building east of here is the old state road shed, and is our storage shed and the camp room for workers and gophers to the Fort.

The small hex building or Hogan south of the shed, we just acquired in January this year (2008). It will be an Indian museum and Information Center for now until we can get funding to rebuild the big co-op store for an Information Center and museum. We are still trying but always it is having enough money that holds our projects back. But as the Great Dane Jens Nielsen said, “You have to have stick a da tudy you cannot fail! “ so in that light we will do just that.

Thanks to all of you for your help in sharing your talents in so many ways that adds so much to this project. This FORT WILL BECOME A DESTINATION. last year 5000 visitors to this Fort signed our register, and watching we feel about a 1/3 sign. Thank you for joining us in beautiful Bluff. Today as we honor the first pioneers to Bluff, I feel we are all pioneers of our time here. I have requested us to sing a simple little song later. it's called “I am a child of God.”

THE SAN JUAN RECORD Wednesday October 15, 1997 - Page 10

HISTORIC BLUFF CEMETERY DEDICATION CEREMONY OCTOBER 11, 1997

photos and text
by Terri Winder

On Saturday, October 11, an estimated 250 people gathered on the south side of Bluff's Pioneer Cemetery for a dedication of the historic site, marking the end of an eight-year crusade to secure and preserve the hill top and surrounding area.

Bluff residents joined with descendants of original pioneers to celebrate the culmination of their united efforts. As with celebrations of another era in the small community, this one began with the ringing of a church bell and the playing of a brass band.

Winston Hurst conducted the program, which included remarks by those involved with the fund raising, songs, and poetry. A prayer was offered by the Reverend Jean Trecce, formerly of St. Christopher's Mission. The dedicatory prayer was given by Curtis Jones, one of the few descendants of original pioneers who still has a vested interest in the community.

An early winter storm chilled participants as it churned up the gritty sand around them, calling to mind the succinct statement of a Bluff pioneer: "The sand-laden wind cut our eyes."

Despite biting cold and sparsely scattered rain drops, participants enjoyed the program and the camaraderie of a common cause; coming early to seek out headstones of relatives and lingering afterward to visit.

There are as many stories related to the cemetery as there are headstones. To give an idea of why this land is so sacred to those who fought to preserve it a few of those stories are related here.

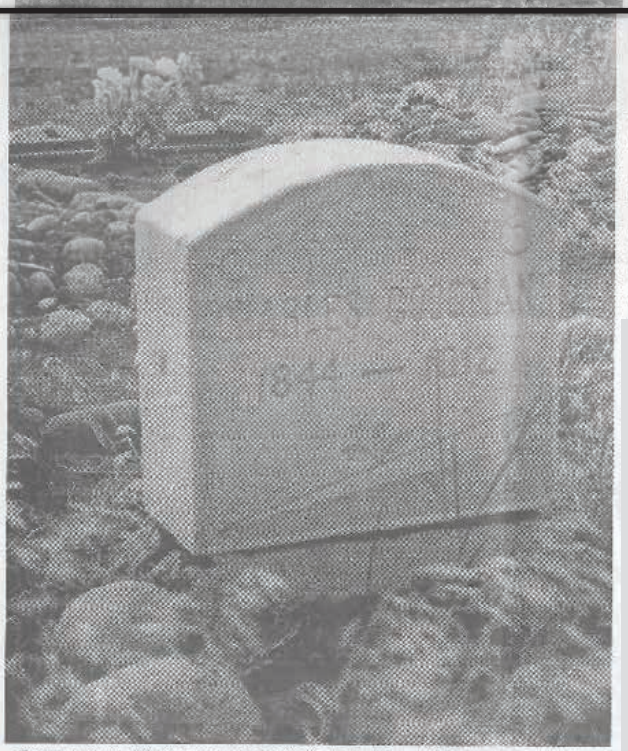




It is as if Annie Anderson is reaching up and placing her hand on her great-great-grandfather's shoulder, as she touches the headstone of Bishop Jens Nielson, the "father of Bluff." Annie's father's side of the family - the Anderson & Anderson law firm - donated the legal work pertaining to the Bluff cemetery preservation project.

A dedicated leader who weathered life's trials with strength and fortitude, always preaching "etiokoty tuity," Bishop Nielson also had a tender side, as illustrated in this little known story:

In the spring of 1906 42-year-old May Lyman Jones was burned badly while rescuing her infant son from a fire. She died from the injury, leaving a family of nine sons and one little daughter, Mamie. During the funeral services, Bishop Nielson held Mamie and rocked her as he cried broken-heartedly, "Poor child, why couldn't they have taken me instead?"



Tongue-in-cheek, Winston Hurst reported that in his Aunt Lucretia Ranney Lyman's history of Bluff, she referred to Charles Goodman as a "transient." Charles Goodman lived in Bluff the last 20 years of his life. A renowned photographer of the early West, he captured the essence of Bluff with his camera, leaving a priceless legacy.

The Historic Bluff Pioneer Cemetery was saved from development due to the efforts of Corinne Roring and others. Corinne led a fundraising campaign raising over $88.000 in a matter of months. The cemetery eventually was signed over to the Hole in the Rock Foundation.



BG The Salt Lake Tribune UTAH/OBITUARIES Sunday, November 14, 2004

Preserving remnants of an arduous expedition

Bluff pioneers' settlement being restored

By Lisa Church
Special to The Tribune

BLUFF — In April 1880, six months after setting off on one of the most arduous expeditions in American pioneer history, the San Juan Mission group of LDS missionaries arrived on the banks of the San Juan River and declared their journey done.

Several miles short of their intended destination — a point near where Montezuma Creek joins the San Juan River — the 250 weary settlers could travel no further. Their efforts to blaze a trail through stone — they had hammered away sandstone to widen a route down to the Colorado River's west bank — forever earned them recognition as the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers.

Their goal: to connect southwest Utah Mormon settlements to the state's southeast corner. They had launched their back-breaking trek in November 1879 from a spring 40 miles south of modern-day Escalante.

Photos by Lisa Church

One section of the Joseph F. Barton cabin, above, has been completely restored, and the two adjacent cabins were excavated as part of the Bluff Fort preservation project. Left, a replica of the original 1880s meeting house, which served as a school, community hall, and church, was the center of social and religious life for the 250 men, women and children of the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition. A dedication ceremony is planned for April 2005.

Harrowing journey: 1879-80 mission to Bluff City

In April 1879, a scouting party, led by Silas S. Smith, left Paragonah in southwest Utah to find a good route for the San Juan Mission expedition. Six months later, the pioneers arrived in Bluff City. A look at the journey:

- A shortcut, believed to be what is now known as the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail, appeared to be a suitable route. But it proved more difficult. Most of the pioneers spent the winter at Forty Mile Spring.
- A small group camped at the top of the notch that is the Hole in the Rock, and, over the winter, used pickaxes, shovels and other hand tools to widen the crack so their 83 wagons could pass through.
- On Jan. 6, 1880, the pioneers slowly descended through the crack – a drop of some 2,000 feet with an average grade of 25 degrees, and some areas as steep as 45 degrees. They were then ferried across the 300 foot-wide Colorado River.

The Salt Lake Tribune

The group named their new community Bluff City and quickly set about constructing log homes. The pioneers used the homes' outer walls to form the boundaries of a fort. They built a meeting house and began developing an irrigation system to draw San Juan River water to the parched desert fields.

"When they arrived, they had not even intended to live in a fort," says Utah historian Lamont Crabtree. "But Mormon leaders suggested they stay together until things were stabilized."

Today, a log cabin owned by Hole-in-the-Rock member Joseph F. Barton is all that remains of the original 40 homes that were the Bluff Fort settlement. In 1998, volunteers and historic preservationists formed the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation to restore the original Barton cabin, once part of the fort's west wall.

In association with the Monticello-based Letty Jones Heritage Foundation, the group raised more than $150,000 from private contributions and foundations to purchase the Barton cabin site, build a reproduction of the 1880s meeting house and buy surrounding properties where the fort once stood.

"It's a story that needs to be preserved," says foundation Director Corinne Roring. "Those pioneers made such an incredible journey. They were exhausted. When they arrived here, there was nothing left in man or beast."

Last month, volunteers installed an interpretative display inside the meeting house, depicting daily life in the settlement. A display inside the restored Barton cabin tells the Barton family story. The Bluff Fort is open year-round for free self-guided tours. Fort buildings are never locked, and visitors are always welcome, Roring says.

"I would like to make the fort a place of peace and rest and shade," she says. "It's a resting place, just like Bluff became the resting place for the Hole-in-the-Rock settlers."

Later this year, Roring hopes to complete installation of a stone monument inscribed with the names of the 250 men, women and children who made the difficult trek from Escalante to Bluff. A dedication ceremony is planned for April 2005, commemorating the 125th anniversary of the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition's arrival in Bluff.

But Roring must raise an additional $6,000. She said she is counting on relatives of the original pioneer families, and those interested in preserving the state's history will help make up the project shortfall.

Crabtree calls the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition one of the most important LDS missions because the road forged by the pioneers allowed colonization of the southeastern reaches of Utah, and later parts of Colorado and New Mexico. Preserving the Barton cabin and the old Bluff Fort site is vital because so little physical evidence remains from those original settlers, he says.

"This is really the only tangible remnant of any of the dwellings of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers, and thus, the oldest pioneer dwelling in the entire county and probably the entire four-corners region," Crabtree says of the Barton homestead.

lchurch@xtdlink.net

A 2004 *Salt Lake Tribune* article summarized the 1879-80 pioneer trek through Hole-in-the-Rock to Bluff, the restoration of the Joseph Barton cabin, and the opening of the Bluff Fort visitor center in the Log Meetinghouse replica.



The San Juan Record

HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR SAN JUAN COUNTY, UTAH

1982 Newspaper Photo of the Joseph Barton Cabin San Juan Record, Vol 64 No 49, December 29, 1982. Corinne Roring Collection

What You Need to Know:

Docents (Tour Guides)

- Staff the Visitor Center
- Show tourists around the Fort
- Invite guests to watch a video explaining the expedition



- Tell stories of teamwork, sacrifice, cooperation, and faith
- Are provided an orientation packet containing helpful information regarding local points of interest, pioneer stories, and facts about the trek and the Fort
- Have the opportunity, if you desire, to garden, quilt, make rugs, assist in construction projects, visit local sites, etc.
- Bask in the serenity of the area



For the Experience of a Lifetime Contact:

Grant Taylor (801) 971-5306
or
Corinne Roring (435) 587-2484
You may also send inquires to:

inquiry@hirf.org

Still not sure this is for you -- Talk directly with some docents -- feel free to call any or all of the following:

Erlene Taylor (801) 756-9196

LaMar Helquist (801) 225-9096

Grant or Nina Taylor --
(801) 971-5306

Graig Taylor (801) 836-2402

We encourage you to visit our web page — hirf.org

Hole in the Rock Foundation
P.O. Box 476
Bluff, Utah 84512

"Achieving the Seemingly Impossible"



Why You Are Needed at Bluff Fort

"Have I done any good in the World today?
Have I helped anyone in need?

The words of this familiar hymn go on to encourage us to do more than dream. They remind us that "doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure, a blessing of duty and love."

WE INVITE YOU TO EXPERIENCE JOY BEYOND MEASURE AS A DOCENT AT BLUFF FORT, UTAH

Why Volunteer at Bluff Fort

Meet people from every corner of the world who need, and who want to know about the faith, hope, and determination of the dedicated Hole in the Rock pioneers.

- You select a convenient schedule*
- Tell pioneer stories that tug at the heart and demonstrate their determination to accomplish the seemingly impossible
- Experience the joy of serving others
- Develop special relationships that will last a lifetime and beyond
- NO tedious memorization of script
- Live at home, in your trailer at a full service park, or stay in a new apartment 1/2 block from the Fort
- Receive mileage reimbursement or housing assistance
- Catch the spirit of these pioneers
- "Do Something More" -- Participate in a life changing experience

As the old advertisement declared
"Try it -- You'll like it"



WE NEED YOU

Those who have participated indicate it is an unbelievable experience -- Come be part of the joy

". . . I enjoy sharing the pioneer stories with the next generation, they need to know about the sacrifices made by others so they might enjoy the comforts of today . . . ."

"I just love the opportunity to meet so many wonderful people"

Visitors indicate the Fort is wonderful, come be part of that experience

Germany - "It is Beautiful" -- "We are so thankful to get to know your pioneer history" --
Belgium - "We learned a lot, thank you" -- "We will be back"
Israel - "Great hospitality - amazing story"
Italy - "We had a great time here"
Spain - "Very Nice" - "Wonderful"
Canada - "A Very Stirring Place" -- "A wonderful Project" --
Maine - "Very well done, enjoyed it immensely"
Boston, Mass - "Great Job - great idea"
California - "Glad to see this restoration"
Seattle, Wash. - "Fascinating film" -- "thank you"
Arizona - "Wonderful" -- "Awesome" -- "great"

Be among the first
to serve in the New Visitors Center to be constructed this fall. It will be a replica of the original Co op Store shown below.



Benefits to You

Long lasting joy will come from the experiences, camaraderie, satisfaction, happy faces, and personal growth you will have from sharing the amazing stories of the dedicated pioneers who settled this hallowed ground.

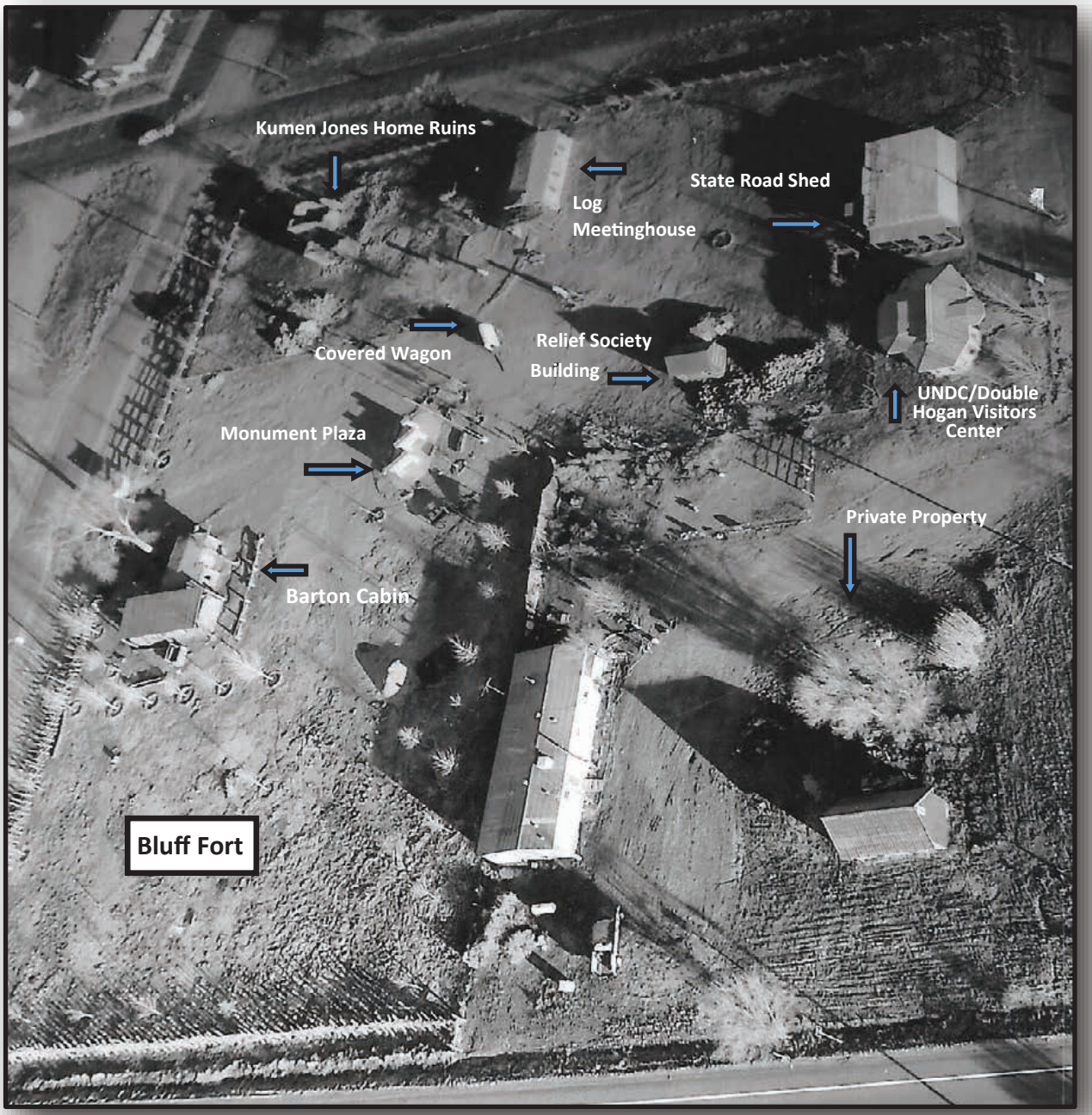


YOU SELECT A SCHEDULE THAT IS BEST FOR YOU

* Serve one day a week for the season, serve daily for a week or more during the season, or join us for a month. You choose what is best for you.



Descendants of these faithful men and women have worked to construct family cabins to honor their ancestors. The pages of their journals contain the heart felt stories told within the walls of these cabin replicas.



Undated aerial photograph showing Bluff Fort after the Barton Cabin restoration & the Log Meetinghouse build, but before cabins were in place. Erlene Taylor copied the photograph from the wall of Corinne Roring's home.

Early Bluff Fort Brochure

Why Visit Bluff Fort, Utah

- Experience life as it was in 1880
- Photograph yourself / family on a real covered wagon or pulling a handcart







- Imagine life in a 130 year old, one room cabin that was home to the Barton's and their seven children
- Learn what happened to the famous outlaw Fred Starr when he tried to rob the co-op store
- View a video of the actual trial blazed by these dedicated pioneers
- Listen to pioneer stories and journal entries
- Step inside a real Indian dwelling



Bluff Fort Is FREE to The Public

Actual Comments from a few Visitors:

England - "Very interesting, a feeling of tremendous pride for these pioneers" -- "Never seen anything better - Fascinating" -- "Marvelous restoration and building effort"

Germany - "It is Beautiful" -- "We are so thankful to get to know your pioneer history" -- "Second time here, very nice" -- "Loved it" -- "Inspiring"

Belgium - "We learned a lot, thank you" -- "We will be back"

Israel - "Great hospitality - amazing story"

Italy - "We had a great time here" -- "Very interesting - well done" -- "Wonderful"

Canada - "A Very Stirring Place, well cared for" -- "A wonderful Project" --

Florida - "Great - learned so much" -- "nice"

Texas - "Amazing accomplishment" -- "informative"

Maine - "Very well done, enjoyed it immensely"

Boston, Mass - "Great Job - great idea"

New York - "Real dedication, many changes since our last visit in 2004"

California - "Glad to see this restoration" -- "very Good" -- "What a trek, interesting"

Seattle, Wash. - "Fascinating film" -- "thank you"

Arizona - "Wonderful" -- "Awesome" -- "great"

For Information Please Visit www.hirf.org or Call (435) 672-9995

Bluff Fort is located on Utah State Highway 191

hirf.org

THE WORLD IS WELCOMED WITHOUT CHARGE AT

Historic Bluff Fort, Utah

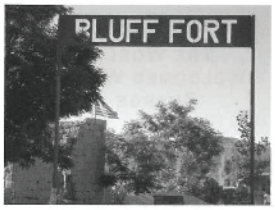


The place, John Wayne, remarked



"Where God Put The West"

Old brochure inside page.



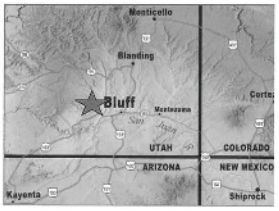
Bluff Fort Offers

- A Visitors Center and Gift Shop (Open from 9 am to 6 pm - Mon - Sat - March 1st to Oct. 31st)
- Free Tours of the Buildings during normal hours (see above)
- Free access to the grounds 24 / 7
- Full size replicas of:
  14 Family Cabins
  The social hall / meeting house
  The Blacksmith shop
  And other important buildings
- A video showing San Juan Hill where seven teams of horses were necessary to pull each wagon to the top

New CLEAN Restrooms

Tour Buses Welcome

Bluff is easy to find since it is located right on Utah State Highway 191



It has often been said, a picture is worth a 1,000 words but to walk the grounds of Bluff Fort is worth a 1,000 pictures

We Invite you to Come and Visit - You will be glad you did



Individuals and groups of people from around the world have **"Accomplished the Seemingly Impossible."**
Such is the story of the Hole in the Rock Pioneers who established a wagon trail across the inhospitable, yet breathtakingly beautiful terrain of Southeastern Utah.

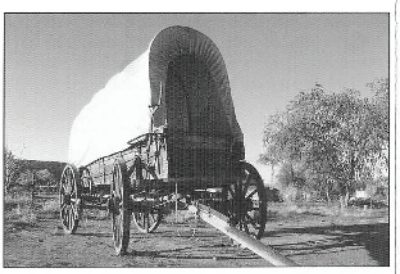


These dedicated men, women, and children accomplished the seemingly impossible. Come and be inspired by their commitment, hard work and dedication.

Their story will stir feelings of accomplishment within you.



There is **NO Charge** to visit the Fort
It is **FREE** to Everyone



The Bluff Fort interpretive site is open year round for free, self-guided tours. The meetinghouse is available for meetings, receptions, reunions, etc.

Future plans for the site include additional interpretive displays, the reconstruction of the co-op store/visitors center, additional log cabins and public conveniences.

It is our objective to preserve the site and provide a meaningful experience for visitors. Please assist us in maintaining and expanding this historical site by making a tax-deductible donation.

For additional information please visit our website: http:\\www .hirf.org

Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation
Box 476, Bluff, UT 84535



Bluff Co-op Store, late 1890's

Bluff Fort Historic Site

Bluff, Utah

East of the Bluff Post Office, adjacent to Highway 191

Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation

Preserving the history and sharing the legacy of the Hole-in-the-Rock Expedition / San Juan Mission

Old brochure front and back.

In 1879-80, Mormon pioneers built a wagon road between established communities in southwestern Utah and the Four Corners area. They were fulfilling an assignment from their church (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) to establish a settlement in the area and nurture peaceful relations with the Utes and the Navajos. Their journey turned into an ordeal of unparalleled difficulty as they spent six months blazing a route across some of the most broken and rugged terrain in North America, including a path through the Hole-in-the-Rock (a crevice in the Colorado River gorge).



Re-enactment of the pioneers' ascent up Cottonwood Canyon, Hole-in-the-Rock in the background. Courtesy of The Utah Board of Education.

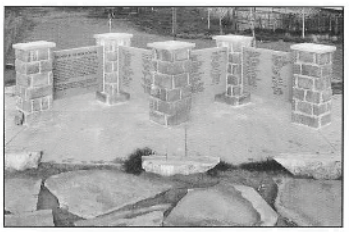
Upon their arrival in the San Juan area in April 1880, they established a small community called Bluff City. Their first dwellings were one-room log cabins. The cabins were lined up next to each other to form the exterior walls of a fort where security was achieved by everyone living in close proximity to each other. The fort consisted of an open square outlined by forty to fifty cabins whose doors and windows all faced the center. A meetinghouse at the north end of the fort was used as the church and school and became the center of all social activity.

Only one of the fort's log cabins has survived. It was home to Harriet and Joseph Barton and their eight children. It is now stands as a reminder of early home life on the San Juan frontier.



Barton cabin following preservation work

Through a series of circumstances, concerned individuals were brought together at just the right time to save portions of the Barton cabin. During the first week of June 1997, volunteers throughout the state convened at the cabin site. In one week's time, one room of the cabin was restored, and the other rooms were excavated and preserved as an interpretive site.



Monument honoring the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers

As volunteers feverishly worked to preserve the cabin, a dream and vision that was to extend far beyond the task at hand was launched. Since that time, most of the Bluff City block associated with the Barton cabin (which was the site of the Bluff Fort) has been acquired. The property has been cleared, and a replica of the Bluff Meetinghouse has been built on the site. It was constructed as authentically as possible. Its location, size and shape are the same as the original. As with the original, the replica's logs are cottonwood and the roof is dirt.



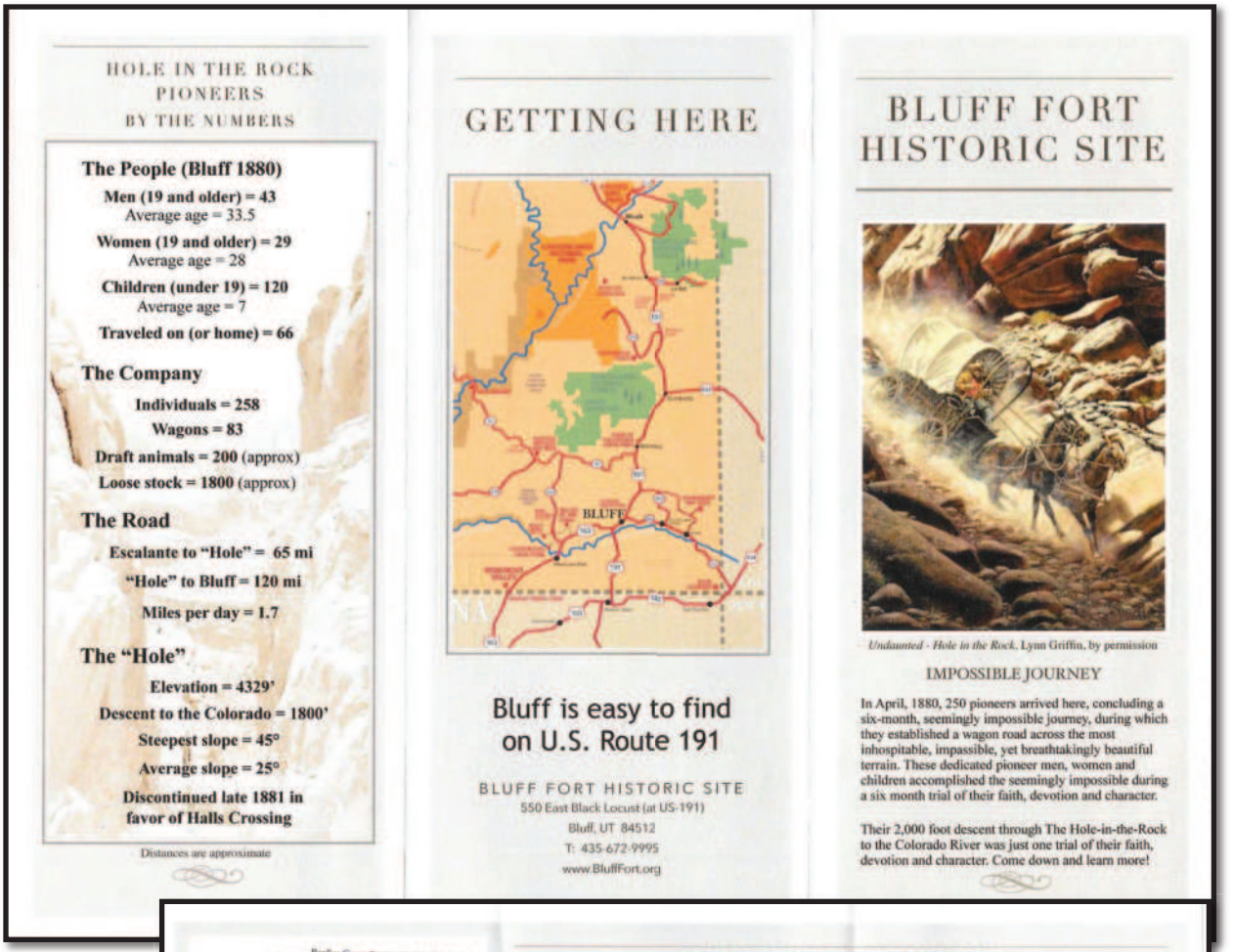
Bluff Meetinghouse about 1890



East side of the Meetinghouse (replica)



Interior of the Meetinghouse (replica)



HOLE IN THE ROCK
PIONEERS
BY THE NUMBERS

The People (Bluff 1880)

Men (19 and older) = 43
Average age = 33.5

Women (19 and older) = 29
Average age = 28

Children (under 19) = 120
Average age = 7

Traveled on (or home) = 66

The Company

Individuals = 258

Wagons = 83

Draft animals = 200 (approx)

Loose stock = 1800 (approx)

The Road

Escalante to "Hole" = 65 mi

"Hole" to Bluff = 120 mi

Miles per day = 1.7

The "Hole"

Elevation = 4329'

Descent to the Colorado = 1800'

Steepest slope = 45°

Average slope = 25°

Discontinued late 1881 in favor of Halls Crossing

Distances are approximate

GETTING HERE

BLUFF

Bluff is easy to find on U.S. Route 191

BLUFF FORT HISTORIC SITE
550 East Black Locust (at US-191)
Bluff, UT 84512
T: 435-672-9995
www.BluffFort.org

BLUFF FORT HISTORIC SITE

Undaunted - Hole in the Rock, Lynn Griffin, by permission

IMPOSSIBLE JOURNEY

In April, 1880, 250 pioneers arrived here, concluding a six-month, seemingly impossible journey, during which they established a wagon road across the most inhospitable, impassible, yet breathtakingly beautiful terrain. These dedicated pioneer men, women and children accomplished the seemingly impossible during a six month trial of their faith, devotion and character.

Their 2,000 foot descent through The Hole-in-the-Rock to the Colorado River was just one trial of their faith, devotion and character. Come down and learn more!

Brochure used in 2024.



WHAT TO DO

- Visitor's Center (Open year-round)
- Replica of the Co-op Store
- Knowledgeable and friendly staff
- Gift Shop
- Replicas of family cabins
- Stories of pioneer families
- Meeting House/Social Hall
- Blacksmith Shop
- Video about the amazing pioneer journey to colonize and establish peace in the area
- Covered wagons
- Hand carts
- Indian dwellings
- Opportunity to take photos in pioneer costumes
- Craft center where you can watch quilts, rugs and other items being made
- Original art by local artists
- Lynn Griffin art prints
- Annual International Balloon Festival



THE SAN JUAN/BLUFF MISSION
UNIQUE AMONGST WESTERN COLONIZATION ENDEAVORS

1. The San Juan Mission/Bluff expedition (sent by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, under the direction of Church President John Taylor) was the last organized wagon train of its size in the United States.

2. No wagon road was built through rougher country than was the Hole-in-the-Rock trail.

3. Due to the harsh terrain, it took twice as long for the San Juan pioneers to traverse the 250 miles to Bluff as it took some of the same pioneers to pull hand carts 1300 miles from Winter Quarters to Salt Lake City. The San Juan Missionaries averaged only 1.7 miles per day, a slower average than the Oregon Trail expeditions, the Brigham Young-led Mormon expeditions, the Mormon handcart expeditions and even the ill-fated Donner Party expedition.

4. The San Juan Mission was the first and probably the only settlement purposely placed adjacent to two Indian nations with the goal of establishing better Indian relations.

5. The total average age of the missionaries at the time of the expedition's beginning was 18. The average age of the adults only (those 18 or over) was 28. One hundred twenty members of the mission were children and teenagers under the age of 18. Twenty-five of the children were between the age of two weeks and one year, and over 38 members of the expedition were single adults.

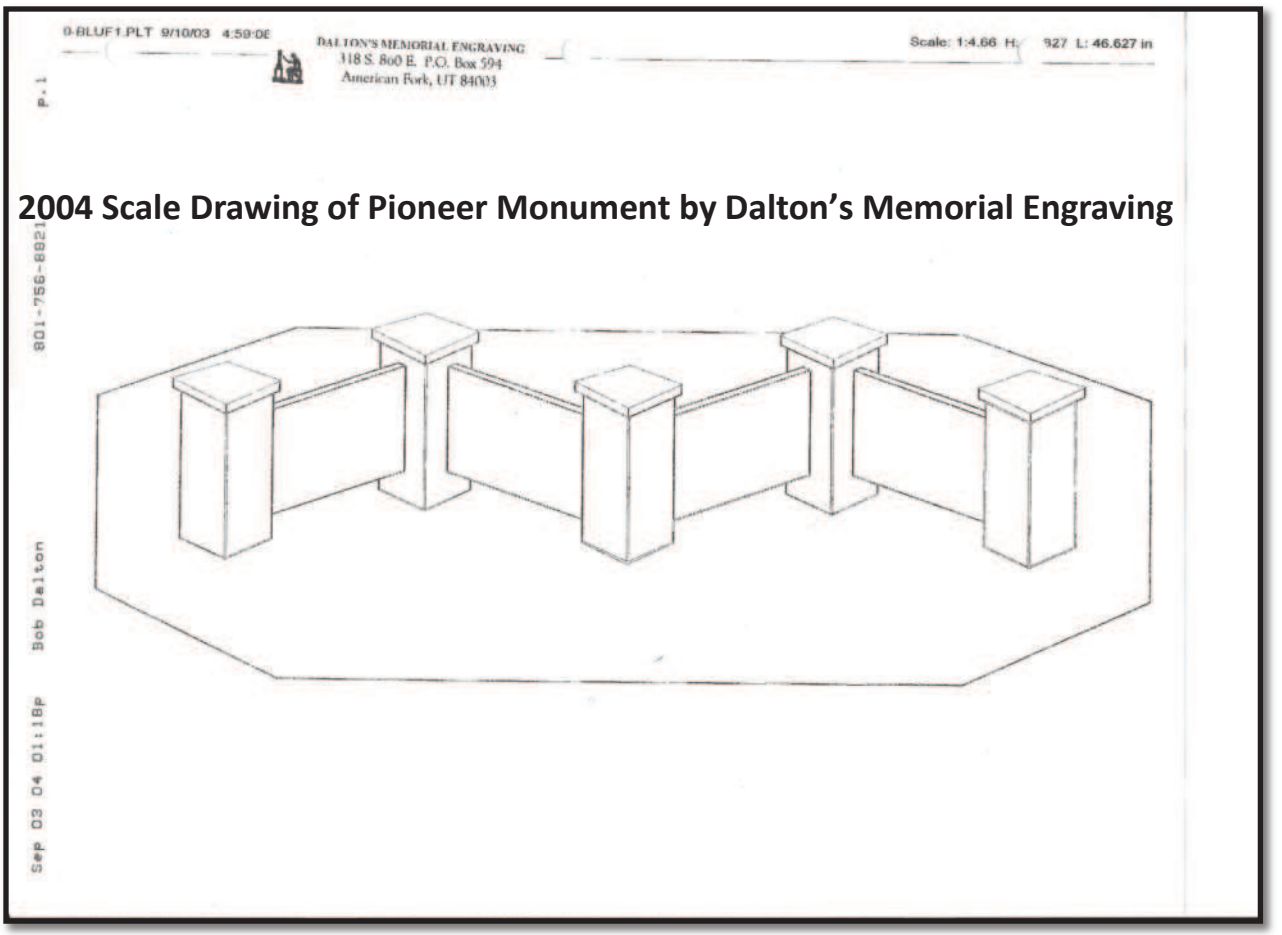
6. The trail covered about 250 miles for most of these pioneers. All traveled 60 miles from Escalante to the "Hole" (Colorado River) and 120 miles from the River to Bluff.

7. The trail provided a crucial supply and access link between the Four Corners area and the western Utah settlements. For one year the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail was used for bidirectional travel. In 1881 part of the original route including the Hole-in-the-Rock was bypassed in lieu of Halls Crossing. In 1886, when the railheads reached southeastern Colorado, the trail was discontinued as a supply route.

