

# Butch Cassidy

## Sorting Facts from Fiction

Maybe. In 1969, when 20th Century Fox released its box office smash 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,' reporters came to Cassidy's childhood home, looking for his family. They found Mrs. Lula Parker Betenson, 86, Butch's youngest sister. Among other things, she told reporters that Cassidy had not died in South America in 1909, as was widely believed, but had come back to visit some 16 years later, in 1925. Lula said that Butch instead died in Spokane, Wash., in 1937, and spent his last years as a trapper and prospector. Could it be true?

Recently, diligent scholars like Larry Pointer, who wrote *In Search of Butch Cassidy*, have dug up evidence showing that in all likelihood Butch Cassidy did fake his death in San Vicente, Bolivia. They suggest that after making it big in Bolivian train, payroll and bank robberies, Cassidy sailed to Europe, got a facelift, moved back to America, married, then became an entrepreneur in Washington. Some of the evidence is convincing, especially a detailed manuscript about Cassidy which actually appears to have been authored by Cassidy.

## The Early Years

Born Robert LeRoy Parker in Beaver, Utah on April 13, 1866, Cassidy was the first of 13 children. His Mormon parents had come to Utah from England in 1856. His parents moved over the mountains to Circleville in 1879 and young Roy, as he was known about the house, worked in ranches across western Utah, including at Hay Springs, near Milford. On one of these early jobs Roy had his first run-in with the law - he let himself into a closed shop, took a pair of jeans, and left a note promising to return later to pay his debt. But things did not go well in Circleville for the Parker family - Roy's dad, Maximilian, lost land to another homesteader in a property rights dispute - and Roy ended up looking to a shady local rancher, Mike Cassidy, in admiration. By 1884, Roy was rustling cattle from Parowan (just over the Markagunt Plateau) and his life on the lam had begun. He soon took on the name Butch Cassidy, perhaps in honor of his childhood hero.

Roy Parker has been called a sort of Robin Hood of the Western frontier, a man who bristled at the notion that large cattle outfits were squeezing the smaller rancher out of business. In the years following 1884, Roy drifted west to Telluride, Colo., stopping along the way in the back of beyond territory known as the Robber's Roost, which is in the rough foothills of the Henry Mountains. He also worked in Green River.

## Life as an Outlaw & Telluride

The first major crime attributed to Cassidy is the robbery of the San Miguel Valley Bank in Telluride, on June 24, 1889. He and three cowboys got away with \$20,000 by thoroughly casing the joint first. The bandits then made their way over a choice hideout, Brown's Park, along the Green River at the

Utah-Wyoming border. They made forays to Green River and Vernal before moving north to Lander, Wyo.

Cassidy was one of the first to break ground on the Outlaw Trail, a meandering ghostlike path that began in Mexico, ran through Utah, and ended in Montana. The unofficial trail linked together a series of hideouts and ranches, like the Carlisle Ranch near Monticello, where ranch owners seemed willing to give jobs to outlaw cowboys. The Carlisle, actually, was close to Robber's Roost, and it was here where Butch camped out for a night or two before and after the Telluride holdup.

After Telluride, Butch's notoriety as an outlaw grew - an outlaw fighting for 'settlers rights, as citizens of the united States of America against the old time cattle baron (sic)' as written in a mysterious manuscript now believed to be Roy Parker's memoir. After the cruel winter of 1886-87, these resentments were ripe. Small cattle operations were crippled by the loss of stock, and larger operations paid a premium for rustled cattle. During this time, Cassidy and his gang established what would become their greatest hideout, the Hole-In-The-Wall, in central Wyoming. After spending a few years in a gloomy prison in Wyoming, Cassidy returned to rustling, this time along the Utah-Arizona border. During this period he began to assemble a sort of elite corps of outlaw cowboys, the Wild Bunch, which included Dick Maxwell, Elzy Lay, and Harry Longbaugh, who was perhaps better known as the Sundance Kid. Later the group was joined by Henry Wilbur 'Bub' Meeks, another Utah Mormon escapee, and George Currie.

## **Montpelier Bank Robbery**

The first robbery credited the Wild Bunch was the August 13, 1896 holdup of a bank in Montpelier, Idaho. This robbery showed the trappings of what would become the Wild Bunch signature holdup: a well-planned attack. The bandits made off with over \$7,000, and Cassidy, in part of an elaborate escape attempt, fled to Iowa, then Michigan, where he came face to face with an old foe - a deputy sheriff from western Wyoming who was on the lookout for him. Narrowly escaping (Cassidy even claimed to have shared a hotel room with a sheriff who was hunting for him but apparently never got a good look at him) Cassidy headed south then west again, where he met the gang and planned perhaps their greatest robbery, the \$8,800 heist of the Pleasant Valley Coal Company payroll.

## **In and Out of Utah**

Here, in narrow Price Canyon a few miles from Helper, Cassidy and his gang stole the payroll simply by shoving a revolver into the gut of the paymaster, who forked over the loot. Then, using an ingenious scheme, Cassidy and his gang rode hard for several days, employing a series of cached top-quality horses that could ride for hours at high speeds without tiring. The gang split up, and Butch fled to northern Wyoming, where he persuaded a rancher to hire him temporarily.

