

Settling Tooele

The following excerpts on the settling of Tooele are taken from Cyrus Tolman: Father, Frontiersman, Pioneer by Loraine Tolman Pace, Second Edition, 2006, pages 22-27:

The Indian version for the naming of Tooele *“is that the county took its name from an Indian chief named Tuilla, who lived in the valley years before the advent of the Mormons. Captain Ferguson, an Indian born in 1865, and well-educated as well as having served in the U. S. Army, said he had lived among the Indians of Tooele County many times, and heard the story repeated many times. Elizabeth R. Nelson, born in Tooele in 1853, also verifies this version, by asserting that as a girl in 1867, she heard her father, John Rowberry, tell of an Indian chief, Tuilla, for whom the valley was named. This version is also probable inasmuch as Howard Stansbury’s (government surveyor) map of this region in 1849 and 1850, denotes the valley as ‘Tuilla,’ and the settlement itself as ‘Tooele.’”* (History of Tooele County, p. 22.)

Indians, wolves and rattlesnakes were plentiful in the Tooele Valley and added to the hardships and terror of the pioneer families.

Andrew Jenson, writing of the early days in the Salt Lake Valley for the Deseret News said, *“Tooele Valley was named after the tule (pronounced tooly), a Mexican Indian name for a variety of bullrush abundant in that locality. It was misspelled “Tooele” by Thomas Bullock, the pioneer clerk, in a public document of that period, and the orthography has since remained unchanged.”* (History of Tooele County, p. 22.)

Tooele County is divided into three valleys: Tooele Valley, Rush Valley and Skull Valley. Early pioneers visited Tooele Valley from time to time, and as early as 1847 and 1848 the settlers of Great Salt Lake Valley used these three valleys as a herd ground for their cattle. At this early time the valleys were accredited as a splendid grazing country.

September 2, 1849, the first white settlers came to the Tooele Valley with a desire to establishing a permanent settlement. Evidently, Josiah Call, his wife and one child; Judson Tolman, his wife and one child; and Samuel Mecham with his wife were in the vanguard. “As soon as they had chosen the land to settle upon, they began the work of homemaking. The timber was in the canyons and upon the mountains, and roads had to be made and trails cut through the thick brush that grew in the way. They built their single rooms so close together that they seemed to be covered by a single roof, floored with puncheon and covered with puncheon also. (Ibid., p. 19-20.)

Part of the land was marshy so the men drained it and prepared it for planting. They worked hard during September and then left for October Conference to report to Brigham Young and ask for more settlers. Cyrus and his wife (Alice) and two children (Julia Ann and Cyrus Ammon), Judson and Benjamin returned to Tooele the latter part of October. Cyrus Tolman is given credit for planting the first seven acres of winter wheat. (History of Tooele County, p. 33.)

“In 1849, when Bishop John Rowberry, E. T. Benson, and Cyrus Tolman were sent into this section to make a survey of the land and determine what could be raised here, they suggested to

Brigham Young that sheep and cattle would do well.” After exploring and planning a town site, they took their families back to Salt Lake. They cleared the area, cut trails to the canyons to obtain lumber, planted crops, and built homes for their families. (Ibid., p. 40.)

The journey to Salt Lake would begin at a very early hour in the morning, and by evening they would stop at the cave in the mountain near the old town of Garfield, now the site of Kennecott on highway 50. Next day, after another twelve hours of travel, they would reach Salt Lake City. They met at the L. D. S. Church tithing center where posts were traded for needed merchandise. All fencing was of posts. (Wire was not used for fencing until some years later.)

They built the first log cabins near the water supply at the mouth of Settlement Canyon. The little cabin the family lived in was built like a dugout with the back end leaning against the hillside. The roof was sod and blended with the hill behind. At one time a cow was grazing on the hill and walked out on the roof and fell through the back end of the house! Another time a rattlesnake was found hanging from the ceiling of their home.

Alice’s challenges were many. Sometimes, there was not enough clean clothing to make the necessary changes, so she would stay up at night to wash and iron while the children were sleeping. Her only light was the light from the fireplace and her thread was the ravelings from a cherished piece of cloth. She made soap by first making the lye from wood ashes. Fortunate indeed were they when there was enough fat or rinds of some kind to make soap sufficient for their needs. The envy of the village was the woman who could afford a real factory-made washboard. Many times it was loaned to a neighbor and sent to someone living many miles away. The stage driver would kindly take it there one day and bring it back the next.