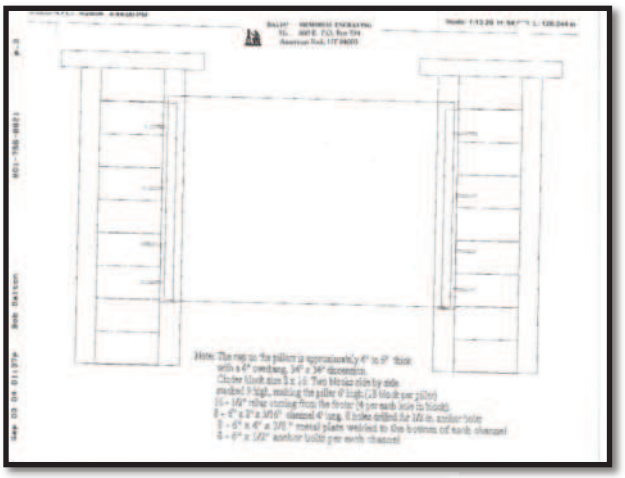
8. Through their adversities, the San Juan missionaries were forged like fine steel for the formidable task of establishing a livelihood in a harsh, desolate country, nurturing peaceful relations with Indians, establishing law and order amongst the lawless of the region and opening the area to future colonization.

9. Today the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail is the most preserved wagon road in the West. Many of its most challenging sites are virtually untouched from when the pioneers blasted and cut their path. The trail and its significant sites stand as a testament of the San Juan Pioneers' fortitude and convictions.

— Lamont Crabtree, 2005



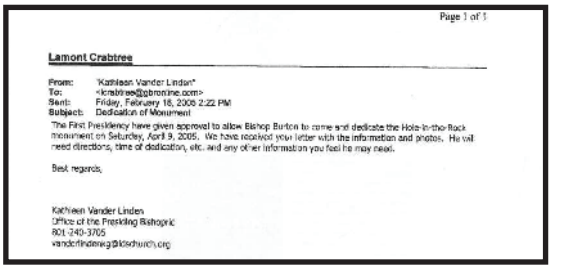
2004 Scale Drawing of Pioneer Monument by Dalton's Memorial Engraving







Monument slab being inserted. Unfinished Relief Society building in left background. Corinne Roring photo.



The Times Independent, Thursday, November 18, 2004



These exterior walls of the Joseph F. Barton cabin are unfinished, but one section of the cabin has been completely restored, and the f
adjacent cabins were excavated as part of the Bluff Fort preservation project. Barton and his wife Harriet were among the 250 m
women and children of the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition. In the winter of 1879 and 1880 they traveled from Escalante, carving a ro
through solid rock to cross the Colorado River into the southeastern stretches of Utah. *Photos by Lisa Chur*

Restoration effort being undertaken to preserve colorful history of Hole-in-the-rock pioneers

by Lisa Church
contributing writer

In April of 1880, six months after setting off on one of the most arduous expeditions in American pioneer history, the San Juan Mission group of Latter Day Saints missionaries arrived on the banks of the San Juan River and declared their journey done.

Several miles short of their intended destination, the weary settlers could travel no further. Called by the Mormon church to forge a shortcut between southwestern LDS settlements and the sparsely populated southeastern portions of what is now Utah, 250 men, women, and children gathered in November 1879 at Forty Mile Spring, south of Escalante to begin the excursion.

Their efforts to blaze a trail through stone – using pick axes, shovels and other hand tools they chiseled away rock to widen a narrow crack leading down to the west bank of the Colorado River – forever earned them recognition as the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. Though the trip through the slot and the months of winter travel that followed were slow and difficult, all the pioneers survived. When they arrived in the newly anointed Bluff City, the group quickly set about constructing log homes, using their outer walls to form the boundaries of a fort. They built a meeting house, and began developing an irrigation system to draw San Juan River water to the parched desert fields in the community they named Bluff City.

"When they arrived, they had not even intended to live in a fort," says Utah historian Lamont Crabtree. "But Mormon leaders suggested they stay together until things were stabilized."

Today, a log cabin owned by Hole-in-the-Rock member Joseph F. Barton is all that remains of the original 40 homes that were the Bluff Fort settlement. Since 1998, volunteers and historic preservationists formed the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation to restore the original Barton cabin, once part of the fort's west wall.

In association with the Monticello-based Letty Jones Heritage Foundation, the group raised more than $150,000 from private contributions and foundations to purchase the Barton cabin site, build a reproduction of the 1880s meeting house and buy surrounding properties where the fort once stood.

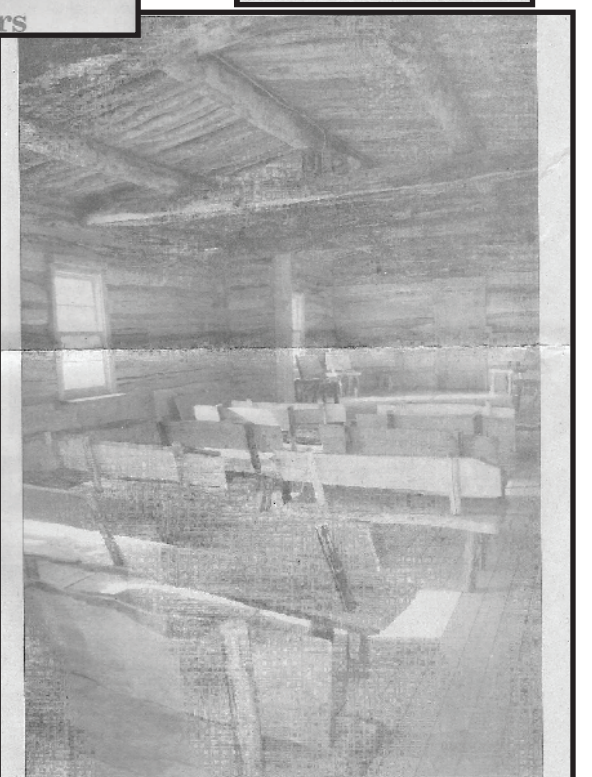
"It's a story that needs to be preserved," says Corinne Roring, director of the Letty Jones Heritage Foundation. "Those pioneers made such an incredible journey. They were exhausted. When they arrived here, there was nothing left in man or beast."

Last month, volunteers installed an interpretative display inside the meeting house, depicting daily life in the settlement. A display inside the restored Barton cabin tells the Barton family story. The Bluff Fort is open year-round for free self-guided tours. Fort buildings are never locked, and visitors are always welcome, Roring says.

"I would like to make the fort a place of peace and rest and shade," she says. "It's a resting place, just like Bluff became the resting place for the Hole-in-the-Rock settlers." Later this year, Roring hopes to complete installation of a stone monument inscribed with the names of the 250 men, women and children who made the difficult trek from Escalante to Bluff. A dedication ceremony is planned for April 2005, commemorating the 125th anniversary of the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition's arrival in Bluff.

But Roring must raise an additional $6,000 to complete the project. She said she is

Continued on Page B2



A replica of the original 1880s meeting house has been constructed as part of the Bluff Fort preservation project. The meeting house, which served as a school, community hall, and church, was the center of social and religious life for the 250 men, women and children of the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition. In the winter of 1879 and 1880 they traveled from Escalante, carving a road through solid rock to cross the Colorado River into the southeastern stretches of Utah.


LDS Church Ne

on the Shoulders of those gone before

Tribute paid to those who settled Bluff, Utah

New General Authority

Incredible journey

Early-day struggles not forgotten by many latter-day descendants

BLUFF, UTAH

Church News • week ending April 16, 2005 — 11

LDS Church News

"On the Shoulders of those gone before. Tribute paid to those who settled Bluff, Utah." Week ending April 26, 2005


Juan Record

PAPER FOR SAN JUAN COUNTY, UTAH SINCE 1915

50 cents April 13, 2005

Nearly 500, including LDS Presiding Bishop, attend Bluff Fort dedication

Nearly 500 people, many descendants of the original Hole In the Rock pioneers, gathered in Bluff on April 9 with H. David Burton, the presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to dedicate recently rebuilt Bluff Fort.

April 6, 2005 was the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers in Bluff.

The dedication is the culmination of several years of hard work by a number of area residents, led by Corrine Roring. In addition to Roring, Lamont Crabtree, LaMar Helquist, Graig Taylor, and Gary and Sharon Guymon contributed to the reconstruction of the Fort.

It was a typical April day in Bluff, with strong gusts and cold winds, however the group of hundreds seemed to enjoy the day's activities.

In addition to a speech and dedicatory prayer by Bishop Burton, others who spoke at the event include Lamont Crabtree, Corrine Roring, Graig Taylor, John Blickenstaff, LaMar Helquist, along with a traditional Navajo blessing by Curtis Yanito and music by Stan Bronson, Shawna Lloyd and Ruth Kimmerle.

In addition to the dedication, Bishop Burton enjoyed a bouncy trip to San Juan Hill.

Terri Winder writes about the event on page 3 of this issue of the *San Juan Record*.


4-13-05 THE SAN JUAN REC

H. David Burton, the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, shares his thoughts before offering the dedicatory prayer on April 9 at the Historic Bluff Fort. The past week marked the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Hole in the Rock Pioneers to Bluff. Staff photo

Taking a little part of Bluff home with you

by Terri Winder

"We have a sandpile over there," Corinne Roring told the crowd gathered for the Bluff Fort dedication on April 9. "Before you leave, go over and put a little bit of Bluff sand into your pocket."

But then, someone, somewhere, seemed to doubt that the hundreds gathered for the dedication would take Corinne up on her suggestion and the wind began to blow, carrying the sand with it. No one had to even get near the sandpile; the sand came to them. It blew into hair, eyes, and mouths; it sifted through clothes and settled into wrinkles. It had a Navajo stickity-tuity-ness about it that would not brush off. By the time the program was over, the participants had a literal taste of what the Bluff pioneers experienced day in and day out.

Bluff was not the end of the trail – or the end of the trial – for those who came through the Hole-in-the-Rock, it only marked a new chapter in a book of hardship and heartache.

Perhaps this is where the term "True Grit" came from, referring to those who could survive the grittiness of the weather, as well as the grittiness of the unrefined living conditions. And yet, it was symbolic of sandpaper, which in its very harshness creates a smooth and refined finish, for the Bluff pioneers have become, by right, some of the most admired and revered people in Utah history.

Corinne has displayed true grit as she has taken on the task of preserving Bluff pioneer history, urging others to do the same. The spirit that prevailed at the dedication was not swept away by the strong winds, it was only reinforced as participants reflected on pioneers, cold and hungry and exposed to raw elements coupled with the fear of disease, lack of communication, and Indian factors.

The site fosters a feeling of gratitude for modern conveniences and comforts, but more so, a feeling of gratitude for those who went before for their faith, optimism and per

Bluff Fort Monument Dedication April 6, 2005.



Sand and Stone

The Hole-in-the-Rock trail in southern Utah challenged youth and leaders from three stakes both physically and spiritually. The experience changed more than a few lives.

By R. Val Johnson
Church Magazines

Pushing or pulling, taking a handcart over jagged stone is tough. The rocks slow you down, jar your bones, sap your strength.

But sand is worse. When faced with a hill of it, all you can do is take a deep breath and run. With enough speed, and a little help from others, you make it to the top, where you can rest, drink half a lake of water, and move on.

But what nearly does you in are those long stretches of sand that claw at your feet and handcart wheels. Your only option is to keep pulling and pushing, pulling and pushing, until you have to stop before you collapse. Getting started again takes nearly all your energy. Still, foot after foot, you gather your strength and move ahead. Finally, suddenly, you discover you've left the sand behind.

Your destination is still a long way off, but somehow, having made it through the sand, you know you can finish. You know you can make it to camp or to home—to that place where you will rest and heal and prepare to face with greater confidence the next hard thing you need to do.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

Down the Hole-in-the-Rock

Sand and stone confronted nearly 750 youth and their leaders in June 2010 as they drove, walked, climbed, and pulled handcarts over portions of the Hole-in-the-Rock trail between Escalante and Bluff, Utah, USA.

The trail was built in the winter of 1879–80 by Mormon pioneers who had been called by President John Taylor to settle the San Juan region of Utah. When southern and northern routes to the area proved to be too dangerous or not passable year-round, the 250 pioneers decided to build a new, more direct trail. Part of the route they chose was through a wilderness so barren and hard to get through that those familiar with the area considered the task impossible. The pioneers gave themselves six weeks to get to their destination. It took them six months.

Over the course of those six months, they used picks, shovels, and black powder to build a nearly impossible road

(continued on page 43)

EXPERIENCING TRIAL AND TRIUMPH TOGETHER

The original pioneers assigned to the San Juan Mission consisted of 250 people, most in families. The average age of the adults was 26. The average age of those who followed in their footsteps in 2010 was much younger. Most travelers were teens, organized with their leaders into "families."

Of his trek "family," one young man from the Tonalá Utah Kaibab Stake said, "Although I didn't know the people in my family very well at the beginning, they all became my friends. We walked together, pulled handcarts together, camped together. We'll be friends forever. The trek was life changing."

One stake leader noted that the most important decisions the leaders made in preparing the youth for the trek was calling dedicated "Mas" and "Pas" for each of the families and determining which of the youth should be with them.

For more information about the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers and trekking to San Juan Hill, go to lds.org. Because the trail to San Juan Hill is on public land, groups planning to hike the trail need government permission. The Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation provides guidance and help. You'll also find more photos at ensign.lds.org.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

GETTING THERE—WITH THE LORD'S HELP

The pioneers who settled the San Juan traveled in 83 wagons. In 2010, trekkers used handcarts. The Kaibab Stake had a covered wagon (C) for a measure of historical authenticity. "Pulling that handcart taught me I can do hard things," said Spencer Bradford of the Standing Utah Stake. "We had to pull through some sandy spots, and I wanted to quit. But I thought of the pioneers. They did hard things for months on end. I just needed to trust in the Lord."

DOWN THE HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK

In 1879, an exploratory party located a crack in what had seemed an impenetrable canyon wall between southwestern Utah and the San Juan country to the southeast. The crack, later called Hole-in-the-Rock, was not passable for wagons, but with ingenuity and plenty of black powder, the pioneers built a road down the incline. (Beginning on page 48 Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles relates the story of the last wagon down.)

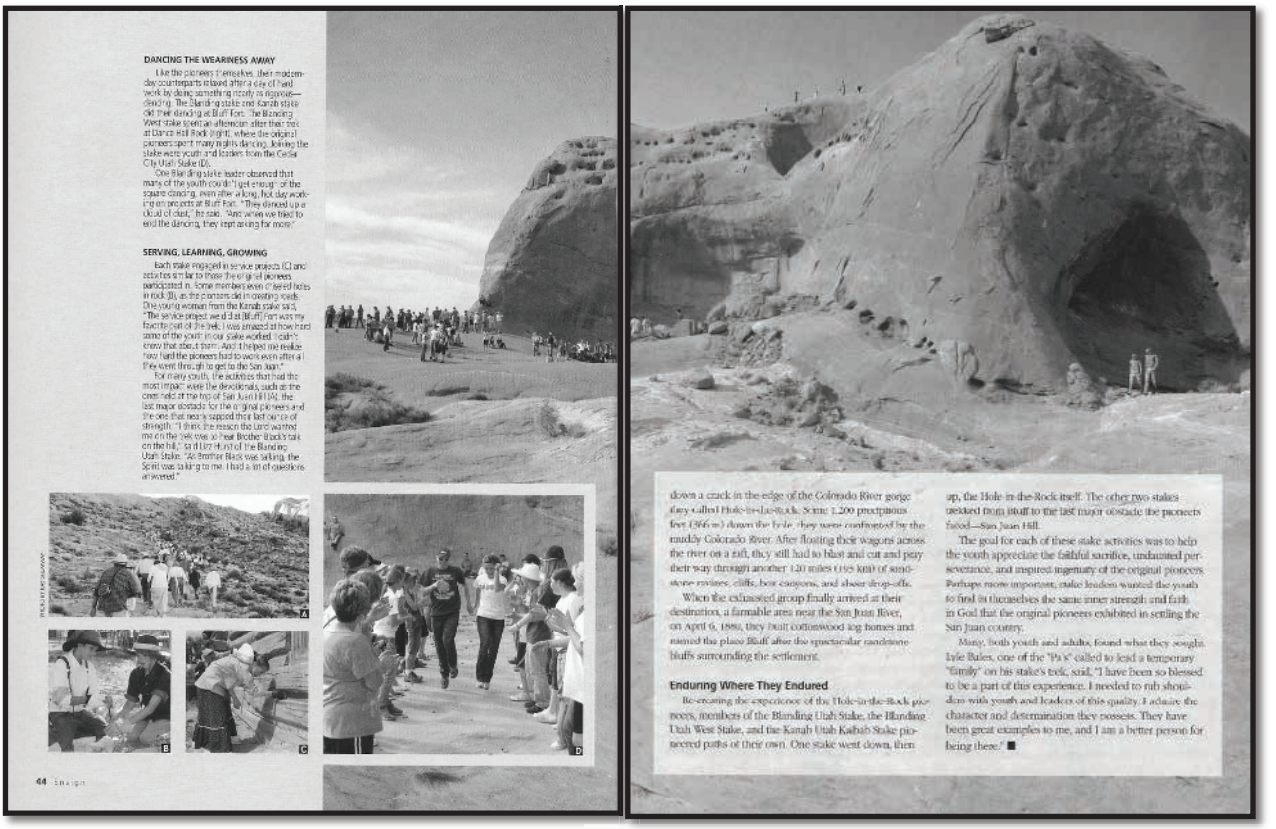
Today, fallen boulders encumber the Hole-in-the-Rock. Though it is navigable on foot (A), the climb is difficult. Natasha Beck summed up what she learned in hiking the Hole: "Nowhere can our physical trials compare with those of the pioneers, but we know God's love. He will see us through our trials, just as he did the pioneers."

HOME ON THE RANGE

Whether hiking the Hole or pulling a handcart, doing it with friends made it enjoyable. By many accounts, relationships forged on the trails will last a long time. Those relationships were built not only on the trail, but also while preparing for the treks and camping with one another (B, D). Camping gave the trekkers a greater understanding of the meaning of home.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

"Sand and Stone," by R. Val Johnson, 2011 July *Ensign,* pp. 40-45. This article helped put Bluff Fort on the map!



DANCING THE WEARINESS AWAY

Like the pioneers themselves, their modern-day counterparts relaxed after a day of hard work by doing something nearly as rigorous—dancing. The Blanding stake and Kanab stake did their dancing at Bluff Fort. The Blanding West stake spent an afternoon after their trek at Dance Hall Rock (right), where the original pioneers spent many nights dancing. Joining the stake were youth and leaders from the Cedar City Utah Stake (D).

One Blanding stake leader observed that many of the youth couldn't get enough of the square dancing, even after a long, hot day working on projects at Bluff Fort. "They danced up a cloud of dust," he said. "And when we tried to end the dancing, they kept asking for more."

SERVING, LEARNING, GROWING

Each stake engaged in service projects (C) and activities similar to those the original pioneers participated in. Some members even drilled holes in rock (B), as the pioneers did in creating roads. One young woman from the Kanab stake said, "The service project we did at Bluff Fort was my favorite part of the trek. I was amazed at how hard some of the youth in our stake worked. It didn't stray that about them. And it helped me realize how hard the pioneers had to work even after they went through to get to the San Juan."

For many youth, the activities that had the most impact were the devotionals, such as the ones held at the top of San Juan Hill (A), the last major obstacle for the original pioneers and the one that nearly sapped their last ounce of strength. "I think the reason the Lord wanted me on the trek was so Pearl Brother Black's talk on the hill," said Hunt of the Blanding Utah Stake. "As Brother Black was talking, the Spirit was talking to me. I had a lot of questions answered."

down a crack in the edge of the Colorado River gorge they called Hole-in-the-Rock. Some 1,200 precipitous feet (366 m) down the hole, they were confronted by the muddy Colorado River. After floating their wagons across the river on a raft, they still had to blast and cut and pray their way through another 120 miles (193 km) of sandstone ravines, cliffs, box canyons, and sheer drop-offs.

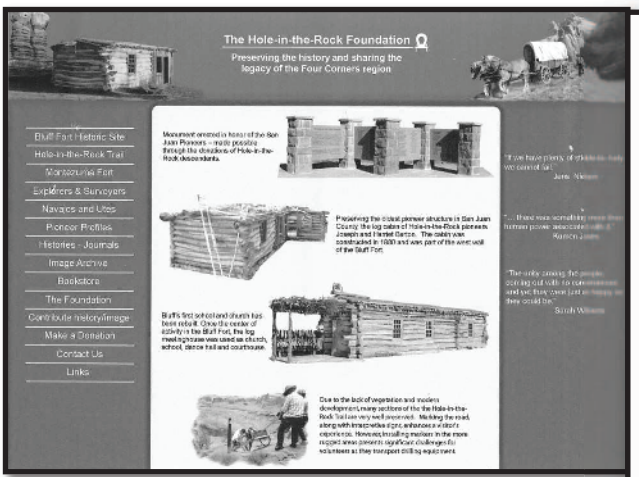
When the exhausted group finally arrived at their destination, a farmable area near the San Juan River, on April 6, 1880, they built cottonwood log homes and named the place Bluff after the spectacular sandstone bluffs surrounding the settlement.

Enduring Where They Endured

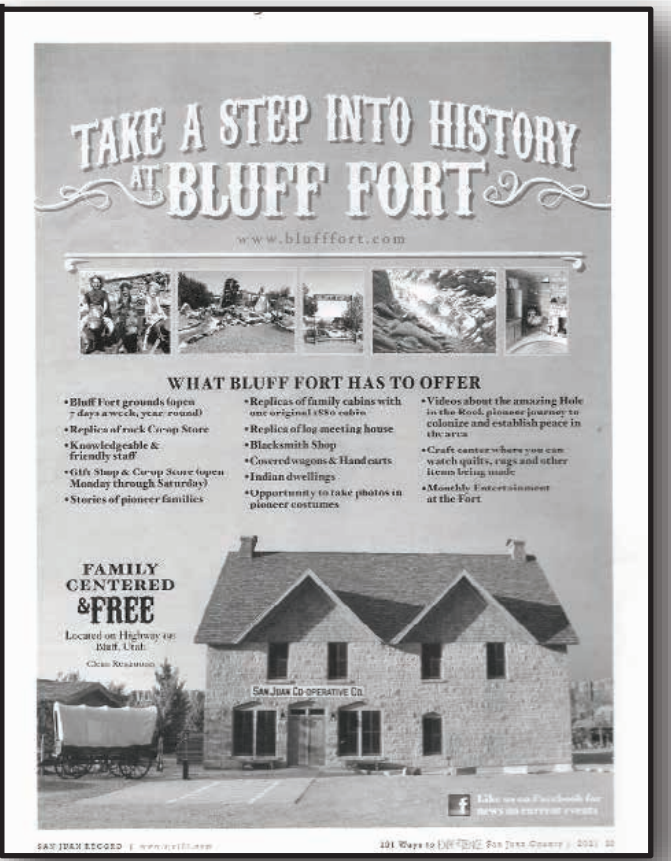
Re-creating the experience of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers, members of the Blanding Utah Stake, the Blanding Utah West Stake, and the Kanab Utah Kaibab Stake pioneered paths of their own. One stake went down, then up, the Hole-in-the-Rock itself. The other two stakes trekked from Bluff to the last major obstacle the pioneers faced—San Juan Hill.

The goal for each of these stake activities was to help the youth appreciate the faithful sacrifice, undaunted perseverance, and inspired ingenuity of the original pioneers. Perhaps more important, stake leaders wanted the youth to find in themselves the same inner strength and faith in God that the original pioneers exhibited in settling the San Juan country.

Many, both youth and adults, found what they sought. Lyle Bales, one of the "Pa's" called to lead a temporary "family" on his stake's trek, said, "I have been so blessed to be a part of this experience. I needed to rub shoulders with youth and leaders of this quality. I admire the character and determination they possess. They have been great examples to me, and I am a better person for being there." ■



The Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation. Preserving the history and sharing the legacy of the Four Corners region.



Advertisement for Bluff Fort in "101 Ways to Experience San Juan County 2021." The page is repeated each year in the travel magazine printed by the *San Juan Record. www.sjr101.com*

“Faith to Answer the Call.”
By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
From a regional stake conference broadcast address delivered on September 12, 2010 at Brigham Young University. *Ensign* July 2011

In 1849, just two years after the Saints had entered the Salt Lake valley, Elder Parley P. Pratt of the Quorum of the 12 apostles led an expedition to the south. The farther south the expedition went, the more difficult the terrain became. After the men had dropped 3,000 feet (940 meters) from the rim of the Great Basin to the convergence of the Virgin and the Santa Clara Rivers south of modern-day St. George, Utah, the terrain became dry and sandy, volcanic and rugged. The scouts were not impressed. A journal says: “Passed . . . over a rugged, stony, sandy, almost indescribable country, thrown together in dreadful confusion. . . “A wide expanse of chaotic matter presented itself, consisting of huge hills, [red] deserts, cheerless, grassless plains, perpendicular rocks, loose barren clay, . . .sandstone . . ., lying in inconceivable confusion - in short, a country in ruins, . . . turned inside out, upside down, by terrible convulsions in some former age.”

But however, the land looked going south, the wind-whipped, erosion-gutted cliffs and canyon wilderness of San Juan County to the east looked a lot tougher. Church leaders knew that taming that rough, unchartered corner of the territory would be difficult, but they nevertheless wanted to establish communities for the Church there. At the quarterly conference of the Parowan stake in 1879, 250 people accepted the call by President John Taylor to establish the San Juan Mission. With 80 wagons and nearly 1,000 head of cattle and horses, they began to cut their way toward and through imposing, unexplored territory of snow-capped mountains and towering stone pinnacles.

Seeking the shortest route to San Juan, those first explorers overcame one obstacle after another, but soon faced the largest and most intimidating barrier of all: the impassable gulf of the Colorado River gorge. Miraculously their weary scouts found a narrow slit in the canyon - a crevice running 2,000 feet (610 meters) down the red cliffs to the Colorado River below. This lone, near-lethal “hole in the rock” seemed to offer the only possible passage to the eastern side.

For the most part, the slice in the sandstone was too narrow for horses and in some places too narrow even for a man or woman to pass through. Sheer drops of as much as 75 feet (23 meters) would seem to have made it impossible for a mountain sheep, let alone loaded wagons. But the hardy Saints were not going to turn back, so with blasting powder and tools, working most of December 1879 and January 1880, they cut a precarious, primitive road into the face of the canyon precipice.

With this roadbed finished, such as it was, the task was now to get the first 40 wagons down the “hole.” The other wagons, waiting five miles (8 kilometers) back at Fifty-Mile Spring, would follow later.

They organized themselves in such a way “that a dozen or more men could hang on behind the wagon” with long ropes to slow its descent. Then the wheels were brake-locked with chains, allowing them to slide but avoiding the catastrophe of the wheels actually rolling. In one of the great moments of pioneer history, one by one the company took the wagons

down the treacherous precipice. When they reached the canyon floor, they eagerly started to ferry across the river with a flatbed boat they had fashioned for that purpose. As it turned out, the Joseph Stanford Smith family was in the last wagon to descend that day.

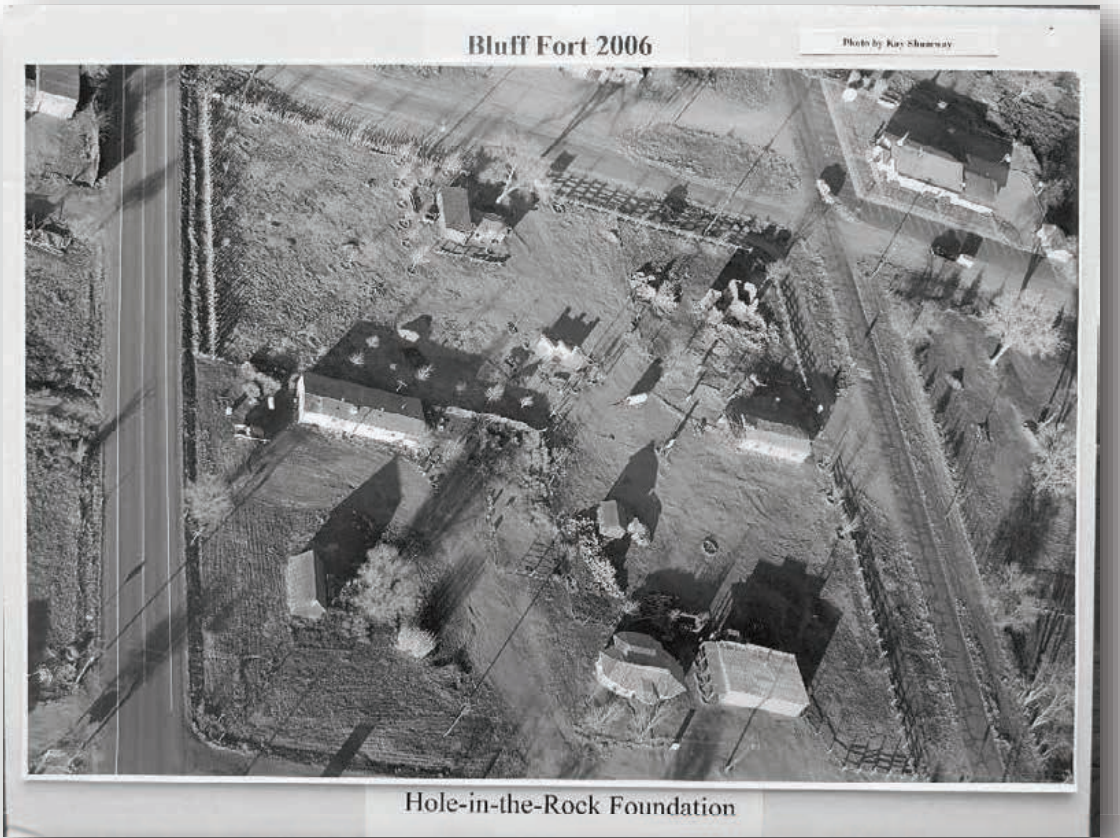
Stanford Smith had systematically helped the preceding wagons down, but somehow the company apparently forgot that Brother Smith's family would still need help as the tailenders. Deeply disturbed that he and his family seemed abandoned, Stanford moved his team, wagon, and family to the edge of the precipice. The team was placed in front and a third horse was hitched *behind* the wagon to the rear axle. The Smiths stood for a moment and looked down the treacherous hole. Stanford turned to his wife, Arabella and said, "I'm afraid we can't make it."
She replied, "But we've got to make it.
He said, "If we only had a few men to hold the wagon back we *might* make it."
Replied his wife, "*I'l*l do the holding back."

She laid quilt on the ground and there she placed her infant son in the care of her three-year old Roy, and five-year-old Ada. "Hold little brother till Papa comes for you," she said. Then positioning herself behind the wagon, Belle Smith grasped the reins of the horse hitched to the back of the rig. Stanford started the team down the hole. The wagon lurched downward. With the first jolt, the rear horse fell. Sister Smith raced after him and the wagon, pulling on the lines with all her strength and courage. She soon fell too, and as she was dragged along with the horse, a jagged rock cut a cruel gash in her leg from heel to hip. That gallant woman, with clothes torn and a grievous wound, hung on to those lines with all her might and faith the full length of the incline all the way to the river's edge.

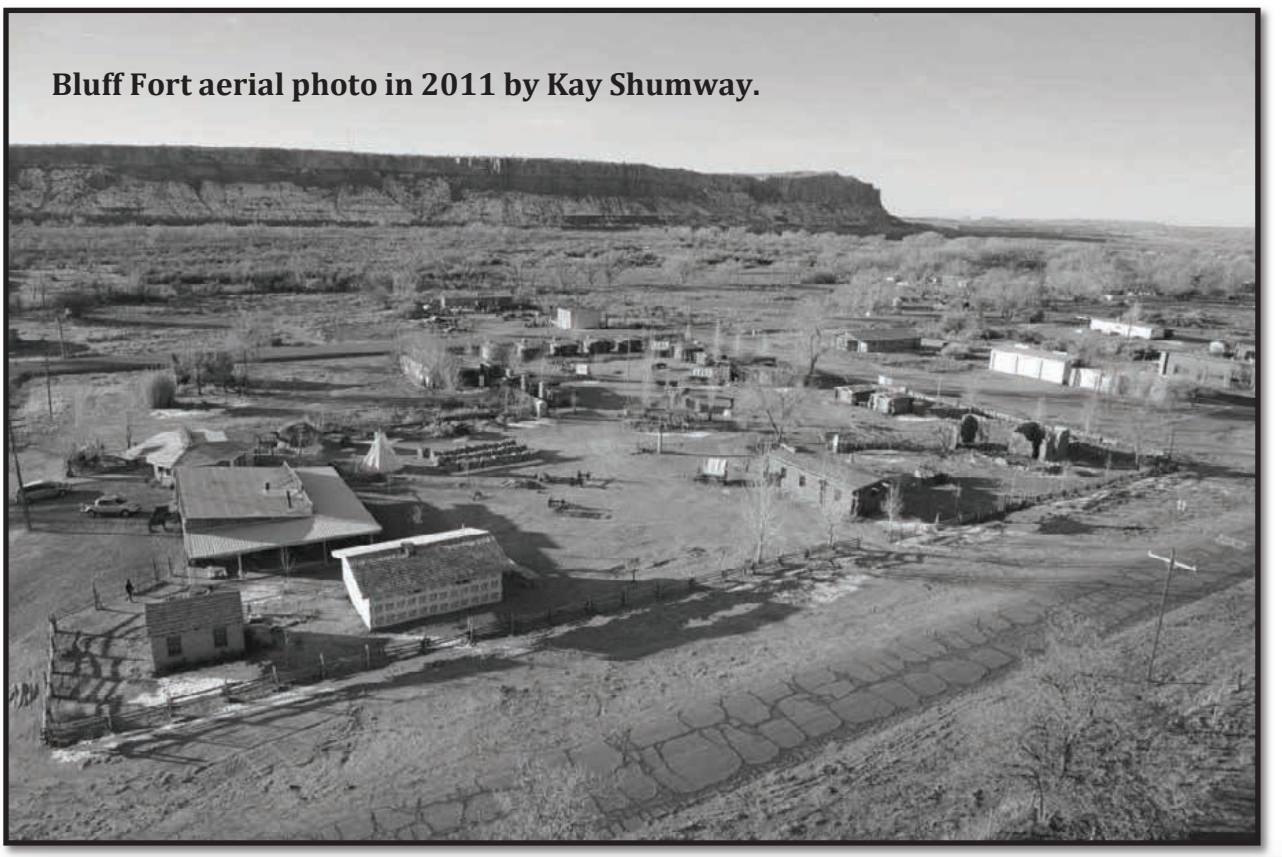
On reaching the bottom and almost in disbelief at their accomplishment, Stanford immediately raced the 2000 feet (607 meters) back to the top of the cliff, fearful for the welfare of the children. When he climbed over the rim, there he saw them literally unmoved from their position. Carrying the baby, with the other children clinging to him and to each other, he led them down the rocky crack to their anxious mother below. In the distance they saw five men moving toward them carrying chains and ropes. Realizing the plight the Smiths were in, these men were coming to help. Stanford called out "Forget it fellows. We managed fine. Bell here is all the help a fellow needs [to make this journey.]" "Faith to Answer the Call," by Elder Jeffrey R Holland, 2011 July *Ensign.* pp. 48-54



The last wagon down. "Undaunted" painting by Lynn Griffin.


Bluff Fort 2006
Photo by Kay Shumway
Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation


Bluff Fort 2010
Photo by Kay Shumway
Blanding, Utah



Bluff Fort aerial photo in 2011 by Kay Shumway.







Above new co-op built 2013.

About 2015.

Kay Shumway photos.