Castle Gate was the Wild Bunch's one and only major holdup in Utah. After that, the outlaws held up banks and trains in South Dakota, Wyoming, New Mexico and Nevada, and managed to bring home increasingly large sums of money - like an estimated \$70,000 for the holdup of a Rio Grande train near Folsom, New Mexico. But by then, the good old days seemed to be over. By this time, the Wild Bunch had an extensive ally of law officers hunting them wherever they went, and Butch had an impressive folio compiled by the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, whose operatives seemed to

follow his every move, waiting for a slip-up. The Gang often came back to Utah, either for protection or transportation, and once to ask Gov. Heber Wells in 1900 for amnesty in exchange for the promise to shape up. Abandoning that idea, the group later traveled across the Great Salt Lake Desert en route to Nevada, where they robbed the bank in Winnemucca.

## **Death in South America?**

The heat was on in a serious way, and by 1902 the group had disbanded, and Butch had gone to England, then Argentina, where Butch, Harry Longabaugh and his girlfriend Etta bought a small ranch. All was well until a stock buyer and former Wyoming deputy came through the country, ending the gang's seclusion. From here, Cassidy went back to robbing trains and payrolls up until his supposed death in 1908.

## **The Legend Lives**

After a trip back to Europe, Cassidy returned to the United States, this time with the name William Phillips. Phillips went to Michigan, where he met and fell in love with Gertrude Livesay. The two were married in May, 1908. The happy couple moved to Arizona, where Phillips apparently made a little cash on the side by fighting with Pancho Villa in the Mexican Revolution, then north to Spokane, where he founded the Phillips Manufacturing Company and later worked for Riblet, who made chairlifts and tramways. But things went downhill, and Phillips was close to bankrupt. He embarked on a few desperate trips back to Utah and Wyoming in hopes of finding some buried caches, but he apparently was unsuccessful. He was diagnosed with cancer, and died on July 20, 1937.

## **The Essence of Butch Cassidy**

In a way, Cassidy captured the essence of a land that, in many respects, is still wild. Back in Circleville, his old home is frail and weathered. Back in 1976, in a story for National Geographic, Robert Redford followed the Outlaw Trail. In his story, Redford wrote: 'As technology thrusts us relentlessly into the future, I find myself, perversely, more interested in the past. We seem to have lost something - something vital, something of individuality and passion. That may be why we tend to view the western outlaw, rightly or not, as a romantic figure.'

Maybe. Cassidy had his own reasons, though. He wrote: 'The best way to hurt them is through their pocket book. They will Holler louder than if you cut off both legs. I steal their money just to hear them holler. Then I pass it out among those who really need it.'

<https://www.utah.com/things-to-do/attractions/old-west/butch-cassidy/>

# Completing the Transcontinental Railroad, 1869

## Driving the Golden Spike

**A** railroad linking America's east and west coasts had been a dream almost since the steam locomotive made its first appearance in the early 1830s. The need for such a link was dramatized by the discovery of gold in California in 1848 that brought thousands to the West Coast. At that time only two routes to the West were available: by wagon across the plains or by ship around South America. Traveling either of these could take four months or more to complete.

Although everyone thought a transcontinental railroad was a good idea, deep disagreement arose over its path. The Northern states favored a northern route while the Southern states pushed for a southern route. This log jam was broken in 1861 with the secession of the Southern states from the Union that allowed Congress to select a route running through Nebraska to California.

Construction of the railroad presented a daunting task requiring the laying of over 2000 miles of track that stretched through some of the most forbidding landscape on the continent. Tunnels would have to be blasted out of the mountains, rivers bridged and wilderness tamed. Two railroad companies took up the challenge. The Union Pacific began laying track from Omaha to the west while the Central Pacific headed east from Sacramento.

Progress was slow initially, but the pace quickened with the end of the Civil War. Finally the two sets of railroad tracks were joined and the continent united with elaborate ceremony at Promontory, Utah on May 10, 1869. The impact was immediate and dramatic. Travel time between America's east and west coasts was reduced from months to less than a week.

**"It was a very hilarious occasion; everybody had all they wanted to drink."**

*The ceremony at Promontory culminated with Governor Stanford of California (representing the Central Pacific Railroad) and Thomas Durant (president of the Union Pacific Railroad) taking turns pounding a Golden Spike into the final tie that united the railroad's east and west sections. As the spike was struck, telegraph signals simultaneously alerted San Francisco and New York City, igniting a celebratory cacophony of tolling bells and cannon fire in each city.*

Alexander Toponce witnessed the event:

"I saw the Golden Spike driven at Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869. I had a beef contract to furnish meat to the construction camps of Benson and West.

On the last day, only about 100 feet were laid, and everybody tried to have a hand in the work. I took a shovel from an Irishman, and threw a shovel full of dirt on the ties just to tell about it afterward.

A special train from the west brought Sidney Dillon, General Dodge, T. C. Durant, John R. Duff, S. A. Seymour, a lot of newspaper men, and plenty of the best brands of champagne.

Another train made up at Ogden carried the band from Fort Douglas, the leading men of Utah Territory, and a small but efficient supply of Valley Tan.

