

Red Rock Pass History

Compiled from Belva's collection by Ann Yearsley. Photos by Ann Yearsley



View of Red Rock Pass From The South



Photo From Inside of the West Side Cave



Kissing Rock



Red Rock Monument



Hole In The Rock

One of our Eagle scouts, Jon Thomas, organized the project of installing the steps going up to the Jefferson Hunt monument. There are many people who stop and visit this monument and many classes from Idaho State University who come to examine the rocks and formations in their Geological classes.

Red Rock Pass Rich in History



Artist L.A. Ramsey's interpretation of Lake Bonneville flooding through Red Rock Pass.

At the northern most point in Cache Valley is Red Rock Pass. Of the hundreds of people who daily drive U.S. 91 through the pass, probably few are aware that it is the dividing line between the Pacific and Great Basin drainage areas. Probably even fewer realize the geologic significance of this lonely, flat, stretch of ground; but the Pass was created by and owes its chief fame to the fact that through it Lake Bonneville

drained millions of acre-feet of water.

During the last ice age, the Great Basin filled with numerous inland seas, the

largest of which was Lake Bonneville. At its height, perhaps 30,000 years ago, the lake stretched nearly 400 miles long from Beryl Junction in Iron County, Utah, to Red Rock Pass in Bannock County, Idaho. The shore line stood at some 5,150 feet above sea level. At the height the campus of Utah State University and the site of the city of Preston were under 350 feet of water.

Whether or not man ever looked on the lake is conjectural, but its shores were certainly the haunts of woolly mammoths. Numerous tusks and skeletal parts have been discovered in the valley's gravel pits: Trenton, Logan and most recently Smithfield.

The gradual erosion at the head of Marsh Creek weakened the natural barrier at the head of Cache Valley, and at some distant point in the past, the land bridge collapsed and a great stream of water flowed out into Marsh Creek, Portneuf River, Snake River, the Columbia and finally the Pacific Ocean.

The initial flow must have been a torrent; the deep river channel west of Arimo suggests the force of the flood. Idaho geologists have traced the gentle valley on either side of the Snake River as far downstream as Twin Falls to Bonneville waters. Indeed, many of the canals, which irrigate the fertile Snake River Plain from American Falls, Minidoka and Milner Dams follow the high-water line of the Bonneville flood.

The huge stream flow probably continued for over a year. Long enough to lower the lake to 4,770 feet. At this height, the elevation of Red Rock Pass, Bonneville stabilized. Wave action formed the most pronounced of the "benches" which ring the valley, and the deposits of streams entering the lake created deltas at their mouths: Utah State University and River Heights (from Logan River), Preston and Dayton (from Bear River), Weston (from Weston Creek), Hyrum (from the Little Bear River).

Eventually rising temperatures and declining precipitation resulted in the steady decline of Lake Bonneville to its present shrunken remnant, the Great Salt Lake. And Red Rock Pass was left, quite literally, high and dry-many miles away from the waters which created it. Indeed, it was not until the late 1880's that Karl Grove Gilbert discovered the importance of the pass and published his findings in the first monograph issued by the U.S. Geological Survey. But in the interim, man had entered Cache Valley and had put the pass to his use.

Earliest use, no doubt, was Indian utilization of the mountain gap as a highway between Marsh and Cache valleys. There is a persistent legend of a great battle fought there between

the Shoshone and the Crows (or Utes, depending upon the source one consults) in the early years of the 19th century, about 1805. The tale is impossible to document at this late date, but there is nothing inherently unbelievable about it.

After settlement the pass was sort of a no-man's land between Cache Valley on the south and the Shoshoni-Bannock Reservation on the north. After the 1862 discovery of gold in Montana, the main trail between Cache and the mines ran through it. The somewhat ambivalent legal status made the area a candidate of outlaws. At least two stage robberies, one in 1866 and one in 1871, are known to have occurred near Red Rock.

The pass was finally settled in 1865 when Capt. Jefferson Hunt of the Mormon Battalion established a ranch at Red Rock. A monument to him stands atop a low knoll in the center of the pass, and the private Hunt family cemetery is located at the base of it.

The mid-1870s saw additional ranches in the vicinity, in both Cache and Marsh valleys, and in 1878 the Utah Northern Railroad pushed its narrow gauge tracks through the gap in route to Montana. Roads and railroads have made Red Rock a highway, but it is still a lonely spot whose ghosts include not only outlaws and Indians and ranchers, but also mammoths and the sounds of many waters.

Published April 25, 1977 - Reference: In 'God's Lap' Cache Valley history as told in the newspaper columns of A. J. Simmonds - The Harold Journal.

Memories of the Little Red Rock Cabin by Ruby Drusilla Hillman Ames.



A few years ago, my cousins and our children visited the little cabin to hear my mother tell stories about living there. She showed us where everyone slept. The last two children slept at the foot of Grandma and Grandpa's bed. We asked where the closets were. And she said they were lucky to have two outfits at a time so they didn't need much storage.