Bluff Fort Fireside given by Joseph Fielding McConkie, October 18, 2008

At a Bluff Fort Devotional Joseph Fielding McConkie, who was the son of Elder Bruce Redd McConkie stated: "Places of historic, religious, and personal significance carry with them a special and distinctive spirit. We know it has the spirit of place. This spirit unlocks feelings and understandings that invite us to be a part of things bigger than ourselves. We sense that the ground upon which we walk is sacred. The doctrine of sacred ground finds frequent expression in scriptural text. The Bible begins with the story of Eden which it refers to as the garden of God and the holy mountain. It ends with a reference to the Holy City which it previously identifies as the New Jerusalem. In Bible texts it is not only the appearance of God or angels that makes a particular place sacred but the faith and sacrifice that it called forth. By such a standard, Bluff, Utah founded April 6th, 1880, by a hearty company of Mormon pioneers whose faith and 'sticky ta tudy' is unmatched in the annals of pioneering has claim to being sacred ground.

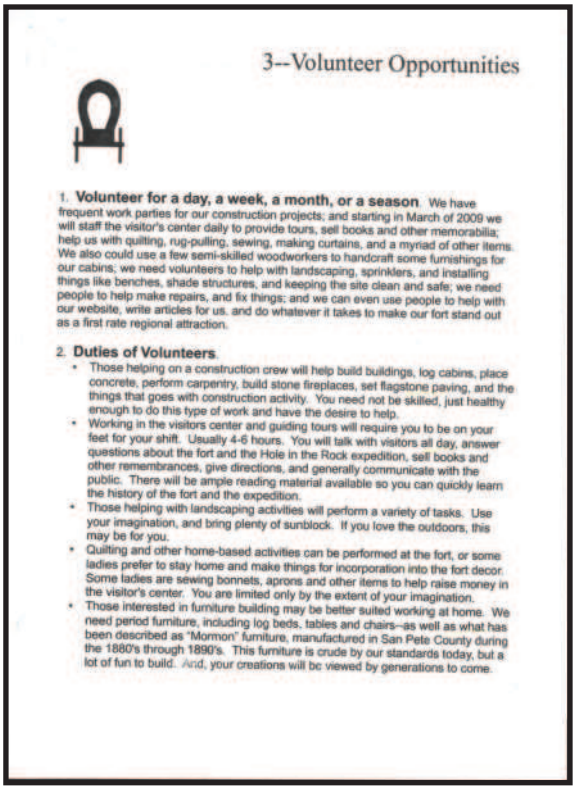
"One does not walk the fields of Gettysburg without feeling that the land has been hallowed by the courage and blood of those who fought and died there. There is a spirit you'll feel when you enter the old Constitution Hall in Philadelphia where our founding fathers risked both life and fortune to give birth to a new nation. To walk the streets of old Nauvoo is to feel the presence of its original citizens who you sense are there to meet you. So, it is at Bluff Fort, now being reconstructed by the descendants of the Hole in the rock pioneers.

"This ground is hallowed by the faith and works of its original settlers. Though the elevation is only 4300 feet above sea level it stands as close to the stars and the heavens as one can get on this mortal earth. It is a magnificent monument to the faith and courage of its original settlers. Monuments are the sanctuary of memory. They constitute the holy mountain from which vantage point we see the vision of the past, present, and future. They are the temple of memory which gives meaning and purpose to all we do."

"Bluff becomes to us as Salvation Knoll was to the four scouts sent from the hole in the rock to find a way for the main company to travel. Disoriented by clouds and bad weather, they climbed this imminence from which they were able to see the Blue Mountains and thus chart their course. So it is that we as the descendants of the Hole in the rock pioneers return to this sacred ground both physically and in memory to assure that we do not get lost in a wilderness of lesser things.

"How it might be asked does one return to a place that they have not been? To which the answer is that a memory has been bequeathed you by your forebears of that which they believed and did. The memory will be unlocked upon your return.

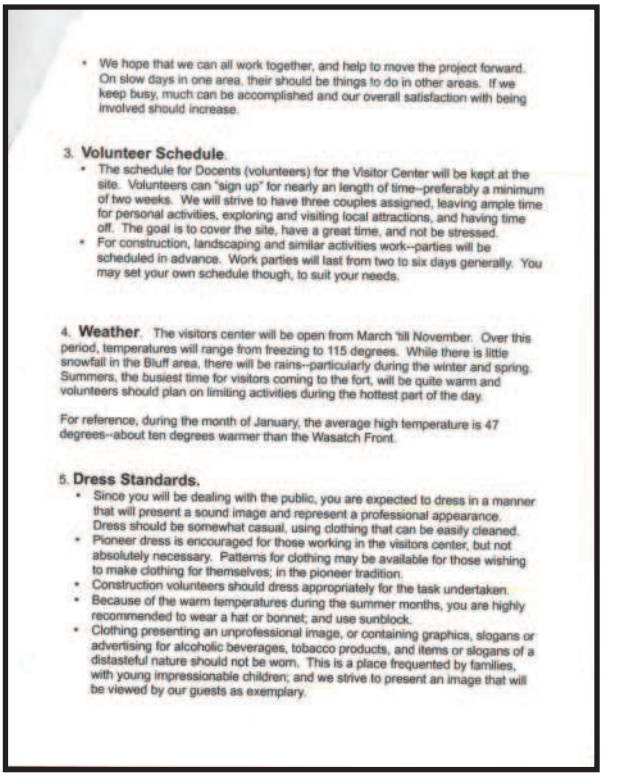
"And so it was that our family went back. We felt the spirit of Bluff, we stood and shared the vista of Salvation Knoll. We climbed San Juan Hill and we marveled at the faith and the strength of those who went before us. To share their vision, one must stand where they stood. To see is to believe. Their invitation is simple, come and we will be here to meet you. As our blood is your blood, so our story is your story."



3--Volunteer Opportunities

1. **Volunteer for a day, a week, a month, or a season**. We have frequent work parties for our construction projects; and starting in March of 2009 we will staff the visitor's center daily to provide tours, sell books and other memorabilia; help us with quilting, rug-pulling, sewing, making curtains, and a myriad of other items. We also could use a few semi-skilled woodworkers to handcraft some furnishings for our cabins; we need volunteers to help with landscaping, sprinklers, and installing things like benches, shade structures, and keeping the site clean and safe; we need people to help make repairs, and fix things; and we can even use people to help with our website, write articles for us, and do whatever it takes to make our fort stand out as a first rate regional attraction.

2. **Duties of Volunteers**.
   - Those helping on a construction crew will help build buildings, log cabins, place concrete, perform carpentry, build stone fireplaces, set flagstone paving, and the things that goes with construction activity. You need not be skilled, just healthy enough to do this type of work and have the desire to help.
   - Working in the visitors center and guiding tours will require you to be on your feet for your shift. Usually 4-6 hours. You will talk with visitors all day, answer questions about the fort and the Hole in the Rock expedition, sell books and other remembrances, give directions, and generally communicate with the public. There will be ample reading material available so you can quickly learn the history of the fort and the expedition.
   - Those helping with landscaping activities will perform a variety of tasks. Use your imagination, and bring plenty of sunblock. If you love the outdoors, this may be for you.
   - Quilting and other home-based activities can be performed at the fort, or some ladies prefer to stay home and make things for incorporation into the fort decor. Some ladies are sewing bonnets, aprons and other items to help raise money in the visitor's center. You are limited only by the extent of your imagination.
   - Those interested in furniture building may be better suited working at home. We need period furniture, including log beds, tables and chairs--as well as what has been described as "Mormon" furniture, manufactured in San Pete County during the 1880's through 1890's. This furniture is crude by our standards today, but a lot of fun to build. And, your creations will be viewed by generations to come.



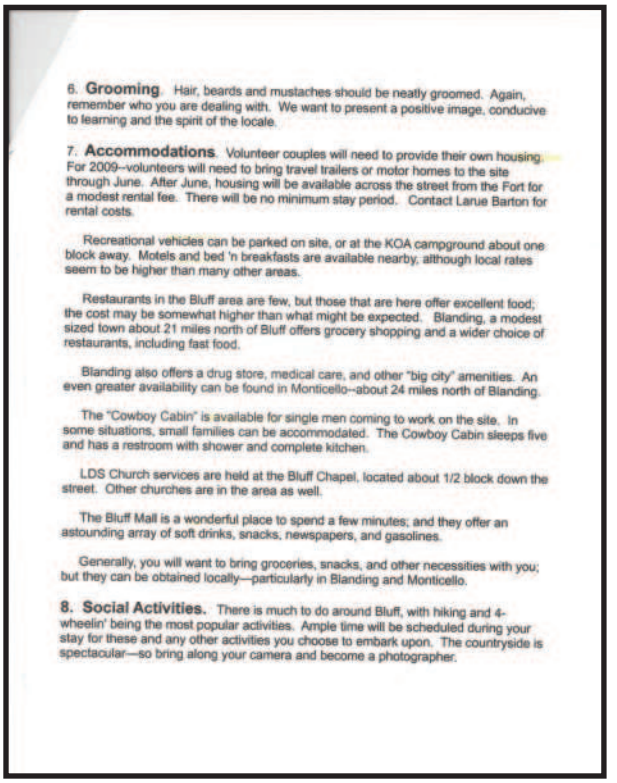
- We hope that we can all work together, and help to move the project forward. On slow days in one area, their should be things to do in other areas. If we keep busy, much can be accomplished and our overall satisfaction with being involved should increase.

3. **Volunteer Schedule**.
   - The schedule for Docents (volunteers) for the Visitor Center will be kept at the site. Volunteers can "sign up" for nearly an length of time--preferably a minimum of two weeks. We will strive to have three couples assigned, leaving ample time for personal activities, exploring and visiting local attractions, and having time off. The goal is to cover the site, have a great time, and not be stressed.
   - For construction, landscaping and similar activities work--parties will be scheduled in advance. Work parties will last from two to six days generally. You may set your own schedule though, to suit your needs.

4. **Weather**. The visitors center will be open from March 'till November. Over this period, temperatures will range from freezing to 115 degrees. While there is little snowfall in the Bluff area, there will be rains--particularly during the winter and spring. Summers, the busiest time for visitors coming to the fort, will be quite warm and volunteers should plan on limiting activities during the hottest part of the day.

For reference, during the month of January, the average high temperature is 47 degrees--about ten degrees warmer than the Wasatch Front.

5. **Dress Standards.**
   - Since you will be dealing with the public, you are expected to dress in a manner that will present a sound image and represent a professional appearance. Dress should be somewhat casual, using clothing that can be easily cleaned.
   - Pioneer dress is encouraged for those working in the visitors center, but not absolutely necessary. Patterns for clothing may be available for those wishing to make clothing for themselves; in the pioneer tradition.
   - Construction volunteers should dress appropriately for the task undertaken.
   - Because of the warm temperatures during the summer months, you are highly recommended to wear a hat or bonnet; and use sunblock.
   - Clothing presenting an unprofessional image, or containing graphics, slogans or advertising for alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, and items or slogans of a distasteful nature should not be worn. This is a place frequented by families, with young impressionable children; and we strive to present an image that will be viewed by our guests as exemplary.



6. **Grooming**. Hair, beards and mustaches should be neatly groomed. Again, remember who you are dealing with. We want to present a positive image, conducive to learning and the spirit of the locale.

7. **Accommodations**. Volunteer couples will need to provide their own housing. For 2009--volunteers will need to bring travel trailers or motor homes to the site through June. After June, housing will be available across the street from the Fort for a modest rental fee. There will be no minimum stay period. Contact Larue Barton for rental costs.

Recreational vehicles can be parked on site, or at the KOA campground about one block away. Motels and bed 'n breakfasts are available nearby, although local rates seem to be higher than many other areas.

Restaurants in the Bluff area are few, but those that are here offer excellent food; the cost may be somewhat higher than what might be expected. Blanding, a modest sized town about 21 miles north of Bluff offers grocery shopping and a wider choice of restaurants, including fast food.

Blanding also offers a drug store, medical care, and other "big city" amenities. An even greater availability can be found in Monticello--about 24 miles north of Blanding.

The "Cowboy Cabin" is available for single men coming to work on the site. In some situations, small families can be accommodated. The Cowboy Cabin sleeps five and has a restroom with shower and complete kitchen.

LDS Church services are held at the Bluff Chapel, located about 1/2 block down the street. Other churches are in the area as well.

The Bluff Mall is a wonderful place to spend a few minutes; and they offer an astounding array of soft drinks, snacks, newspapers, and gasolines.

Generally, you will want to bring groceries, snacks, and other necessities with you; but they can be obtained locally—particularly in Blanding and Monticello.

8. **Social Activities.** There is much to do around Bluff, with hiking and 4-wheelin' being the most popular activities. Ample time will be scheduled during your stay for these and any other activities you choose to embark upon. The countryside is spectacular—so bring along your camera and become a photographer.



Deseret News

JESUS CHRIST

LDS Church News

Spirit of Place

Remote and obscure, Bluff Fort not forgotten

see pages 8-10

WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 8, 2008 | 'Make something of yourself,' follow Savior – PAGE 5

See the *LDS Church News* article on the following page.



RELIVE While parents and older siblings labored, younger children learned about their ancestors by reliving life as they knew it, such as attending school in this pioneer meetinghouse recently built in the style of the original.

Many hands unite to make a challenging task of building cabins possible. Below, Wayne and Patricia Tew finish roof.

Sacrifice revered

Cabins honor struggle of 'unparalleled difficulty'

BY SHAUN D. STAHLE *Church News* staff writer

BLUFF, UTAH

Not much was known about southeastern Utah when pioneer settlers were directed by President John Taylor in 1879 to leave their established homes in Parowan and Cedar City, Utah, and forge their way across generally unfamiliar territory.

With more faith than resources, they embarked on a journey that endured six months and required the descending of a sheer rock crevice in the Colorado River gorge now known as Hole in the Rock.

Once they arrived in the San Juan area in April 1880, they built the small community of Bluff. Irrigation ditches were dug and crops planted, then small one-room cabins were erected in close proximity to each other to form a fort as a means of defending themselves.

Originally, the fort comprised 40 to 50 cabins. Today, only one cabin, the Barton cabin, remains as a reminder of frontier life on the San Juan River.

Descendants of these 250 pioneers describe the struggle as an "ordeal of unparalleled difficulty" in Church history.

Yet, the taming of this remote four-corners area of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona goes generally unknown, as if the isolation has shrouded this epic journey in obscurity.

Too much happened here, say descendants, to allow such faith to fade away. So in 1996, they organized the Hole in the Rock Foundation to "preserve the history and share the legacy."

In that spirit, three families gathered Oct. 12-18 to build cabins in honor of their ancestors. In something of an old-fashioned barn-raising festivity, they assembled logs, built a roof and landscaped the grounds.

More than 150 descendants and volunteers joined during the six-day event to build the Amasa Barton cabin, Barton blacksmith shop and the James Monroe Redd cabin.

For these modern-day pioneers, the process was arduous. Large logs weighing up to 400 pounds were hoisted into place by manpower, rather than heavy equipment, to fashion walls up to 6 feet high.

Electric drills drove heavy lag screws through the logs to fasten them together, a convenience not afforded the pioneers who used wood dowels or iron rods.

Cement was slapped in the crevices between logs for insulation in a process called "chinking."

The families celebrated their fest with a Dutch oven meal, and a dedicatory service on the morning of the final day.

"We walked the ground, tasted the blowing sand, enjoyed the heat and hefted logs until our backs gave out," said Ron Snowden, a volunteer. "We now have far more respect for our pioneer ancestors and understand their lives far more as a result of following in their footsteps."

More information about the restoration project can be found at www.HITR.org.

Anna McConkie chinks logs by applying cement to insulate the cabin. Three cabins were built by descendants of settlers in eastern Utah.

10 — *Church News* • week ending November 8, 2008

"Sacrifice revered."

By Shaun D. Stahle, *Church News* November 8, 2008.



This discarded display board was used in the old visitors' center.

"If we only had a few men to hold the wagon back." Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve. *Church News* November 8, 2008.



'If we only had a few men to hold the wagon back'

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve delivered the following account during a 2007 eastern and southern Utah stake conference.

With blasting powder and tools, working most of December and January of 1879-80, they [pioneers] cut a precipitous, primitive road into the face of the canyon precipice. With this roadbed . . . the task was now to get the first 40 wagons down the "Hole."

Twenty men and boys would hold long ropes at the back of each wagon. The wheels were then brake-locked with chains, allowing them to slide [while] avoiding the catastrophe of the wheels actually rolling.

In one of the great moments of pioneer history, one by one the company took the wagons down the treacherous precipice. When, miracle of miracles, they reached the canyon floor, they eagerly started to ferry across the river with a flatbed boat they had fashioned for that purpose. As it turned out, the Joseph Stanford Smith family was the last wagon to descend that day.

Stanford Smith had systematically helped the preceding wagons down, but somehow in their one-by-one success and consequent disappearance, the others apparently forgot that Brother Smith's family would still need help as the tail-enders. Deeply disturbed that he and his family seemed abandoned, . . . [Stanford] stood for a moment and looked down the treacherous "Hole."

[He] turned to his wife and said, "Belle, I am afraid we can't make it."

"We must make it," she replied.

"If we only had a few men to hold the wagon back we might make it," he said.

"I'll do the holding back. We will make it," she said.

Positioning herself behind the wagon, Belle Smith grasped the reins of the horse hitched to the back of the rig.

Stanford started the team down the "Hole." The wagon lurched downward. With the first jolt the rear horse and Sister Smith were literally catapulted into the air. Recovering, she hung back, pulling on the lines with all her strength and courage. A jagged rock cut a small gash in her leg from heel to hip. The horse behind the wagon fell to his haunches. The half-dead animal was literally dragged most of the way down the incline. That gallant woman, clothes torn, with a grievous wound, hung on to those lines with all her might and faith, and with her husband muscled that wagon the full length of the incline all the way to the river's edge.

On reaching the bottom, and almost in disbelief at their accomplishment, Stanford immediately raced [1,300] feet back up to the top of the cliff fearful for the welfare of the children. When he climbed over the rim, he saw his three children literally unmoved from the position their mother had placed them in.

Carrying the baby, with the other two children clinging to him and to each other, he led them down the rocky [path] to their anxious mother below. At that point, in the distance they saw five men moving toward them carrying chains and ropes.

The Smiths had been missed from the larger party. Realizing the plight they were in, these men were coming to help.

Stanford called out, "Forget it fellows. . . . [Belle] here is all the help a [man] needs [to make this journey]."

Elder Holland's account was adapted from David E. Miller, "Hole-in-the-Rock: An Epic in the Colonization of the Great American West," 1959.

One of the great moments in pioneer history

BUILD About 150 descendants of the pioneers who settled Fort Bluff as part of the San Juan Mission gather at the historic site Oct. 12-18 to build three cabins in honor of their ancestors. Plans are to re-create the historic site

8 — *Church News* • week ending November 8, 2008

SONS OF UTAH PIONEERS ANNUAL TRIP LED TO SEVERAL MISSIONARY RECRUITS TO BLUFF FORT

June 1-6, 2009

Graig and Grant Taylor were guides on the SUP summer trip. They started in Cove Fort, then Parowan Rock Church, Heritage Park, and Davenport Pottery Dig. The pioneers were all called by the Parowan stake president. Tuesday, they went to the Iron Mission Museum and then Pipe Springs National Monument. Lunch was at Jacob Lake Inn, then on to Antelope Canyon, and then dinner in Page, AZ. Wednesday members of the group flew over Lake Powell to Rainbow Bridge, and the Hole in the Rock and portions of the trail. In the afternoon they floated down the Colorado from Glen Canyon Dam to Lee's Ferry. Thursday morning, they traveled to Monument Valley and were guests of the general manager, Ronnie Baird at their trading post movie museum. Lunch included Navajo Tacos, and then on to Salvation Knoll for a Dutch Oven dinner, served by Ben Black and company.

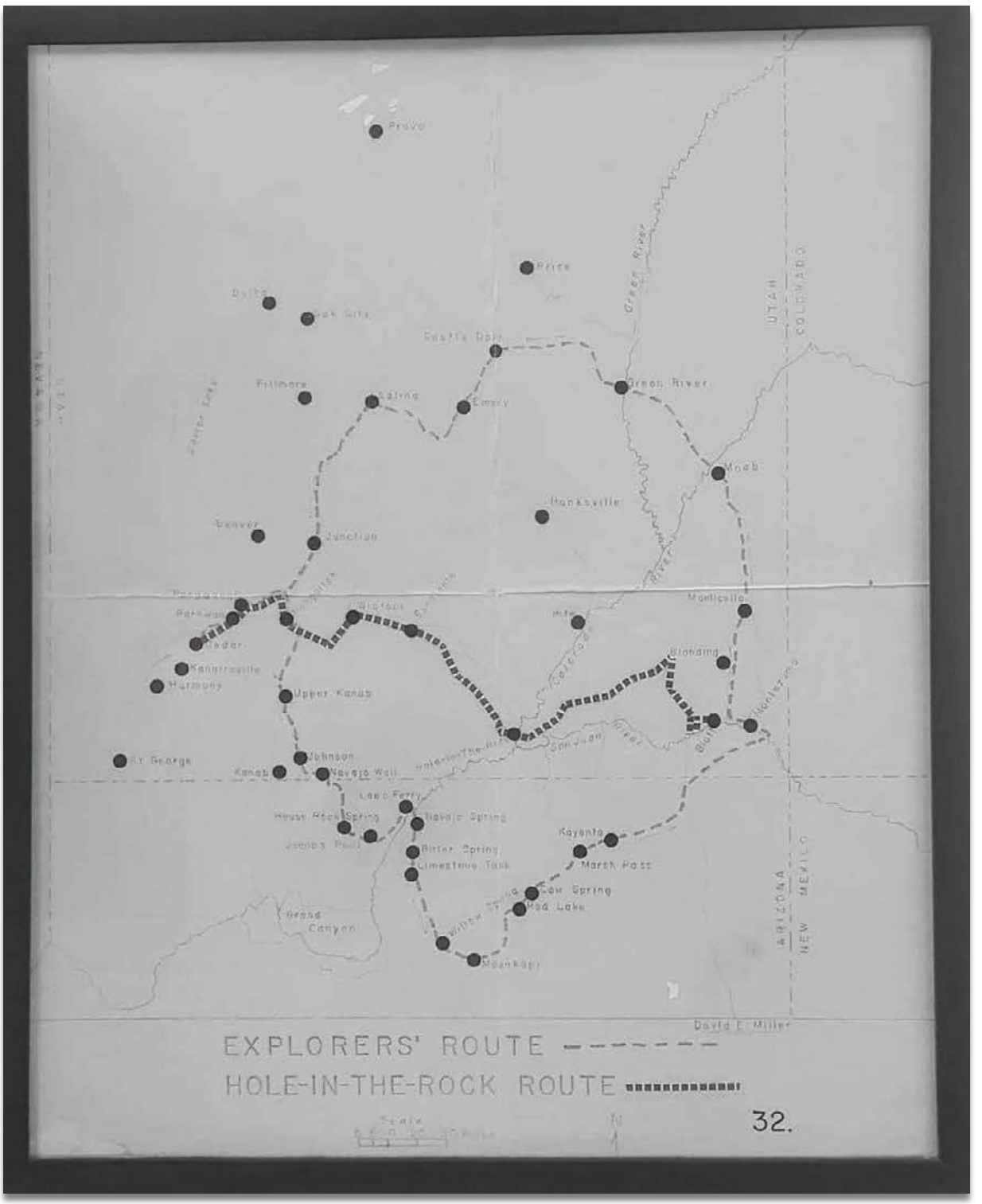
Friday, the group split into two, and one group went on ATVs to San Juan Hill and River Ruin, while the other group toured Bluff Fort and the City of Bluff. That evening they were served barbeque beef from Jacob Lake, with Rhubarb Crisp. They were entertained by Native American singers and Steve Simpson's son. Talks were presented by both Graig and Grant. They were fed homemade sweet rolls with juice and milk before boarding the bus for home.

This tour was repeated twice. Stuart and Kristi Matheson were on one of the tours, and later they were called to serve at Bluff Fort by Elder Steven E. Snow. Joe and Maureen Brandon were also on one of the trips and came to serve at Bluff Fort with Frank and Elaine Rowley.

Laren and Judy Neilson were on one of the trips, and Judy invited Grant to come to visit Chesterfield, ID, where they had served a mission for five years as guides. Grant and Jack Powers (Fort carpenter) later visited Chesterfield and were hosted by the Neilson's and the Chesterfield Restoration Board. Jack and Grant gained some great ideas from that visit that are still used and are part of the creation of the fixtures at Bluff Fort.

As the bus pulled out, Graig met Fred Jones and began talking about the cabin project at the Fort. Fred offered a check for his family to build 3 cabins, i.e., Parley Butt, Sam Wood, and Fredrick Jones (see Chapter Two).

"Never underestimate the spiritual power of temporal work."
President Henry B. Eyring



This map showing the explorers' and subsequent Hole in the Rock routes hangs in the Fort receiving front office (formerly the Cowboy Cabin).

22 September 2009

hirf.org

San Juan County Commissioners
Mr. Bruce Adams
Mr. Lynn Stevens
Mr. Kenneth Maryboy
P.O. Box 9
Monticello, Utah 84535

Dear Commissioners:

We know you have a very busy schedule but we wanted to take just a few minutes of your time to express our sincere appreciation for the support, interest, and time you have spent to assist us in our effort to preserve the history and build a legacy to the pioneers who founded Bluff Fort and San Juan County. The Hole in the Rock Expedition has received significant media coverage and with the KSL documentary* on Oct 4th we expect more and more people will be visiting San Juan County with a renewed interest in historic tourism.

We believe this will bring significant benefits to the County, local businesses, and the community as a whole. Much of the ground work for our project and many others has been the result of the untiring efforts of Charles DeLorme who radiates such a spirit of enthusiasm, confidence, and cooperation that success seems to follow. He is to be commended for his dedication to this work.

We are excited that Bluff Fort is rapidly becoming a tourist destination for people from every state in the union and from the four corners of the earth. During our work project last week, we gathered a few random pages from the visitor center registration log and have enjoyed reading the comments made by visitors from around the world. We have attached them and hope you will enjoy their comments and home town addresses as much as we did.

We would also like to formally invite you and your companions to participate in the dedication of the John Taylor memorial plaza and statue at Bluff Fort. This will be dedicated by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Saturday the 24th of October at 11 am. We anticipate there will be around 500 people attend this special celebration including Beverley Taylor Sorenson, who along with her family funded the project, the Governor and other special guests.

If you have any questions, please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Corinne Roring
President HIRF

* Carole Mikita has specifically asked for and will include photos from the San Juan Historic Commissions files in her documentary.

cc: Charles DeLorme

Attention -- Attention -- Attention --

We are Excited to Announce Our Fall Celebration

Inside this flyer you will find some critical information for you and your family --

Please review the dates and opportunities available to everyone --

We hope to see you at Bluff Fort

Thanks

SPECIAL NOTE: Although Bluff Fort is open for self guided tours all year the Visitor Center will close for the winter November to March. If you are making a special trip and want to view the Hole in the Rock video please contact LaRue Barton at 435 – 672-9967.

Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation

"Achieving the Seemingly Impossible Through Dedication and Cooperation"
The Jones -- Wood -- Butt -- Cabin Assembly Project
October 14th to 17th -- 2009
Daily Itinerary for Bluff Fort Volunteers

PLEASE NOTE: We publish this itinerary knowing full well that it will change as we deal with the daily realities of the reconstruction. Each work project brings new challenges, and new opportunities to learn patience and flexibility. We hope you will also understand the need for patience and flexibility. Revised 12 October 2009

Travel Day And Your Arrival

- When you arrive at the Fort, please go to the main registration area (by the Kitchen or in the Visitors Center) where you will check-in, sign a release form, get your name tag, and be directed to a work assignment. Since many of the volunteers will be strangers we encourage you to wear your name tag all week so others can get to know you
- Each of the work assignments is headed by a team leader. They will direct the team in accomplishing the task in a safe, efficient and effective manner.
- Your team leader will explain what needs to be accomplished, provide you with tools and instructions to help you in your task and answer any questions you may have.
- You may be asked to assist in any or all of the following work:
  - Unloading supplies / materials from trucks, trailors, and cars
  - Construction of the cabins
  - Landscaping
  - Checking sprinkler systems
  - Chinking the cabin walls
  - Laying stone paths and walkways
  - Constructing a fence
  - Assisting at the registration area
  - Maintaining drinks and snacks at the aid stations
  - Cooking
  - Building Shade structures
  - Installing signs
  - Constructing cement cabin pads
  - Other work as it is identified
  - Log de-barking
  - Installation of benches
- Remember the work day is not complete until all tools and supplies are returned to their proper place and the construction leader indicates we are through for the evening.
- When it is time to eat, we may ask that you do so in shifts so that construction work can continue, especially when chinking so the material does not dry and become unusable.
- This work project is about linking and restoring families. We thank you for your desire to participate.
- **WE APPRECIATE** your willingness to assist us in this most important effort and we will work with you to find a meaningful assignment that you feel comfortable doing. Most of our tasks can be completed without prior experiences so don't be afraid to volunteer for something that you have not done before. **Most importantly take time to get to know those you are working with and enjoy this experience. Be safe and have fun.**

1

Bluff Fort News

September 2009

"Accomplishments Exceed Expectations As Year Comes to a Close"

To the hundreds who have volunteered their time, talents and/or resources to the Hole in the Rock Foundation's effort to preserve the history, protect the trail, and perpetuate the legacy of these pioneers our sincere THANKS.

To the thousands who have visited the Fort or trail this year we express our deep appreciation and hope your experience has stirred within you a desire to learn more about your own heritage as well as the men, women, and children of the Hole in the Rock Expedition. We hope you will visit us again soon and perhaps join with us in this great cause.

Important Announcements for October

As indicated above, your efforts, hard work, and enthusiasm have resulted in an amazing transformation at the Fort in 2009. And with your continued support we will finish the year with a few outstanding work opportunities and October celebrations.

First – KSL television will broadcast a documentary on the Hole in the Rock Pioneers on October 4th between sessions of LDS Conference (noon - 2 pm.) It will feature Gerald Lund and Carole Mikita and show parts of the actual Hole in the Rock trail, significant locations along the journey, and Bluff Fort. We encourage you to watch.

Second – A general work project will be held Oct. 7th to 10th. Volunteers are needed to assist in landscaping activities, building stone walkways, working on the John Taylor memorial plaza, and general Fort improvements. Please let us know if you can participate any or all of these days so proper food arrangements can be made for you. **(801-224-4885).**

Third -- The Jones, Wood, and Butt Family Cabins will be constructed beginning on October 14th with the dedication service for these three cabins on the 17th about 11 am. For those who have participated in the cabin building projects in the past you realize how much fun and hard work goes into this effort. Since we will be doing all three at the same time your participation is encouraged, solicited, and appreciated. Additional work to complete the family cabins, Relief Society building, and spruce up the site will require everyone's help.

Fourth – A life size statue of President John Taylor, who issued the call to the saints participating in the Hole in the Rock Expedition, will be dedicated by **Elder L. Tom Perry**, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Saturday, October the 24th at 11 am. at Bluff Fort. This special monument to President Taylor has been donated by Beverley Taylor Sorenson and her family. They too will be attending the dedication along with other State and local officials. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend. Prior to the service 8:30 to 10:30 a.m., a brunch will be provided at the Fort. It will consist of Johnny Cakes, fruit etc. (a $5 donation is encouraged). **A few chairs will be provided but we strongly encourage you bring your own so as to be more comfortable during the service.**

Volunteers are needed to assist on Friday the 23rd to arrange chairs, prepare the grounds, and in general, help prepare for the service.

Thanks again, we look forward to seeing you at the Fort.

Corinne Roring,
President HIRF

Opening Hymn:

We thank thee, O God, for a prophet
To guide us in these latter days.
We thank thee for sending the gospel
To lighten our minds with its rays.
We thank thee for every blessing
Bestowed by they bounteous hand.
We feel it a pleasure to serve thee,
And love to obey they command.

When dark clouds of trouble hang o'er us
And threaten our peace to destroy,
There is hope smiling brightly before us,
And we know that deliverance is nigh.
We doubt not the Lord nor his goodness.
We've proved him in days that are past.
The wicked who fight against Zion
Will surely be smitten at last.

We'll sing of his goodness and mercy.
We'll praise him by day and by night,
Rejoice in his glorious gospel,
And bask in its life giving light.
Thus on to eternal perfection
The honest and faithful will go.
While they who reject this glad message
Shall never such happiness know.

President John Taylor



"What shall I say of United States? . . . As part of the common brotherhood of the nation, we will perform the part of a good citizen, rally round the cause of right; maintain inviolate the Constitution of the United States . . . and if all men forsake this great bulwark of human rights, let us rally around it." (Champion of Liberty, 14)

John Taylor Memorial Plaza
Dedication Service

October 24, 2009 -- 11:00 a.m.
Bluff Fort, Bluff, Utah

John Taylor – Third President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

- Statesmen
- Colonizer
- Religious Leader
- Author and Publisher

Born: November 1, 1808
Milnthrope, Westmoreland, England

Died: July 25, 1887 (age 78)
Kaysville, Utah Territory

Recognition of Honored Guests

- Elder L. Tom Perry, Apostle, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- The Honorable Gary R. Herbert, Governor State of Utah
- Beverley Taylor Sorenson – Granddaughter
- Barbara Taylor Perry – Granddaughter
- Sorenson Family Members
- Descendants of the Original Hole in the Rock Pioneers
- Board Members – Hole in the Rock Foundation
  - Corinne Roring
  - Mike Roring
  - L. Graig Taylor
  - Karl Barton
  - LaMar Helquist
  - LaRue Barton
  - Lamont Crabtree

Program

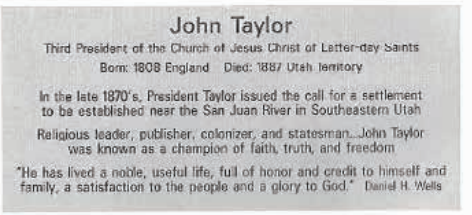
Music – Blue Mountain Strings, Directed by Mary Ann Lyman
Welcome – Grant Taylor – HIRF
Opening Hymn – "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet"
Conductor – Richard G. Lyman
Invocation – Joseph Taylor Sorenson
Introduction of speakers
Remarks – Governor Gary R. Herbert
Remarks – Mary Jane Woodger - Professor of Religion BYU
Special Musical -- James Sorenson Jr.
"A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief"
Speaker – Elder L. Tom Perry – Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Unveiling of John Taylor Statue – Beverley Sorenson
Dedicatory Prayer – Elder L. Tom Perry
Expression of Thanks and Appreciation – Grant Taylor
Benediction – Corinne Roring – President HIRF

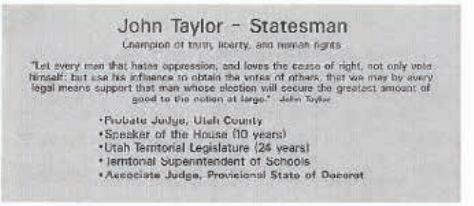
Acknowledgements

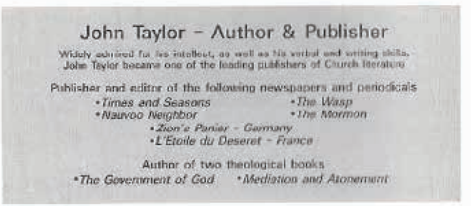
- Transportation – Ben Black
- Flowers – Carol Lee Curtis
- Hole in the Rock Foundation Special Volunteers
- Ron & Linda Snowden
- John & Brandon Cox
- Grant & Nina Taylor
- Gary Gyman

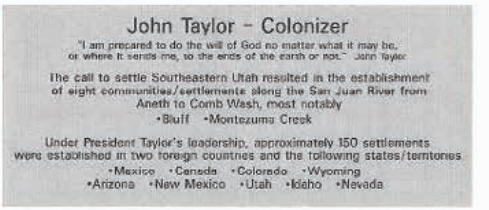
A special thanks to all who have contributed in anyway to this special event

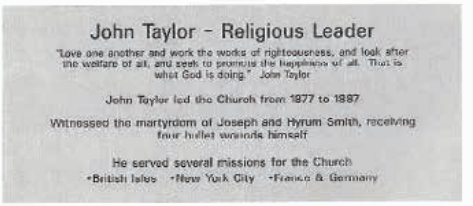
Information about President John Taylor, engraved on plaques at the base of the John Taylor Monument at Bluff Fort installed in 2009.