It was a very hilarious occasion; everybody had all they wanted to drink all the time. Some of the participants got "sloppy," and these were not all Irish and Chinese by any means.

California furnished the Golden Spike. Governor Tuttle of Nevada furnished one of silver. General Stanford [Governor Safford?] presented one of gold, silver, and iron from Arizona. The last tie was of California laurel.

When they came to drive the last spike, Governor Stanford, president of the Central Pacific, took the sledge, and the first time he struck he missed the spike and hit the rail.

What a howl went up! Irish, Chinese, Mexicans, and everybody yelled with delight. 'He missed it. Yee.' The engineers blew the whistles and rang their bells. Then Stanford tried it again and tapped the spike and the telegraph operators had fixed their instruments so that the tap was reported in all the offices east and west, and set bells to tapping in hundreds of towns and cities. Then Vice President T. C. Durant of the Union Pacific took up the sledge and he missed the spike the first time. Then everybody slapped everybody else again and yelled, 'He missed it too, yow!'

It was a great occasion, everyone carried off souvenirs and there are enough splinters of the last tie in museums to make a good bonfire.

When the connection was finally made the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific engineers ran their engines up until their pilots touched. Then the engineers shook hands and had their pictures taken and each broke a bottle of champagne on the pilot of the other's engine and had their picture taken again.

The Union Pacific engine, the, 'Jupiter,' was driven by my good friend, George Lashus, who still lives in Ogden.

Both before and after the spike driving ceremony there were speeches, which were cheered heartily. I do not remember what any of the speakers said now, but I do remember that there was a great abundance of champagne."

**References:**

Alexander Topence's account first appeared in Topence, Alexander, *Alexander Topence, Pioneer* (1923) republished in Botkin, B.A. and Alvin Harlow (eds.) *A Treasury of Railroad Folklore* (1953); Bain, David Harward, *Empire Express, Building the First Transcontinental Railroad* (1999).

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pfgoldenspike.htm>

# Robbers' Roost on the Outlaw Trail



Robbers Roost, Utah, courtesy Mountain Photography.

Located within the rugged canyon lands of southeastern Utah, Robbers Roost was a popular hideout for cattle rustlers and other outlaws during the days of the Wild West. The area was ideal due to its rough terrain — it was easily defensible, provided hundreds of hiding spots, and was difficult to penetrate.

Situated between the Colorado, Green, and Dirty Devil Rivers, this stretch of land, crisscrossed with steep-walled canyons and hidden ravines, had long been utilized by outlaws long before Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch came along. The area first received its name and reputation in the 1870s when Cap Brown began to run stolen horses through the region. During his heydays, Brown was said to have been one of the most proficient horse thieves in the American West.

Butch Cassidy and other Hole-in-the-Wall members would come along in the late 1800s, using the area to hide horses and cattle that they had rustled or to rest and lie low following a robbery.

It was here that Cassidy met the man who would become his best friend and partner in crime — Elzy Lay. The two would form the Wild Bunch gang and work diligently to develop contacts that would give them easy access to supplies and fresh horses. Among these contacts was a ranch owned by outlaw sisters Ann and Josie Bassett. Along with the Sundance Kid's girlfriend, Etta Place; one of Elzy Lay's girlfriends, Maude Davis; and gang member Laura Bullion, they were the only known females to have entered Robbers Roost during the 30 years it served as an outlaw hideout.

Within the confines of the hideout, the Wild Bunch and other outlaws built cabins and outbuildings to help shield them from the harsh winters and store weapons, horses, chickens, and cattle.

Another frequent resident of Robbers Roost was Matt Warner, born Willard E. Christiansen to the fifth wife of a Mormon bishop in Ephraim, Utah. Warner served a cattle-rustling apprenticeship before joining the McCarty Gang along with Cassidy. The future Wild Bunch used Robbers Roost after a Telluride, Colorado bank robbery in 1889. Members of the Wild Bunch used it again in April 1897 after they held up the Pleasant Valley Coal Company payroll in Castlegate, Utah. Daring robberies such as these made the Wild Bunch notorious to some and folk heroes to others.

Despite sporadic attempts and many boastful claims, lawmen of the day never discovered the hideout location as the outlaws held each other to strict confidentiality regarding its location. C. L. “Gunplay” Maxwell, a small-time bandit and want-a-be member of the Wild Bunch, wrote Utah Governor Heber M. Wells from prison that Robbers Roost was defended by a well-armed, 200-man gang with an intricate system of fortifications, tunnels, land mines, and a vast storehouse of supplies and ammunition. This letter fueled the reputation of the Roost. Few lawmen cared to enter such supposedly dangerous ground.

Robbers Roost was just one of several hideouts utilized by the Wild Bunch. Others included Brown’s Hole, a rugged canyon region near the junction of Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming on the Green River, and the Hole-in-the-Wall in central Wyoming. The three hideouts were strung out about 200 miles apart. Their hard rides between the string of hideouts were impressive, as they perfected a “Pony Express” method of getaways — using fresh horses and supplies stashed at hideouts some 20 miles apart. The outlaws were all expert horsemen and always stressed the importance of strong, well-trained horses. The route linking these way stations became known as the Outlaw Trail, and it ran from Montana to Mexico.