“The entire county was covered with thick growing grass, and inasmuch as there was not enough water to properly farm the land, livestock would do well. However, the early settlers were not so much interested in the raising of cattle and sheep as they were in farming, because the problem of the raising food seemed to be the paramount thing at the time. Each family had its own cows, probably one or two, according to the size of the family...Each family kept its own herd about the small farm during the summer months, but as they had not learned the art of storing food for the winter months, they were compelled to turn out on the ranges the animals which were not being used for milking. A good many of these cattle perished during the winter, due to lack of food and shelter. The stock kept at home were fed on the branches of mahogany trees which the men brought down from the canyons.” (History of Tooele County, p. 40.)

The first winter in Tooele was a hard one for Cyrus’ family and the other settlers, snow fell early and often. One of the snowstorms swept over the valley for 48 hours, and drifted the snow as high as the tall willows that grew along the creek. Two feet of snow had to be shoveled out of some of the cabins before they could start a fire. The poor cattle died and the stronger teams suffered. They sought shelter from the storms along the willow drifts, and there they *were* found frozen stiff. (Ibid., p. 34.)

First Christmas

James Dunn published this article in the Tooele Transcript, December 26, 1902:

“When the children of Tooele awoke on Christmas morning in 1849, not a doll or a toy was in all the land. Not even a stick of candy or an apple was found in any of the cabins. But the children and their parents were happy for all that; for they were glad they still had a little to eat, and prospects before them in their new homes were beginning to grow brighter every day. But, if there were no dolls or toys for the children, the fathers and mothers did not forget Christmas, and before the day was over they had a real jolly good time.

In the evening they all met at the cabin of John Rowberry—that was the house they held all their meetings in—and there they had a good old-fashioned dance to wind up the day with. It was the merriest crowd that ever met in a Christmas gathering for they were all young men and women, and as full of fun and frolic as it was possible for young married people to be. Some of them were very good dancers, and a few were good singers, and they could get up an interesting party whenever they took the notion for amusement.

“Now let us see who was at their first Christmas party that was held in this city: John Rowberry, wife and five children; Cyrus Tolman, wife and two children; Judson Tolman, wife and one child; Josiah Call, wife and one child; Captain (Phineas) Wright, wife and one boy; Samuel Mecham and wife; Mr. Bravett, wife and five children; Benjamin Tolman and Robert Skielton.

“So you see there were enough parents and children to fill John Rowberry’s house for a good Christmas shake down. But the great drawback was music. Not a musical instrument of any kind was owned in the valley but Si Call was a very good whistler and he whistled the tunes while the merry pioneers danced to the music. We cannot tell you who called the numbers that evening, it was probably Si Call himself who both whistled and called, as he is reported to have been a very genius in that line. But the dancers had a good time until just before midnight, when the dance broke up, and that was the end of the first Christmas party that was held in this city or county.”

(There are various accounts of the first Christmas held at Bishop Rowberry’s. Some pioneer accounts record that Josiah Call was a good whistler and whistled tunes while the pioneers danced, and other accounts, found among the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, state that Cyrus Tolman was a gifted whistler and provided the music for the dances. Some accounts just say “Sy” or “Cy” provided the music. See accounts in History of Tooele County and “Tooele, Utah, Stake History, 1847-1900.”)

These early settlers made a favorable report to Brigham Young of the Tooele area; therefore, he sent an exploring party into the canyon for saw and shingle timber. The explorers returned to Brigham Young with a discouraging report. Shortly thereafter Cyrus was in Salt Lake and talked to President Young, who told him of the report of the explorers. Cyrus laughed at the story and said there was both saw and shingle timber in the canyons, and right there, a bargain was made to have a load of this kind of timber delivered to Salt Lake City. A few days later Cyrus fulfilled the contract to the satisfaction of President Young. (Ibid., p. 20.)

Cyrus' early experience in forestry in Maine was of great help to him and to others. It is regrettable that we do not have in Cyrus' own words some of his training and experiences in Maine and Iowa and of the later exploring and settling that he did in Utah and Idaho. He was 28 when he crossed the plains and 29 when he entered Tooele. He surely must have felt a great deal

of personal pride in being able to make good his promise to Brigham Young to bring saw and shingle timber out of the Tooele canyons.

Sawmills became the first industry of Tooele County. *"At the next meeting of the Provincial Council of the State of Deseret, 24 November 1849, Ezra T. Benson, Anson Call, Josiah Call, and Judson Tolman were granted the right to the saw and building timber in Pine Creek and Small (Middle) Creek Canyon, and the privilege of a mill site on Big (Settlement) Canyon Creek, the petitioners agreeing to make a road into the canyons and, upon completion of the mill to furnish lumber at \$20 per thousand feet."* (L. D. S. Journal History, November 24, 1849, History of Tooele County, pgs. 20, 43.)