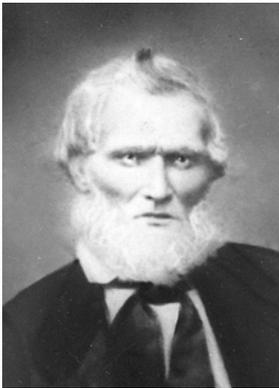
She told us a story about one day when Grandpa Ira got mad and stomped out the front door slamming the door behind him, but didn't

remember the screen door was fastened shut. It was a good thing he was small in stature.

Our family still loves to tell our children, friends and everyone who will listen to stories about the little cabin in Red Rock. It only came to my attention in the past few years that Grandpa had purchased that cabin in 1898 and sold it in 1928. I realized my grandparents had lost the ranch because of the depression.

The older boys left the ranch to work in the cement plant in Inkom and one of my uncles was herding sheep for the Kaziski's in Dempsey Creek and my mother did most of the farming then. See their entire family history in the Drusilla Hillman history.

History of Jefferson Hunt



In a lonely little grave at the side of the highway, about midway between Oxford and Downey, Idaho rests all that was mortal of one of the great pioneers of Utah-Jefferson Hunt.

No Adequate sketch of the life of Jefferson Hunt has ever been written. What this good man suffered and endured for the sake of his religion and his church would, if properly told, make a gripping and faith-promoting story. It is to be hoped that one of his posterity will take the time to search out the facts and publish them to the world.

From the meager information available to the writer, the following has been obtained:

Jefferson Hunt was born in Bracken County, Kentucky, on January 20, 1803. He was the son of John and Martha Jenkins Hunt. At an early age he moved with his parents to Illinois, and there, in 1823 he was married to Celia Mounts. In 1835 Jefferson Hunt was baptized.

When he joined the main body of the Saints, we do not know but the history informs us that he was at Far West, Missouri. On July 4, 1838 (?) when the Saints celebrated Independence Day and that he was the assistant marshal of the day.

He was driven out of Missouri in 1839, and listed his losses at \$2,000. He moved to Nauvoo and resided there until after the death of the Prophet, when he joined the Mormon Battalion and was elected captain of Company A. Two of his grown sons, Gilbert and Marshall, also enlisted. Captain Hunt then obtained permission for his wife Celia, and the entire family, to accompany the Battalion. The smaller children were Hyrum, John, Joseph, Parley, Jane, Harriet and Mary.

After terrible suffering the Battalion arrived at Santa Fe in October 1846. There the women and children and the sick were transferred to Fort Pablo, on the Arkansas River. Captain Hunt continued with the Battalion to California. At Los Angeles, in July 1847, he was discharged from the army and set out eastward to find his family. How he made his way across the Nevada desert we do not know, but he and his son, Marshall, reached Salt Lake Valley and they were no doubt overjoyed to find that Mrs. Hunt and the smaller children had preceded him to the gathering place.

About 1849 Jefferson Hunt moved with his family to Provo. The same year he acted as guide for a group of gold seekers who were on their way to California. After his return to Utah in 1850, he joined Amasa Lyman and Charles C Rich in leading a large colony of Saints to southern California where they founded the city of San Bernardino.

When San Bernadino was abandoned in 1857, Jefferson Hunt returned with his family to southern Utah. In 1860 he located in Ogden Valley, and the town of Huntsville was named after him. How long he remained there we do not know, but by 1867 he had become a resident of Oxford in Cache Valley. He died at Oxford on May 11, 1879. At that time the Deseret News said of him, "He was ever a staunch defender of the truth and died in full faith of the Gospel?"





Monument Inscription: "Captain Jefferson Hunt, soldier, pioneer, and churchman. Born January 20, 1804 in Kentucky. Died May 11, 1879 in Idaho. Charles Jefferson Hunt served in the Mormon Battalion as captain of company A and as assistant executive officer in its historic march from Council Bluffs Iowa to San Diego, California 1846-1847. His service on the commendation of all whom served with him. Under appointment by President Brigham Young in 1851, Captain Hunt was guide for the pioneers to San Bernardino, California. His pioneering services also included Provo, Parawan, and Huntsville (which bears his name) in Utah and Oxford, Idaho. A convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, he was loyal, obedient, and faithful to the end."

Red Rock Pass Cemetery

Bada, Ellen -Feb. 25, 1919 – Died from the Flu Epidemic
Barger, Abram LaFayette – May 6, 1838 – Sep. 1, 1916
Barger, Julia Ellen Hunt – May 27, 1852 – Sep. 8, 1932
Criddle, John Clark - Unknown
Hunt, Artimacy – 1859 - unknown
Hunt, Charles Jefferson – July 12, 1881, Dec. 31, 1904
Hunt, J. Frank – 1859 - 1917
Hunt, Capt Jefferson – Jan. 20, 1803 – May 11, 1879
Hunt, Liberty – Aug. 16, 1884 – Aug. 10, 1898
Hunt, Matilda Jane Nease – Jan. 1, 1828 – Oct. 22, 1865
Pratt, Celia - Unknown
Pratt, Myrtle G. - Unknown
Spidell, Syllvia Hunt – 1882 - 1916



Red Rock Cemetery is cared for by the family of Delos (Bud) Barger, grandson of Abram LaFayette and Julia Ellen Hunt Barger, daughter of Jefferson Hunt.