

Bits of Early Grantsville History—1852 to 1860

Compiled by Richard W. Walker, September 7, 2002

From *Manuscript History and Historical Reports—Grantsville Ward, Tooele Stake*, Church Archives:

Early in 1852 a townsite was surveyed at Willow Creek by Jesse W. Fox of Salt Lake City, under the direction of George D. Grant, after whom the settlement was subsequently named.

The first settlers on Willow Creek built their stockade early in 1852. It occupied the grounds now included in lots 1 and 2 of block 6 of the Grantsville City Survey, enclosing about 2 ½ acres. The stockade was built by sticking cedar posts into the ground, and the houses were built inside of the stockade in a row extending east and west in the north side of the enclosure, while the corrals were on the south side. It is believed that about a dozen families spent the winter of 1851–52 on the present site of Grantsville.

The emigrants who settled on Willow Creek (Grantsville) in 1852 did not locate in the stockade but on the different lots on the surveyed townsite which they selected, but in the spring of 1853, when orders were given to fort up as a matter of protection against the Indians, the settlers moved their houses into fort style. Among the new settlers in 1852 were William Lee, John Clark, John B. Walker, William C. Martindale, Jackson Redding, William Pope, James Dailey, and others.

From *Journal History*, August 30, 1852, Church Library:

Tooele County, Willow Creek Precinct, August 30, 1852

Pres. Young, Sir:

We the citizens of the above named place feel to write you a few lines stating the situation of our settlement. At the present time we number about eight men strong and about 45 Indians, out of which there are about 16 able men, and according to the best information that we can get from the Indians, there are about seven more of the same tribe remaining in the mountains, including men, women, and children, all of whom seem to be perfectly friendly and not disposed to steal, but we know not how soon they may change, as Indians are very treacherous, and we would like to have your counsel on what further to do with them, as we have got a great many of them now, and they have become a burden on our hands to feed and take care of. As there are but few of us here to protect ourselves, we are obliged to use them more than kindly for fear of offending them and they become embittered against us and become our enemies. We would further request that you would send a dozen or more families to settle and strengthen our place, as there will, we think, be water enough to support that many. We would furthermore request that all those owning land in this place do either settle their land or cause it to be settled with families that will become permanent settlers, in order to strengthen our place and support schools, as we do not feel safe with the few in number that are here. We have children here growing up and not enough to support a school, and unless those that are owning land in this place settle or cause their land to be settled, we never can have a school, as most of the land in this place is owned by those living in the city, and they do not intend settling it, either themselves or cause a family to settle on it, according to the present prospects; and we would request, your honor, to use your influence to have those that

own land to settle it or give way to those that would settle, as they hold the best land in this place, and we do not feel safe with so few in number.

Yours respectfully in the bonds of the everlasting Gospel,
Benj. Baker, president

From *Journal History*, October 25, 1852, Church Library:

Tooele County, Willow Creek, October 25, 1852

To Pres. Brigham Young:

Dear Brother, we the citizens of this place feel it a duty to lay before you the situation of things as they exist in this settlement, desiring your counsel and instruction on the subject, in order that our foundation may be laid in righteousness.

In the first place, it is presumed that all the best of the farming land is already surveyed that the water will irrigate in this region, also a city has been laid off, and city lots taken up; yet there is but very little done towards building up the place; some of those men that have got surveys made are in California, Iron County, Salt Lake County, etc. Now there is quite a number of families that have been sent here to settle and will do it provided that these lands and city lots which remain unoccupied could be distributed amongst them. We submit the foregoing for your consideration and patiently await the decision of your counsel.

Thos. Clark, president of the branch
Wilford Hudson, clerk

From *Manuscript History and Historical Reports—Grantsville Ward, Tooele Stake*, Church Archives:

Benjamin Baker presided at Willow Creek until the autumn of 1852, when Ezra T. Benson visited the place and appointed Thomas H. Clark to act as bishop of the settlement, with John B. Walker and William A. Martindale as his counselors.