Statements By or Information about President Taylor

"We have no particular standard, except the broad platform of truth—religious, political, social, moral, and philosophical. We are not bound down to any particular party, or creed; either religious or political. It is true we are Mormon, inside and outside, at home and abroad, in public and private, everywhere. We are so, however, from principle. We are such, not because we believe it to be more popular, lucrative, or honorable, (as the world has it); but because we believe it to be more true, more reasonable and scriptural, moral and philosophic; because we conscientiously believe that it is more calculated to promote the happiness and well being of humanity, in time and throughout all eternity, than any other system which we have met with" ("Introductory Address," *The Mormon*, 17 Feb. 1855, 2).

"It is true that the founders of this nation, as a preliminary step for the introduction of more correct principles and that liberty and the rights of man might be recognized, and that all men might become equal before the law of the land, had that great palladium of liberty, the Constitution of the United States, framed. This was the entering wedge for the introduction of a new era, and in it were introduced principles for the birth and organization of a new world." (Champion of Liberty, 15)

"We believe that our fathers were inspired to write the Constitution of the United States, and that it is an instrument, full, lucid, and comprehensive; that it was dictated by a wise and forseeing policy, and . . . that it is the great bulwark of American liberty. . . . We therefore rest ourselves under its ample folds." (Champion of Liberty, 10)

"I expected when I came into this Church that I should be persecuted and proscribed. I expected that the people would be persecuted, but I believed that God had spoken, that the eternal principles of truth had been revealed, and that God had a work to accomplish which was in opposition to the ideas, values, and notions of men, and I did not know but it would cost me my life before I got through. Was there anything surprising in all this? No. If they killed Jesus in former times, would not the same feeling and influence bring the same results in these times? I had counted the cost when I first started out, and stood prepared to meet it." (Champion of Liberty, xv)

"We declare that the fear and the love of God are the foundation of all of our actions, spiritual as well as temporal." (Champion of Liberty, 154)

During his time as President and throughout his previous decades of service as an Apostle, John Taylor was always ready to teach and defend the truth. The captain and officers of the ship expected that they would sink, but the voice of the Spirit testified to John Taylor, "You must yet go to America and preach the gospel." President Taylor recalled: "So confident was I of my destiny, that I went on deck at midnight, and amidst the raging elements felt as calm as though I was sitting in a parlor at home." Teachings of the Presidents of the Church

In 1877, President John Taylor was elected to the office of territorial superintendent of district schools in Utah. In that position, he sought to appoint the most qualified teachers to teach the children and youth. He also continually monitored educational statistics—not only from Utah, but from all the states and territories in the United States—to help him better understand the level of education among the Latter-day Saints. For his administration of the school system, he received a letter of commendation from the acting commissioner of education of the United States. The letter was a fitting recognition for President Taylor, whose life reflected his love of learning and teaching.

8 October 2009

Office of the Governor
Ms. Ginger Fairbanks
Ms. Andrea Hansen

Andrea,

Thank you so much for the information regarding the Governor's desire to attend the Dedication of the John Taylor Statue in Bluff, Utah. We fully realize that his schedule cannot be guaranteed and we appreciate that he plans to attend.

Per your request, I have attached the template for your review as well as for Ginger Fairbanks. If either of you have any questions, please call me on my cell phone, 801-372-6490, or send me an e-mail.

Name of Event **– Dedication of the John Taylor Statue**
Day of the Week**, Saturday – 24th of October 2009**
TIME **– Dedication begins at 11:00 am**
(Sorenson's plane leaves Salt Lake City at 8:30 am)
Place **– Bluff, Utah (San Juan County)**

Recognize:

- Elder L. Tom Perry, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Beverley Taylor Sorenson and her family members (funded the statue)
- Board members of the Hole in the Rock Foundation
- Local government and business leaders

Talking Points: (Time allotted: 8 to 10 minutes)

- The Governor may of course speak on any topic of his choosing, but the following information and suggestions may be helpful to him. Around the base of the John Taylor Statue we have five engraved stones. The first stating the vital information about him as a person. The other four are representative of key elements in his life. They are:
  - John Taylor – Statesman
  - John Taylor – Religious Leader
  - John Taylor – Colonizer
  - John Taylor – Author and Publisher

You will note, the program (shown below) calls for remarks from the Governor and Mary Jane Woodger (Head of the Taylor Family Organization) as well as Elder Perry. Our suggestion would be that the Governor may wish to comment about President Taylor as a Statesman and Champion of Liberty. Mary Jane will be commenting about him as an author and publisher with a few remarks on his activities as a religious leader. We believe Elder

Perry will focus his talk on John Taylor as a colonizer and religious leader. (I have attached a documents showing the wording on each of the stone panels)

- We are searching to find some interesting stories from his years in public service that might be fun for the Governor to share, if he were so inclined. We will provide those as soon as possible. There may also be information contained in the records of the State that would interesting to those in attendance.

Agenda: Program – Outline of the event – Who is speaking before/after the Governor?

Sorenson Plane –
Scheduled departure at 8:30 am from SLC (we will contact you next week with the plane number and additional information)
Passengers:
- Elder and Sister L. Tom Perry
- Beverley Sorenson
- Joseph Taylor and Kathleen Sorenson
- Jim and Nina Sorenson
- Governor Herbert and his wife
- Paul Taylor

Days DRAFT itinerary For Beverley Sorenson, Governor Herbert and Honored Guests:
8:30 am - Plane Departs from Salt Lake City -
9:25 am - Plane arrives at Blanding Airport
9:35 am - Depart Blanding Airport in mini tour bus for Bluff (Black Hawk Tours)
10:05 am - Arrive Bluff Fort
10:10 am to 10:30 am – Brunch and Native American Cultural Presentation (10:20 to 10:30)
10:35 am - Visitor Center to view Hole in the Rock Video – LaRue Barton – HIRF Board
10:53 am - Take seats on stand
11:00 am - Dedication Service Begins
12:05 pm - Dedication Service Ends – greet family and friends, photos
12:25 pm - Depart Bluff Fort in 4 wheel drive vehicles for San Juan Hill (Black Hawk Tours)
1:00 pm - Lunch at base of hill – tour continues
- Stories of HIR Pioneers – and vision of HIRF.
2:10 pm - Leave San Juan Hill area for tour of Bluff Fort
~~2:40 pm - Golf Cart tour of Fort Buildings~~
3:00 pm - Leave Bluff Fort for Blanding airport
3:30 pm - Plane Departs Blanding Airport for Provo airport
4:15-4:20- Arrive at Provo Airport – Elder and Sister Perry depart (arrangements have been made to transport them to BYU football game and home to Salt Lake City)
4:40 pm - Sorenson plane departs Provo Airport for Salt Lake City
5:00 pm - Arrive Salt Lake City

DRAFT itinerary for Dedication Service:
11:00 am - Welcome and Introduction of Honored Guests – Grant Taylor – HIRF
11:06 - Opening Hymn – congregation – (need words printed on program)
11:11 - Invocation – Joseph Taylor Sorenson
11:13 - Introduction of speakers – Grant Taylor
11:15 - Remarks – Governor Herbert – (8 to 10 minutes)

11:25 - Remarks – Mary Jane Woodger (Taylor Family Organization President) - (5 to 7 minutes)
11:32 - Special Musical – "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief" by James Sorenson Jr.
11:37 - Speaker – Elder L. Tom Perry – (15 minutes)
11:52 - Unveiling of John Taylor Statue – Beverley Sorenson
11:55 - Dedicatory Prayer – Elder L. Tom Perry
12:00 - Expression of Thanks and Appreciation – Grant Taylor
12:03 - Benediction –
12:05 - Mix and Mingle around statue and Fort

What is the Governor expected to do? Enjoy the day with the Sorenson family, Elder Perry and other guests. Offer brief remarks at the dedication service. Learn more about the Hole in the Rock expedition, visit part of the actual trail, see the video on the challenges faced by these faithful individuals, see the progress being made by the Hole in the Rock Foundation to preserve and perpetuate the history, reconstruct the Fort, and preserve the trail.

Background:

Purpose of the event? Dedicate the first life size statue of President John Taylor who issued the call to the pioneers of Southern Utah to blaze a road from Escalante to the southeastern area of the territory. They were then to establish a settlement along the San Juan River

How many attending? Expecting over 500

Who will be in the audience? San Juan County Government and business leaders, descendants of the original Hole in the Rock pioneers, the general public and visiting tourists

Any significance of the location for the event? After a most difficult six month journey the Hole in the Rock pioneers established the settlement of Bluff Fort.

History of the organization or people? Members of the Hole in the Rock Foundation have spent the past 15 years acquiring land, documenting and preserving the history, marking the trail, gathering journals, restoring Bluff Fort, and perpetuating the legacy of the dedicated men, women, and children of the Hole in the Rock expedition.

Any personal story?
We will research some stories that the Governor may wish to include in his remarks and send them to you as soon as possible.

On-site contact information:
L. Graig Taylor – cell phone 801-836-2402 or Bluff Fort Visitor Center phone 435-672-9995

QUESTION for you – One of the drivers of the vehicles transporting the guests to and from the airport is a retired police officer – Does the Governor require any additional or special security during the day?

Please note I have also attached a DRAFT Press Release that we would like to send out at the beginning of the week. We understand that Ginger must approve all documents that mention

the Governor. We seek approval to send this to media outlets in Utah. Any suggestions, changes, or improvements you might recommend would be appreciated.

I hope the information I have provided is sufficient and complete. Again if you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Thanks so much for your assistance

Carl Mackay for Graig and Grant Taylor

P.S. Mary Jane – provided the following quotes from John Taylor – Statesman

Statesman:

"It is true that the founders of this nation, as a preliminary step for the introduction of more correct principles and that liberty and the rights of man might be recognized, and that all men might become equal before the law of the land, had that great palladium of liberty, the Constitution of the United States, framed. This was the entering wedge for the introduction of a new era, and in it were introduced principles for the birth and organization of a new world." (Champion of Liberty, 15)

"What shall I say of United States?. . . . As part of the common brotherhood of the nation, we will perform the part of a good citizen, rally round the cause of right, maintain inviolate the Constitution of the United States. . . . and if all men forsake this great bulwark of human rights, let us rally around it." (Champion of Liberty, 14)

"We believe that our fathers were inspired to write the Constitution of the United States, and that it is an instrument, full, lucid, and comprehensive; that it was dictated by a wise and forseeing policy, and . . . that it is the great bulwark of American liberty. . . . We therefore rest ourselves under its ample folds." (Champion of Liberty, 10)

ARCHIVES CHURCH NEWS

Faith conquers 'impossible trek'

Monument unveiled to honor foresight of President Taylor
By Shaun D. Stahle 31 Oct 2009, 12:00 AM MDT
BLUFF, UTAH

It was this month 130 years ago, in October 1879, when early Mormon settlers in southern Utah left their base camp in Dance Hall Rock to embark on one of the most arduous treks in Church history. They had been called by President John Taylor to leave their comfortable settings in the Parowan, Utah, area to colonize the opposite corner of the state in southeastern Utah.

Armed with little more than faith, their journey of about six months included carving a narrow wagon path through sheer rock down a steep cliff, now known as Hole-in-the-Rock. They crossed the Colorado River, only to begin traversing an area that advance scouts deemed impassable. That's when the journey became really difficult.
A call from a prophet of God to make peace with the Utes and Navajos of the area was all the motivation these settlers needed to conquer this imposing terrain.

They arrived at their destination in Bluff in April 1880. They soon erected 40 log homes and encircled their beautiful setting between the San Juan River and picturesque rock cliffs with a fort.

Descendants of President Taylor and those original settlers have not forgotten the boldness, or the foresight, of such a call to leave established homes for the unknown perils of hostile terrain. Some 500 descendants and San Juan County residents gathered Saturday, Oct. 24, under deep blue skies to join with Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve in dedicating a bronze statue of the third president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints erected on the original site of the fort. Accompanying Elder Perry was Utah Gov. Gary R. Herbert, who paid homage to the political accomplishments of President Taylor.

The original Bluff Fort was protected by a wall and had a forge for metal works, as well as wagons, as displayed in this re-creation of the pioneer fort.



Graig Taylor gives Elder L. Tom Perry a guided tour through Bluff Fort.
Photo by Shaun D. Stahle

"We are here to place a stone to remember how the Lord helped a small company of saints survive a most difficult assignment from a prophet to settle in a very remote place as a part of a plan to expand new communities in the western part of North America," said Elder Perry during his comments prior to dedicating the monument.

Elder Perry told how after the death of Brigham Young, John Taylor as the senior apostle took his position as the head of the Church and continued to expand the perimeters of the Church with more than 100 new settlements.

In his comments, Elder Perry stressed three

characteristics that served John Taylor as president of the Church then and have application today.
In the past two years, descendants of the original settlers of Bluff Fort have built 11 cabins to re-create the setting of the original fort in southeastern Utah. Early pioneers built 40 log homes. When completed, this replica fort will house about 20 homes.



Photos by Shaun D. Stahle

The Mormon apostle spoke of President Taylor's courage, his ability to communicate, and his faith. Describing his courage, Elder Perry told of an incident when President Taylor addressed a group that included men who sought to tar and feather him near Columbus, Ohio. Disarming them with an eloquent delivery on Constitutional rights, he softened their hostility and set the stage to teach them the gospel.
"The would-be tormentors made no move," said Elder Perry. "Instead, they remained quiet and attentive while the speaker expounded on the doctrines of Mormonism for three hours. The qualities [he] exhibited would earn him the title of 'Champion of Right' by which he was often referred to by the Latter-day Saints."

Concerning President Taylor's communication skills, Elder Perry told of the time John Taylor was given a special call to go to New York City by Brigham Young to organize and publish a newspaper, whose purpose would be to present the doctrines and practices of the Church in a manner to neutralize the groundswell of anti-Mormon feeling that had been mounting all over the East Coast for over a year.

"His [confidence] in the beliefs of the Church that he had embraced caused him to establish his headquarters at the corner of Nashua and Ann Streets, between the offices of the city's media Goliath — the *Herald* and the *Tribune.* Brother Taylor was in the very heart of Gotham's newspaper world," he said.

"Selecting such a stand is evidence again that he did not intend to hide his light under a bushel. On the contrary, he had taken a prominent position with a determination to keep it. He stationed himself in the front ranks and unfurled his colors and with great courage. …"
Concerning President Taylor's faith, Elder Perry told how John Taylor arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1837 as a new convert. There he found bitter spirits of apostasy among some of the Church leaders, including Parley P. Pratt who was an instrument of his conversion while on a mission in Canada.



" 'I'm surprised to hear you speak so, Brother Parley,' " Elder Perry said, quoting John Taylor. " 'Before you left Canada you bore a strong testimony to Joseph Smith being a prophet of God and to the truth of the work he has inaugurated and, you said you knew these things by revelation and the gift of the Holy Ghost. You gave me a strict charge to the effect that though you or an angel from heaven was to declare anything else, I was not to believe it. Now, Brother Parley, it is not man that I am following, but



Elder L. Tom Perry, right, and Grant Taylor watch as Beverley Sorenson and her son, Joseph, unveil a statue of John Taylor donated by the Sorenson family. President Taylor called settlers to colonize Bluff. Photos by Shaun D. Stahle

the Lord. The principles you taught me led me to him and I now have the same testimony that you rejoiced in. If the work was true six months ago, it is true today.' "

Elder Perry urged those assembled at the site of Bluff Fort to learn more of the life and work President Taylor, and then said, "It is fitting today we place this statue of John Taylor here in this historic community. It will stand as a reminder to all who visit of the faith of those who sacrificed so much to bless us with a heritage to turn our thoughts to the past to give us the firm resolve to have the faith to face the future with a bright determination of hope and courage."

Following Elder Perry's comments, the monument was unveiled by Beverley Sorenson and her son, Joseph — descendants of President John Taylor — who funded the statue.

Visitors to Bluff Fort will find a lively setting with well-crafted recreations of the fort. In the past two years, descendants have erected 11 cabins in honor of their ancestors.

2009 Dedicatory excerpts of L. Tom Perry remarks concerning John Taylor at Bluff Fort.



Dedicatory excerpts

"As Thou knowest, we have gathered today in historic Bluff, Utah, the end of the trail for one of the most difficult travels of pioneers in the settlement of the western United States. We are here to dedicate a statue honoring John Taylor, a prophet of the Lord, who under his leadership called at least 100 companies of pioneers to settle and build communities in southern Utah, Nevada, and Arizona, one of which was the Hole-in-the-Rock settlement.

"President Taylor demonstrated great leadership in the establishing of new communities in western United States, his leadership brought a new vision of the potential for the Lord's restored Church here on earth. His beginnings were in a land of libraries, museums, theaters and universities. This culture trained him to be articulate, dignified and with polished refinement. He brought to Church leadership these qualities from his early life. His defense of the doctrines of the Church brought him the title of 'Champion of Right.'

"He led the Church through one of its most challenging times. Through all of the times of leadership challenges, he made time to be a devoted father to his family. He presided over his family with great compassion and love.







2009 Scenes at Bluff Fort.
Photos by Shaun D. Stahle

"We have been blessed to have our roots firmly grounded by the sacrifice of noble pioneer heritage. Through their extraordinary efforts and inspired leadership, an empire has emerged out of a desert. Their strong traits of courage, industry, faith and determination have given us a legacy which we can look upon with great pride. It is proper we build monuments to remind our and future generations of our special pioneer heritage. It is a heritage of inspired leadership that is directed by the hand of God through his holy prophets."

























All Photos by Shaun D. Stahle. Originally in color format.

















The original Bluff Fort was protected by a wall [of cabins] and had a forge for metal works, as well as wagons, as displayed in this re-creation of the pioneer fort.

All Photos by Shaun D. Stahle, originally in color.

Thoughts given by Mary Jane Woodger at the dedication of the John Taylor statue in 2009.

In Abraham 3 God told Abraham that in the preexistent state there were those among the spirits of men that were noble and great and that these he would make his rulers. God knew that these noble and great ones would never deviate. They would be as sure as the planets rotating around the sun. Such a one was John Taylor.

From the time of his baptism John Taylor said he never doubted from that moment any principle of Mormonism. Though he never doubted, he knew as soon as he committed to conversion it would not be easy. He said "I expected that when I came into this church that I should be persecuted and proscribed but I believed that God had spoken; that the eternal truths had been revealed; and that God had a work to accomplish which was in opposition to the ideas, values, and notions of men; and I did not know but it would cost me my life before I got through. Was there anything surprising in all this? NO, I had counted the cost when I first started out and stood prepared to meet it . . . I do not believe in a religion that cannot have all my affection but in a religion for which I can both live and die. I would rather have God for my friend than all other influences and powers."

John Taylor did have God as his friend. He was also a dear friend to the prophet Joseph Smith. It was John Taylor who penned of his prophet friend that Joseph Smith had done more save Jesus only for the salvation of men.

Joseph Smith once told John Taylor "You have received the Holy Spirit and if you heed promptings of the same, it will become a continuous fountain of revelation from God." And so it was that John Taylor as a religious leader became a fountain of revelation for Latter Day Saints. When he was called as an apostle, he not only looked at the calling as lifelong but also as a call throughout all eternity. Brigham Young had once said of John Taylor that he was the greatest intellect the church would ever produce and yet John Taylor never let that intelligence go to his head. He knew from whence true religion came.

The story was told that when he was in France, he was given a very light cake that would almost blow away. It had no substance and would never satisfy the appetite. Not knowing the name of it, John Taylor decided to call the cake fried froth or philosophy. He said it reminded him of those men who profess so much intelligence that they cannot listen to the word of God. Such was not the case with John Taylor. As a prophet of God there was no pretense about his source of light and truth.

During his presidency he established the Primary. During the 50th anniversary of the church, he proclaimed the Jubilee year forgiving 1/2 of the perpetual immigration debt and delinquent tithing. He ordained 6 apostles, dedicated the Logan temple, and published the first hymnal with lyrics and music; but more than anything else he believed and taught in the power and efficacies of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Listen to the sublime words that John Taylor penned just two years into his presidency when he wrote the "Mediation and the Atonement." "His suffering affected universal nature. World upon world, eternal things hang on thy anguish King of Kings. When He gave up the ghost, the solid rocks were riven, the foundations of the earth trembled, and all material things were convulsed with the throes of seeming dissolution. Thus, was the torturing pressure of the intense, this indescribable agony that it burst forth abroad beyond the confines of his body and convulsed all nature and spread through all space."

Because so much occurred during John Taylor's administration we might be inclined to forget that above all else he was an eminent teacher of the Atonement. As president Lorenzo snow said at his funeral president Taylor is one who taught those principles which pertain to the exaltation and salvation of the human family, and he was willing to make any sacrifice to accomplish this object. That his testimony in regard to the son of God and those principles that he had espoused to might be carried out to the nations and whole of the human family. Such was a prophet of God, a noble and great one who was a prophet to the whole human family, even to those whom he sent to a place called Bluff.

FIVE PAGES OF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ORIGINAL BLUFF FORT.

Bluff Fort

The following are quotes from histories and journals regarding the Bluff fort / cabins. Added commentary is italicized:

INSTRUCTED TO BUILD A FORT

"There are small predatory bands of renegade Indian tribes who prey on defenseless persons as well as lawless adventurers from among the whites. We therefore deem it a matter of solemn prudence that temporary dwellings should be in close proximity to each other, and where practical we would recommend that you build in the form of a hollow square, and close up the spaces between your dwellings with a stockade." Erastus Snow Sept 5, 1880, San Juan Stake Records.

WORK ON THE FORT BEGINS

"Drove to Bluff City and found all well. The folks are forting up by advise of Brother Snow." Platte D. Lyman journal, Friday Sept. 24, 1880.

CENTER OF FORT A HOLLOW SQUARE

"The people of Bluff built adjacent log houses in the shape of a hollow square a. A rude fort with all windows and doors to the inside and only portholes or peep-holes looking to the outside. Albert R. Lyman, Indians and Outlaws, Pg. 33.

ONE ROOM CABINS
MUD MIXED WITH STRAW

"We began to build a log cabin immediately. A one-room affair with one window and a big door that faced the inner circle. It had a mud roof and floor. The mud was mixed with old straw or weeds and a horse was used to tromp it down. I know because I rode the horse round and round till I was dizzy. We were three or four days getting the floor to where we could pat it down with a shovel." Lars Christensen, Emigration Stake High Priest Quorum Bulletin, Quoted in text by John Henry Ayre, Utah State Historical Society.

DIRT FLOORS SPRINKLED
TO HARDEN / REDUCE DUST

"...floors required sprinkling at intervals to lay the native dust and tempt the soil to harden." Albert R. Lyman, History of San Juan County, 1918, Unpublished, Utah Historical Society.

WATER WELL IN THE CENTER
ALL OPENINGS FACE THE CENTER

"In this fort there were no doors or windows opening to the outside. All open into the space in the center. From north to south and east to west a small passageway ran in a gap between houses, permitting teams to drive in. A well in the center furnished water." Mary Jones, Anchored Lariats on the San Juan Frontier. Pg 48.

CLOTH STRETCHED OVER CEILING

"Factory, an unbleached cotton cloth, was stretched over the ceiling to make that better looking and to catch the water in rain storms - a difficult task as it became badly mud stained." Mrs. Frederic I. Jones, Saga of San Juan , Pg. 66.

SOD ROOF DRIPPED DISMALLY

"...roofed them with thick of coats sand. Which feathered out into a crop of runty sunflowers and stink-weed, if the seed-weed had time to sprout before the wind carried the sand away. But whether it raised weeds or blow away, it never turned the rain, which dripped dismally from it long after the sky was clear." Albert R. Lyman, History of San Juan County, 1918, Unpublished, Utah Historical Society.

BLACKSMITH SHOP IN S. E. CORNER

Amasa Barton's blacksmith shop was located in the corner of the fort. Albert Lyman, Indians and Outlaws, Pg. 85. On the maps of bluff prepared by Albert R. Lyman in 1970 the blacksmith shop is shown at the southwest corner of the fort. Utah State Historical Society's Bluff Historic District Files.

GATES AT EACH CORNER
MEETING HOUSE AT NORTH END

"They built their houses joining a hollow square covering about three acres, with all doors and windows on the inside. Peepholes or portholes in the back of houses to look from the fort in all directions. Four heavy gates wide enough to admit a wagon opened into each corner of the fort, and a log meeting house stood in the north center looking south." Albert R. Lyman, Improvement Era, April 1949.

ALL OPEN IN THE CENTER

"There were no doors or windows to the outside - all opened into the space in the center. From north to south and east to west, a small passageway ran in a gap between houses permitting teams to drive in." Mrs Frederic I. Jones. Saga of San Juan, Pg. 65.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION ALL DOORS AND WINDOWS FACE THE MEETING HOUSE

"It was in this square with doors and windows on every side that the writer of this story first became aware that he was a living being in a most wonderful world with other living beings. The memory picture of that old fort is still vivid in his mind with log walls, the dirt roofs and the quaint old-fashioned windows and doors all facing the big log meeting house as if in the attitude of worship." Albert R. Lyman, Improvement Era, April 1949.

SCHOOL / MEETING HOUSE AND
A NUMBER OF HOUSES COMPLETED

"Attended meeting and spoke to the saints in the log school house which has been built since I went away." *(He had been away Sept 27, 1879 through Jan 1, 1880)* "A good spirit prevails in camp and the prospects for the future are good, quite a number of houses have been built and the people generally are well supplied with the necessities of life." Platt D. Lyman Journal, Sunday Jan 2, 1880.

SCHOOL HOUSE

FORMS NORTH WALL OF FORT

The old log meeting house was part of the north wall of the fort and served as chapel, ballroom, courthouse, school house and a place for all public gatherings. Albert R. Lyman, Indians and Outlaws, Pg. 35.



North Side of School House a sketched by Remington Lane, spring of 1893.

EXTENSION ADDED TO MEETING HOUSE

"During the week most of the brethren have been at work putting an extension of about 14 feet on the north end of the school house which gives it much more room." Platt D. Lyman Journal, December 22, 1883.



Trading post Co-Op store Sketched by Remington Lane, spring of 1893.

CO-OP STORE IN THE
NORTH EASTCORNER OF THE FORT

"...first log home of the San Juan Co-op, built in the early eighties, was part of the fort (northeast corner), three rooms running north and south." Homes in Bluff , unpublished document by Albert R. Lyman, Utah State Historical Society's Bluff Historic District Files.

MOVING OUT OF THE FORT

"During the week moved one of my houses onto one of my lots, preparatory to getting all of my effects out of the fort."Platt D. Lyman September 19, 1883. Moved my family onto my lot in the afternoon...". Platt D. Lyman Journal, August 26, 1883. *This journal entry seems to imply that when living in a fort was no longer necessary, the residents moved their log houses and assembled them on their town lots. The process of dismantling , moving and reassembling had to be easier than building a new cabin from scratch.*

FLOODS

"The cottonwood wash sent down a large body of water which deviating from its normal course struck the Southwest corner of the fort filling a number of houses with water and mud to the depth of 8 or 10 inches and causing the inmates to move to higher ground." Monday April 28, 1884, ... another flood has been down the Cottonwood raising higher in the Fort more than the previous one but doing less damage." Platt D. Lyman Journal, Saturday March 15, 1884.

SOME LIVING IN FORT
AS LATE AS MARCH 16, 1884

As late as March 16, 1884 people were still living in the fort. Saga of San Juan, pg 66.

MEETING HOUSE DISMANTLED

Meeting house was dismantled in 1893. Albert R. Lyman, Pioneering in Southeastern Utah, Improvement Era, June - Aug 1915.



1893 photograph of the meetinghouse. Taken just prior to its being dismantled.

THE CITY LOTS FOLLOWING THE FORT

"Nearly every house had its orchard, its cellar, its wood pile, and by all means its privy, peering modestly from among the peach trees. Many families had grape bowers, all had gardens, some had wells, but the water was hard. Bull fences were the only kind at first and everybody had to bench for cattle and horses roamed the streets. Everybody had pigs, chickens, cows and horses." Signed document by Albert R. Lyman, State Historical Society's Bluff Historic District Files

RELATIONSHIP OF THE
BARTON CABIN TO THE OLD FORT

"Part of the house (log home of Joseph F. Barton still standing) was at one time a part of the west wall of the fort." Signed document by Albert R. Lyman, State Historical Societies -Bluff Historic District Files. *This statement leaves no room for speculation on the cabin's location with respect to the fort. However, this position raises two dilemmas. The window (of the intact north west room of the cabin) and the door/ breezway face the outside of the fort. This contradicts all written descriptions of the fort which clearly state that no doors or windows faced the outside. It is possible that the window and door in question were added later. Initially the glass panes and lumber for windows and door jams would have been purchased elsewhere and freighted to Bluff. With money and resources scarce, windows may have been a luxury that were not afforded to some rooms/ cabins.*

The second dilemma relates to the position of the west wall of the fort. On some maps the west wall of the fort is shown several hundred feet farther west than the current location of the cabin. The early descriptions of the fort, quoted previously, clearly state that the center of the fort was hollow and the cabins formed the exterior boundaries of the fort. It is also unknown if the remaining structure is untouched from the days of the original fort. When the fort was dismantled and part of the original fort site became the Barton lot, the Bartons may have

made modifications, added rooms or even moved them to better suit their needs.

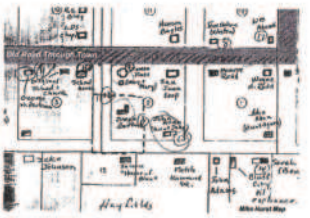
If the west wall of the fort was where the Hurst and Perkins maps place it, the Barton cabin and any other structure forming the west wall would have had to be moved to accommodate the city street layout. Based upon Platt D. Lyman's Journal, some cabins were moved from the fort to the city lots. Is it possible that the Barton Cabin was moved? Likely not. The northeast corner of the cabin was built around standing tree trunks. The log beams supported by these tree trunks will need to be closely examined. If the beams supported by the tree trunks are part of the main structure, it would seem to rule out a possible move.

Albert R. Lyman's maps and descriptions place the west wall of the fort more in line with the current location of the Barton cabin. Although it does not resolve the window/door issue, this map eliminates the problem of the cabin being too far from the west end of the fort. Albert R. Lyman lived in the fort as a young boy and spent his life in the San Juan area. His map contains more detail than any other known map. Until additional documents/evidence are found, the Albert Lyman map must be relied on to establish the cabin's relative position to the fort.

MAPS OF THE BLUFF FORT

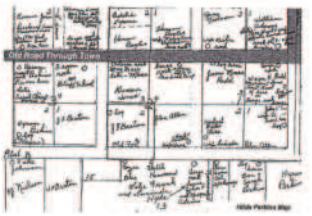
Mike Hurst Map ?

Located in the Utah State Historical Societies Bluff Historic District Files. The map contains no information as to its authorship or creation date. Kent Powell, Director of Historic Preservation for the Utah State Historical Society, believes that it was created by Mike Hurst in the early 1970's.



Hilda Perkins Map

Located in the files of the San Juan County Historical Commission. Notes on the map indicated that it represents the Bluff of 1903. Map creation date is unknown.



These descriptions may have assisted as guides when building the replica cabins.

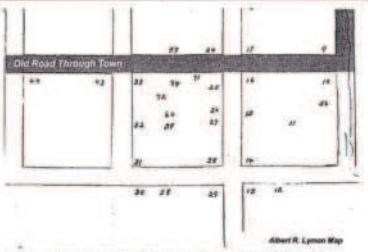
Hilda Perkins Map

A second map by Hilda Perkins. No creation date. There are some differences between the two Perkins maps. It is not known which map was created first or why Perkins created two maps. Located in the Utah State Historical Society's Bluff Historic District Files.



Albert R. Lyman Map

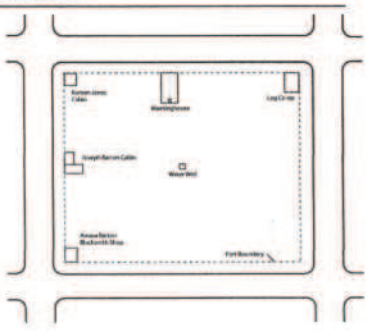
Map with descriptive notes created and signed by Albert R. Lyman 1971. Located in the Utah State Historical Society's Bluff Historic District Files.



13 Frank Hyde Store
14 Log Home of Jens Nielson, later became the home of Sarah Perkins
15 Monroe Redd's log home. Became the post office
17 Aunt Kristen Nielson two room log home
24 Hanson Bayles log home
25 Co-op three room log home. Northeast corner of fort
26 One room camp house notorious for its bad company
27 John Allen's corral
28 John Allen log home
29 John Adams stone home
30 Fletch Hammon home
31 Blacksmith shop southwest corner of the fort. Later became the home of Dave Edwards followed by Charles Lang
32 Joseph F. Barton cabin, west wall of the fort.
33 Kumen Jones log home, part of the west wall of the fort. Later replaced with a stone home
34 Log school / meeting house, north wall of the fort
43 Two room stone school house built in mid nineties. Later demolished, some stones used to build the jail
44 Hyrum Perkins log home
57 Hans Bayles' corral and shed
58 Fletch Hammond's corral
59 Joseph F. Barton corral
60 Kumen Jones corral
72 Meat market

Bluff Fort

Approximate location of known structures based on Albert R. Lyman's map and notes.





Impressive modern signs are installed identifying missionaries' accommodations at Bluff Fort.

Groundbreaking for Bluff Fort Co-op Store October 12, 2011.

Blue Mountain Panorama
pages 10 & 12

October 12 -- Historic day for Bluff Co-op groundbreaking

by Janet Wilcox

The long awaited groundbreaking ceremony for the new Bluff Co-Op Store, at the old Bluff Fort, was held last Wednesday with a number State, Church and Tribal dignitaries taking part.

During his remarks at the ceremony, Utah Governor Gary Herbert promised Corrinne Roring that not only would he "polish his dancing shoes" for next year's promised dedication of the Bluff Co-op, but that he would "start practicing his dancing steps."

Master of Ceremonies for Wednesday's event was former San Juan County commissioner, Lynn Stevens. Stevens introduced Gov. Herbert, as "Utah's Most Rural Governor" and complemented him on his efforts to represent and visit rural Utah. The Governor spent last Wednesday touring San Juan County, beginning with a visit to the Utah State University-College of Eastern Utah Blanding Campus. While there, he spoke to students statewide via the Utah Education Network. The Governor also visited several local schools, the Blanding Visitors Center, Edge of the Cedars Museum, and talked with many local residents.

Gov. Herbert reminded the audience of about 100 people at Bluff Fort, that the groundbreaking of the new Bluff Co-op, was a remembrance of those who had come before.

"We are standing on the shoulders of the Hole- in-the-Rock pioneers, whose qualities can still be incorporated today," he said. "The building of a replica of the first Co-op promises to be the 'Gem of the Fort,' and will once again be the hub of what happens here at the Fort. The Co-op was one of San Juan County's first successful businesses, where bartering and trading with Native Americans and pioneers alike made it the center of commerce during the years of the gold rush, and first oil boom in San Juan County. In fact," Herbert stated, "the Co-op paid a 10% dividend to original investors during the first 5 months of existence, and later paid 25% dividends to investors before the first year ended."

The Governor told citizens that the State is looking for ways to expand the economy in rural Utah, saying that tourism and travel can help. He thanked local residents for "all you do to raise good families and to run good businesses."

