

HOLE IN THE ROCK

News

Preserving the History and Sharing the Legacy

Volume 8 Summer 2010



ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL AFFAIR

New cabins have been erected in memory of Jens Nielson and Charles Eugene Walton.

The building of the Jens Nielson and Charles Eugene Walton cabins, the first weekend in May, proved that inherited work genes are still active. The 1st great, 2nd great, and 3rd great grandchildren of Jens and Elsie, Kirsten, and Katrina Nielson, as well as the descendants of Charles Walton, were busy raising both cabins.

The little children went to school in the log meeting house with teachers Janie Lauritzen and Ann McDougal. Ann and Kirk McDougal heard there was work to be done at the Fort and volunteered to come help, and they did just that. Thank you McDougals, and come again.

It is always fun to see soft hands working, chinking the mud and dirt of the roofs and much more. It was a satisfying experience for all. Nothing ever built in Bluff is—or was—easy. Everyone knows the meaning of “sticky-ta-tudy.” Thanks Grandpa Jens for that expressive and determined motto.

From all of us on the Hole in the Rock Foundation board, we thank all of you who donated your money, your time and your hard work to build the cabins. Next time, come to play, relax and enjoy beautiful Bluff by the cliffs and the river.

Corinne Roring, HIRF President

CABIN BUILDING

Descendants of Charles Eugene Walton and Jens Nielson and his wives Elsie, Kirsten, and Katrina united their efforts to build cabins at the Fort in honor of their ancestors. Virginia Nielson Black, descendant of Jens and Kirsten Nielson, has kindly shared with us her perspective on the cabin raising.

Our backs and arms are still aching, but such a fun time was had by all those in attendance. What a sweet spiritual experience it was to be a part of building Jens Nielson and Charles Eugene Walton Sr. cabins. Love went into every log, every little “chink,” and every little watery sponge. It was with the deepest respect that we honored our pioneer forefathers by

building these little cabins. We know it is from our family that we get our traditions and attitudes about our environment, education, love, opportunities and happiness. After all is said and done, God ordained the family for time and eternity.

Children, young adults, semi-old folks, and really old people, (like me) worked from daylight to dark and enjoyed every minute of it. We were lucky to have some professional builders in our family to advise us. We all felt a sense of belonging, a sense of history for these intrepid Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. We could feel their courage and the sacrifices they made to fulfill their calling from the prophets.

The old Bluff Fort is a profound and historic project. We will never forget that Friday and Saturday, building and dedicating those cabins. We were a group of happy, positive and very hard workers. We loved the opportunity to participate. The weather was perfect, the kids were well-behaved, and we felt our ancestors smiling down on us in our endeavors.

Being in Bluff brought back sweet remembrances of the “pond,” “the swing tree,” “the rare cliff flower,” and the “swinging bridge.” Thank you!

We love and appreciate those great people who planned this, did the work, fixed the meals, and made us welcome. The Navajo tacos were a great finale to a wonderful weekend. God bless you and all of us. Keep the family spirit alive.

Virginia Nielson Black



For more pictures of the cabin raising, see page 2.



CABIN BUILDING CONTINUED

Raising the Walton and Nielson cabins.

“Participating in erecting a monument to the accomplishments of my ancestors was a singular experience. I say this not only because they deserve one, but because ‘there ain’t a thing worth doing that ain’t worth doing well,’ and with effort.

The Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers and settlers of Bluff underwent numerous trials, many of them physical. Helping with this project in a physical way was only an echo of what they did.

This was a lasting memory I won’t soon forget. Years from now, when I have children of my own, I will take them to Bluff and show them what I helped to build, and I’ll teach them the history of their ancestors. Then I will be able to say, ‘I was here, I did this and I remember those that came before.’”

—Cheyenne, Granddaughter of Virginia Nielson Black



The completed Butt cabin



FROM THE FORT

Volunteers for cabin maintenance and beautification needed.

We are so excited about all the visitors coming to Bluff! We now have 12 cabins for viewing, and you can really visualize how the Fort looked in 1880. But we have one little problem, and we could use your help!

We do not have enough workers on a regular basis to keep the cabins swept and dusted so they look presentable. We are asking those of you who live in the surrounding area to come and clean your cabin, hoe a few weeds around it, and make it a part of your family. This would make an excellent Family Home Evening activity. Serving in this small way will help you really feel the spirit of this place.

There are many descendants of the original Fort settlers that live close by but who were not able to construct cabins. However, you can do your part now to help keep the cabins looking great! Thank you for all you have done, and know that you are needed and appreciated.