At a conference held on March 27, 1853 at Grantsville, Tooele County, Utah, Thomas H. Clark was sustained as president of the Grantsville Branch, with John B. Walker as his first and William A. Martindale as his second counselor. Wilford Hudson was sustained as clerk of the branch.

Seth M. Blair, in a communication to the *Deseret News* published April 30, 1853, wrote:

The branch at Grantsville is presided over by Bro. Thomas Clark, who seems to be a good and faithful man of God, with his councilors Bros. Walker and Martindale, through whose influence the branch seems to be in a healthy condition and to enjoy the blessings of the Spirit with its attendant blessings of gifts of Tongues, etc., as promised by the Savior.

President Clark has recently organized the young men of said branch into the Teacher's Quorum, in which place they seem to magnify their calling; and the general spiritual health as well as temporal is good.

There are some 25 or 30 families in Grantsville, mostly of last fall's emigration, who will be enabled, we believe, of enclosing this season 2500 acres of land; their soil, timber, grass, and other conveniences is not excelled in the mountains, with the exception of their exposed situation to the various tribes of Indians on the western

range of the Wasatch mountains, which Indians we believe should be guarded against very prudently indeed, and to which we would call your attention.

The prophecy of the Presidency in the Ninth General Epistle in regard to the Gift of Tongues has been fulfilled in said branch, for Bro. Walker and Lee have the gift of the Utah tongue, and have preached (and did while I was there) to the Indians in their own tongue, and to the conviction of all present of their knowledge of what was said to them.

But the good influence that is created from time to time amongst the Indians who reside in Grantsville is destroyed more or less by the visit from the Utahs from Weber waters and other places, as well as from the Desert on Mary's River, and the most annoying thing to the brethren at Grantsville is the fact of the ability of the Indians to obtain such a vast amount of lead, powder, shot, caps, and guns as they do, which is a source of great annoyance and inconvenience to the settlement, and which no doubt would be stopped if the Superintendent of Indian Affairs knew of this fact.

In the spring of 1853 the settlers moved their houses from the stockade to their new locations, where they fortified up in 1854. The original town survey consisted of 48 lots, each containing 1 ¼ acres.

The heaviest hailstorm ever witnessed by the oldest settlers in the valley fell at Grantsville May 23, 1853. After the storm, the ground was literally covered with hailstones varying in size from the hickory nuts to ounce balls. The hail of course damaged the crops considerably.

Up to this time the good people of Grantsville had paid in tithing 1 ½ tons of butter and nearly 800 lbs. of cheese, thus showing that the settlers of Willow Creek had already become prosperous.

According to the official report read at the General Conference of the Church October 6, 1853, Grantsville had 215 persons belonging to the Church.

It is believed that the first schoolhouse was built and a school taught in it in the year 1853.

In 1854 the people who had built on their town lots were advised to fort in as a matter of protection against the Indians; consequently, that which is sometimes termed the second fort at Grantsville was built.

Another severe storm, which visited Grantsville this year, again destroyed parts of the crops.

Meetings continued to be held in private houses at Grantsville until the winter of 1853–54, when a meeting house was built—a log structure, about 30 by 20 feet, on the street west of the present meeting house. This primitive building had a dirt roof.

In 1855 the grasshoppers destroyed nearly all the crops at Grantsville. Millions of them fell on the Great Salt Lake in such very large heaps that they made a floating island about a mile long and about three inches deep. When a south wind prevailed, this floating island was blown way out into the lake and settled somewhere near the place where Garfield now stands. The dead grasshoppers generally floated onto the shore finally.

In October 1855 the Grantsville branch reported 251 members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Owing to the ravages of the grasshoppers causing destruction of the crops in 1855, times were very hard at Grantsville prior to the harvest of 1856. People were obliged to eat greasewood greens and other plants called pigweeds or a small spinach. Many pigs and dogs

starved to death. For seven weeks in succession the settlement was without bread. On one occasion when William Lee brought some flour and other eatables from Davis County, the children climbed on the top of the houses looking for him to arrive with the flour. One man came to Brother Lee begging piteously for a pint of flour to relieve the hunger of his starving family. When Brother Lee, in response, gave him 25 lbs., the man wept like a child for joy. Flour at that time was considered of far more value than gold.