The Roost was largely abandoned as an outlaw hangout after 1902 when Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid departed for South America. However, during Prohibition, the Roost area saw one last surge of illegal activity. Several unlawful whiskey stills were erected at springs in the clandestine canyons. Several of the canyons in the Roost still contain evidence of the illegal stills.



Wild Bunch, aka Hole in the Wall Gang (1896-1901) – Led by Butch Cassidy, the Wild Bunch terrorized the states of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada for five years.

Today, the original Wild Bunch corral remains in Robbers Roost, in addition to a stone chimney, caves, and several carvings. It continues to be a destination for hikers, campers, horseback riders, off-roaders, and canyoners attracted to the myriad of canyons and trails. In 2003, hiker Aaron Ralston rescued himself after being trapped for five days beneath an 800-pound boulder while exploring the canyons alone.

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<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/robbers-roost/>

# Matt Warner: Utah's Outlaw

August 11, 2015 by David E. Jensen



Illustrations by Jessica Hannan

Utah has produced some of the Wild West's most prominent figures, from distinguished religious leaders such as Brigham Young, who led a Mormon exodus to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, to celebrated outlaws such as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Long before statehood, Utah Territory was home to historic figures both famous and infamous.

One of Utah's genuine home-grown gunslingers was Matt Warner. Born in Ephraim on April 12, 1864 as Willard Erastus Christiansen, the young Mormon boy adopted the alias "Matt Warner" after a fight with another boy whom he thought he had killed. He was only 14-years-old. Fear of punishment forced the young fugitive to take refuge with a band of cattle rustlers. He won his first gunfight at the age of 15, marking the beginning of a life lived mostly outside the law, and later, in an ironic twist of fate, as a law man.

Roger Metzger is a member of E Clampus Vitus, Chapter 1900 (also known as the Helper Clampers); a group dedicated to the preservation of Utah's outlaw past. Based in Helper, the [Clampers](#) commemorate local history with plaques dedicated to lesser-known historical persons and events.

According to Metzger, "We do plaques for ghost towns, coal mines, and people and places the state don't recognize." Matt Warner is one of Metzger's favorites.

At the age of 25, Warner became a husband, father, and a temporarily honest man. But Warner soon resumed his nefarious ways and renewed his allegiance to the Robber's Roost Gang. He plundered banks and robbed trains with the likes of "Elzy" Lay, Tom McCarty (his sister's husband), outlaw pals Jim Peterson and Bill Tibbets, and the venerable Butch Cassidy himself. Warner's Mormon upbringing earned him the sarcastic moniker, "The Mormon Kid."

At the end of the 19th Century, the canyon country of southeastern Utah provided a vast labyrinth of hiding places where wanted men could escape the law. After a shootout gone bad, however, the law



caught up with Warner and he was sentenced to five years' hard time in the Utah Territorial Prison for robbery, during which time his wife passed away.

Good behavior earned Warner an early release from prison, and some say that in 1900, Governor Heber M. Wells granted him a pardon. In an unusual about-face, the once-notorious criminal remarried and ran for elected office in Carbon County. But his initial bid for public office met with failure, because according to Metzger, "He ran for Sheriff under his real name, Willard Erastus Christiansen, but nobody knew who he was."

After officially changing his name to Matt Warner, he was easily elected Justice of the Peace and later served as the Sheriff of Price. A stone monument in front of the Carbon County Courthouse, placed there by the Clampers, bears his name today.

In his later years, Warner penned a memoir entitled *The Last of the Bandit Riders*. "He was a very brilliant outlaw," says Metzger. "When he became Sheriff, he knew how to catch outlaws. He was one of the most excellent shots of his day. He was hired to guard gold coins and things."

Known for a combustible temper in his younger days, Warner was considered a fair man by those who knew him, and it is said that "he would rather die than tell a lie."

Matt Warner died on December 21, 1938. Shortly thereafter, in the Diamond Mountains, not far from Flaming Gorge, Matt Warner Reservoir was built and named in his honor.

On April 12th of this year, the Clampers celebrated Warner's birthday, and every Christmas they sponsor a Sub-for-Santa in tribute to one of Utah's outlaw legends.

<https://utahstories.com/2015/08/matt-warner-utahs-outlaw/>

# Utah's Cowboys of the Wild West

The Wild West (also referred to as the Old West) is a unique and intriguing time in U.S. history, spanning thirty years (1865-1895). The beliefs and lifestyles of the men and women who settled the West have greatly influenced the lives of those who call the West their home today. Utah is no exception.

Utah's landscape was dominated by cowboys (herders and drovers). Ranches could be found from the mountain ranges in the north to the canyon lands in the south and just about everywhere in between. Cattle were first introduced via the Old Spanish Trail. This trail covers 2,700 miles, starting in New Mexico and ending in California. The trail enters Utah through three routes; The North Branch begins in Green River, the Northern Route begins in Moab, and the Armijo Route begins in Big Water and crosses through St. George to the south.



Pioneers were another source of cattle. They brought cattle with them across the plains, from big ranch states such as Texas, and back from expeditions to California.

