

HISTORY OF GOSHEN VALLEY

By Farrell L. Lines

In 1960 a book "Goshen Valley History" was published by Raymond Duane Steele, whose mother was raised in Goshen. As I was trying to find out more about our family, I had correspondence with him in the 70's and he was very friendly and helpful. I will relate here a thumbnail sketch of the Goshen Valley as taken from his book.

In the spring of 1856, Phineas Cook and couple of other men, who lived in the Payson area, came into the Valley following the tracks of stray cattle. They discovered a meadow area about five miles long and a mile wide, which was watered by a good size stream which entered the Valley from the south and was fed from springs and melting snow from the mountains to the east.

Phineas Cook immediately went to Salt Lake City and obtained permission from Brigham Young to establish a new colony in the valley. By summer, Mr. Cook was the head of a group of about 25 men who were engaged in building an irrigation dam across Current Creek. In the winter of 1856-1857, only a few families remained in the camp.

The next spring more families came and the settlement was officially founded. It was originally named Goshen, which was the name of the town in Connecticut where Mr. Cook was born. One of the original families was Joseph Weech, whose daughter later married one of the Lines' boys, Henry.

Since this was one of the frontier colonies, there were continual problems with the Indians. Chief Tintic was killed in the valley, along with a number of settlers. The last engagement of the Walker War was fought in the valley, which was known as Goshen Valley Battle.

The settlers built a fort called "Sodom" at the original townsite. That original settlement was about two miles north of the present townsite. The settlers finished the dam and began the work of grubbing out the greasewood and plowing and planting.

In 1858 Johnson's Army entered Utah and passed through Salt Lake City and made a camp at Cedar Valley, just over the hills northwest of Goshen. During the next three or four years, the settlers had a ready cash market for all their surplus grain, meat and vegetables. Camp Floyd, during this time, had a population second in size only to Salt Lake City. However, as the Civil War broke out in 1860, the soldiers left Camp Floyd and went back east.

In 1859 the people decided to leave the Old Fort area because of the low, boggy, and unhealthful terrain. They settled on a bench a mile southwest of the old fort.

However, the new area, named Sandtown, did not work out either because the area was so sandy and windy. There had been a bowry at the Old Fort, but no meetinghouse was built in Sandtown.

In 1860 most of the families deserted Sandtown and moved to Lower Goshen, which is located about four miles northwest of the present townsite. That settlement is about a mile and a half northwest of the Old Fort Sodom.

The Lower Goshen town was laid out like most Utah towns and had a forty block site to accommodate 160 residences and 1,000 people.

By 1863, the saints had built a meetinghouse, a tithing office, and a school building. There was also a gristmill and several residents had begun setting up small shops and manufacturing. That was the townsite of the community that our Lines family settled in after their arrival in Utah.

On September 5, 1865, President Brigham Young and several apostles stopped in Goshen on their way to visit with the southern wards. A meeting was held that evening in the bowry, or church building and President Young spoke for half an hour. Our grandfather, John, and his children were undoubtedly at that meeting.

During their residence in Lower Goshen, the people gradually became conscious of the fact that the land was too salty and low to produce much of anything. The fruit trees and the gardens failed year after year. Someone made up a song about the bad condition:

"Green peas they take a curious notion;
They all go back to Mother Earth
When they see Goshen"

In the fall of 1867, Brigham Young again visited the community and selected the present site. The following spring the new town was surveyed and was given the name Goshen, which had been the original name. Most of the families moved onto this present townsite in 1868.

At the time of the move, they abandoned the old pioneer cemetery where our Grandfather, John is buried and there are no markers remaining at all in that cemetery.

The railroad was built across the state of Utah between 1868 and 1871. A number of the Goshen settlers contracted with their teams to obtain work, which brought in good money to the community.

Ore was discovered in Tintic, a few miles west of Goshen. Several significant silver mines were drilled and began operation. Not only did this provide jobs in mining, but also provided work for freighting the ore. Smelters and stamp mills were also established in Homansville, which is in the Tintic district.

In the 1870's, a group of settlers established a community known as Mona about twelve miles above the Goshen dam to the south. The Mona settlers began taking a significant amount of water from Current Creek, which depleted the water available to Goshen residents downstream for their farms. The Goshen community went to Church authorities asking for assistance in resolving the situation. However, the Church leaders ruled in favor of the Mona settlers.

The Goshen community, realizing that they could not farm without water, took their case to Civil Court and a judgment was entered in their favor giving them back all of their water. The Church Leaders were angry that the Goshen Ward had not followed church council. So, in 1881, the entire Ward was excommunicated from the Church for "insubordination". A special meeting was held a short time later at which apostles John Taylor, George Q. Cannon, Wilford Woodruff, Frances M. Lyman, and John Henry Smith presided. They offered to reinstate any Ward members who were willing to be rebaptized and confirmed. The majority of the Goshen Ward swallowed hard and was rebaptized. However, some of the Ward thought that the excommunication was improper and that they did not need to be rebaptized. This second group became disenchanted with the Church and many of them left the Valley shortly after.

Even after the playing out of the mines in Tintic, the town did not disappear. It has continued over the years as a nice little community of farm and ranch people. As you drive through the community you will want to take a special look at the few old brick homes that have survived, along with the old church that is located across from the post office. The majority of the community is LDS and belong to the Santaquin Stake.