Dignitaries who participated in the groundbreaking, and who were introduced by Stevens included Wilson Martin (Chairman of Utah State History, and Chairman of the Four Corners Heritage Council); Shirley Silversmith (Director of Utah Division of Indian Affairs); President Mike Redd (Blanding Utah LDS Stake); Elder Perry Webb (6th Quorum of 70's LDS church area representative); San Juan County commissioners: Kenneth Maryboy, Phil Lyman, and Bruce Adams; Cleal Bradford (Past Chairman of the Trail of the Ancients Council, and member of the Heritage Council. Bradford also wrote the original $486,600 grant to build the new Co-op); Manuel Heart (Ute Tribal Councilman and former Chairman of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe); and Leigh Von der esch (Director of Travel & Film for Utah).

In her introductory welcome, Corrinne Roring, representing the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation, thanked those who had worked so hard to make her "distant dream" of 10 years ago, a reality.

"I predict that with the addition of the Bluff Co-op, the Bluff fort complex will become a "must stop and see" destination for all those who pass along Highway 191... This would not have succeeded without you," she told those in the audience.

She thanked all those who, over the past four years, had helped to raise the matching money to the original grant; and thanked the Bluff Fort volunteers who "perform a labor of love" in keeping the gardens and grounds so clean and beautiful.

She predicted that in 2012 "we'll celebrate the dedication of the Co-op" which will be the "Jewel of the Fort by ringing the bells," (as they did in early Bluff when Utah became

continued on page 10



Bluff Co-Op Store to become a reality in 2012...
Utah Governor Gary Herbert and a number of other State, Church and Tribal dignitaries were in Bluff last Wednesday for the groundbreaking of the new Bluff Co-Op Store at the old Bluff Fort complex. Shown above with shovels in hand are: (L-R) former San Juan County Commissioner Lynn Stevens, Wilson Martin (Chair of Utah State History & Four Corners Heritage Council); Shirley Silversmith (Director Utah Division of Indian Affairs); President Mike Redd (Blanding Utah LDS Stake); Elder Perry Webb (6th Quorum of 70's LDS Church Area Representative); Utah Governor Gary Herbert, San Juan County Commissioners Bruce Adams and Kenneth Maryboy, Corrinne Roring (Hole in the Rock Foundation), Cleal Bradford (Past Chair of Trail of the Ancients Council, and member of Heritage Council, as well as writer of the original $486,600 grant to build the new Co-op); County Commissioner Phil Lyman; Manuel Heart (Ute Tribal Councilman and former Chairman of the Ute Mt. Ute Tribe); and Leigh Von der esch (Director of Travel & Film for Utah). Photo by Janet Wilcox



Students from Bluff Elementary got a chance to break a little ground at the site of the new Bluff Co-Op store after the official ceremony was over. Photo by Janet Wilcox

Bluff Co-Op Store

Continued from page 12

a state in 1896), and "with a feast, and dancing 'til midnight – so get your dancing shoes ready. . . Bluff will buzz with activity again!"

Following the official ground breaking, many 3rd – 5th grade students from Bluff Elementary School also took turns breaking the soil for the new building. A delicious lunch with Bar-B-Que sandwiches prepared by Twin Rocks Cafe, and salads, cookies, and drinks prepared by the fort volunteers fed the group. It was a delicious end to a beautiful day of ceremony and hope.

Earlier in the morning, Gov. Herbert's statewide address to students over the UEN Network was the first statewide, live gubernatorial speech geared toward high school students. About 110 schools participated via live Web streaming. Herbert said that the digital age and changing job market demand a highly-educated workforce in order to compete. "When you go out to the world to start your careers, you're not just going to be competing with the graduates of Utah State University and Dixie State, you'll be competing with the graduates of the University of Beijing in China," he said. After the speech he fielded questions from students from Orem, Rich County, Murray and Emery County.



A vision is coming true...
Corrinne Roring has envisioned the restoration of the Old Bluff Fort for many years, and the Bluff Co-Op Store has been part of the vision that is now coming true. By next year the store will become a reality. Photo by Janet Wilcox

What Does a Docent Do in "da" Day? by Janet Wilcox, 2011

Anyone know what a docent is? Half a cent? Two cents? Those who "do"?

Hint: the Bluff Fort has nearly two dozen of them. Some of them include local residents Neldon and Bobby Holt, Karl and LaRue Barton, Beverly Vowell, Karen Dufer, Joyce Martin, Donna Washburn, Bernice Hurst, Max and Sandy black, Pam Bronson, and Judy Lyman.

Give up? A docent is one who teaches or lectures, often serving as a volunteer at museums, historic sites, and galleries. The Fort site has now expanded and visitors have increased to the point that a real push is on to recruit docents to help meet the needs of the many visitors who are coming each day. In 2010 there were about 1500 visitors. From March 3rd of this year to June 30th there have been 5,376 visitors to this historic site.

Bobby Holt explained how they became docents. "Last year last fall we were here visiting the Fort with our daughter and grandkids and Steve Bronson, director of the Fort, asked us if we'd like to be tour guides at the Fort, and we thought it would be a good thing to do; "So here we are."

Bobby told of a recent experience she had at the Fort: "Last Saturday while we were here substituting at the Fort, we had an amazing thing happen. A German couple came in, and as we were visiting, I told them I was going to Germany this fall." She explained that she was going to Saint Ingbert about 50 miles south of Frankfurt, and the couple said they lived very close to that area. Then they asked her who she was going to see. "I told them it was my sister Shirley and her husband Theo Herzer and I was dumbfounded, when they said, they knew them!" Ironically the visitor and Theo are both ministers in Protestant churches in that area.

That same Saturday, Bobby explained that at one time there were five languages being spoken: Russian, German, Spanish, Italian and English. The Fort is fast becoming the multilingual gathering point of San Juan.

Another local volunteer docent is Ariella Thomas who moved to Montezuma Creek six months ago to teach kindergarten. "I needed something to do this summer and came looking for a job." There were no paid jobs but lots of volunteer needs, so she decided to help. "This experience has helped me learn to love the area. When I moved here, I thought it was the ugliest place in the world, and now because I've learned so much, I really enjoy being here."

Other docents at the Fort come from out of town and include Lorraine and Dennis Harvey from Casa Grande, Arizona, Elaine and Frank Rowley from Coolidge, Colorado, Jim and Mitzi Perkins from Boise, and Ron and Lorraine Barton from Saint George. They will be in San Juan through the summer and live in camp trailers while volunteering at the Fort. Earlier docents who served at the Fort were George and Lark Flannigan from Cedar City area, Bill and Laura Lee Hall from Saint George, Corrine and Howard Hurst from California, grant and Erlene Taylor from highland, Keith and Jerry Nielsen from Utah County, and LeiMomi Sampson also from Utah County.

Future docents coming in the next few weeks include Russell and Peggy Capson from South Jordan, and Lamar and Colleen Helquist. In September Wayne and Marva Hancock from Springville and Erma Redd will be coming to help. Fort director, Steve Bronson, added "We need about four more local docents to help us finish up this season and we could really use some local volunteers to help us for a few hours on Sundays."

Docents at Bluff Fort are multi-talented volunteers and do much more than explain and lecture. They also garden, water, organize, run the gift shop, clean cabins, bake zucchini bread, and greet the public. Director Bronson thinks they are the best. Quote "how wonderful and great they are We have some wonderful people working here, who have a great willingness to serve. I can't say enough good things about them. They have really spruced things up!"

In the early days when the idea of Bluff Fort was incubating in Corinne Rorings mind. Carl and LaRue Barton were the first docents and directors of the complex period last fall, Laura stepped down when Steve Bronson came on board. Corinne roaring paid tribute to the bartons at that time, quote we have we would particularly like to thank LaRue Barton, outgoing visitor center director for the great work she has done. She worked tirelessly for three years to advance the mission of Bluff fort. Every state in the union has been represented in visits to the Fort this year, except Tennessee and people from 44 foreign countries have come. In the two hours we were there Friday July 8th, we spoke to Frenchman, Scot's, Irish, and people from Belgium. So what is bringing tourists to this unobtrusive piece of real estate commemorating the survival and stick to 2D of the 1880 hole in the rock pioneers? It's certainly not glaring neon lights, loud music, and colorful buildings. None of modern technologies fancy recreation draws is needed to tell the blood bluff pioneers simple, yet dramatic story of dedication and survival in the wildest country in the West. Not only did they survive, but they did it all while carving a road across the rugged, unmapped morass between Escalante and Bluff, Utah. These are the stories the docents share with visitors.

The cabins, stories, memorials and friendly visits with docents help to make a memorable visit for those who visit the site. One visitor from Morocco wrote, "God bless the souls of all these pioneers." Another from England wrote "Great to see sheer willpower wins through this history lesson."

Steve Bronson claims there is a unique spirit there, different than any other place. He recalled visiting with Kirk Nielsen once, who told him: "I can't even say the word Bluff without tears coming to my eyes." After visiting the Fort, most leave Bluff Fort with the same feeling of awe and admiration.

If you have questions or want to volunteer call the Fort director at 435-672-9995. *Blue Mountain Panorama* Thursday July 21st, 2011, page 6.

2011 Bluff Fort Docents

Lorraine and Ronald Barton, St. George; LaRue Barton, Bluff; Max & Sandra Black, Monticello; Steve Bronson Bluff Fort Director (paid position),; Karen Dufur, Blanding; Wayne & Marva Hancock (September only), Springville, Utah; Dennis & Lorraine Harvey, Casa Grande, Arizona; Sheldon and Roberta Holt, Blanding; Judy Lyman, Blanding; Joyce Martin, Monticello; Bernice Perkins, Blanding; Rank & Elaine Rowley, Coolidge, Arizona; Grant & Erlene Taylor (serving a mission) Highland, Utah; Beverly Vowell, Blanding; Donna Washburn, Monticello, Utah



Steve Keele and George Jones, Bluff Fort docents in April of 2023. Steve passed away in January 2024. Ron Bateman photo.

Docents Terri and Mike Liechty making a presentation in 2023.

Alan Peterson photo from Bluff Fort video.



THE JODY WOOD BOOK PROJECT

My husband and I had the privilege in 2016 of serving a work mission at the Bluff Fort in Bluff, Utah. The Fort is an amazing historical center, lovingly restored by faithful descendants of the early Bluff settlers. Most of those settlers were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When asked by their Prophet John Taylor to build a settlement in the southeastern corner of the state of Utah, they willingly began preparations to answer that call.

The Samuel and Josephine Wood family were one of the many stalwart families who left well-established and comfortable brick homes in Cedar City, Utah to make the treacherous journey by wagon and settle in Bluff. I had the opportunity to study their lives in depth during my time of service at the Bluff Fort, as I was tasked by the Fort Directors to prepare and publish a book that could be sold in the Bluff Fort Co-op that told Jody's story.

I began immediately by researching publishing options, preparing a project timeline, obtaining the required permission for publication rights, and researching source material for the manuscript.

Josephine Wood, fondly called Aunt Jody by all who knew her, was one of few pioneer women who wrote and preserved a journal. She was called by Bishop Jens Nielson to serve as the town nurse and midwife, a calling she held throughout her life in Bluff. Her colorful journal outlined the daily challenges of travel by small wagon train in unfamiliar and often hostile territory, the trials of meeting life's necessities while journeying with several small children and herds of stubborn livestock in tow, and constant weather and terrain obstacles. Once her family was established in Bluff, her journal stands in testament to the many births, illnesses, and deaths of which she was a part. Her journal and her life portrayed the challenges of family life on the wild frontier of the late 1800's, of efforts to make peace with the Indians, of service to others and commitment to God.

The miracles involved in bringing this project to fruition began immediately. The Hole in the Rock Foundation needed to obtain permission from the Wood family descendants in order to publish the manuscript. That came about as one of the board members met with Jody's 90-year-old granddaughter, Kathern Marks, who was living in Salt Lake City, to discuss the project; within days one of Jody's great grandsons was visiting the Bluff Fort, and he willingly agreed to serve as the family liaison to complete the necessary legal work for publication. He also graciously spear-headed donations from the entire Wood clan and garnered their support in funding all printing costs, thus enabling the Fort to profit from all sales of the book.

As I was busy doing my own research and manuscript preparation, I could see the hand of the Lord in opening door after door to help this story progress. The Wood family photos I had access to through the Fort were not high enough in resolution for a clear image. I was able to contact one of our Fort service missionaries who lived in close proximity to Kathern Marks and he visited her and scanned her original family photos and mailed them to me on a thumb drive.

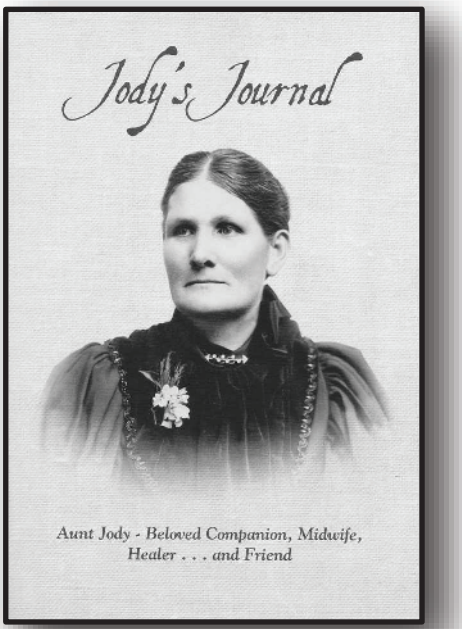
Coincidentally, my husband Lee had completed a Photoshop course at Dixie State University on restoring old photos just days prior to us leaving for our Bluff Mission. He became my 'photo expert' on helping me get the proper resolution and sizing for the 73 photographs in the book. Due to the large size of the manuscript, I split the project into thirds—two files for the book portion and one for the journal portion. The publisher required the files to be merged in Adobe publishing software, after which they would mail me a printed copy of the manuscript for my review and approval. I experienced my own 'pioneer trials' in attempting to merge files from my Apple Mac computer to the only Adobe software at the Fort, which was on a Windows platform computer. The merged files constantly presented challenge after challenge, sending me back to the drawing board to find a resolution. Throughout these trials, the Lord provided direction as I sought Him through prayer, and the manuscript file was

submitted to my publishing rep at Brigham Young University Press. As my husband and I prepared to make a quick drive to Salt Lake on some Fort errands and to pick up the book print draft, I received a 5:00 pm call—my publishing rep stated that all the photos were coming in at too low a resolution. Apparently, the Adobe software was compressing the file and changing the photo resolution. I went back to the drawing board and spent the evening re-inserting and formatting 73 pictures. As I struggled to get the last photo to insert in place, regardless of what I did, it would pop to the next page or completely disappear. I tried everything—deleting the page and reinserting the photo and caption, decreasing size and then gradually increasing to the desired page size, different positions on the page, all the text wrapping options—nothing would work.



Finally, at 1:00 a.m. I knelt in prayer and pleaded for help in knowing what to do to complete the file. I kept thinking about the book and asking, "What am I missing? Heavenly Father, please help me to know what I'm missing here." Suddenly the Wood family photo popped into my head, and I saw each member of the family intently looking at me (photo taken in 1892/93). I distinctly had the impression that I needed to check that photo again. As I logged back on to the computer and went to the page for the family photo, somehow with all the problems of merging files and two differing computer environments—the page with the family photo had been deleted. I quickly reinserted it and said a prayer of deep, heartfelt thanks, then went directly to the photo I had been struggling with earlier and it popped into place first try and stayed put! Some people would call that a coincidence—but I call it a miracle! It was an answer to sincere prayer! The many descendants of Jody and Samuel Wood would have been terribly disappointed if that family photo had been missing from the book.

The size of the miracle doesn't matter—what matters is the fact that it comes from God. I am so grateful for the incredible opportunity I had to serve as a missionary at the Bluff Fort, and I treasure the lessons I learned from Jody Wood and her family as I studied their lives of faith. As one of her patients, Caroline Nielson Redd, wrote of her, "She took care of me when eight of my children were born. Sometimes Aunt Mary Jones came with her, and when these two good women entered my home, all fear left, and I knew everything would be all right. To have Aunt Jody near was worth more than medicine. Her tender touch, encouraging words, calm spirit, cheerful way, and prayers were many times the only medicine needed. She never left the house without fixing something good for her patients to eat. If there is such a thing as perfection on this earth, Aunt Jody can be counted as such. To know her was to love her."



"Jody's Journal" chronicles the faith and fortitude that this amazing mother of ten employed in serving both saints and sinners on the frontier for more than a quarter-century. It was so easy to fall in love with Jody and her family, and I am thankful for the valuable lessons I learned from them as I played a small part in sharing their story for future generations. Cathy Wright, 2016 Bluff Fort service missionary.



Bluff Fort Service Missionary Jerry Allred stands next to his amazingly lifelike carving of Jens Nielson and the Mormon Pioneers traversing San Juan Hill in 1880. The carving is on permanent display at Bluff Fort.
Courtesy photo

San Juan Hill recreated in a beautiful carving by Bluff Fort Service Missionary Jerry Allred

interviewed by
Beverly Vowell Black

As the Mormon pioneers who went through the Hole-in-the-Rock from 1879 to 1880 drew near to their final destination in southeastern Utah, they encountered a formidable barrier known as Comb Ridge.

They had already descended down through the Hole-in-the-Rock to the Colorado River, blasted roads through sandstone, and forged other trails around Grand Gulch. They were broken and discouraged.

To overcome the obstacle of Comb Ridge, these pioneers labored on a steep trail they could ascend to get on the other side. They called this site on the ridge San Juan Hill.

To bring this scene to life, Jerry Allred, 2019-20 Bluff Fort Service Missionary was asked to recreate a wood carving depicting the daunting San Juan Hill.

Jerry was born in Twin Falls, ID, but hails from Tremonton, UT. During his adult life he worked at various jobs. He taught junior high agriculture, woodshop and biology. He also helped build chapel and temple steeples all over the country for the LDS Church.

As a child, Jerry watched his dad carve wood and whittle a toy-sized cow and was fascinated. Over the years he had the notion that carving was something he would like to do. However, with no wood shop at his home or even his high school, that dream was put on hold.

His first experience with art was when he was a kid. When Jerry's teacher thought he was taking notes, he was drawing pictures. His teacher found out Jerry was taking notes on test days! He took his first art class at Ricks College and also attended workshops sporadically.

Carving birds out of wood was always his desire. He was introduced to that form of art in the early '80s when he was attending Brigham Young University. Jerry watched a man carving a duck for a class that he was teaching. He wasn't able to attend the week-long class but knew that was something he wanted to do in the future.

About ten years ago, he and his wife, Paula, were on vacation in Idaho. They ran across a lady from Burley named Lona Hymas Smith. She was a professional bird carver and had a booth at the Sun Valley craft show.

Lona was doing everything Jerry wanted to do as far as creating birds and various things out of wood so they sat down and visited with her.

The visit paid off. Lona helped Jerry start his desire to carve birds. Lona acted as his critique and his inspiration on wood carving. She actually talked him into competing.

After he carved his first song birds Lona and Paula planned a trip to go to a 2005 world contest in Ocean City, MD. They thought Jerry's bird was good enough to "go to the world." That bird went into the novice level and won first place.

From there, Jerry progressed into carving other birds and entering them into other regional contests around the country – selling a few here and there. After several years of carving birds, he began carving old wagons and buggies on small habitats with rocks.

Jerry stated, "I determined that particle board made a great looking rock and the wagons and horses I carve are made from pieces of pine.

"The birds are carved out of a different wood that I get from Louisiana that is called tupelo and it's grown in the swamps down there."

People have asked Jerry, "What brought you to Bluff, UT?" Here is the 'Rest of the Story' in Jerry's own words.

"In 2015, Paula and I were driving down to Houston, TX for a family event and we stopped at the Blanding Visitors Center. The guide told us about Bluff Fort.

"It struck our curiosity, so we drove down and found out that we could serve there as LDS Service Missionaries, something we wanted to consider after we retired.

"Our goal came true; Paula and I started serving at the Bluff Fort in March 2019. In August, Bluff Fort Director, Jim Orr, asked me if I could do a wood rendition of San Juan Hill.

"Earlier that year we had the opportunity to walk up to the hill and it was like, 'Wow, it's amazing that these pioneers were able to do this with team and wagon.'

"When I was approached, I was overwhelmed and excited. I knew I could do it, but I wasn't sure what it should look like. I immediately started carving horses thinking the scene would be on flat ground.

"I carved ten horses standing flat, but when I got to the eleventh, Jim said, 'Shouldn't these horses be going uphill since they are representing the animals pulling wagons up San Juan Hill?'

"I said, 'Yes.' So I went back to the drawing board and completely started over, carving 14 new horses.

"I put all of my previously-carved horses in a tote, though one went to Spain. I had a man visit the Fort who belonged to a carving club in Spain. This carving club carves a nativity scene each year in some foreign country.

"That year they had picked the United States and they wanted to make the nativity scene as if it was in in the 1860s. I asked him what size his animals were going to be.

"When he told me, I got one of my horses out of the tote and gave it to him. After Christmas I received a text from this gentleman telling me that my horse was in a nativity scene somewhere in Spain.

"How long did it take to carve the horses? From the time I start to cut the wood, it took a couple of hours to cut out the three pieces. Then I glued them together.

"The next day the glue was dry and I would start to carve and finish the horse the next day. So, about two-and-a-half days per horse.

"The reason you aren't able to see a seam on these horses is because they are sanded and painted with three or four coats of subpaint which covers up the wood grains and the seams.

"Then you put on three or four more coats of the coloring paint. The harnesses, strips, and reins took about as long as the horses.

"People keep asking me, 'How long did it take you to carve this entire project?' I worked two to four hours some days on the it; other days I did other projects; other days I worked on the project three to five hours.

"I averaged my time and figure it took over 500 hours to complete this project. I did all the horses first, with no painting. Then I started the rock of the San Juan Hill – two months' worth of work.

"Some have asked, 'Why did you use particle board?' Particle board is made up of all of these particles so when you carve them it looks like rock. The texture creates a nice-looking rock.

"So, it was the horses first, the hill and the wagon come next. It is a very detailed wagon. I kept going out to the old original wagon outside of the Bluff Fort wood shop to make sure I was doing the details correct.

"I had carved – and sold – a few wagons in the past, so I knew the undercarriage had to have specific parts and names. The wheels – including the spokes – are all made out of one piece of wood. All the bushes are also carved out of wood.

"When I got ready to carve Jens Nielson, this was the first person I ever carved. I carved the feet, legs, and rear end in one piece, the torso in a piece, the head and hat, and two arms in separate pieces. I glued them all together, sanded, and painted.

"I always use just regular wood glue on pine. It works well. On the harnesses I used plain old super glue because it sets up fast. When I glue parts that need to stay together immediately, I use super glue gel.

"Sometimes it bothered me that I would give out assignments to the other missionaries, they would go out to work, and I would sit down in the shop and start carving. I was thinking, 'What if this doesn't turn out very good.' But I think it turned out okay.

"I was asked to describe the feelings I felt as I was carving this project. I often wonder if all of my carving experience was preparing me to come to Bluff Fort to donate my time and talents to leave behind something for the visitors to see to help tell the story. Most visitors do not have the privilege of going out to see San Juan Hill."

After her interview with Jerry Allred, Bev Vowell Black stated, "I totally marvel every year at the different talents the various Bluff Fort Service Missionaries have that make the Fort an even more amazing place to visit.

"It was never mentioned when Jerry interviewed to be a Service Missionary that he was 'a wood carver. Somehow the Bluff Fort Director, Jim Orr, found out this man's talent and what a blessing that was!

"I have never seen a piece of artwork that touched my soul like this replica of San Juan Hill. The first time I walked into the Bluff Fort wood shop and saw this amazing rendition, I simply broke down and cried.

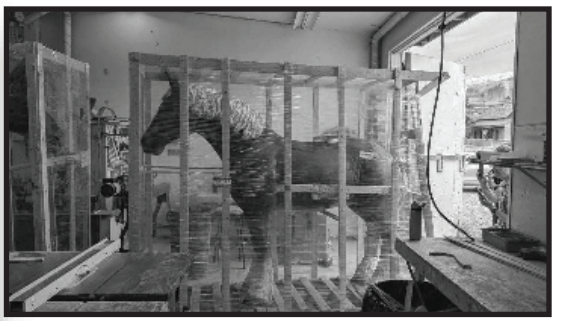
"I can only imagine how touched the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers in heaven must be feeling right now knowing that someone was willing to create a replica of one of the most difficult accomplishments they experienced in 1880 just prior to reaching the site they would call Bluff."

This six-foot carving will be on permanent display at the Bluff Fort Co-op in Bluff, UT just in time for Jens Nielson's 200th birthday celebration on Saturday, April 25. It is a must-see!

Children's Bluff Fort Pioneer Hunt

1. Co-op visitor center — What disaster occurred to this building in 1925?
2. Restrooms — What reputation does this building have?
3. Relief Society building — Pioneer women made their own fabric. They carded the wool and made yarn with the device under the window. What is it?
4. Maintenance building — What part of this building welcomes guests for delicious treats?
5. Crafts building — What things are made for the co-op visitor center?
6. Navajo Hogan — What Indian tribe lived in this building?
7. Ute Teepee — What Indian tribe lived in this building?
8. Water wheel — The Pioneers used this for what purpose?
9. Gold panning — Did bluff Fort have working gold miners?
10. Parley Butt cabin — Pioneers couldn't go to the store and buy clothes. They made them. See how many sewing machines you can find in this cabin.
11. Samuel Wood cabin — What were the weeds used for which are hanging on the wall?
12. Frederick I. Jones cabin — Pioneer children love goodies just like you! What do you think was made in the metal pot with the blue lid?
13. Holyoak Encampment — What two things were used to keep warm?
14. Charles Walton cabin — How successful was Bluff for students in attending college?
15. Hanson Bayles cabin — There is a doll buggy in this cabin what is next to it?
16. Decker cabin — There isn't a stove in this cabin. Where did pioneers cook their food?
17. Jens Nielson cabin — Jens Nielson came to Salt Lake City by handcart and to Bluff by covered wagon. Find something he used to carry his belongings to Bluff Fort.
18. George B Hobbs cabin — Pioneer children loved to play just like you. What is sitting in the highchair?
19. Thales Haskell cabin — Since there wasn't electricity in the cabins, can you find two things that were used for light?
20. Amasa Barton blacksmith shop — Amasa Barton was a blacksmith. What is that? Can you find what he used to blow air on the fire?
21. Farm equipment display — How were most of these items used?
22. James Redd cabin — Pioneers couldn't run to the grocery store for everything. What was in the basket on the table and how did they get those food items?
23. Lemuel Redd cabin — A pioneer didn't have a microwave. What did they heat their water in?
24. Joseph Barton's original cabin — This cabin was built in the 1880s. One of the things that the pioneer women did was knit. What was being knitted in this cabin?
25. Lyman cabin — Where did pioneer babies sleep? Find a baby's bed. What color is the blanket in the bed?
26. Perkins cabin — Pioneers did not have washing machines. Find what they used to wash their clothes.
27. Kumen Jones home — What makes this home different from the other homes?
28. Pavilion — How is this place used?
29. Log meetinghouse — The log meetinghouse was used as the first school, church, courthouse and social hall period who was the first school teacher?
30. Monument — What is the name of this man who supported the Bluff Fort settlers?

Visit the bakery for ANSWERS

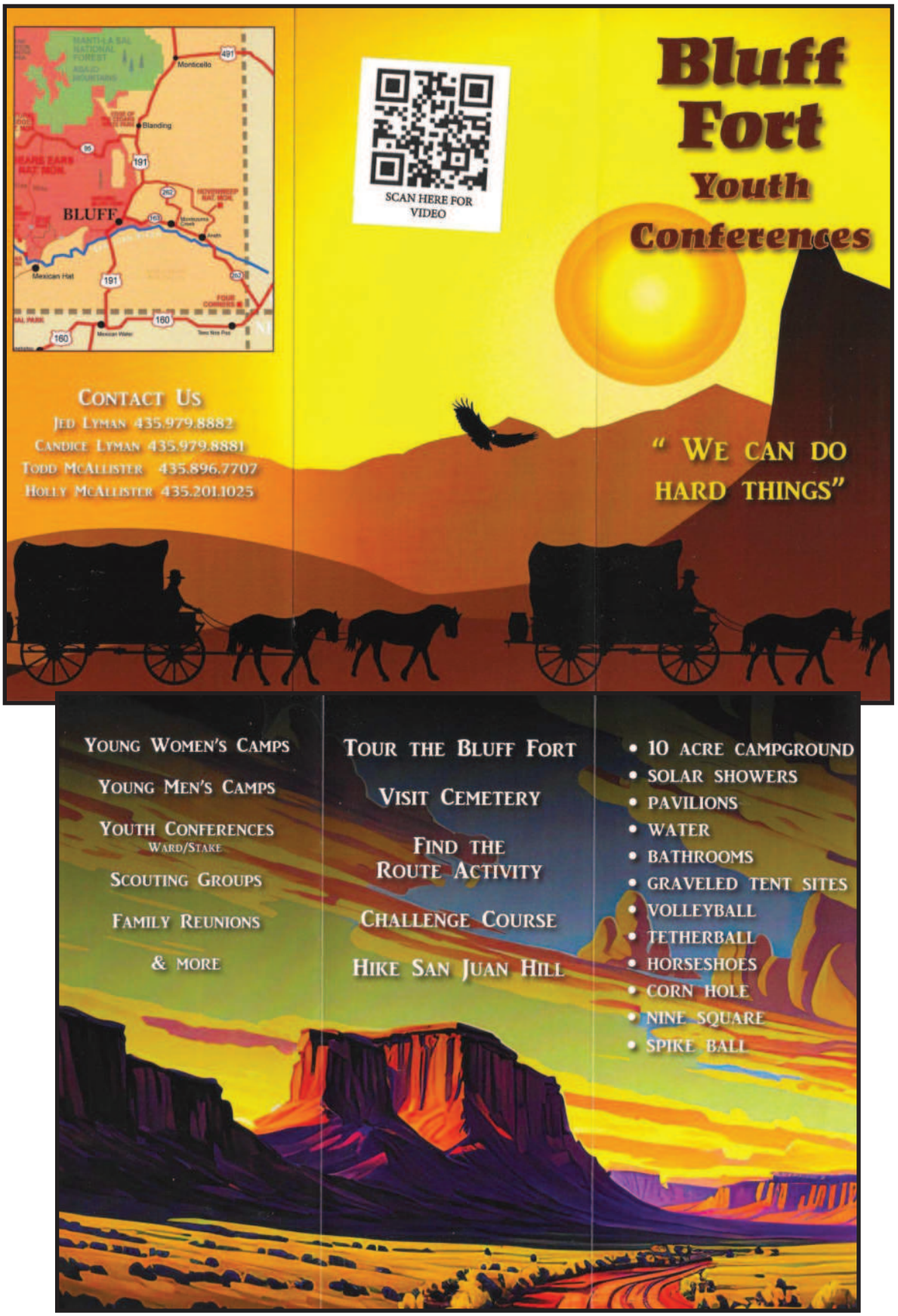


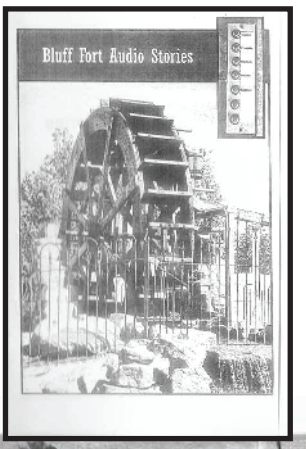


Two life-sized, fiberglass horses arrived at the Fort on June 26, 2024. They will be hitched to a covered wagon as a photo-op.

BLUFF FORT TOTAL YEARLY VISITORS

Year	Total Visitors	Total USA	Total International	Total Missionaries
2008	2000			
2009				
2010				
2011	15,118 January to October			
2012	11,051 January to October			4
2013				18
2014	32,145			21
2015	33,430			21
2016	46,232			16
2017	42,029	23,227	14,735	14
2018	46,259	25,796	18,654	25
2019	47,907	25,674	20,901	24
2020	15,985			26
2021	44,176			28
2022	49,314	2248	1366	25
2023	52,245	8,531	6366	27


Bluff Fort
Youth Conferences
SCAN HERE FOR VIDEO
BLUFF
Monticello
Blanding
Mexican Hat
CONTACT US
JED LYMAN 435.979.8882
CANDICE LYMAN 435.979.8881
TODD MCALLISTER 435.896.7707
HOLLY MCALLISTER 435.201.1025
" WE CAN DO HARD THINGS"
YOUNG WOMEN'S CAMPS
YOUNG MEN'S CAMPS
YOUTH CONFERENCES
WARD/STAKE
SCOUTING GROUPS
FAMILY REUNIONS
& MORE
TOUR THE BLUFF FORT
VISIT CEMETERY
FIND THE ROUTE ACTIVITY
CHALLENGE COURSE
HIKE SAN JUAN HILL
• 10 ACRE CAMPGROUND
• SOLAR SHOWERS
• PAVILIONS
• WATER
• BATHROOMS
• GRAVELED TENT SITES
• VOLLEYBALL
• TETHERBALL
• HORSESHOES
• CORN HOLE
• NINE SQUARE
• SPIKE BALL



Front cover of Bluff Fort Audio Series booklet.



Bluff Fort Audio Stories Updated 2019

Disclaimer: This is a work in progress. Scripts are changed and added on a fairly regular basis. The story project was under the direction of Grant Taylor. Scripts were found in journals, letters and family stories that were retold to fit the size the scripts. but Dick Jacobs and later Ben Wilson helped record and edit the scripts. Many volunteers and some paid translators helped to create these stories that can be found all around Bluff Fort. Many thanks to all who helped. Editor's note: The audio sites are numbered corresponding to the above map. A few have no audio, as noted along the way.

San Juan Cooperative Building (Site #1)

Read by Jeff Lambright

San Juan Cooperative
Established 1882
There are places so full of memories, they almost come to life. The co-op is that kind of place. It has witnessed a great deal of history. The view out those windows has changed through the years and yet if you watch and listen… who knows? You may catch a glimpse of the past. From here one could see most of the comings and goings in town. The building itself played a role, even before it was finished.

In 1899 the building, still under construction, hosted its first Holiday Dance. That festive occasion provided a pattern for many celebrations to come.

But the co-op was more than a gathering place. It became the center of commerce as well. Folks came here to do business from all over the region. Within these stone walls was a bank, a Post Office, a General Store and a place to catch up on the news.

By 1895, Bluff had become one of the richest per capita cities west of the Mississippi. Cattle, sheep and a gold rush kept the town and the co-op bustling with activity. In its hay day, the Co-op issued stock. Members were paid a 40% return on their investment the first year.

In 1920, the Co-op was sold to John Hunt, but continued its role as a community center. Then one evening in 1925 Fred Star, a newly hired employee, stayed after work and packed sticks of dynamite next to the safe. It seems that Fred decided to stay and watch the explosion. July 19, 1925 not only marked the demise of the Co-op but also of Fred.

Valuable lessons and insights can be learned from the past. History helps us better understand who we are. With those purposes firmly in mind, an effort to recreate the original co-op was carried out by the Hole in the Rock Foundation. In 1899 the original building was an investment in an uncertain future. It cost $3000 and untold labor when it was built. Rebuilding it cost more than a million dollars in 2013. But this was an investment of a different kind-- an investment in the value of history--bringing past and present together--enriching the future with the insights of the past. For all involved in the re-creating the Co-op the effort has indeed been a labor of love.

Elder Erastus Snow (Site #1)

Statue upstairs in the Ecclesiastical corner
Read by Burnis Skinner

The settlers of Bluff had come in response to a missionary call, and Elder Erastus Snow was the Mormon Apostle who shepherded the work of the fledgling San Juan Mission. He visited Bluff in August of 1880 and gave the settlers instructions for building a hollow square fort as a means of protection. He also surveyed the work on the canal and their water diversions.