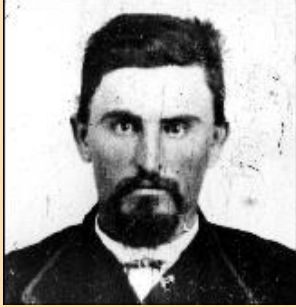
Utah's cattle industry saw its biggest increase with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Cattlemen could now buy and sell cattle with the markets of the eastern states, which led to more men choosing to settle in Utah and bring their cattle herds with them. Each cattleman started out with only a few heads of cattle. In 1870 there were 39,180 cattle in Utah, and twenty years later Utah was estimated to have had 278,313 heads of cattle.

The same spirit of daring determination can be found in the modern-day Utah cowboy. Many men, women, and children raise their cattle on the open range as in the days of the Old West (with the help of modern inventions such as the pick-up truck and the computer). Utah's economy continues to greatly benefit from the agricultural pursuits of the cowboys of the 21st Century.

<https://johnhutchingsmuseum.org/wild-west/utahs-cowboys-of-the-wild-west/>

## ***THE HISTORY OF THE CHUCKWAGON***

*The first Chuck Wagon was developed by cowboys working for Colonel Charles Goodnight, co-founder of the Goodnight-Loving cattle trail. Credit for inventing the chuck wagon is given to legendary ranchman and trail driver Charles (Chuck) Goodnight who invented the chuckwagon in 1866 for use by his crews.*



*Charles Goodnight, Inventer of the Chuckwagon.*

### **Texas Cattle Drives Began in 1867 and ended Some 20 Years Later**

*Joseph G. McCoy, a young cattle shipper from Springfield, Illinois came up with the idea of a shipping point along the railroad that was steadily moving west. He chose the village of Abilene, Kansas for his enterprise. In the space of a few months he talked the Kansas Pacific Railroad into furnishing stock cars. He built shipping pens and a hotel in Abilene, and then he sent word to Texas that he had the facilities to ship all the cattle they could bring to him.*

*The great trail drives up the Chisholm trail began in 1867. In time expansion of the railroad system made the long cattle drives unnecessary, but before that day came over 9,000,000 head of cattle were driven from Texas to destinations in the north, with an approximate value of \$100 million dollars. Not all the cattle were sold for beef. Thousands of longhorns were used to stock new ranches throughout the Great Plains states and territories. They spread from the Dakotas to Utah, and from Texas to Canada.*

### **Cowboy Shortage Led to Development of the Chuckwagon**

*By the 1870's, dozens of cattle drives were moving millions of cattle from Texas to markets in the midwest. As a result, there was a shortage of cowboys and there was tremendous competition in recruiting good cowboys. To gain the recruiting advantage, Goodnight decided to improve on the quality of meals served along the trail. What he needed was a good cook and a mobile kitchen.*

*To that end, Colonel Charles Goodnight purchased a sturdy war-surplus munitions wagon strong enough to make the journey of more than a thousand miles along difficult trails under all kinds of weather.*

*Goodnight outfitted the wagon with a kitchen on the back of the military wagon and with the help of his cook, developed an efficient layout that was soon adopted by all trail drovers across the west and named the chuckwagon after founder Chuck Goodnight.*

*The chuckwagon was used to transport food and supplies for trail crews and cattle drives and served as the cowboy cook's home on long trail drives. The chuckwagon also carried provisions for the trail*

*hands, especially water, plus bedrolls, shovels, axes, rope, and even a few personal items.*



### Typical Crew for a Trail Drive

*A 12-man crew could manage a herd of 2,000 to 3,000 head. The trail boss was the ultimate authority on the trail, like the captain of a ship, and was paid \$100 to \$125 a month. Of the rest of the crew, the cook was the most important, earning about \$60 per month.*

### Operation of the Chuckwagon

*During the long trail drives, the chuck wagon was the headquarters of every cattle outfit on the range. The cowboys ate their meals there and it was their social center and recreational spot, a natural gathering place for exchanging "windies," or tall tales, listening to music if their happened to be a musician in the group, or just recounting the experiences of the day.*

*The chuck wagon was also the cowboy's only known address, truly their home on the range. The chuck wagon cook was the king. He ruled the wagon with an absolute hand. Because the morale of the men and the smooth functioning of the camp depended largely upon him, the cook's authority was unquestioned. Even the wagon boss walked softly in the vicinity of the chuck wagon cook.*

*Wagon cooks as a group had the reputation of being ill-tempered, and no wonder. Their working conditions usually left a lot to be desired. The nature of the cook's job required that he get up several hours earlier than the cowhands, so he worked longer hours with less sleep. When the outfit was on the move, he had to be at the next appointed camp and have a hot meal ready on time. He was often short of fuel or water. He was constantly called upon to battle the elements – wind, rain, sand, mud, insects, and even rattlesnakes – while preparing his meals. In addition to preparing meals, Cookie also was expected to act as barber, doctor, banker, and sometimes as mediator or referee if a disturbance among the cowboys arose. He was keeper of the home fires, such as they were, out on the range.*

*The atmosphere around a chuck wagon has been described as pleasantly barbaric, as might be expected with a group of men far from home who were doing rough, dirty work under sometimes brutal conditions. The language was colorful and often profane.*

*There were, however, definite rules of behavior around the chuck. Most were unwritten laws*

