

CLOVER VALLEY, NEVADA

The early settlements in southeastern Nevada, including those of Clover Valley and Meadow Valley, were appendages of the Southern Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A long, dry season along the upper tributaries and drainage basin of the Virgin River during 1863 caused a number of the settlers along the Santa Clara Creek to seek other areas for settlement where there was water and soil to support a part of the expanding population. Accordingly, some exploration was carried on, and a number of families under the leadership of Edward Bunker established a settlement in Clover Valley, some eighty miles northwest of St. George, headquarters for the Southern Utah (Dixie) Mission.

Among those accompanying Bishop Bunker were Dudley Leavitt, Brown Crow, Hamilton Crow, Samuel Knight, William Hamblin, Luke Syphus, Mather Syphus, Amos Hunt, Bradford Hunt and a Brother Blair. These families moved into the Valley early in 1864. In May the colony was increased by the family of George Washington Edwards, a member of the larger migration of Lees and Mathews who were en route to Meadow Valley, some twenty-five miles to the northwest. On the thirtieth of May, William H. Edwards, the first white child to be born in present-day Lincoln County, was born to the Edwards family. The Edwards family, however, remained only one year, then migrated to Meadow Valley and became a part of the Panaca settlement.

Clover Valley was described by the historian of the Southern Mission as "a pretty little valley of meadowland, containing 200 to 250 acres." The hills produced abundant feed for livestock and there was a moderate supply of timber available in the mountains to the south.

The settlers grouped together and built their homes in the shape of a fort, with all buildings facing onto a common inner court. One of the early settlers described it as having "the schoolhouse partly across one end and the town ditch running through the center of the fort. The first corral was built at the northwest end of the fort, the fence at one end of the fields forming one side of the corral. Later, a big public corral was built on the south side of the fort."

The Indians, although friendly at first, found the relative abundance of the settlers too tempting, and began to help themselves to the cattle and livestock. During the first winter and following spring, Bishop Bunker reported seventy-five head of cattle stolen. It became policy for the settlers to gather their cattle into the big corral every night and to keep a guard through all hours, but still the cattle were stolen. On one occasion, on a stormy night, Bradford Huntsman was on guard when a flash of lightning revealed an Indian crouching in a corner of the corral with an arrow fitted to his bow prepared to shoot. Huntsman fired instinctively, and with daylight the settlers found the Indian dead with a bullet through his heart. Fearing revenge from the Indians, Huntsman left the valley and moved back to Utah.

Subsequently, a posse of Pahranaagat Valley miners came to Clover Valley in connection with the murder of one of their number in Meadow Valley by the Indian Okus. In his confession Okus had implicated Bushhead, a Clover Valley Indian. The miners killed three other Indians incidental to the capture of Bushhead, then hanged him. Bunker and the other settlers, however, refused to join the miners in a proposed raid on an Indian encampment in the mountains to the southeast of Pahranaagat Valley.

In order to provide for maximum protection, the settlers organized all available manpower into a military unit. On the occasion of a visit of Church officials from mission headquarters, they held muster. The scribe

for the visitors recorded the event. "On August 3, [1865] military muster was had at 7:30 a.m. Thirteen men mustered, eight more were out on guard duty guarding the livestock, making in all twenty-one capable of bearing arms. Reports showing eleven rifles, one rifled pistol and 540 rounds of ammunition. The men were under Dudley Leavitt and Samuel Knight, captains of tens."

Frictions between the settlers and natives increased, however, and on the recommendation of the mission president the settlement was abandoned in the summer of 1866. The people migrated to Panaca, to communities to the east, and closer to the headquarters of the mission.

The small valley was vacated for less than three years. In May of 1869 Lyman L. Woods, accompanied by Taylor R. Bird, moved into the valley. Woods acquired the land rights from Luke Syphus, and the new settlers moved into the fort homes that had been built by the earlier settlers.

The Woods family had originally been called to settle on the Upper Muddy in 1868. Inadequate water led to a change in their assignment, and to their selection of Clover Valley for their home. Range conditions were very good, and the family prospered in a typical pioneer economy. They were largely self-sufficient, raising their own food and manufacturing much of their clothing and other necessities.