Elder Snow came again in the fall 1884 after a devastating flood brought the San Juan River to the mid section of the Fort. Montezuma Fort had been washed away by that flood.

Realizing the difficulty of settling on the San Juan, Elder Snow offered a release to any who lacked the means or ability to stay. The remaining settlers were given an Apostolic Blessing which promised them that they would be doubly blessed if they remained.

That blessing was fulfilled in a literal way. By 1895, Bluff had become the richest city per capita west of the Mississippi River. Cattle and sheep provided lucrative returns because of the plentiful feed found on the surrounding rangeland.

Elder Snow continued to oversee the work of the San Juan Missionaries and praised them for their perseverance and dedication to their call to settle the San Juan.

Restrooms (Site #2)

Relief Society Building (Site #3)

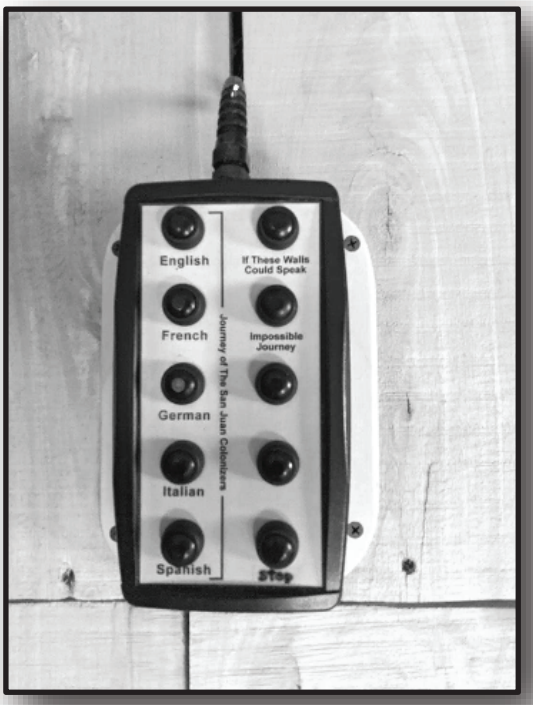
Read by Connie Jacob

The Relief Society, the oldest woman's organization in the world, was organized in Nauvoo, Illinois, under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith following the desire of the sisters to bring comfort and physical relief to the poor and to educate and strengthen the sisters spiritually and morally. This organization which is governed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, directs the women's efforts. The women of Bluff joined together weekly in a Relief Society building and with kindness and love watched over and cared for each other.

When babies were born, meals were taken in. When sickness entered in, care was given and when death came, the sisters were there to give comfort and solace. They knew of God's Plan of Happiness and by joining their faith together miracles could and often did happen.

Maintenance Building. (Site #4 no narrative)

Crafts Building (Site #5 no narrative)





Push buttons inside the Log Meetinghouse enable visitors to view video presentations in several languages. Similar buttons allow visitors to hear the audio presentations detailed in the appendix.

Hogan Narration (Site #6) (Not finalized or recorded)

Indian Encampment by Grant Taylor

Settling the west came with a price. The indigenous residents suffered because of the white man's desire for land and expansion of the United States. The white man's laws and treaties were not fair.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to the Great Basin seeking freedom from religious persecution. Their Prophet and his brother, Joseph and Hyrum Smith had been martyred in Illinois. Under the direction of their next prophet, President Brigham Young, they left homes in Illinois and new converts coming from Europe came west in wagons and handcarts, seeking refuge and a place to call home.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs made treaties with native tribes. Much of the land that was allocated made it difficult to survive.

About the time these pioneers arrived, the Indians were returning from a forced immigration to Oklahoma. Their cropland had been destroyed and so finding enough food was difficult.

Marauding Indians preyed on their livestock and Brigham Young developed a plan to work with the native Indian tribes. Young asked the Saints to feed not fight, but large herds were coming up missing in southwestern Utah Territory. Due to pleas from these settlers, Young decided to send a settlement group to the southeast corner of the territory. He passed away in 1877 before calls were made, but in 1879 calls went out creating the San Juan Mission from President John Taylor. This group was to work towards peace with the Navajo and Paiute tribes.

When the settlers arrived in Bluff they were met by a group of Indians. These Indians couldn't believe that a wagon train could have negotiated the terrain.

Soon these settlers had regular interaction with the native Indians. Relationships were made forging friendships. The Indians were intrigued by the pioneers and they began trading with them. When pies and bread were baked at Bluff Fort, the Indians would come hoping for a slice.

Soon, a trust and brotherhood developed. Indians worked for and with the white man. The Indians learned that these white men could be trusted and that they did not lie.

This hogan has been blessed and was furnished by Lou Ann Harvey, a member of the Navajo tribe and currently director of Senior Services in Bluff. She said that it reminds her of her grandmother's hogan.

The Hogan by Sunny Feinauer, Bluff Fort Missionary 2021 to 2023.

The word hogan means home. Casey and Cecilia Lee Boy came and spoke with Sunny about how to set up the hogan. Mary Lou Harvey was the original one to set up and furnish the Fort hogan.

The Fort's is a male hogan. It has a square door, and it has sides that are built out from the door. Our hogan has short sides because we don't have enough room to build it out.

A female hogan has a rounded door and does not come out in front. A female hogan is typically larger than the male hogan. She can have more people in hers. The door always faces east for the morning sun. The Native Americans say their morning prayers to the east and their evening prayers to the west.

When you enter a hogan for normal purposes, you go left. You look forward to the future. Don't look back to the past. This clockwise rotation is used in many things. Sweeping, stirring while cooking, digging a hole when planting.

Way back, there was no cooking done in the male hogan. The women would cook outside and bring the food in to the men. The male hogan is used for ceremonies, sleeping, eating. In modern day, the females cook inside the female hogan.

Women and babies don't wear feathers. Men can wear feathers for ceremonies. It depends on the ceremony what kind of feathers. The feathers could be crow, eagle, or turkey.

The picture in the hogan of the woman brushing hair is with a corn brush. They believe that from birth, your wisdom is in your hair. So many don't cut their hair. When children get older, they might ask permission to cut their hair. Parents decide if the child is wise enough to make good decisions. Then they might give permission. Then along comes a grandparent who says, "You cut off your wisdom."

They used to sit, as well as sleep on sheepskins. The tail of the sheep goes up against the wall. They believe that the sheep can carry you off in the night, if the head is up by the wall. In the morning, they take the sheepskins out, shake them, and let them air out all day.

The special guest or the medicine man sits on the skin on the west end of the hogan. The patient sits to the right of the medicine man. The medicine man does a sandpainting on the floor which represents different things. The traditional colors of the sand are blue, white, black and yellow. The ceremony can take up to 4 days before the patient is well. At that time, the patient leaves, and the medicine man brushes the sand out of the door, which takes all of the illness out of the hogan.

In the Fort hogan, we have a rug loom. They are sacred. All parts of it have sacred symbols. The top is Father Sky. The bottom is Mother Earth.

Men were the first weavers. The tradition is that Spider Woman taught them to weave. The lacing on the top represents lightning. The strings going down represents rain. All the sticks are sacred and should never touch the ground. The patterns for the rugs are in the weaver's head.

They believe that they weave their soul into their rug. They need a way for the soul to escape when the rug is finished. So, a thin thread comes out of the rug for that purpose. It is called the spirit line.

The baby is held in a cradle board.The round part at the top represents a rainbow. The lacing on the baby represents lightning. The baby is laced in snugly so that they will develop a straight sturdy spine.

A mother will have the baby next to her when she weaves her rug so she can tell her stories and sing cradle songs. There are many stories about the loom and the cradle songs. They are sacred and not shared with us.

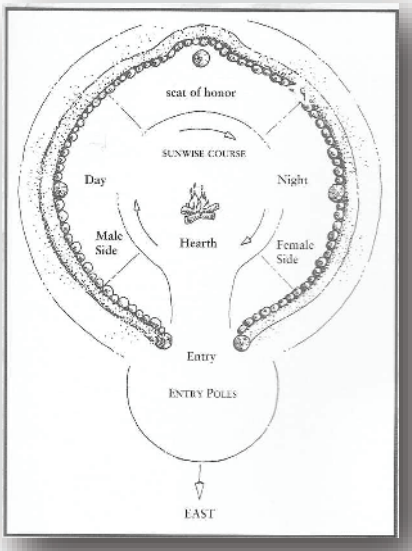
These items in the hogan are sacred and are kept off the ground.

Seven sticks are used for stirring. They represent the seven sisters. (The seven stars in the sky.) When the men can't see them in the sky, they know that it is time to plant. These sticks can be presented to a young woman when she comes of age. She puts them above the door. It represents That this home will not go without food.

The grinding stone can be used to grind corn. Traditionally, they ate blue corn and squash. When a girl gets married. Her mother gives her white corn. The girl grinds it into a fine white flour. She then puts it in the cake batter to make her wedding cake. She stirs it with the stirring sticks in a clockwise rotation.

When the Navajos were forced to march to Fort Sumter, they were given bacon, flour, and coffee beans. They did not know what to do with it. They ate it raw, and many became sick and died. Captain Barney took flour and baked it on heated stones, and out of that came frybread.

The hogan represents Mother Earth's womb. The stove pipe is the umbilical cord, and the hole in the ceiling is the navel. When leaving the hogan, a person puts their hands high in the air and says "Thank you Mother Earth."



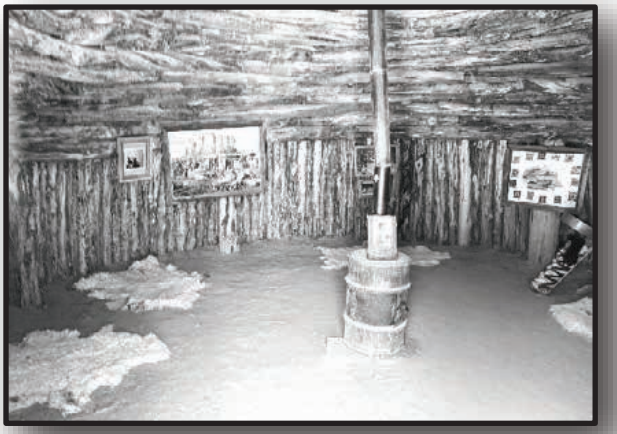


Diagram from "The Hogan The Traditional Navajo Home." by Scott Thybony: Published by Western National Parks Association, Tucson, AZ, 1999. Inside the Fort hogan. Ron Bateman photo.

Ute Tepee (Site #7) no narrative

Water Wheel Works-The Story of Water (Site #8)

Read by Jack Powers

Waterwheels and canals have been used for centuries to lift water from rivers and streams to irrigate arid farmland. There are as many as 10 waterwheels that were built along the San Juan River.

Soon after their arrival in Bluff, the San Juan Pioneers began surveying to build a canal. The Devil's Ditch as it became known started about 18 miles upstream from Bluff. Diverse methods were used including different types of dams which seemed to get washed away with every heavy rainstorm. The Pioneers used horses and a tool called a Fresno to help dig out the canal. One resident of Bluff remembers as many as 25 teams of horses working at one time trying to keep water in the canal. If you had a water turn, you were required to spend time keeping the sandy banks from washing away. As much as three fourths of a farmer's time was spent working on the Ditch.

The Holyoaks, Hydes and others engineered and constructed large waterwheels to lift water out of the San Juan. After the water was lifted out of the river it was run in a trough or aqueduct, then the water flowed into ditches to irrigate their crops. Waterwheels depending on their size weighed over 2,000 pounds. To construct and assemble the wheels right at the waters edge was no small feat. However, the level of the water varied and to adjust the level at which water met the buckets was pretty difficult. Then if there was a flash flood it often meant the demise of the wheel and it was time to start all over again.

The San Juan River was the only source of irrigation water for the area around Bluff.

Henry and Sarah Holyoak and their seven children moved away from Bluff up the river to a little place they called Holyoak. For three consecutive years they constructed waterwheels just to have the San Juan flood and wash their waterwheels down stream. The Holyoaks realized that when the land around Bluff was divided up that there wasn't going to be enough acreage for their family to survive and so they pushed on up the river. Sarah lived out of her wagon for 3 years while the family struggled to get a waterwheel working. Finally they moved on to Moab and settled at Proverty Flats a few miles west of Moab and Henry made a good life for his growing family.

One of the largest waterwheels was built by the Hydes at the Rincon trading post owned by Amasa Barton.Today you can still see the stone base near the San Juan river from which the wheel was suspended. Water came down the canal and then ditches took off like branches of a tree. At the top of each field was a headgate that could be raised or lowered. Each farmer negotiated for water turns and depending on how many water shares you had would determine how many hours you would have water in your ditch.

Much of the canal cut through sandy soil, the "Ditch" needed continual attention to keep the water in the ditch. Washouts were common. Many diary entries were made that referred to the "need to water the vegetable garden from the well today, because the water had gone out of the Ditch." Their vegetable gardens were large enough to sustain their families through the year. Bottling string beans, corn, peas, applesauce, juices, and anything else produced that would store in a bottle was part of the tasks in the summer and fall.

Try your hand at creating ditches and dams in the erosion table. Mind how easily a break in the dam sends flood waters down the ditch eroding the dam and ditches. This exact problem plagued the Mormon pioneers every summer until the Devil's Ditch was finally discontinued in the late 1930's.

God Panning and Sluice Mining (Site #9)
Read by Jack Powers

Mining gave Bluff a real boom the late 1880's and 90's when flour gold was discovered on the banks of the San Juan. Would-be miners came as far away as England and Wales. The boom turned to bust when the way to recover the flour gold, very fine particles of gold, turned too costly to claim. Some of the miners were also great stone masons and shortly after the mining boom, stone homes began replacing their log cabins. The Kumen Jones home on the Fort property was the first stone home constructed in Bluff. A walk through town gives you a good idea of their amazing craftsmanship.

Try your luck panning for gold. You might be lucky enough to find something shiny in the gold slough. Hope you are enjoying your time at Bluff Fort. Be sure and tell your friends about your visit.

In 1879, John Taylor, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a call for church members to settle this place. Their response is known as the San Juan mission. The region was isolated and as a result it had become a stronghold for horse thieves and other renegades. This in turn provoked strained relations with native tribes in the region.

Parley Butt Cabin (Site #10)
Written by Lanora Butt, daughter of Parley & Ency Butt; also Ency Bayles Butt letter to Lanora Butt
Read by Jessica Jones, Great, great granddaughter

"October 10, 1897 - a windy cold day! While playing with the children --- popping corn for us --mother was stricken with a coughing spell. By night she was chilly. We built a fire in the fireplace. By bedtime she was worse. She dropped off to sleep and [then] suddenly into convulsions. Soon after midnight Mother died along with her unborn child. Mother was only 33 years old.

People were notified. They came-not a few…. When Uncle Hanson arrived from Thompson Spring, he and Father threw their arms around each other and wept bitterly.

The funeral was held at the graveside on a knoll near the house where Mother had once taken me to pick wild flowers. She remarked then that this would be a good place for a cemetery.

I was taken there to see her lowered into the grave. I was the only one who knew that she had picked that very spot. …and recollections of that spring day eased my sorrow-torn heart. (Spoken Signature): Lanora Butt, daughter of Ency Bayles Butt
urn provoked strained relations with native tribes in the region.

Samuel Wood Cabin (Site #11)
Written by a great granddaughter
Read by Terri Baker

Aunt Jody, as she was fondly called, was twenty-nine years old when she arrived in Bluff. When sickness came upon the people, she quickly demonstrated her ability as a nurse. In Bluff a bumper crop of babies was always on the way. Bishop Jens Nielson, who knew of her nursing skills in Cedar City, called her to officiate as midwife of the community. She refused, saying, "I am green as a cucumber, and I don't know how babies are born." But Bishop Nielson persuaded her. "She was the doctor in Bluff for twenty-five years, often giving her services without charge, though some paid in kind with fruit, honey, meat, cloth, or anything they had that was usable. She delivered over 165 babies after she started counting, and never lost one in childbirth. Among her many gifts was the ability to cheer and comfort those in distress. Her tender touch, her encouraging words, her calm spirit, her cheerful way, and prayers were often the only medicine she used."

Frederick I. Jones Cabin (Site #12)

Description by Albert R. Lyman Read by Mark Taylor

When in 1882, Frederick and Mary Jones accepted a mission call to the recently organized San Juan Mission, they left their small farm in Cedar City, and journeyed by covered wagon to the little settlement named Bluff in the wilds alongside the San Juan River. As soon as they arrived, Fred set out to provide for his loved ones in Bluff as he had in Cedar City, but the lack of resources limited him.

Fred had a garden, an orchard, and land in the field. His two rooms, like every other house in Bluff at that time, were built with the crooked and twisted cottonwoods that grew along the river; the kind that defy mechanical skill and mock at artistic taste. The floors were dirt. But within these log walls prevailed the blessed atmosphere of home, without which even a palace is a desolate place to live. Even with its crudeness, there wasn't a home where more parties, more candy pulls, quilting, and children's gatherings were held than in the Jones's home.

With all the stark inconveniences and discomfort of life in the log shelters of far away Bluff in the early 1880s, it was a life of peace and comfort compared to life among the rugged rocks and thirsty sands along the dim wagon tracks leading away in any direction.

Holyoak Encampment (Site #13) No narrative

Walton Cabin/School in Bluff (Site #14)

Read by Carl Larsen

The determined pioneers who settled here were not solely interested in conquering the land; they placed great importance on educating their hearts and their minds. "The glory of God is intelligence" they believed. They had often been admonished to seek learning…out of the best books…by study as well as by faith.

After they arrived, establishing a school became one of their first priorities. But readin' and writin' and cipherin' as it called were a bit different in 1880. Desks were shared with other students. Slates were used instead of paper and pencils. And heat in the winter came from a pot-bellied stove.

The Log meetinghouse served as the first schoolhouse. The bell on the south end called children of all ages to school. Text books were scarce. One teacher taught all of the grades. All lessons were recited or studied aloud. On occasion books were lent to the school. These were treasured and thoroughly studied.

Bluff's first school teachers included Ida Lyman, Sarah Cox, and Charles Walton. Compensation was very meager. Payment for Ida Lyman's teaching services was a milk cow. Wages for others came from a small tuition which was commonly paid in kind with vegetables, fruits, meat and bread.

School activities included ball games, music lessons and a mandolin and guitar club.

When Charles Walton was the school teacher, he held a community spelling school every Friday evening. Walton also gave music lessons, directed plays, made costumes, and built scenery.

The lessons taught in the log school house enabled many of the pupils to go on to college. By the turn of the century, Bluff had a higher percentage of youth attending Brigham Young Academy in Provo, than did any other Utah community.

It has been said that experience is the best teacher in life and the experiences of those who settled Bluff have provided lessons which not only benefited their own descendants but which will benefit generations yet to come.

Hanson Bayles (pronounced Bayless) Cabin (Site #15)

Read by Mark Taylor

While serving one term as Sheriff of San Juan County, two outlaw cowboys were seen in the County. Hanson and his deputies rounded up the two cowboys and headed for Thompson, UT, over 100 miles away. This was the closest rail-head where the outlaws could be extradited to Colorado to stand trial for their misdeeds.

Each night Hanson and his deputies would take turns standing guard over the prisoners. One night during Hanson's watch, everyone seemed to be asleep. Pretty soon his eyes got heavy too and he dozed off. All of a sudden he heard someone call out his name, "Hanson!" He awoke just as one of the outlaws was grabbing for the rifle between Hanson's knees. Hanson grabbed got the rifle first and the plan was foiled.

They finished their journey and handed the outlaws over to the authorities waiting in Thompson.

Hanson reported the incident to his family and said that the voice that had awakened him had the distinct Danish accent of his deceased mother. He was convinced that his mother had sounded the alarm that saved the lives of the two peace officers.

The Decker Cabin (Site #16)

Written by Anna Maria Mickelson
Read by Annete Decker, great granddaughter-in-law

Life in Bluff involved joy and sorrow. Some of the most joyous were the births and death brought some of the saddest. Three Decker brothers, Cornelius, James and Nathaniel, came with their wives. James' wife, Anna, gave birth to the first baby on the expedition, Lenora Deseret. Emma, Cornelius' wife, gave birth to the first baby born in Bluff.

In 1901 diphtheria struck the family of James and Anna Marie Decker. Lynn, a son, died on the 15th of December. The coffin was not allowed in the meetinghouse for fear of spreading the disease.

The next day, James and their daughter Gertrude, 14, passed away. The family was quarantined and their log home was burned to stop the spread of the disease. They moved into the new home James had been building, but in late January two more children died, Horace, 17, and Clair, 9. Anna Marie lost 4 of her 11 children and her husband in just a little over a month. The diphtheria epidemic touched others but none died.

Anna felt great sorrow, but faith in her Savior Jesus Christ and a knowledge that she would see them again gave her solace in her grief. Her friends and neighbors showed great love to her in acts of service and kindness. That's just the way it was in Bluff. When joy came to one, it came to all, but when sorrow struck, it was felt by all as well. It took great faith and courage to face the challenges. As each of us face challenges in our lives, faith in Jesus Christ still brings peace to our minds.

Jens Nielson Cabin (Site #17)

Written by Corinne Roring
Read by Evan Madsen
The women and children in Bluff watched from the windows of their small log homes, as a hundred Navajo warriors with faces painted black rode into the fort on their horses brandishing guns. It was a threatening day in the small fort's history, for the settlers would have to save themselves—if they were to survive. It was reported that a Navajo was murdered by a Mormon named Amasa Barton at a his trading post at Rincon, ten miles downriver on the San Juan, and that another Navajo had killed Amasa in self-defense. And now, the Navajos wanted to avenge a wrong.

Two men were at the fort that day. The aged Bishop of Bluff, Jens Nielson, tired and stooping from his labors, came limping to meet the hostile warriors, and Kumen Jones came forward to act as an interpreter. "We are ready to talk with our *friends*," Jens said, "but *friends* do not cling to their guns while they talk. We have *no* guns. If you want to talk with us, go stand your guns against the wall and then sit with us here in a *friendly* circle."

The courage of Jens facing the fight-hungry Indians disarmed every hostile spirit. The older warriors were the first to dismount, and they leaned their guns against the log store, and sat down cross-legged on the sand in front of the two white men. Soon, every Indian stacked his gun with the others and sat down to listen.

"Your friend, Old Eye was not killed by Amasa Barton," declared Bishop Nielson, and he told the Navajos to ask the Paiute Indians, who had witnessed the whole affair. The calmness of Jens Nielson and Kumen Jones acted as sunshine on the Indian braves. The storm passed as the voice of an old man from Denmark, spoke words of the heart to a hundred braves ready to fight.

"Don't go now," Jens said. "Stay with us until tomorrow. It is late; you are hungry. Some of you have come a long way." Jens ordered a fat steer be butchered, he ordered flour, bacon, and other things from the log store. They built campfires all over the street, roasted their beef, baked their bread, chatted and laughed. After breakfast the next morning, the Indians insisted on shaking hands. "We are *friends*, always friends," the Indians repeated as they rode away.

Once again, the hand of Providence brooded over the little colony in their effort to become trusted *friends*.

Jens Nielson was a stalwart leader in the community and everyone looked up to and trusted him. He lived in Bluff for the rest of his life and considered his mission complete only with his death, which happened in 1906. He is buried on cemetery hill.

Bodil Mortensen Statue (Site #17a) Narrative on small video screen on front of Jens Nielson Cabin

Opener to Tremonton Stake Pioneer Youth Trek July 26th, 2009
https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=i2PZ48pbgxE WALDRPW

I was born in a beautiful country in Denmark in 1847. My parents weren't wealthy people. But more important was their faith in Jesus Christ and in his church. They wanted badly to move to the Salt Lake valley with the other Mormons. They could not afford to send the family all at once. So, they started to send us one by one.

My sister had gone the year before and now it was my turn. I was only 9 when they started. I went with another family, Jens and Elsie Nielsen. Their little boy, Neils who was five, became one of my playmates.

It was a long voyage across the ocean and many people became ill. But what an adventure for a young girl. We didn't reach Iowa City until late in the spring, but we were

so excited to get there that they decided to head out with one of the last hand cart companies. It wasn't too bad for us kids and we covered a lot of miles because we didn't have to wait for the big slow animals. It was a lot harder on the men who were pulling the big handcarts, and many became sick from exhaustion. Sister Nielsen asked me to help watch little Neils while she helped her husband.

Late in October we crossed the Sweetwater River in Wyoming. It started to get cold. By morning we were covered in over a foot of snow. They told us that we had to keep going or we would freeze to death. Brother Nielson was so frozen and weak that he told his wife to go on without him. Even though she was a small woman, she put him in the hand cart and pulled him. It made it more important for me to keep Neils going. It was so cold that it was hard to keep up. We wanted to stop many times, but those that did would freeze to death.

Late that evening, we finally stopped. I was so grateful and only wanted to sit down and have something warm to eat. Sister Nielsen told me that I cannot rest yet. She sent me out for wood for the fire. I couldn't find anything else to burn so I started to gather sagebrush. I worked my way back through the cold and the snow to the handcart. I was so tired that I leaned up against the wheel of the handcart to rest for a moment. I shut my eyes and fell asleep never to open them again in this life. I was buried the next day in a common grave with 13 other people, including my little friend Neils. My name was Bodil Mortensen.

George B. Hobbs Cabin (Site #18)

Read by Paul Taylor Button #6 read by Joseph and Nathan Taylor

I was just 22 when called to the San Juan Mission. I had two sisters and their families who were also a part of the San Juan Mission call, Elizabeth and her husband Henry and Ellen Agnes and her husband Amos Hyrum Fielding. My family lived in Parowan. I was still single when I went on the expedition. During the next few months I was called to be a scout on all four of the exploring parties. I saw the difficulty in the lower trail across Lee's Ferry and across the reservation. I traveled back the upper route when we left Elizabeth and her family at Montezuma Creek. Silas Smith and others had heard word from Charles Hall and Ruben Collett that there was a crevice in the Colorado River Plateau at the end of the Kaparowitz Plateau. It seemed the best and most feasible way across the Colorado, because it was so much shorter and didn't cross Indian Territory. On the last exploring expedition I was called along with George Morrill, George Washing Sevy and Lemuel H. Redd Sr. to scout the rest of the trail for the wagon train.

We packed food for eight days thinking that the little over a hundred miles could be mapped in that time period. Little did we know…

At the top of Grey Mesa we spent most of one day looking for a way off the slick rock that encircled the flat plateau. That night as we were eating our dinner, eight mountain sheep came into our camp. They were really beautiful. The next morning we decided to give it one last shot and so each of us headed in a different direction. I gave up and headed back to camp to make breakfast for everyone, thinking that they'd find a way. While I was frying up some bacon, one of those mountain sheep came into camp. I had a gun, but it was too beautiful to kill. So I grabbed my lariat and tried to lasso it. No sooner had I thrown the rope than the animal would move a bit ahead. I kept coiling my rope and throwing, and he kept moving just out of reach of the rope. Without really realizing, all of a sudden I was off the mesa. The little sheep had shown us the way down.

It proved to be the only way possible to take wagons off the mesa, even though we had to build another dugway and put in a lot of cribbing for the wagons to safely come down. I know that God was with us and that He knew that we had to go on, like Jens Nielson said, "Whether we can make it or not."

seen from the first expedition to Montezuma Creek. Being guided again by the hand of God, we climbed to the top, and I recognized the Blues. We thought we might also have seen trees lining the San Juan River. We found an Indian tower to sleep in that night. We circumvented Grand Gulch and found our way down the Twist. Then we had to try to find a passage through Comb Reef. It stretched for almost 60 miles. Hurrying down Comb Wash, we found a Navajo trail that led up through a crack. Wagons couldn't go that way, but with difficulty they could make it up San Juan Hill.

We arrived in Bluff on December 27th. A gentile lady, Sister Harris, had just finished breakfast for her family but had some Johnny cakes that she fed us and fried up some pork. I think I ate twenty-three Johnny cakes, which almost made me sick. Oh what joy to see my sister and her family and the Davis family in Montezuma Creek all doing fairly well.

When I got back to report to the brethren, I asked about my livestock that I had left with them to watch over. It was all my worldly wealth and they had let my animals wander off. I was tired and hopping mad, so mad that I decided to quit the expedition and head back home. As I headed back along the Kaiporowits, I cooled off a bit. Then I got feeling pretty awful that I'd shot my mouth off like that with good people that were trying to do the same thing as me, live by the golden rule. I got to feeling pretty humble and so as I was hiking along, I started to pray. Pretty soon I had an impression that I should move closer to the plateau. Not too far off the trail, I came across a pretty little meadow with my livestock, plus some other strays. I realized that my animals had been cared for by the best Shepherd of all. Now I could have just skedaddled back to Parowan, but I knew that I had been called by President Lund, under the direction of our Prophet John Taylor, to help scout out the trail for the Hole in the Rock pioneers. So I retraced my steps back to 50 mile camp and checked back in for the duration of the trek.

Thales Haskell (Site #19)

Read by Mark Taylor

When Thales Haskell was a young boy, he never imagined he would one day be called on a mission to live among Native American tribes in the west, in order to learn their language, their culture, and their ways for the purpose of improving relations between the Indians and the Pioneer settlers.

In 1855, Thales married Hannah Maria Woodbury, and they moved to a small settlement in southern Utah. Thales was away from home when a young Indian boy was visiting Hannah, and the boy removed one of the guns that Thales kept on the wall. The boy accidentally discharged the gun, and Hannah and her unborn child died from the gun wound. When Thales returned home he was devastated, however, he did not seek retaliation on the young boy. Thales believed the boy's story that it was an accident, and he did not want the boy punished.

In 1857, Thales married Margaret Johanna Edwards. Margaret was from Wales and adapted to life in the rugged west. She became a mid-wife and nurse to the settlers.

In 1881, Thales was called to move his family to San Juan in the four corners region, where he assisted the settlement of Bluff. Often in danger, Thales was promised in a blessing that as long as he was obedient to the Lord he would never be harmed by the Indians. That promise was fulfilled as he mediated between various tribes and the pioneers. Thales was well known as one of the best interpreters in the Mormon community. He spoke five Indian languages and earned the respect of many natives. Navajo Henry was ever emphatic in his praise of Thales. "Haskell," said Henry, "he all time *one* talk and *heap* good man." Mancos Jim, a veteran of all the old fights, never hesitated to declare when Haskell's name came up, "Me heap like 'em." As for Haskell, he humbly remarked, "It seemed to me that it was the Lord's will that I should be one to tarry with the Indians."

In 1886, Apostle Erastus Snow paid a visit to Bluff and commented on the fact that Thales' family was not there. When Thales explained that they had moved to Colorado, Elder Snow inquired as to why Thales had not gone with them. Humbly, Thales answered that as he had not yet been released from his missionary service, he had not felt it proper for him to leave. On the spot, Elder Snow released Thales and encouraged him to join his family in Colorado, which he did, though not for long. In 1888, Indian trouble again became so bothersome to the Bluff settlers that they requested to church officials that Thales return. Obediently, Thales accepted the call to return to Bluff, and he did what he could to help restore peaceful relations with the local Indians. In 1891 he was again released from his missionary service and returned to Colorado. Remarkably, he had spent nearly thirty-two years of his life as an Indian missionary. Thales passed away on 13 June 1909 in Manasa, Colorado.

Amasa Barton (Site # 20)

Read by Mark Taylor

Commerce was good with the new settlements. A number of trading posts sprouted up. Amasa Barton started his trading post, the Rincon, near San Juan Hill. Often customers would bring items for pawn. An Indian named One Eye had brought in a gun to use for trade at the trading post. A few days later he returned bringing a broken gun hoping to exchange that one for the working gun and maintain the same amount of credit or pawn. Amasa explained that that was not fair and that he couldn't make the exchange. One Eye and his renegade friend became agitated. Amasa invited the two to a meal which his wife had prepared. After a nice lunch they returned to the trading post and continued their dialogue. The renegade friend pulled out his gun and fired at Amasa. Amasa ducked and the bullet mortally wounded One-Eye. Seeing what he had done, the renegade fired again at Amasa and hitting him in the head mortally wounded him. Seeding Amasa fall to the ground, he put the gun to his head and fired again. He then left to tell his friends his version of why One-Eye was dead.

Sister Barton, hearing the gun shots came running and when she saw what had happened she gave a young Indian boy named Posey two dollars to deliver a message to the folks in Bluff to come and help them. Amasa was moved to Bluff and about 8 days later he passed away.

When the renegade told his story to the tribe, the Indians prepared for battle and covered in war paint, got on their horses and rode into Bluff. They were met by Bishop Neilson and while he talked others prepared a large meal and they all sat down to eat. The next morning, the store was opened and dry goods were handed out to the Indians and no physical harm was done. Feeding, not fighting the Native Americans was the Mormon way.

Farm Equipment Display (Site #21 no narrative)
Equipment Donated by Melvin Gaines

James Redd Cabin (Site #22)

Written by Mary Donahoe
Read by Mark Taylor

James Monroe Redd was sixteen when he joined the Hole in the Rock party to assist his older brother and father (Lemuel H.) on the trail. Monroe was in charge of overseeing the cattle and horses, and when grass and feed became scarce, he separated from the company to find grazing ground.

Arriving in Bluff, he helped set-up living quarters for those he had grown to know and love, before he returned to New Harmony, Utah. In 1884, he married Lucinda Pace and they lived in New Harmony for the first three years. However, in 1887, Monroe sensed greater

business prospects in southeastern Utah, and moved his family to Bluff. The journey was much easier this time with no holes to blast or roads to hue out of rock surfaces.

Monroe turned to raising cattle and horses and joined the San Juan Co-op in Bluff when the settlers bought out a Texas cattle company. Monroe's growing family led him to return to farming, and the family moved north to Monticello in 1905, where land was more suitable.

During an epidemic of typhoid fever that hit their Monticello community, Lucinda nursed many people who became quite ill. When it was discovered that typhoid spread through the unclean water from their irrigation ditch, Lucinda and several other women made it their personal mission to see that a clean water system and electricity were installed in Monticello.

For many years, Monticello had no public eating place, so the Redd's home was open to hungry, tired travelers. The guests that they entertained ran the gamut from state and Church officials to humble, hungry Indians. Thus, the influence of those who first settled in Bluff, spread throughout all of San Juan County.

LH Redd Cabin Ramblings of Eliza Westover Redd (Site #23)

Read by Vinnie Harker

You are wrong about my early experiences in Bluff. (A chuckle and a smile in her voice as she remembers).

After traveling six months, to have a real room, to be able to stand up to dress and undress to be able to open and close a real door, let light in through a real window, make my bed and walk around to do things – that was joy unsurpassed.

Father was a thrifty person from the start, so even in those early days, we always had a cozy nook in our rough surroundings. When we first arrived, he took our two wagon covers and made a very comfortable tent. He built a bedstead from pieces of dry cottonwood and corded it with rope. No castle was more appreciated!

Later he built a cabin and then he went up the river when he heard a settler was leaving and came home with lumber flooring enough for one room, also a door and a window and half dozen chickens. I bought a cheap lace curtain from Montgomery, and put factory (muslin) on the wall, and oh you can't imagine what that one room log cabin with a real door and window meant to me. I had a rag carpet mother had helped me with and that room, I can see it now. It was real happiness. When my neighbor, Harriet Barton called one day, she was fair aghast at the coziness of my cabin.

Believe it or not, those days of bringing up my young'uns at the fort was the happiest time of my life. (Hear the pen scratching stop and a contented sigh.)

(Spoken signature): Eliza Westover Redd

Joseph Barton Cabin (Site #24)

Written by LaRue Barton Kirkham, read by Cassie Welch, Great granddaughter.
Mama had been washing and ironing all week. It wasn't often that a photographer came to town. In those days we had to sit very still while the cap on the lens of the camera was removed and left off for 30 seconds or more. It must have been a daunting task getting seven children not to wiggle, but Mama was determined. Looking back, I wonder if she somehow knew that would be our last photograph.