A pioneer monument at Settler's Park in Tooele, Utah was erected by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers in 1934 in honor of the early pioneers and inscribed with the following:

THE EARLY SETTLERS OF TOOEELE COUNTY
WHO MADE THEIR FIRST CAMP ON
THIS SPOT OF GROUND
SEPTEMBER 2, 1849

JOHN ROWBERRY, WIFE AND FIVE CHILDREN
JOSIAH CALL, WIFE AND ONE CHILD
CYRUS TOLMAN, WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN
JUDSON TOLMAN, WIFE AND ONE CHILD
ORSON BRAVETT, WIFE, AND FIVE CHILDREN
SAMUEL MECHAM, ROBERT SKELTON, BEN. TOLMAN
CAPTAIN WRIGHT, WIFE AND ONE BOY, F. X. LOUGY

"About February, 1850, the first ecclesiastical organization was formed by Ezra T. Benson who visited the valley; he appointed John Rowberry presiding elder with Phineas R. Wright as the first and Judson Tolman as the second counselor. Immediately following the organization, meetings were held in private homes, the first being held in the house of Judson Tolman....On the 25 of February 1850, th the first white child was born in Tooele valley. Mrs. Sarah Holbrook Tolman, wife of Judson Tolman, gave birth to a son, later named Judson A. Tolman." (History of Tooele County, p.24.)

August 29, 1850 Alice gave birth to her and Cyrus' second son, William Augustus.

"The Indian raids were estimated to have cost the Tooele settlers over \$5,000 in horses and cattle stolen and destroyed during 1850-51." (Ibid., pgs. 26, 29.)

March 25, 1852, John Rowberry wrote: *"We have built a meetinghouse 24 feet square. Our meetings are well attended. We have a school of about 30 scholars. We have a good sawmill in operation and a gristmill building."* (History of Tooele County, p. 24.)

June 3, 1852 a daughter, Alice Ann, was born to Cyrus and Alice Bracken Tolman.

In the August 1852 county election the following candidates were successful: John Rowberry, Representative to the Legislative Assembly; Francis Lee, Sheriff; Peter Maughan, County Recorder...Jacob Hamblin, Treasurer; Isaiah Hamblin, Wilford Hudson, Thomas Atkin, Phineas R. Wright, Benjamin Baker, Cyrus Tolman, Judson Tolman, Joseph Sidwell, Thomas Lee, William A. Pickett, Samuel Steele and James McBride, Referees.

The elected officers for the Tooele Precinct were: George Bryan, Justice of the Peace; James Smith, Constable; Cyrus Tolman, Pound Keeper; William A. Pickett and Benjamin Clegg, Fence Viewers; Thomas Atkin, Phineas R. Wright and George Baker, School Trustees.

The following excerpts on settling Tooele are taken from Judson Tolman: Pioneer, Lumberman, Patriarch by E. Dennis Tolman, Second Edition, 2004, pages 37-40:

In early September, 1849, Brigham Young sent the first families to the Tooele Valley, some twenty miles southwest of Salt Lake City. Judson Tolman, his wife, Sarah Lucretia, and their 19-month-old daughter Nancy responded to that assignment, along with Josiah Call, his wife and infant child, and Samuel Mecham and his wife. Traveling together, the three families explored the valley, the surrounding canyons and the mountains, and decided to settle on a small stream south of the current city of Tooele. (Mercer, Mildred Allred, ed., History of Tooele County. Salt Lake City, Publishers' Press, 1961, p. 19.)

Judson attended October Conference in Salt Lake City less than one month after arriving in Tooele. Joseph Holbrook notes: "In the fall Month Oct. I settled with Judson Tolman my son in law who had been with me from Nauvoo until now his wife living in the family and we doing our work together as one man he had a good new two horse waggon & harness two good yoke of Oxen two cows & bread stuff enough for one year together with about two hundred (doll) in Cash which gave him a good start in the valley for a Young man to begin with." (Journal of Joseph Holbrook, page 149). While there (conference), he (Judson) reportedly asked Brigham Young to send additional settlers to the Tooele area. As a result of that request, Judson's two brothers, Cyrus—with his wife and two children—and Benjamin Hewitt, as yet unmarried, arrived in Tooele in November 1849. There are still Tolmans living in Tooele County who are descendants of Cyrus.

Editorial Note: (This entry in Joseph Holbrook's journal is significant, because it represents the "coming of age," if you will, and the formal separation of the households—Judson and Sarah, for the first time in their married lives, establishing their own home and separating their family from the patriarchal presence of the Holbrooks.

A very interesting story ensued from Cyrus' early experience in Tooele. President Brigham Young had sent an exploration party to the mountains both east and west of Tooele to determine if there was suitable saw and shingle timber for construction. That party apparently reported to President Young that very little such timber existed in the Tooele area. Soon afterward, Cyrus was in Salt Lake City to meet with President Young and, during that meeting, contradicted the report of the exploration party. He reported that there was considerable saw and shingle timber in

the canyons and promised to deliver a load of it to Salt Lake City. That contract was filled a few days later with the delivery of a load of Tooele timber to Brigham Young.