*understood by all but the greenest of cowhands. For example, riders approaching the campsite always stayed downwind from the chuck wagon so that they didn't cause dust to blow into the food. No horse could be tied to the chuck wagon wheel or hobbled too close to camp. Cowboys looking for warmth never crowded around the cook's fire. There was no scuffling about of kicking up billows of dust around the chuck wagon while meals were being prepared.*

*When it came to eating, no cowboy dared help himself to food or touch a cooking instrument without Cookie's permission. The cowboys never used the cooks worktable as a dining table; they sat on the ground and used their laps instead. When dishing out a helping of food from a pot, they placed the lid where it wouldn't touch the dirt. It was against the rules for a cowboy to take the last piece of anything unless he was sure the rest of the group was through eating. If a man got up during a meal to refill his cup with coffee and someone yelled, "Man at the pot," he was supposed to fill all the cups held out to him as well as his own.*

*After a meal, the cowboys always scraped their plates clean and put them in the "wreck pan" or the receptacle that the cook provided for this purpose. Like most rules of etiquette, the rules around the chuck wagon were based on concern for others and common sense.*

*Along with sourdough biscuits and coffee, most chuck wagon meals included beans, or frijoles, as they were often called. Beef was something that was never in short supply, and a good chuck wagon cook knew how to prepare it in many different ways. Fried steak was the most common; the cowboys never seemed to get tired of it; but pot roasts, short ribs, and stew showed up often on the menu. If Cookie had time, and he was feeling kindly toward "the boys," as he called the cowhands, he would make a desert. Usually it was a two-crust pie made with apples or some other dried fruit.*

*On a chuckwagon, the larger back partition held sourdough starter, a flour sack and larger utensils. Smaller spaces contained tin plates, 'eatin' irons," [utensils] and a 3 - 5 gallon coffee pot. If the weather was cold, the cook often kept the sourdough starter against his body, as it required constant warmth. Heavy pots and pans were stored in a hinged box below the chuck box. A water barrel was mounted on the wagon side. It was cooled by wrapping in wet canvas or gunny sack. A jockey box beneath the footboard held emergency equipment such as hobbles or horseshoeing tools. The wagon bed held other staples such as beans, coffee, flour, salt, potatoes, etc. In a large outfit, there was a separate wagon for bedrolls.*

*A Dutch oven, a cast iron pot with legs and a rimmed lid was essential. It was placed over hot coals. More coals were then piled on the lid. Equally important was the large coffee pot and a couple of kettles. At the campfire, fire hooks dangled from the crossbar over the heat for the pots to hang on. The 'gouch' hook lifted hot and heavy lids. There was a dish pan for mixing bread, a kettle for heating water for washing, a 'wreck' or 'roundup' pan for dirty dishes, and a 'squirrel can' for scraps.*

*Sourdough was a staple and cooks guarded their dough keg.*

*A typical day's food on the trail was meat, hot bread, dried fruit and coffee for breakfast. The noon and dinner meal included roast beef, boiled potatoes, beans, brown gravy, light bread or biscuits, and coffee.*

*Dessert included stewed dried fruit, spiced cake made without eggs or butter, and dried fruit pies. Northern cowboys were more likely to get beef with their meals. Some outfits in the Southwest made do with salt pork, beans and sourdough.*

*Typical Chuckwagon Provisions for a 1000 mile trail drive included:*

*300 pounds salt pork  
500 pounds Flour  
50 pounds Salt  
100 pounds Coffee  
50 pounds Baking Powder  
10 pounds Pepper  
200 pounds Onions  
500 pounds Beans  
50 pounds sour dough starter  
500 pounds potatoes  
50 pounds dried chilis  
50 pounds dried garlic  
50 pounds lard  
200 pounds dried fruit  
Approximate cost: \$3500.00*

*The chuckwagon, sometimes drawn by oxen, but usually by mules, carried not only food, utensils and a water barrel, but also tools and the crew's bed rolls. A fold-out counter, supported by one or two hinged legs, was used for food preparation. The wagon contained several drawers and shelves, with a ibootî or storage compartment underneath, all covered by a canvas top. The cook served beef and bison steaks, and stew, "chuckwagon chicken" (bacon), "Pecos strawberries" (beans), "sourdough bullets" (biscuits) and cowboy coffee.*

*After the beef was salted, the cook slipped them into a hot Dutch oven. He then pinched biscuits off one end of the newly made loaf of dough, rounded each one between his palms, dipped it in melted tallow and placed it into a bread oven. When the bottom was filled, he set the lid in place and shoveled hot coals around and over it.*

*When the grub was ready to serve the cousie would give a shout to summon the cowhands to breakfast.*

*The men headed for the wash basin and scrubbed their hands and faces and passed around the all too wet towel to dry off. A common comb may have been used to arrange messy hair. (Sounds a little too cozy).*

*Each man helped himself to a plate, cup and tools. The men got in line, grabbed their grub, plunked down somewhere and ate their meal.*

*As each man finished, he flipped the dregs from his coffee onto the ground and dropped his dirty dishes into the "wrecking pan" - a big dishpan set aside fir this purpose. To neglect placing dishes in this pan was the ultimate no-no*