Caring for a large family was very hard work and Mama didn't seem quite herself as we awaited the arrival of child number eight. Still her eyes seemed to sparkle at Papa's promise to remodel her too small of a kitchen but before it was finished things went very wrong. Mama passed away a few days after delivering Ray Wesley. He died a few days after her.

Papa had been carefully sorting and matching lengths of fine-grained wood to build cabinets for Mama's kitchen. He used the wood for her coffin instead.

It was hard to be happy after Mama died. Sometimes, I would sit in her rocking chair and look at that last photograph, hour after hour. I could almost feel her comforting me. We cannot see things clearly now, but there is one thing I know . . . one day we will all be together again. Annie Barton Hammond, 1896.

Platte D. Lyman (Site #25)

Written by Brent Lyman, Great grandson of Platte DeAlton Lyman
Read by Mark Taylor

Platte was born in the back of a wagon on August 20, 1848. Two wagons had stopped on the banks of the Platte River for 30 minutes while he was born. They would travel for two more months before reaching the Salt Lake valley. Platte had only three weeks of formal education but his mother taught him to read and write by the age of six. He studied the rest of his life. He cowboyed, freighted and farmed. He provided the main source of income for his widowed mother and siblings. He loved to read and always had some books in his saddlebags. He loved horses and said, "The best thing for the inside of a man is the outside of a horse."

At the age of 18 he was called to serve a mission to England. He and Adelia Robison had been married for five days. In his early twenties he was asked to represent Millard County to help draft the first Utah Statehood Constitution. Platte became well known and trusted in Central Utah.

In 1879 he was called with his family to join several dozen other families to settle San Juan County. This southeastern portion of the Utah Territory was home to Navajos, Paiutes and outlaws, all of which often raided settlements to the West and North. Platte was asked to become the field captain serving under Silas Smith. Platte kept the only daily diary for the first expedition. Smith was away much of the time getting supplies and lobbying the Territorial Legislature for money so that left Platte in charge of the expedition, which constructed a road across the most difficult terrain ever traveled by a settlement wagon train.

He spent most of the remainder of his life in San Juan County where he was the first president of the San Juan Stake, the first president of the San Juan Cooperative and he helped organize the first San Juan County legal court system and county government. After serving as President of the European Mission for three years for the Mormon Church, he returned to his beloved San Juan. He died in Bluff on November 13, 1901 at the 53. (A. Brent Lyman, Great Grandson of Platte DeAlton Lyman)

Perkins Cabin (Site #26)

Written and read by Frank & Elaine Rowley

At the tender age of 6, Benjamin Perkins was thrust into the dark depths of the coal mines in Wales. Who would have ever thought this experience would prepare him for the "impossible journey" that awaited him and his brother Hyrum and their families.

When the call from President John Taylor came to Hyrum and his wife, Rachel, in 1879 to join the San Juan Mission, Benjamin volunteered for him and his wife Mary Ann to join the expedition also. It was Elder John Taylor who when on a mission to Wales, had stayed often with the Perkins family and had given them great spiritual inspiration and direction. This caused Ben and Hyrum and their wives to willingly accept the call.

As the company reached the Colorado River at the site they would soon call "The-Hole- in-the- Rock" it became Ben and Hyrum's job to design and engineer the seemingly impossible task of making a road down this nearly vertical cliff. With their experience in mining and the use of explosives they were soon nick-named the "blowers and blasters from Wales."

Despite the hardships the pioneers faced daily, a great deal of the peace of the company was due to the pleasant natures of the Perkins brothers. Kumen Jones wrote in later life of the journey to Bluff, "…We needed men who knew how to work and were not afraid to tackle downright hard jobs where good judgment was needed. And here is where the Perkins Brothers, Uncle Ben and Hyrum came into the large game. The jolly good nature with which they went at the hardest and biggest jobs was an example in psychology. It gave courage to the less ambitious ones, and that was an asset to the cause."

The "impossible journey" could never have been accomplished without the stalwart women that stood alongside these valiant men.

MaryAnn, Ben's 1st wife, was a woman of remarkable courage, determination and a strong sense of duty. She was the mother to 11 children and 1 adopted daughter. Mary Ann filled her home with flowers and beautiful things and welcomed all who came to her door, no matter their station, their dress or their race.

Sarah Williams, at the age of 19, came along on the trip to Bluff to help Ben and her sister MaryAnn with their children. She also drove one of the wagons for Ben. When they arrived in Bluff, she said, "I didn't see anything there to stop for, nor could I see how it was possible to make a town in such a place. How thankful I was I didn't have to make my home there." Little did she know that she would soon become Ben's 2nd wife and she would raise her 10 children in this little spot in the desert that she grew to love so very much.

Rachel Corry, Hyrum's wife, was known for her ability to remain calm in situations of great anxiety. When a Navajo "war party" was headed to Bluff and all the women and children were to meet at one of Bishop Nielson's home, Rachel and her four little children were not there. She had "bits and pieces of tidying that she had to do in her house before leaving it and even in the face of marauding Navajos, her standards would prevail."

These are the Perkin's pioneers!

Kumen Jones Home (site #27)

Written by Kumen Jones-excerpts gathered by Leon Jones, Great grandson
Read by Leon Jones

"Three babies were born on the way, and with the assistance of two old-time nurses, and the blessing of the Good Father, all went well with mothers and children. The Good Father had a kind watch care over our whole company of pilgrims, bringing us through without death or serious sickness or accident of any nature. Nearly everyone was helpful and kind and good-natured, and in very rough places men would rally to each other's help, steadying the wagons down the slick rocks with long ropes, and pushing and pulling up the hills. With them was an ol-timer named Barnes whose ponderous laugh echoing through camp would bring at least a good-natured smile to the faces of all who heard.

"Looking back at it now, and considering how that large company working, and blasting their way through a country of that nature, and being there during six months of one of the severest winters, it looks to me as though there was something more than human power and wisdom associated with it.

"When that bedraggled company of tired pilgrims straggled into the present site of Bluff, many of their teams, which consisted of horses of all sizes and descriptions, as well as oxen, mules and burros, were unable to proceed farther; at least they would have to stop there for some time, and some of them remained there on that account. Most of the original settlers at Bluff, however, remained there from religious and conscientious motives. And under the blessing and protection of a kind Providence, they were prospered and preserved to accomplish, at least in a large measure, the mission assigned them. "
Kumen Jones

Bowery (no recording) (Site #28)

Vegetable Garden (Map Site not numbered) Not recorded

Garden produce was very important to the survival of these pioneers. Each spring the soil was prepared by digging in manure and other organic material. Seeds were planted as weather allowed. Peas, onions, cabbage, radishes and lettuce were all planted in the early spring. When fear of frost passed then other vegetables were planted. Letters and diaries talk about what was planted and how well they were doing. Some commented about the water being out of the Devil's ditch and so water was drawn from one of the three wells at the Fort. Garden plots were large, often as big about 100' x 100'. A family's vegetable requirements came from their harvest. Vegetables were preserved in bottles for use in the winter. Bluff was noted for its horticulture, berries as well as watermelon and cantaloupe.

Orchard Story – (Map Site not numbered) Not recorded

Mormon settlers were industrious. Soon after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Platt D. Lyman's, 2nd in command on the Hole in the Rock trail, grandfather headed back across the plains realizing that the Mormons would need starts for fruit trees and other nursery stock. Fruit trees were planted around their homes hoping that the frost wouldn't get the year's harvest. Bluff was known for its fruit production. The fruit would be made into jams and jellies. Larger fruits were bottled, sliced peaches, apricots, pears, and plums. The women were proud of the bottled fruit lining their store room shelves. Bottling was a big job for the whole family. Each fall as fruits and vegetables ripened, children picked the fruit and helped stock the wood to keep the stove hot. Fruit was washed and placed in sterilized bottles and placed in a large kettle where it would cook. After the prescribed time in the

water bath, bottles would be placed on the kitchen table and each ear would be tuned to hear the ping of the bottle lid announcing that it was sealed and ready for storage. Each family member looked forward to a cold bottle of peaches or pears, or jam or jelly on their homemade bread. Families hoped that the home-canned stock would last late into the winter to spice up their diet. Preservation of fruit and vegetables helped keep family expenses down and made for a great family project.

Log Meetinghouse (Site #29)

Read by Burnis Skinner

The log meetinghouse was built soon after the pioneers arrived in Bluff. It "became a place for meetings, dances and all kinds of public gatherings. It gave shelter in wet seasons to unfortunate families whose mud roofs failed to turn the rain and it offered a hardy place for friends to meet and for strolling lovers to rest in the evening. It was not a church but simply a meetinghouse." Albert R. Lyman

Dances, plays, musical productions and parties were commonplace in the meetinghouse. The walls frequently reverberated with sounds from Samuel Cox's fiddle, Charles Walton's violin and horn, Thales Haskell's accordion and Benjamin Perkin's gifted voice and antics, as well as the sounds of harmonicas, choirs, vocal duets and solos.

Church services were also held in this building until 1895 when it was replaced with a stone meetinghouse.

Far too frequently, members of the little community gathered in the meetinghouse with heavy hearts as they mourned the passing of one of their own.

It was uncommon for all of the children of any family to reach adulthood. The Bluff cemetery gravestones paint a sad portrait of the challenges of life on the frontier in the 1880's. The cemetery records list many children who died within days or hours of their birth. Others died in their youth from diphtheria, measles, croup or from simple cuts and scrapes that became infected. Some mothers died in childbirth. Burns from the fireplace took their toll, as did falls from horses.

When wildflowers were in bloom, the caskets were adorned with them. Prayers, hymns of comfort, eulogies and gospel messages provided an eternal perspective and comfort to the mourners.

Following each service a slow procession led by the casket bearers made its way through town and up onto cemetery hill. Here a vista of the entire town, the river and red cliffs provided a fitting backdrop for a final resting place.

Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ was considered a sacred duty. At significant sacrifice to their families, those called answered the call to serve missions for two to three years. Some, particularly the older men, served missions prior to coming to Bluff while others were called from Bluff. Most of the young single men of Bluff were called as were many married men whose departure placed the responsibility for the livelihood of their families upon their wives and children. Following a quarterly conference, Brigham Young Jr. recorded in his journal that so many men had been called away from Bluff to serve elsewhere, that there weren't enough left to maintain the irrigation ditch.

John Taylor Statue (Site #30)

Read by Jack Powers

President Taylor understood the difficulties facing the original native inhabitants who were gradually being forced onto government reservations. He instructed the settlers to "feed them, not fight them," and that's what they attempted to do.

There were a few minor conflicts during those early years, a learning curve which sprang from the clash of two cultures. But in time President Taylor's counsel prevailed. The first response to the settlers became to reach for a loaf of bread rather than a gun.

Hole in the Rock Monument Plaza (Site #30a)

Etched here in stone are the names of those hearty pioneers who made the descent down the 1300-foot vertical drop known as the Hole in the Rock. But that was the only the first obstacle they encountered. Six more tests of courage and determination awaited them on the trail. The last of these obstacles, known as San Juan Hill, was just 10 miles west of Bluff.

After six grueling months of toil and struggle, teams were exhausted and provisions nearly gone, yet the company was determined to press on.

It required seven span (14 animals) of horses to pull each wagon up the last hill 800 feet of slick, solid rock. These hardy pioneers not only opened a route which many others would follow in the years which followed, they made this ground sacred because of their faith and courage.

When the San Juan pioneers reached the Bluff valley, irrigating and planting crops became their paramount concerns. As soon as an irrigation ditch was in and crops were planted, their energy was directed to the construction of adequate shelter that they might not spend another winter in wagon beds and tents.

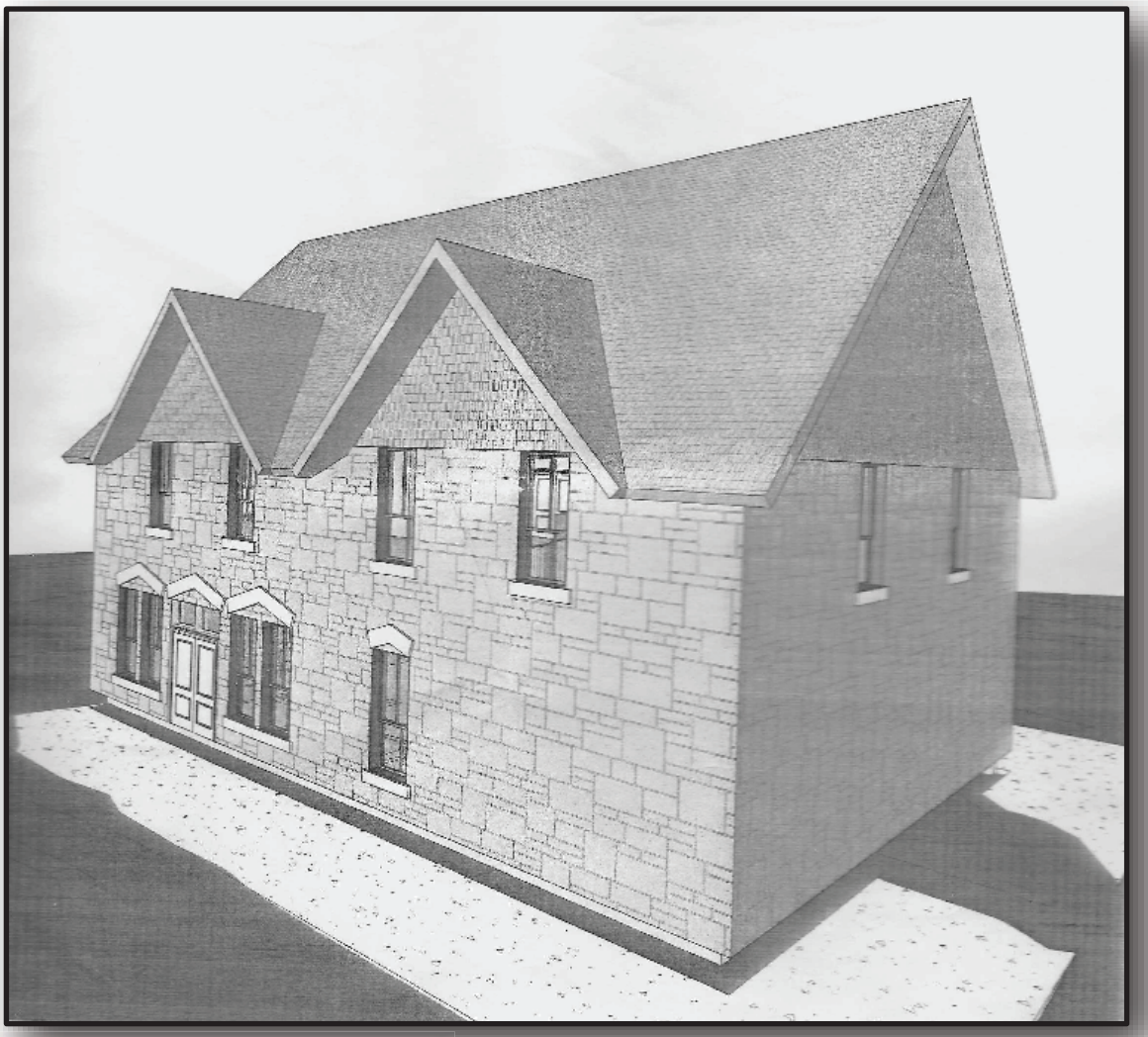
By early fall, they were helping one another construct log cabins from the surrounding Cottonwood trees. Initially, the one room cabins were constructed adjacent to each other to form a fort. The Bluff Fort was not a fortress, but rather places where security was achieved by living in close proximity to each other; united in a common goal.

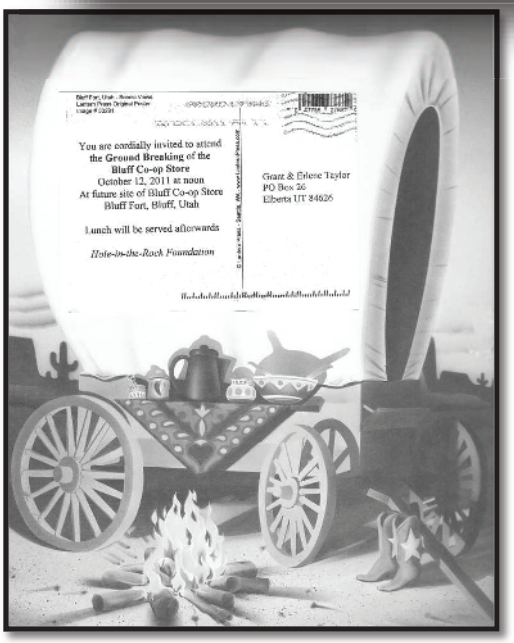
The chicken coop. (Map Site not numbered) No recording.

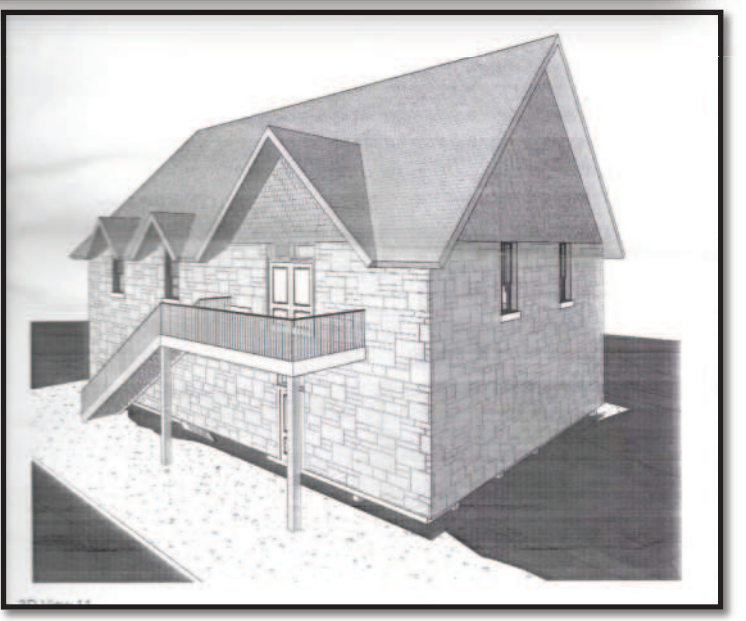


Sunflowers planted by Lisa Hill (2023) in front of a handcart on the left. The chicken coop was eventually converted into a garden shed with chicken clucking sounds emanating from a strategically placed speaker disguised as a rock. An artificial hen roosts in the window.

Architects' drawings of the San Juan Cooperative store.

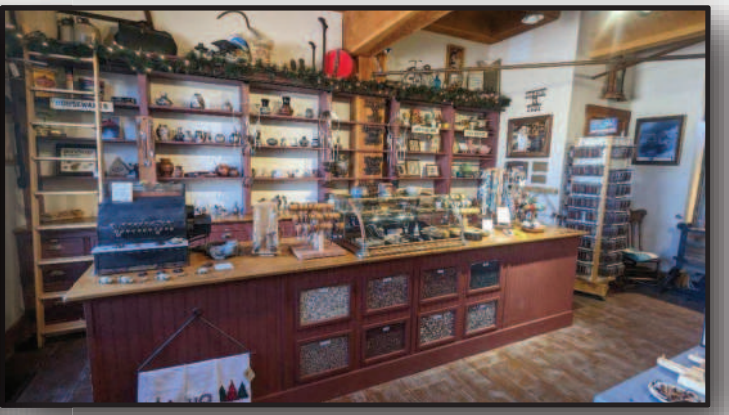








The Co-op west wall.



The Co-op east wall.

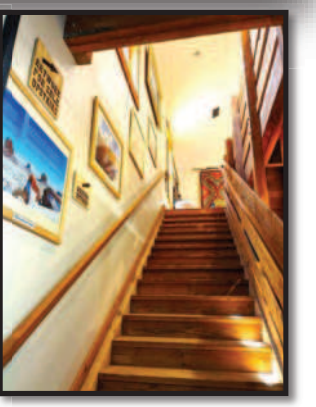


Bluff Mining Cart inside the Co-op.

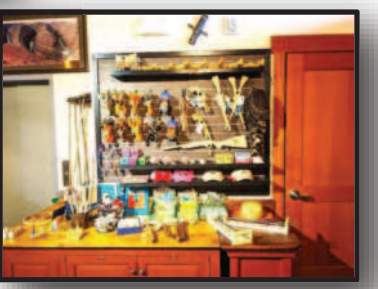


San Juan Cooperative facing southwest inside. Displays of Native American items, handcrafted wood bread boards & rolling pins, etc., plus Topsy Turvy dolls and the "Talking Wall."

Handmade toys such as games, wooden rifles and pistols, tomahawks, slingshots, and caps are for sale in the Co-op.



Stair leading to the museum.





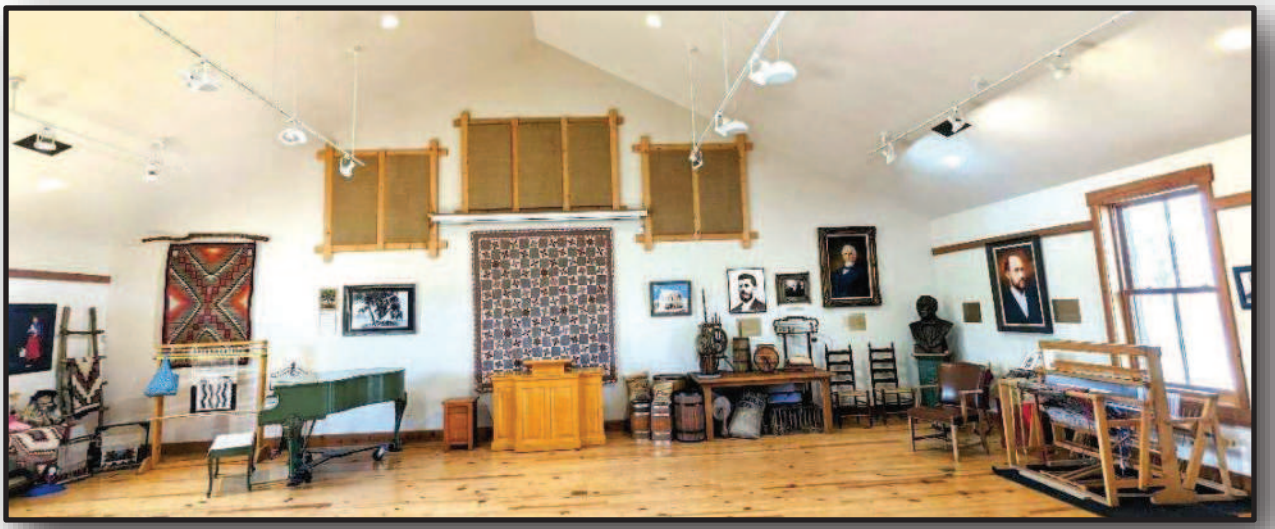
San Juan Cooperative sales counter.
Ron Bateman photos.



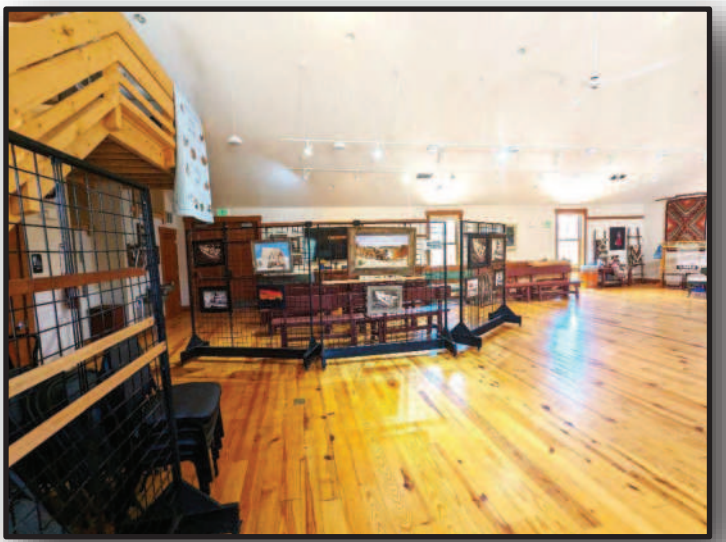
Handmade purses, quilts, cozys, etc. for sale. Missionary Bev Bateman pictured.



The north wall of the upstairs gallery museum in the Co-op.



West wall of upstairs museum of the Co-op. The south wall has stairs leading to the main floor below. Friday Nights at the Fort are held in this hall.



The south wall has art display racks on wheels. On the left are stairs leading to the directors' office. Behind the art racks is a video presentation area as well as double doors leading to outside stairs on the back of the Co-op. On the left are doors leading to a storage closet & restrooms.

Ron Bateman photos.

OBSERVATIONS IN THE CO-OP by Sunny Feinauer (Church Service Missionary 2021-2023)

THE LAST WAGON DOWN STORY-If time, we can tell the story of the "Last Wagon Down." The picture is in the wagon; we can use it as a visual aid.



DIORAMA OF ASCENT UP SAN JUAN HILL- One reason that this was placed there is for our guests to see it, after seeing the film in room #3. The photos are above it to help show Comb Ridge and San Juan Hill. A pointer stick is on the mailboxes to use in pointing out Comb Ridge and San Juan Hill.

COMB RIDGE PHOTO - It illustrates how massive and formidable the ridge really is.

SAN JUAN HILL– You may want to tell visitors that you have hiked San Juan Hill. Show the trail that the pioneers went up. Point out the carving depiction "We Thank Thee Oh God."

VERBALLY TAKE THEM ON A TOUR OF THE SMALL MUSEUM UPSTAIRS (which has been thoughtfully laid out.)

THERE ARE PHOTOS ON THE STAIRCASE (What upstairs looked like prior to re-arrangement: the large bust of Erastus Snow was at the top of the stairs and people frequently asked if that was the prophet. People asked the same about the large portrait of Jens Nielsen. The thought was to tell about whom, and what the pioneers saw when they first came to Bluff.)



NATIVE AMERICANS- The pioneers first encountered Native Americans. So, our native American display is at the top of the stairs. NATIVE Rugs- The rug on the wall came from Redd's cabin. The rug on the loom belongs to Marie Begaye.

SWING TREE photo- The Bluff residents put up a swing and called it the swing tree. They met there for church, meetings, school and picnics. It was a popular place.

The GRAND PIANO was donated by Doug and Laurie Powell, former directors.



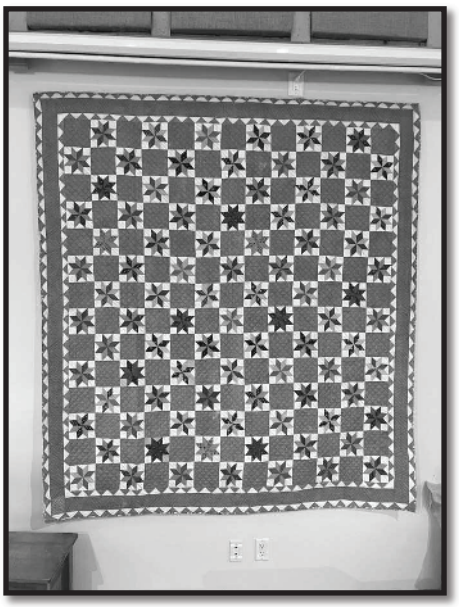
Rich Murset photos.



The **NAVAJO RUG** at the top stairs in the Co-op belongs to Marie Begaye. She talked about learning the art. She said “As Navajos we grow up with the teachings of our culture. My mom was the one who taught me the way of life. She taught me how to weave rugs and would usually take our rugs to the trading post to make money. It would help to buy food and clothes for us. My mom thought it was the way to support our family. She learned it from her experience of being an orphan at age 10. When I got older, I started to notice that it isn't all about the money. I started noticing that my art holds many meanings and memories that are part of the designs. It is a spiritual thing and having turquoise jewelry, and a display of art, and rugs in your home brings protection and blessings.

She said of her traditional culture and lifestyle “A lot of times I asked my mom for teachings. She would explain the rights and wrongs in my culture. I usually keep corn pollen and herbs by my side to use when I need protection. Other than that, I just keep positive thoughts. You can avoid negative thoughts if you think otherwise. Weaving is also meditation to me. When I weave it clears my thoughts. The world is blocked out and i just weave.” Taken from “HOZHO A Walk in Beauty.” By the students of Tse'Bii'Nidzisgai Elementary and Monument Valley High Schools, Doug Freed, editor.

Marie has been a fixture at Bluff Fort for many years as a faithful custodian and docent, coming three times weekly to clean the restrooms.. Ron Bateman photo.



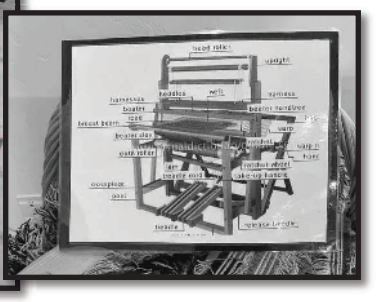
The beautiful QUILT was donated by an unknown person. It's all hand quilted. Check out the back.



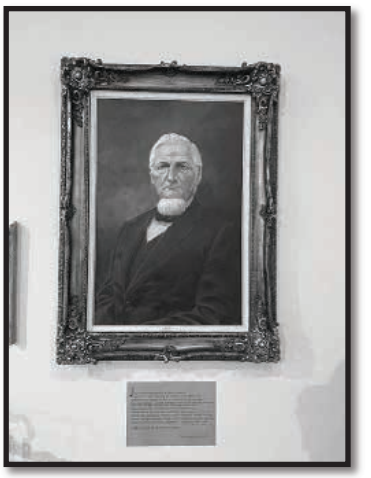
The TRADING POST which eventually became the Co-op and the ECCLESIASTICAL CORNER with signs under the pictures identifying the portraits.



Rich Murset photos.



A RUG MAKING LOOM



Jens Nielson, 1st Bishop of Bluff.



Erastus Snow bust by Ortho Fairbanks. Apostle Snow had responsibility for pioneer settlements including Bluff City.



Kumen Jones, friend to Native Americans, counselor to Jens Nielson.

Platte Lyman, leader through the Hole in the Rock, stake & mission president.



FAMILY COLLECTIONS - families decorated the museum with ancestors' photos and special keepsakes.



Perkins, Bluff Missionaries, and Scorups.

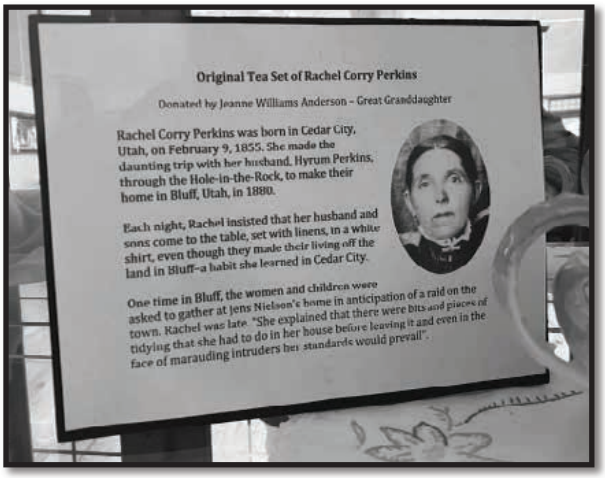


Rich Murset photos.

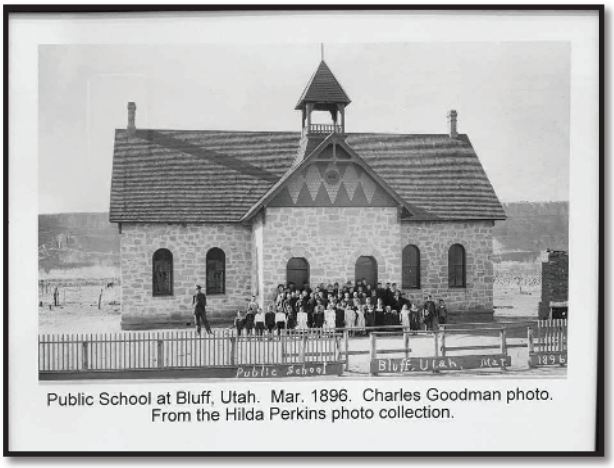
Pioneer dishes.



Johnson, Butt & Barton Families.



Original tea set of Rachel Corry Perkins sign.



Public School at Bluff, Utah. Mar. 1896. Charles Goodman photo. From the Hilda Perkins photo collection.

Pioneer family heirlooms.



Pace and Barney Families, below.

Hanson Bayles with wives Mary Ann and Evelyn.

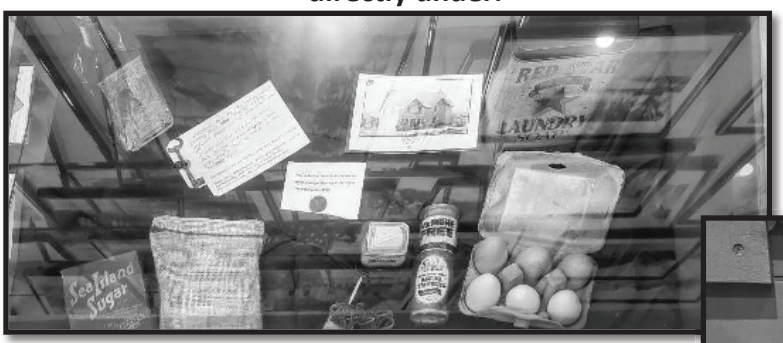
Rich Murset photos.



WALL OF PHOTOS- CHARLES GOODMAN photographer
Wonderful history of the fort through his pictures.



CHARLES GOODMAN PHOTO COLLECTION above on north wall.
Museum display of items to buy, a ledger, dry goods, eggs, and Co-op coinage in a cabinet directly under.

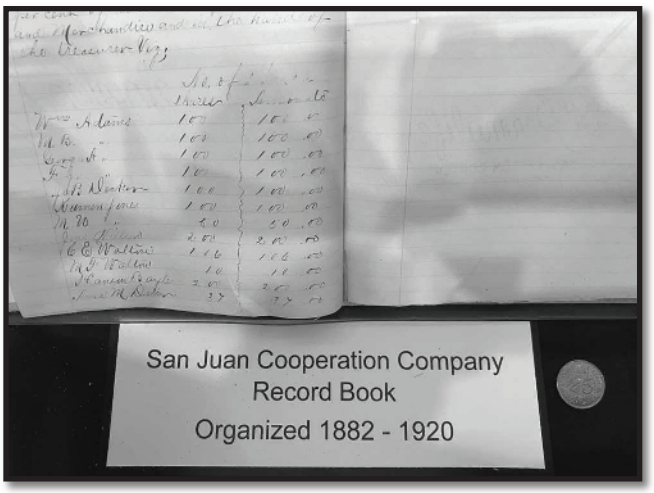


Museum artifacts—Key to Barton Trading Post, 1882 nickel, etc.

Representative items sold in the Co-op.

Rich Murset photos.