The somewhat bounteous harvest of 1856 relieved the wants of the people, at least in a measure.

Early in 1856 Counselor John B. Walker died with consumption, and Timothy Parkinson succeeded him as second counselor. (William A. Martindale replaced John B. Walker as first counselor and Timothy Parkinson replaced William A. Martindale as second counselor.)

In the spring of 1858 Grantsville was vacated, the people participating in the general move south; only ten men were left to guard the settlement. Nearly all the Grantsville people located temporarily on Spring Creek (now Springlake Villa) between Payson and Santaquin. Bishop William G. Young went with the others. William C. Rydalch and a few others took charge of the Grantsville stock during the time of the move. They herded their cattle and other stock in Salt Lake Valley and other places. The ten men who were left to guard the place, and burn the property if found necessary, also attended to the watering of the grain.

Most of the settlers returned in time to celebrate the Fourth of July at Grantsville. On their return they found a good crop of grain growing, and a general good crop was realized by all the farmers that year. Nearly all the former settlers of Grantsville returned to their homes in the fall of 1858.

From the biography of William Lee, from the *Grantsville Observer*, March 1923:

In October 1852 William Lee moved to Grantsville, arriving October 22, 1852, moving into the fort which had been erected there. At this time the Indians had become troublesome to the little band of pioneers; in fact, so serious had the situation become that the little band of settlers, under the leadership of Thomas H. Clark Sr., fasted and prayed for divine guidance that someone should be able to talk to the Indians and persuade them that the settlers were their friends. The answer to their prayers came in a very miraculous way.

In 1853 William Lee was building a chimney on the outside of his log cabin, which he had erected inside the fort, when an Indian appeared and began making signs to him that he wished to help him. William Lee was afraid and retreated inside the cabin. But the Indian kept making signs and finally began carrying rock to the chimney site and mixing up the mud that was used to lay up the rock. William Lee finally gathered up the courage and came out and resumed his labor of building the chimney, the Indian assisting him.

At night he gave the Indian his supper and a blanket to sleep on.

Early the next morning he made known to the Indian by signs that he was going to the canyon for wood and would like his company, it being unsafe to go alone. The Indian agreed to go, and they yoked up the oxen and started for the canyon, William Lee sitting on the front bolster and the Indian sitting on the rear bolster. About half way to the canyon, William Lee found himself facing the Indian and talking to him in the Indian language. So engrossed was he in his talk with the Indian that no attention was paid to the oxen. Left to themselves, they

circled around, and William Lee found himself entering the fort with his oxen, wagon, and Indian, but no wood. The language had been revealed to William Lee in answer to the prayers of the settlers.

The incident was immediately made known to Thomas H. Clark Sr., who called the little band together. The Indian addressed them in his own tongue, William Lee interpreting. He named the Indian Ship-rus, by which name he was known up to the time of his death. He then told the Indian to go to his people and bring them to the fort so he could talk to them.

In two days time the Indians appeared at the fort, and William Lee stood on an old chair and addressed them for an hour, telling them of their origin and that the settlers were their friends, and that they would be taught how to till the ground and supply themselves with the necessities of life. All this was told them in their own language. The Indians answered in this way: "The mountains are ours; the water, the woods, the grass, the game all belong to us, but the Mormons are our brothers. We will share all with them and smoke the pipe of peace together."

This ended the difficulties with the Indians, and the settlers were able to move out of the fort on to their farms.

William Lee was appointed Indian Agent for the United States by Governor Doly, which position he filled until the Indians were ordered to a reservation at Ibapah. He tried to persuade them to obey the Government order, but part of them said they preferred to remain as they were, roving bands. He finally procured a tract of land on Hickman Creek in Skull Valley, where their descendants are at this time (1923). He taught them how to build houses and farm the land. On June 2, 1874, he baptized 100 Indians in Deep Creek, at Ibapah, in this (Tooele) county.