*As soon as the men saddled up and left the cook washed and dried the dishes. The bed rolls were tossed into the chuck wagon or a bed wagon, (hoodlum wagon). The Dutch ovens were wrapped in burlap bags and stowed away with the pot racks in the boot. An assortment of hooks and hangers on the side of the wagon accommodated and other things that needed to be stowed away. The team was hitched to the wagon and the move to the next camp would be under way. Along the way the cook (cousie) would collect any combustible material he could find and store it in the "possum belly" under the wagon.*

*When the new bed ground was reached the cook would dig his fire trench, set up his pot rack, get the coffee going and get started on dinner. A good cousie changed the monotonous diet by preparing soup and stews which were eaten in relish despite some rather vulgar names for the concoctions. A really imaginative cook occasionally stirred up pastries with dried fruit or put up some beans to soak, though beans on the high plains were not to common as it took too long for them to cook.*

*Evening was the time of day to kill a beef. The carcass was halved with the cooks axe and each half was hung from an erected wagon tongue, where the meat chilled during the night, and was ready to be eaten in the morning. During the heat of the day the meat was wrapped in tarpaulins. At night the beef was hung out again to chill.*

*After washing the dishes, filling the water barrel and dragging wood the cook could finally relax and enjoy what was left of the evening.*

<http://www.forttumbleweed.net/chuckwagons.html>

# The Ute Tribe – Roaming the Rockies



## Ute Tipi

An important tribe of the [Shoshonean Indians](#), the Ute, were related linguistically to the [Paiute](#), Chemehuevi, Kawaiisu, and [Bannock tribes](#). They were initially divided into seven nomadic and forest-dwelling tribes, including the Capote, the Mouache, the Parianucs, the Tabeguache, the Uintah, the Weeminuche, and the Yampa. When European [explorers](#) and settlers first pushed westward, the Ute occupied the entire central and west portions of [Colorado](#), and the east portion of [Utah](#), and the upper portion of the San Juan region

of [New Mexico](#).

Ute, which means “land of the sun” also, gave the state of Utah its name. The bands were scattered over some 150,000 square miles, subsisting on wild game, fish, nuts, berries, and greens. They first lived in wickiups before adopting the teepee from the [Plains tribes](#), making for a more effortless movement. The Ute practiced polygamy, with a man often marrying sisters or adding the widow of a brother to his wifely “harem.” Their religious beliefs were based in nature with an animalistic type of worship. Believing they were closely related to the bear, the Utes gathered every Spring for the annual Bear Dance, also known as “Momaqui Mowat.” They also gathered in the Summer for the Sun Dance, their most important ceremony. During this event, participants would fast for four days in the Sun Dance Lodge, undergoing a quest for spiritual power.



## Ute Indians, 1893

Life changed dramatically when the Spanish introduced them to horses, which the Ute referred to as “magic dogs.” Later, the Mormon settlers also introduced them to agriculture which changed their lifestyle once again. The Northern Ute, however, resisted agriculture, not wanting to settle in one place. The Utes also became involved in the trading of horses as well as in the slave trade.

They were always warlike people, and when they acquired horses, it intensified their aggressive character. They soon became respected warriors and feared enemies, often engaging in raiding parties. As more and more Mormon

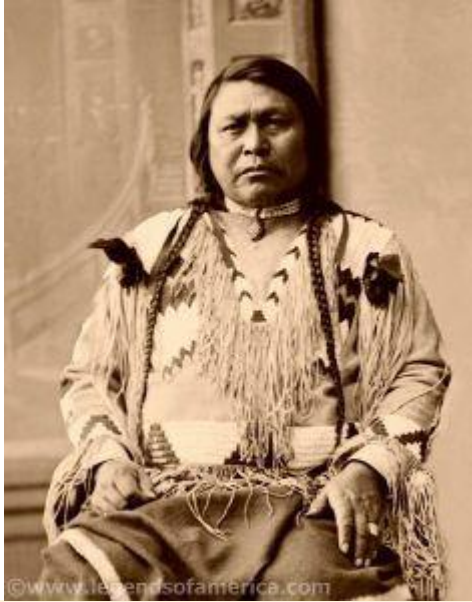
settlers invaded their lands, the Northern Ute began to raid those many settlers, leading to the [Walker War](#) in 1853.

The first treaty with the Ute, one of peace and amity, was concluded on December 30, 1849. In October 1861, the Uintah Valley was set apart for the Uinta tribe, but the government took the remainder of their land. Two years later, in 1863, the Tabeguache were assigned to a reservation. Another treaty signed in March 1868 created a reservation in Colorado for the Tabeguache, Moache, Capote, Wiminuche, Yampa, Grand River, Uinta, again with the remainder of their lands relinquished to the government. The



reservation lines would change over the next few years as portions of the treaties were repealed and lands restored to the public domain.

In 1870, one of the greatest leaders of the Ute, [Chief Ouray](#), traveled with his wife to Washington, D.C., hoping to save his people and their lands. However, his efforts would ultimately be in vain.