James Dunn wrote the following account of the settler's first Christmas in Tooele:

“When the children of Tooele awoke on Christmas morning in 1849, not a doll or a toy was in all the land. Not even a stick of candy or an apple was found in any of the cabins. But the children and their parents were happy for all that; for they were glad they still had a little to eat, and prospects before them in their new homes were beginning to grow brighter every day. But, if there were no dolls or toys for the children, the fathers and mothers did not forget Christmas, and before the day was over they had a real jolly good time.”

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Judson wrote in the early 1900s: “I helped to fight the crickets in 1849 and that year, together with two other families, settled in Toelle [Tooele] valley, where Tooele City now stands. We were the first three families to settle in that valley. In 1850 I was one of a company of thirty-one called by Gov. Brigham Young to serve as a guard on the southwestern frontiers of Utah, under Captain Phineas R. White. I served three and one-half years in that Capacity and was in three

battles with the Indians, wherein sixteen Indians and one white man was killed. In 1852 the Indians took the last yoke of oxen and the last cow I had. In the fall of 1854 I moved to Bountiful, Davis county, where I lived ever since. I might add that I helped to herd Uncle Sam's army in the Echo Canyon war. In September, 1877, I was sent on a mission to the State of Maine. In 1885 I was ordained a High Priest, and in 1897 a Patriarch." (Jenson, Andrew Latter-Day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. II, 1914. Reprinted in 1971 by Western Epics, Salt Lake City, Utah. It is estimated this article was written by Judson in about 1908/1909).

The following excerpts are taken from Benjamin Hewitt Tolman: Brother, Pioneer, Husband, Father by Dawnine T Mills Johnson, First Edition, 2014, pages 1-9 to 1-11:

The fourth valley in Utah to receive white settlers was Tooele. In October 1849, Ezra T. Benson, employed two brothers, Cyrus and Judson Tolman, [as well as Benjamin Tolman, who was probably living with one of the brothers] and Phineas Wright, a millwright, to go into Tooele Valley for the purpose of building a mill. Shortly thereafter Frances X. Lougy, Samuel Mecham and others followed. These pioneer-settlers of Tooele located near the mouth of Settlement Creek Canyon about a mile southwest of the present site of Tooele City. They built several cabins joined together on the east side of the creek. Before winter set in they were joined by John Rowberry, his wife and five children, and Robert Skelton and others. About a dozen families had arrived to found the city of Tooele.

These early settlers made a favorable report to Brigham Young of the Tooele area; therefore, he sent an exploring party into the canyon for shingle timber. The explorers returned to Brigham Young with a discouraging report. Shortly thereafter Cyrus (Benjamin's brother) was in Salt Lake and talked to President Young, who told him of the report of the explorers. Cyrus laughed at the story and said there was both saw and shingle timber in the canyons, and right there, a bargain was made to have a load of this kind of timber delivered to Salt Lake City. A few days later Cyrus fulfilled the contract to the satisfaction of President Young. [History of Tooele County, p. 20].

As a result of fulfilling the timber contract with Brigham Young, Judson [probably as well as Cyrus and Benjamin], along with Ezra T. Benson and Anson and Josiah Call built the first saw mill in the Tooele Area. On November 24, 1849, authorization to build the sawmill was given along with the rights to harvest timber. The sawmill was located on Big Canyon Creek. The timber rights included Big Canyon, Pine Creek Canyon, and Small Creek Canyon. In return for this 'license' to harvest and process timber, they agreed to build a road into the canyon and to furnish lumber at a price of \$20 per thousand board feet. [Journal History of the Church, Salt Lake City, LDS Church Historical Department, 24 November 1849.] Pine and spruce were favored as construction lumber, while the cedar was preferred for shake shingles.

From this mill in Tooele, the lumber was furnished for one of the first school houses built in Davis County, which was built at 400 North and 200 West in Bountiful. [Foy, Leslie T., The City Bountiful, Bountiful, Utah, Horizon Publishers, 1975.] For this construction, they hauled lumber from Tooele to Bountiful, which, even as early as 1851, held some special attraction for them—probably because of the settling there of Judge Joseph Holbrook, Anson Call and other members of the 1848 pioneer companies with whom they had traveled and toiled.

Benjamin probably worked alongside of and lived with Judson while he was single. This would make sense as to why Judson in later years would take Benjamin's son, Benjamin Hewitt Tolman II, under his wing and included him as family. Judson and his family lived in the Tooele Valley until they moved to Bountiful, Davis County in the fall of 1854.