Soon the Indians began their depredations again by running off livestock. On one such occasion, Woods and others gave pursuit and apprehended a party of five with several head of horses. One of the Indians was released to return to the Muddy River encampment for previously stolen stock, while the other four were held as hostages. When the one returned with the stolen horses, he was accompanied by most of the men of the tribe. A council was held, and it was decided that the young leader of the thieves should be whipped. A bullwhip was placed in the hands of another of the raiders to use on his leader, but he was so loath to use it that the chief took the whip and began to apply it vigorously. On the third lash, Woods stopped the whipping. He then butchered a steer for the Indians, and joined them in a feast. Through this episode, Woods won the lifelong regard and friendship of the entire tribe of Indians, and the settlers in the valley had no further trouble with the natives.

In addition to ranch work, farming, and stock raising, Woods engaged in the timber industry, first on hauling contracts to Panaca and Pioche, and in later years as a mill owner and operator in partnership with his son-in-law, George Edwards, of Panaca.

Following the completion of the Central Pacific Railroad, which provided the advantages of transcontinental transportation to northern Utah, Nevada, and California, commercial and political interests saw the need for such facilities to serve the needs of the Southwest, and to link Salt Lake City with the Los Angeles area. In 1880 a start had been made in this direction with the construction of some 240 miles of road as far south as Milford, Utah. The work halted at this point for several years, although the planning continued, and in 1888 engineering parties were sent out to seek practical grades for an extension of the line to Barstow, California. Clover Valley, running in a general east-west direction offered a natural approach to each of two possible routes through southern Nevada, and in 1890 the Oregon Short Line began construction of a grade along the Clover Valley route. By February of that year an important supply camp had been established in the valley. A hospital, boardinghouse, supply depot, etc., with the attendant demand for food supplies, hay, grain, timber and service brought a short period of prosperity to the little community. At one time two thousand men and hundreds of teams were at work along the line, throwing up the grade as far west as present-day Caliente. Lack of funds

and other discouraging events caused a lull in the construction activities for a number of years. With the financial panic of 1893, ownership rights in the railroad grade lapsed, and Lincoln County assumed ownership on default of tax payment. Clover Valley again became the quiet, isolated little frontier community of former years.

In 1898 interest in the road and routes began to revive, with a number of interests becoming involved, including those of Harriman's Union Pacific, the Utah Pacific, and Montana's Senator Clark. From the county commissioners, the latter acquired title to the grade from the Nevada state line through Clover Valley by purchase of the defunct rights of the Oregon Short Line. This set the stage for disputes, claims, and counterclaims that resulted in open conflict between the opposing forces for control and use of the grade that had been built through the valley, and that again brought new life into the community. By August of 1901 the rails had been laid from Uvada to Caliente, although final settlement as to rights and ownership of the right-of-way and grade still remained to be determined.

The alternate periods of "boom and bust" had advantages and disadvantages for the small valley. Markets for produce, cattle, and timber, so sorely needed, were provided. The Woods home became a haven for anyone in need. Emergency hotel and hospital needs were met by the household in a primitive frontier manner. The road often brought destitute itinerants in need of help, and they never failed to receive a helping hand. The home was also a welcome retreat for railroad officials and dignitaries who reciprocated with travel passes and privileges for the hospitality received.

Through the years the Woods family remained the dominant family in the valley. The family consisted of ten children, eight of whom—James, Jasper, Lamond, Maribah, Albert, Roxa, Malinda, and Lafayette—grew to adulthood. The last four of these eight were born in the Valley. As the family grew, and then as other families were added, the resources of the area were taxed to meet the needs of the growing population, with the result that the new families began to establish themselves elsewhere.

All except Lamond and Maribah Woods settled in Utah or Arizona. Maribah moved to Panaca where she became Mrs. George Edwards, and Lamond remained in Clover Valley until the closing years of his life when he too made his home in Panaca.

An incomplete listing of other families who built homes and made contributions in the area over long periods of time include those of Ogediah and Ed Hamblin, John Adair, William Adair, James Willard Simpkins and William Mathews. The Simpkins family migrated to the valley from Circleville, Utah in 1913. Mr. Simpkins purchased the interests of Jasper Woods, and he and his family engaged in the cattle industry. In recent years, however, modern transportation, breaking of cattle and horses, etc., has permitted an absentee control of range interests. The three brothers retaining Clover Valley interests lived in Panaca and commuted to their work. Gene Woods, son of Lamond, also lived in Panaca.

William Mathews moved from Panaca about 1918 and acquired holdings in the upper part of the valley and along the Beaver Dam Creek, interests which are still held by his son Ross.

The decline in the productivity of the range and the failure of the area to continue to support the population of former years do not detract from the contributions made during earlier periods of occupancy. Nor does it signify that the influences of that early period do not continue. The descendants of the original settlers are now spread over wide areas of the West, and continue to contribute to the development and growth of our society.