### Ute Chief Ouray

In July 1879, about 100 men of the White River Agency in Colorado roamed from their reservation into southern [Wyoming](#) to hunt. During this time, a forest fire was started by railroad men, which resulted in a great loss of timber. Blamed on the Ute, the Indians were ordered back to their reservation, where they were to remain. In September of that year, Indian Agent Nathan C. Meeker was assaulted after a quarrel with a Ute man. In turn, he requested military aid, which was granted. Orders were then issued to arrest certain Ute charged with the recent forest fires, and Major Thornburgh was sent into the area with a force of 190 men. Suspecting the outcome, the Indians armed themselves and informed Meeker that the appearance of the troops would be regarded as an act of war. On September 29, 1879, the Indians attacked the agency,

burned the buildings, and killed Meeker and nine of his employees before they arrived. Meeker's wife, daughter, and another girl were held as captives for 23 days. The event is known as the [Meeker Massacre](#). Soon, U.S. troops arrived in masse, and the Ute were forced back on their reservations. With the possible exception of the [Ghost Dance](#) outbreak of the [Sioux](#) in 1890, the massacre was probably the most violent expression of Indian resentment toward the reservation system.

Two years later, all of the Ute had been removed to reservation lands in Utah and Colorado.

Today, the Ute have diversified to include several different income sources for the reservations, including farming, ranching, oil, gambling, and tourism. Each reservation operates its own government, which continues to promote its heritage.



### Ute Warriors

© [Kathy Weiser-Alexander/Legends of America](#), updated November 2021.

# Utah

In the early 1840s as Latter-day Saints prepared to leave Nauvoo, Illinois, they considered several potential destinations. An area in the Great Basin around the Great Salt Lake over 1,000 miles (1,700 kilometers) to the west seemed most favorable to Brigham Young and other Church leaders.<sup>1</sup> In January 1846, Brigham Young declared that the words of ancient prophets “would never be verified unless the House of the Lord should be reared in the Tops of the Mountains,” concluding, “I know where the spot is.”<sup>2</sup> Upon their arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, Wilford Woodruff affirmed it was a “land of promise held in reserve by the hand of God for a resting place for the Saints upon which a portion of the Zion of God will be built.”<sup>3</sup> The Saints soon established a central stake in the Salt Lake Valley, with many smaller settlements in the surrounding region. The area became the final destination for tens of thousands of converts who left their homelands to gather to Zion.<sup>4</sup>

Before the arrival of Europeans, the central Utah region was inhabited by several communities of Uintah, Timpanogots, Sanpits, Pahvant, and Moanunts peoples. These groups collectively identified themselves as *Nuche* (“the People”), and for centuries they lived in family clusters and bands and sustained an extensive hunting, gathering, and fishing culture.<sup>5</sup> As early as the 1600s, Spanish missionaries referred to *Nuche* bands as “*Yutas*,” though the basis for the name remains unclear. By the early 1800s, English speakers variously rendered the Spanish term as “Utaws,” “Yutas,” “Eutaw,” “Eutahs,” “Utes,” and “Utahn.”<sup>6</sup> As with other place names thought to have a Native American origin, United States government officials borrowed “Utah” in naming the territory in 1850.<sup>7</sup>

Following the 1848 treaty that ended the Mexican-American War, the United States Congress began a system of federal management over new territories ceded by Mexico to the United States. A process of forming temporary republics, or provisional governments, allowed local English-speaking populations (with the approval of Congress) to write a constitution; draw civic boundaries for territories, counties, and cities; and nominate governors, legislators, judges, and other officials.<sup>8</sup>

Latter-day Saints passed a constitution in 1849 that claimed a large area as the provisional State of Deseret. Named for a word in the Book of Mormon meaning honeybee, Deseret reached as far north as part of Oregon Territory, as far south as San Diego, California, and as far east as Colorado.<sup>9</sup> The Deseret government operated with a legislature, county commissions, and courts for a little over a year until Congress created Utah Territory as a part of the Compromise of 1850. The new territory superseded the provisional State of Deseret, although between 1850 and 1868, the federal government reduced the boundaries of Utah Territory six times, resulting in Utah’s present size. Latter-day Saints frequently continued to refer to their territory as “Deseret,” a name that congressional leaders refused to consider official.<sup>10</sup>

As a federal territory, Utah was governed by officials appointed by the United States government. Statehood would allow local elections to determine office holders and give Latter-day Saints in Utah representatives and senators in the United States Congress.

The territorial legislature held conventions in 1856, 1862, 1867, 1872, and 1882 to petition Congress to admit Deseret (Utah in 1882) as a state of the Union. Congress rejected each petition, citing in particular the practice of plural marriage as a reason for the rejection. Four

years after Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto, which eventually led to the end of plural marriage in the Church, Congress passed the Utah Enabling Act, permitting the people of Utah to enact a state government and constitution.<sup>11</sup> Voters ratified the state constitution a year later, and in January 1896, United States president Grover Cleveland declared Utah an equal state in the Union.

Meanwhile, Latter-day Saints continued to gather to Utah and the surrounding region. This gathering introduced new peoples and cultures to the region, and the new environment transformed the lifestyles of those who immigrated.<sup>12</sup> With increased settlement, the western United States boomed, and the Church's headquarters were located at an important crossroads of commerce, industry, and immigration.<sup>13</sup>

## **Church Resources**

["Utah—Church History Sites,"](#) Media Library, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.