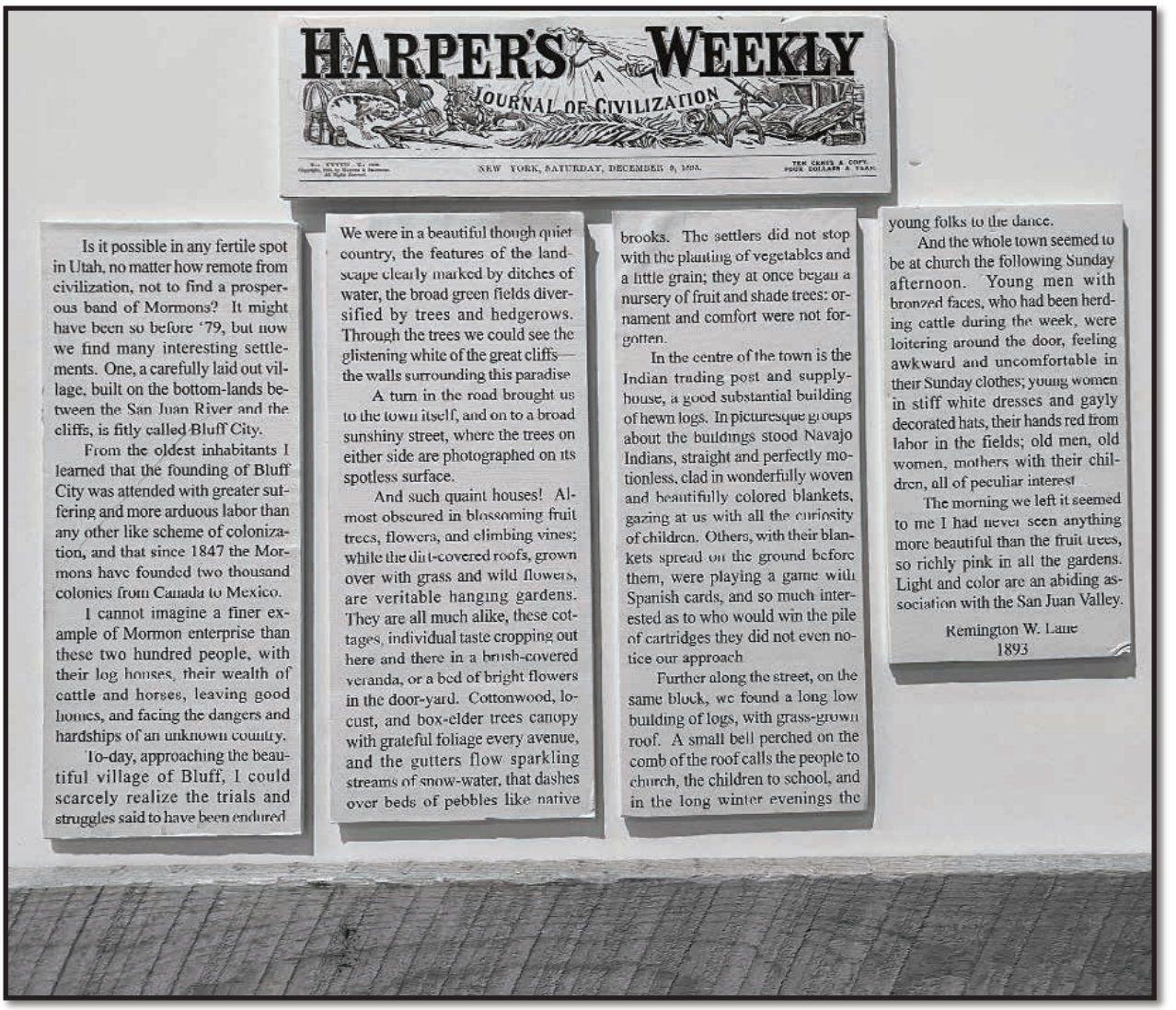




Ledger and San Juan Cooperative Token.



Bluff LDS rock chapel.
Charles Goodman collection.



HARPER'S WEEKLY
A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1893.

Is it possible in any fertile spot in Utah, no matter how remote from civilization, not to find a prosperous band of Mormons? It might have been so before '79, but now we find many interesting settlements. One, a carefully laid out village, built on the bottom-lands between the San Juan River and the cliffs, is fitly called Bluff City.

From the oldest inhabitants I learned that the founding of Bluff City was attended with greater suffering and more arduous labor than any other like scheme of colonization, and that since 1847 the Mormons have founded two thousand colonies from Canada to Mexico.

I cannot imagine a finer example of Mormon enterprise than these two hundred people, with their log houses, their wealth of cattle and horses, leaving good homes, and facing the dangers and hardships of an unknown country.

To-day, approaching the beautiful village of Bluff, I could scarcely realize the trials and struggles said to have been endured

We were in a beautiful though quiet country, the features of the landscape clearly marked by ditches of water, the broad green fields diversified by trees and hedgerows. Through the trees we could see the glistening white of the great cliffs—the walls surrounding this paradise

A turn in the road brought us to the town itself, and on to a broad sunshiny street, where the trees on either side are photographed on its spotless surface.

And such quaint houses! Almost obscured in blossoming fruit trees, flowers, and climbing vines; while the dirt-covered roofs, grown over with grass and wild flowers, are veritable hanging gardens. They are all much alike, these cottages, individual taste cropping out here and there in a brush-covered veranda, or a bed of bright flowers in the door-yard. Cottonwood, locust, and box-elder trees canopy with grateful foliage every avenue, and the gutters flow sparkling streams of snow-water, that dashes over beds of pebbles like native

brooks. The settlers did not stop with the planting of vegetables and a little grain; they at once began a nursery of fruit and shade trees: ornament and comfort were not forgotten.

In the centre of the town is the Indian trading post and supply-house, a good substantial building of hewn logs. In picturesque groups about the buildings stood Navajo Indians, straight and perfectly motionless, clad in wonderfully woven and beautifully colored blankets, gazing at us with all the curiosity of children. Others, with their blankets spread on the ground before them, were playing a game with Spanish cards, and so much interested as to who would win the pile of cartridges they did not even notice our approach

Further along the street, on the same block, we found a long low building of logs, with grass-grown roof. A small bell perched on the comb of the roof calls the people to church, the children to school, and in the long winter evenings the

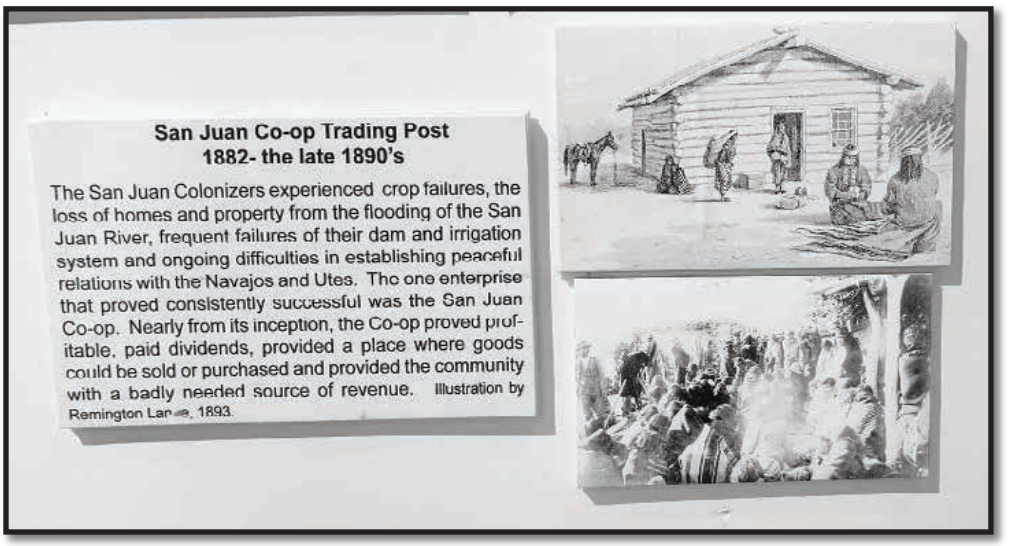
young folks to the dance.

And the whole town seemed to be at church the following Sunday afternoon. Young men with bronzed faces, who had been herding cattle during the week, were loitering around the door, feeling awkward and uncomfortable in their Sunday clothes; young women in stiff white dresses and gayly decorated hats, their hands red from labor in the fields; old men, old women, mothers with their children, all of peculiar interest

The morning we left it seemed to me I had never seen anything more beautiful than the fruit trees, so richly pink in all the gardens. Light and color are an abiding association with the San Juan Valley.

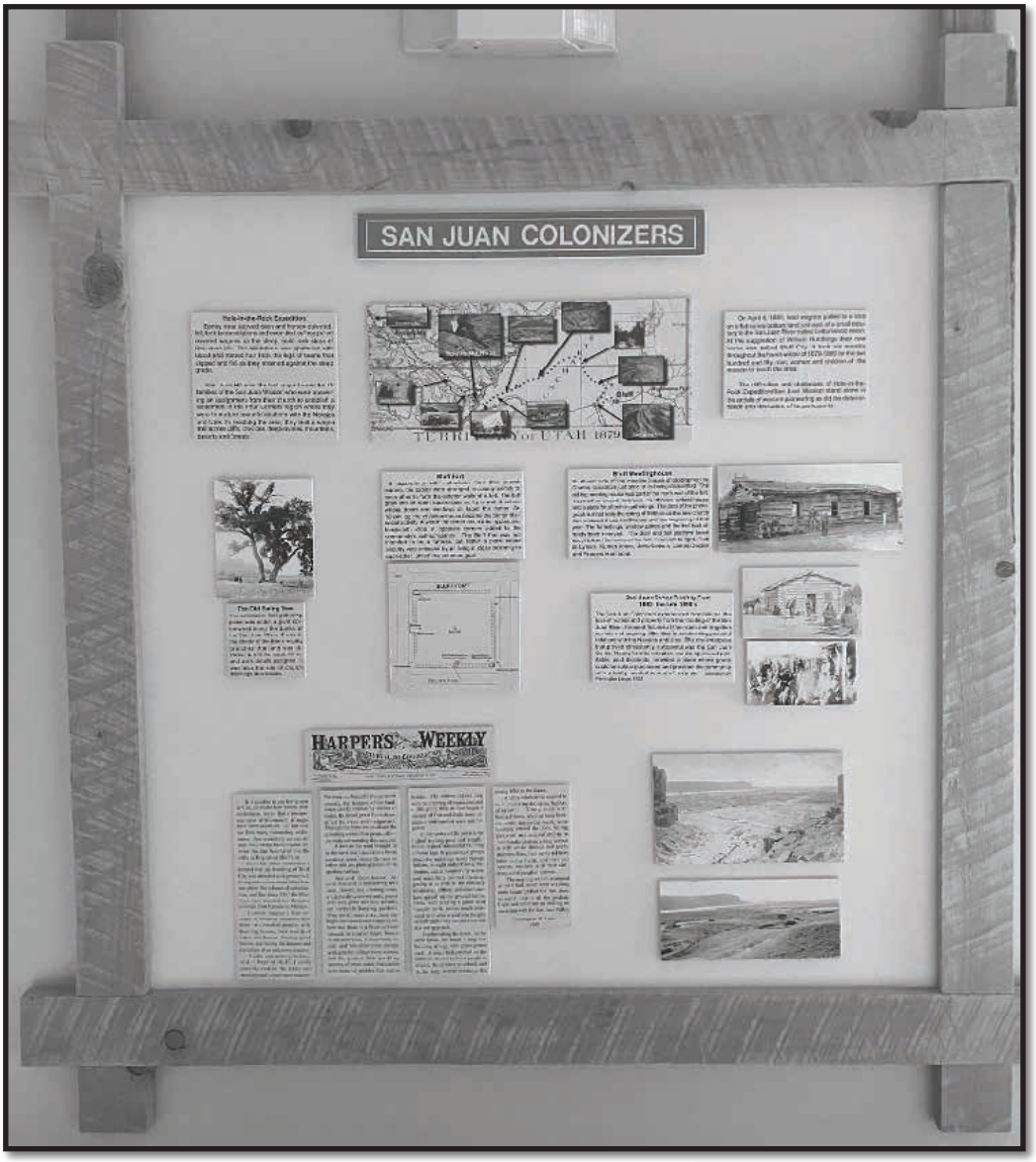
Remington W. Lane
1893

Co-op display of *Harper's Weekly* December 1893 article describing Bluff City in glowing terms.



There is also art displayed on the second floor.

Museum photos by Rich Murset.





The San Juan Colonizers display is located on the north wall. Upstairs theater built by Fort volunteer Jack Powers; exit doors on the south, and family groupings hanging on the wall. The stairs, Native American display, and piano is on the far right.

Rich Murset photos.

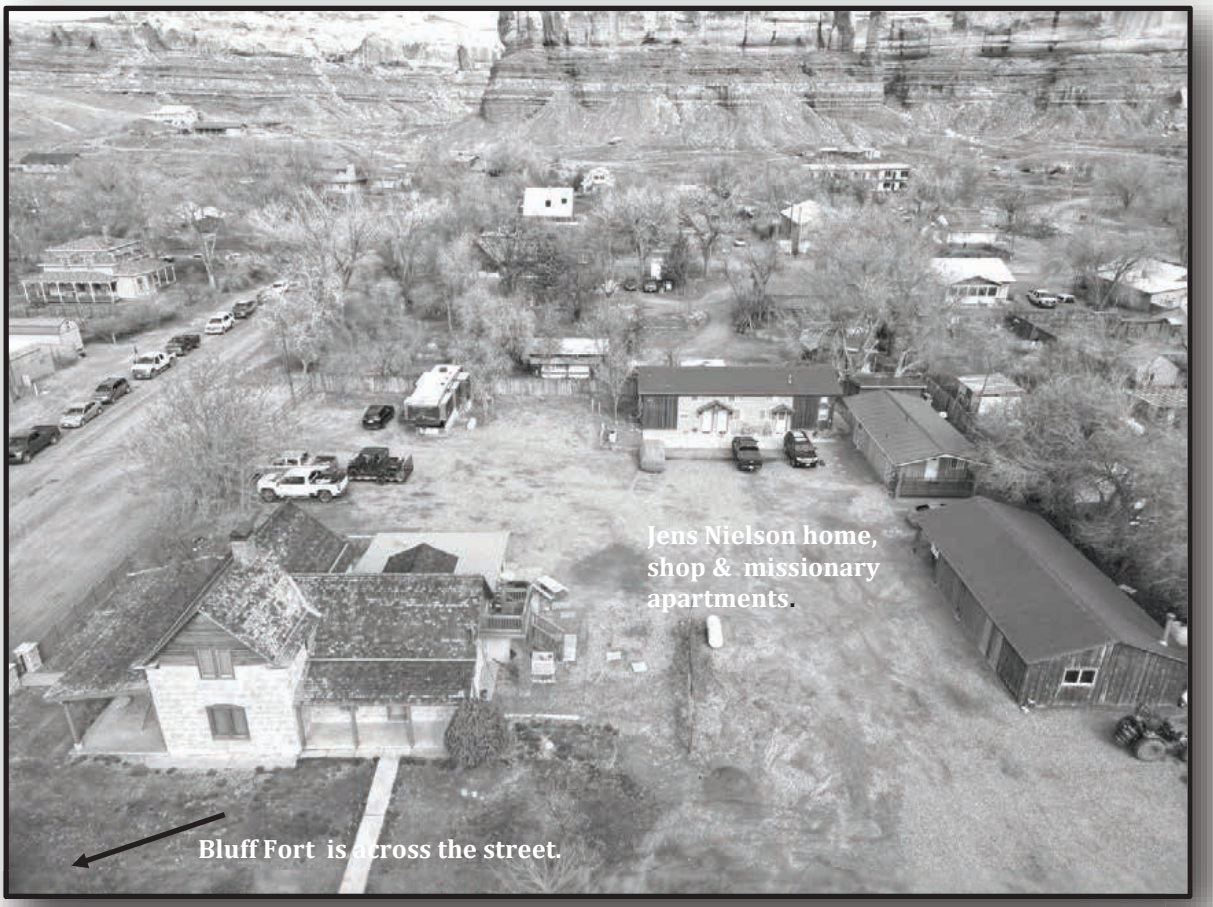


The Roring property (left) has a home, three missionary apartments and a guest apartment, 3 trailer hookups, storage & pad for RVs.



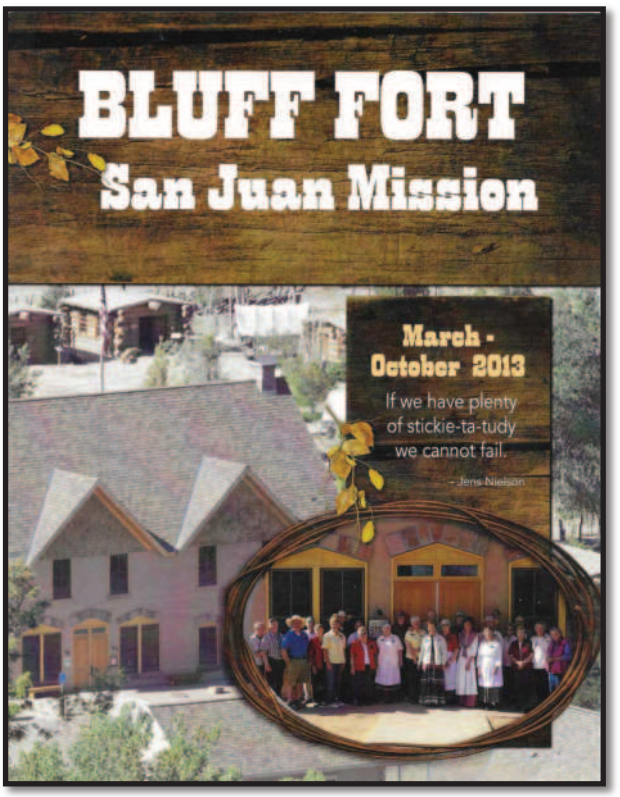
The Jens Nielson complex (owned by HIRF) of five missionary apartments (upper left), two trailer spaces (lower left), a storage building (upper left corner), a metal shop with storage (upper right), and the Jens Nielson home (lower right).

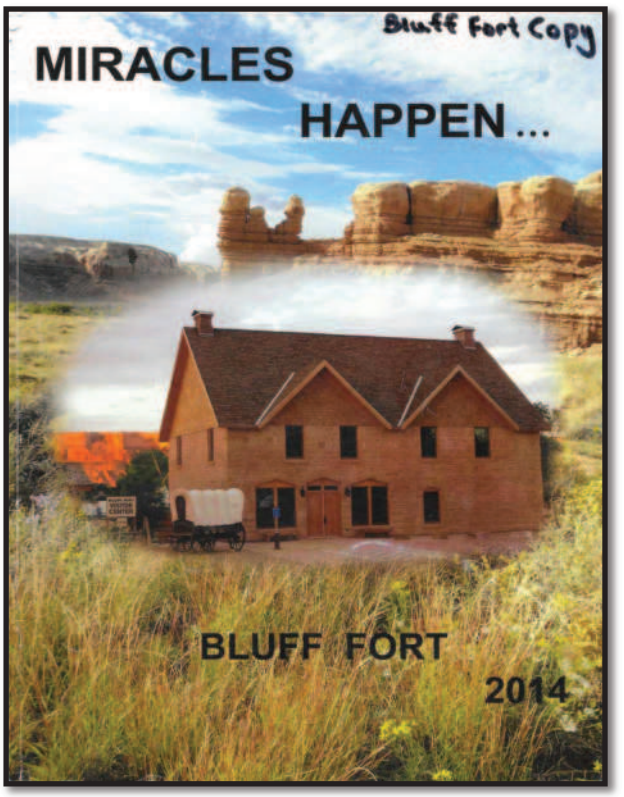
2024 Rich Murset aerial photos.



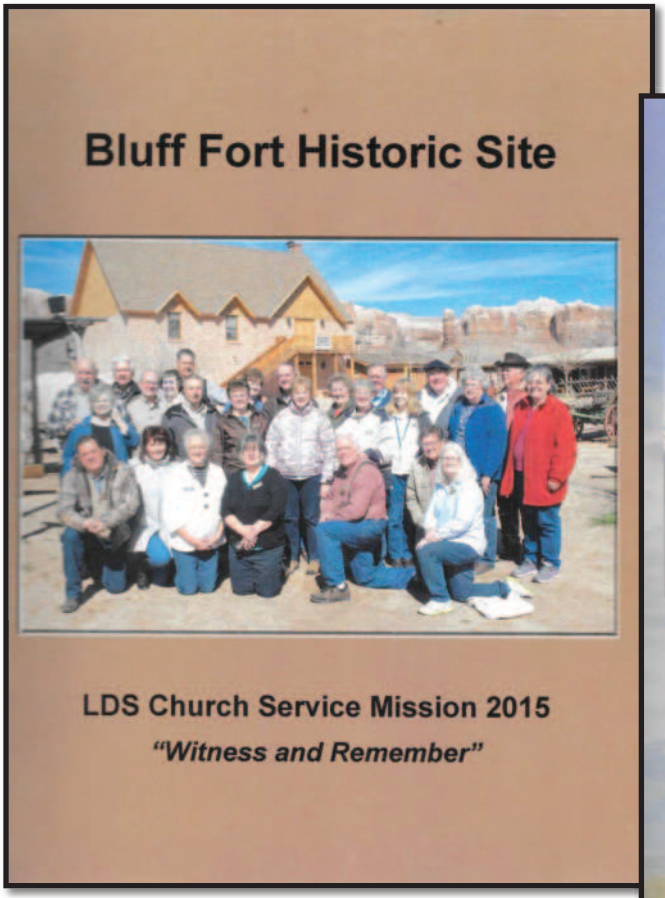


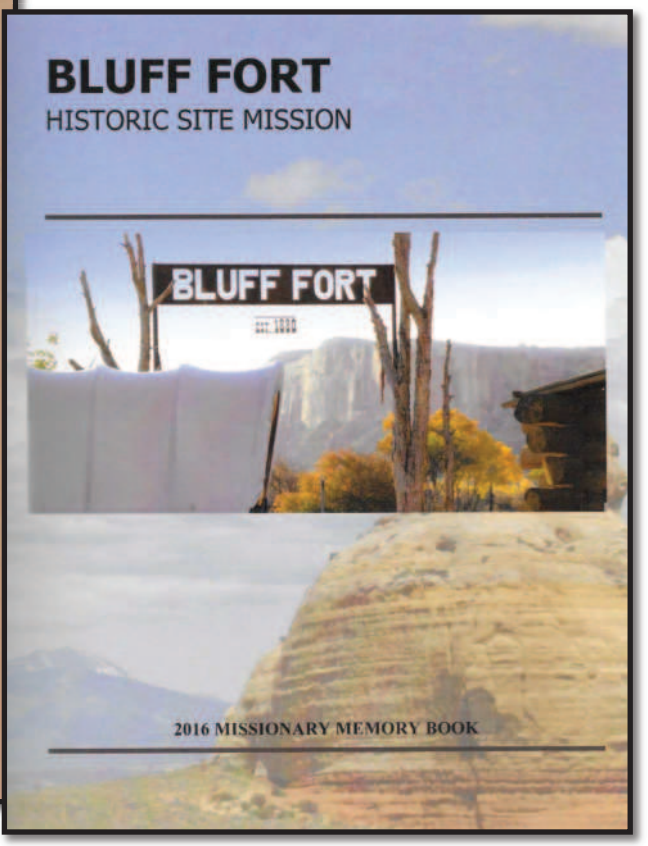
Rich Murset photos.

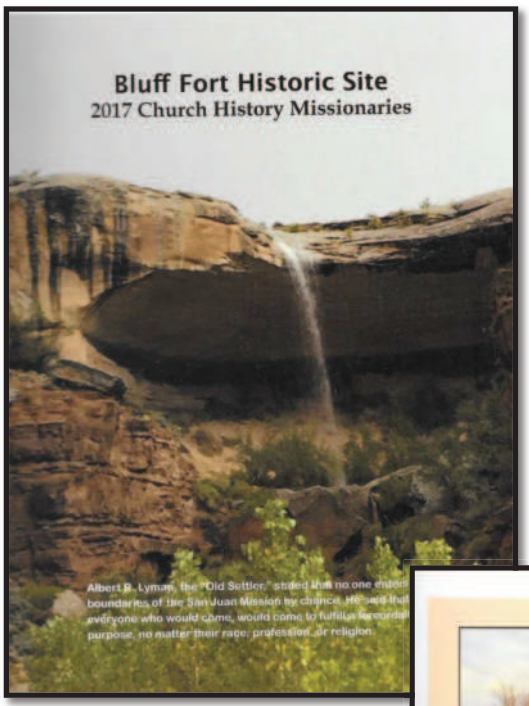




Bluff Fort senior missionaries yearbook covers 2013 to 2016.

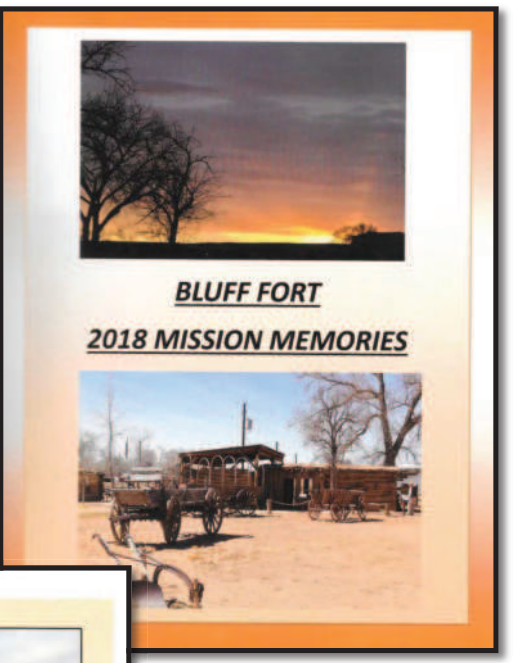


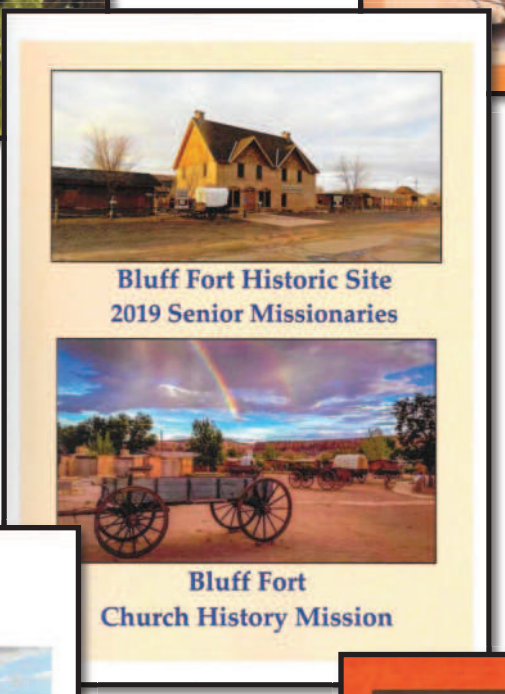


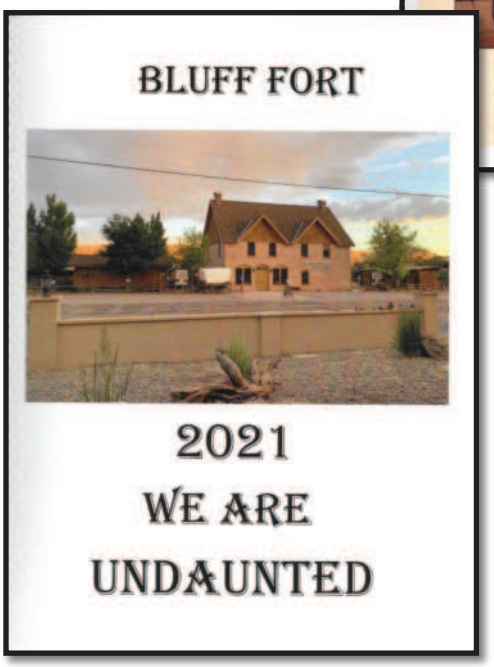


Senior missionaries yearbook covers 2017 to 2023.

No books available for 2020 or 2022.









Trip Advisor Reviews of Bluff Fort Historic Site

Love this place, it needs to be more popular for sure.

The place is amazing, the entrance is free, they offer you bathroom service, cold water (which is really needed during summer), free Wi-Fi, and an amazing place to visit and to enjoy the history of the people who lived there.
PS: the people there are the most lovely people ever, super friendly. Claudio R.

Interesting and educational way point between Moab & Monument Valley!

An extremely interesting and unexpected stop! A great place to spend the afternoon. Helpful volunteers share the history of how the community was established and the houses and cabins there provide a real sense of how frontier life was. Many have been donated and restored by the families of original settlers. It's like walking through living history! The baked goods are also wonderful and the shop has some lovely handmade souvenirs.
Of note, some reviews mention the connection to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints- while there is a connection, there was no proselytizing or any overt religious overtones to our experience there.

More informative and interesting than originally thought

Stopped by by accident as our accommodation was close by. It turned out to be a very interesting and informational excursion getting to learn about the hardships of the early settlers. Also, the kids, 9 and 16, liked it not only for the gold panning and the ice cream/cookies.
Very friendly personnel. Germany

Beautiful and well worth a visit

Came upon this place on a Sunday in July while passing through on a long drive. It was very hot, and we wanted to make a quick stop for our little dog to get out of the car. I saw that there was some beautiful grass inside the fort, and I asked the volunteer if dogs were allowed. I fully expected him to say no, but he said yes! So we had a lovely little break, and looked inside all the cabins. Really wish we'd had more time to soak it all in. It's a beautiful place that was very lovingly created/ restored. Well worth a visit. I hope to be back next year and spend more time. Texas

Jewel in very small town.

Visitor Center is part of this Site in the very small town of Bluff, UT. The staff members were excellent, very knowledgeable and engaging; the store was well stocked with really interesting historical and other items, and the authentic Fort structures, furnishings and original wagons and village items and related short movies were well worth the free visit! Well done! South Carolina

Unexpected Suprise

I wasn't expecting to come across this place but was pleasantly surprised. It was really interesting to see the ingenuity and lifestyle of the early pioneers. The displays are very well done. Some are re-creations and some are originals. I spent about an hour here, including time in the gift shop. Admission was free, if my memory is correct and is well worth the price. Also, first clean bathroom I came across in hundreds of miles! LOL! Canada
https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g56937-d1728160-r914704515-Bluff_Fort_HistoricSite-Bluff_Utah.html#REVIEWS

Guest Register Comments

Over 250 pages in the 2023 guest book comments. Here is a small sampling:

The Netherlands: "On our way to Moab. Something attracted us to stop by. We had a great experience. Thank you!"

New Jersey "Beautifully preserved and kept. I am a Decker! Now wondering if I am related to the Decker pioneers. Thank you!"

Alabama "We will be back, God willing!"

Japan "Best guest visitor center in the USA."

Southern California "Very nice! Best visitor center! Thank you"

Michigan "Outstanding!"

England "Stunning & very informative!"

Washington "Best Stop!"

France "Magnifique!"

Illinois "This is a magical family-oriented place."

Holland "Respect for all pioneers. Not that long ago, but hard to imagine their life!"

Hungary "We didn't expect to find this treasure!"

California "Unplanned stop. Glad we made it!"

Spain "Precious!"

Arizona "A True Gem!"

Chicago "Coolest place. We love Bluff Fort!"

Austria "Awesome showcase of history!"

France "Amazing! Feels like going back in time!"

Alaska "Peaceful!"

Philippines "It touched our hearts!"

Australia "Stumbled on this gem and loved it!"

Ireland "Very interesting tale of endeavor for the Lord Jesus!"

Denmark "A fine park- a little like being taking back to my childhood where I read Laura Ingalls 'Little House on the Prairie."

Namibia Africa "What a jewel along the way!"

Colorado "This place is stellar!"

Florida "We thought this would be a 5 second stop. We have been here an hour and a half." (In 2010)

Germany "Favorite place in the world." (2014)



The Hole in the Rock pioneers inscribed "We Thank Thee Oh God" near the top of San Juan Hill as they neared the end of their journey.
Carl Ball photos



Hole in the Rock looking from the top to Lake Powell below.



Comb Ridge, a formidable obstacle to cross.



Uncle Ben's Dugway.

Places volunteers talk with visitors about.



Goosenecks.

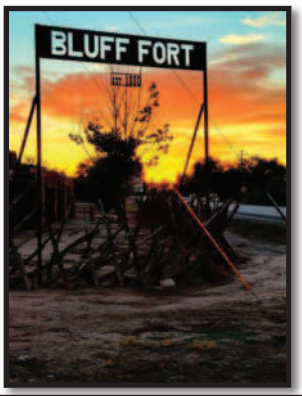


Dance Hall Rock.





Sunsets & moonlit night over the Fort. Carl Ball photos.





Balloons, Co-op & wagons. Lamont Crabtree photo.



Rainbow over the Fort. Bill & Tricia Spere photo.

Bluff Fort scenes through the years.



Moonrise over the Fort. Bill & Tricia Spere photo.



Missionary activity behind Co-op near the gold panning area. Garden squash in foreground. Photo by Ron Bateman.



Drone shot of the Co-op. Alan Peterson, Bluff Fort video photo.



Beautiful moonshot above Fort Co-op through the clouds.
Courtesy of Carl Ball, Sunny Feinauer photo.





Rainbow over the chicken coop.
Photo by Ted & Lisa Hill.



Brilliant sunrise above Fort Co-op.
Courtesy of Carl Ball.

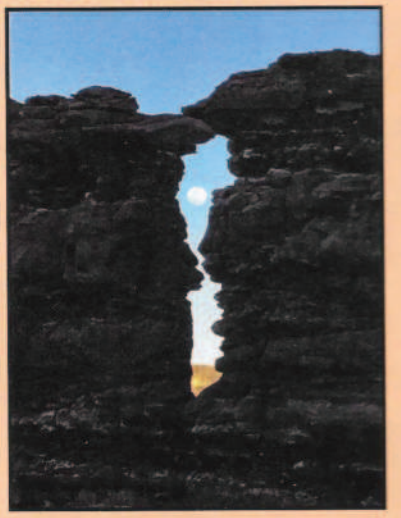


As part of their orientation to the area, new missionaries go on a Bluff City tour of the 1890's homes built there. Shown in the photo is one of the elegant homes belonging to early settlers John and Emma Bayles Scorup. It was built in 1903-04 by Nick Lovelace and Ed Thompson.The University of Utah School of Architecture owned it in 2024 and housed architectural students there periodically. Courtesy of Carl Ball.

The End...

The end of almost every day of the mission was punctuated by an amazing sunset and gorgeous stars. These and so many other images will remain with us the rest of our lives. We will never be the same as we were when we began our service. It is impossible to not have hearts and souls touched while walking on these hallowed grounds and reflecting on the lives of the Hole in the Rock pioneers. We will be forever blessed by their legacy and example. Thank you to them. Thank you to Jim and Vicki Orr. Thank you to the missionaries, the docents, our good Native American friends and all of the choice guests from all corners of the world.







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Editor’s note: This is a partial list of possible sources.

Family Heritage Publishers



In 1879-80, pioneers constructed a new wagon road in southeastern Utah in the four corners area. They were fulfilling an assignment from their church to establish a settlement to successfully nurture peaceful relations with the Ute and Navajo people. Their journey developed into an ordeal of unparalleled difficulty. They spent six months blazing a route across some of the most broken, rugged terrain in all of North America. This trail went through the Hole-in-the-Rock, a crevice in the Colorado River gorge.

Upon their arrival on April 6, 1880, they established Bluff City. Their first dwellings were one-room log cabins. For security, the forty to fifty cabins built closely together formed the exterior walls of a fort in a hollow square with doors and windows facing the center. A meetinghouse, built at the north end of the fort was used as the church, school, and center of all social activity.

A vision of founder Corinne Roring was realized when the Fort was carefully re-created under her direction. Over the years, major corporate and individual donations, supplemented by handmade and baked items produced onsite enable the Hole in the Rock Foundation to continue building and operating the historic site. Volunteer missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began manning the fort full-time in 2013. They are assisted by docents from nearby Blanding during the busy season, many of whom are descendants of the original pioneers. Tens of thousands of visitors come year-around from all fifty states, Washington D.C., and more than 85 countries internationally. Herein lies the story of the modern Bluff Fort development and the many individuals who made it happen.



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BLUFF FORT HISTORIC SITE

Grant Taylor & others