DECKER AND BAYLES CABINS ANNOUNCED

Funds are being raised. All donations are tax deductible.

The Decker cabin will be raised on October 28th, 29th and 30th. This cabin will honor all of the Decker families who made the journey through the Hole in the Rock. Funds are also being raised for a Bayles cabin. A date for its construction has not yet been set.

To donate to the Decker or Bayles cabins, or the continued development of the Fort, please send your donation to the Hole in the Rock Foundation, Box 476, Bluff, Utah. All donations are tax deductible.

THOUGHTS ON BLUFF FORT AND THE SAN JUAN MISSION

Norma Young and her daughters Leimomi Sampson and Jerri Nielson recently worked as docents at Bluff Fort and got to share a part of their personal history with visitors from all over the world.

I am Norma Young, granddaughter of Benjamin Perkins, one of the “blasters and blowers” from Wales. I am proud to be a descendent of the Hole in the Rock pioneers and especially glad to participate in the activities at Bluff Fort. I spent a week at the Fort while the Perkins and Lyman cabins were built. This summer (2010) I spent two weeks there with my daughters LeiMomi Sampson and Jerri Nielson and Jerri’s husband Keith who were all docents at the Fort.

During the first week, we visited with the Nielson and Walton descendants as they constructed their cabins. It gave me a lot of pleasure to visit with old friends and relations and even total strangers who visited the Fort. The second week was quieter after the excitement of the cabin raisings died away, and I was able to walk peacefully around the Fort. I visited with several guests who stopped by, many who were inspired to come after reading the novel *Undaunted* by Gerald Lund. Some of the visitors were travelers from foreign lands who love the southwest in all its red rock splendor. They were pleasantly surprised to be able to see the Fort and hear the stories about the real participants in the settling of the San Juan frontier.

There is a special feeling at Bluff Fort, and we all felt it. Our ancestors seemed to be telling us that they were glad we are remembering them and the sacrifices they made for us. I am 95 years old now, and I hope to be able to make another trip to Bluff next year. I just might be able to do it; we Perkins are survivors—I have two living brothers, DeMar age 91 and Lloyd age 101. The Hole in Rock blood is rich.

I want to thank the Foundation for making Bluff Fort a reality and for the great work they are doing to honor the pioneers of the San Juan Mission. If you want to have a memorable experience, come and be a docent at the Fort. You are never too old or too young.

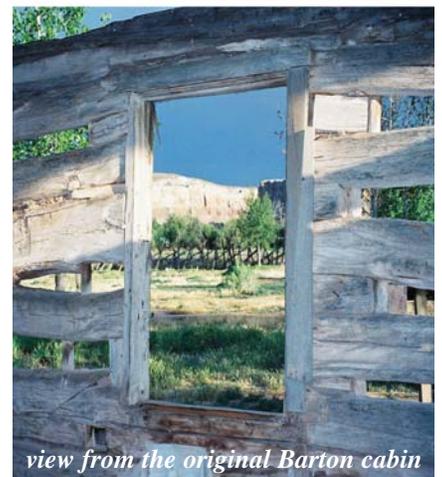
by Norma Young as told by her daughter LeiMomi Sampson



wildflowers



stone ruins



view from the original Barton cabin



hands-on activities for kids



inside the meetinghouse/school room

BE A DOCENT AT BLUFF FORT!

We have had some great volunteers, but we have very few docents scheduled to work at the Visitors Center July through October. Do you have a week, two weeks, or a month?

As a docent, you will learn about the extraordinary men and women whose courage and determination didn't just blaze a trail, it blasted one through the side of a mountain. And you'll get to share their story with people from all over the world.

We have two apartments available for docents to stay in at no charge. One apartment has one bedroom with a queen size bed. The second apartment has a queen bed in one room, a double in the upstairs bedroom, and a large loft with twin beds and a futon. Both apartments are furnished and have central air and satellite TV.

Please call LaRue Barton at 435-672-9967 (home) or 435-672-9995 (Visitor Center) if you are interested.

LaRue Barton, Visitors Center Manager

ONE DOCENT'S EXPERIENCE

Jerri Nielson's husband Keith also felt the call and came to help preserve the monument to the indomitable spirit of the Hole in the Rock pioneers.

It's first morning light and I'm just waking up, expecting to hear the hustle and bustle of a regular day. But instead I hear only the faint, distant braying of a mule. I smile, remembering where I am, and I relax for a few more minutes to savor the memory of the day before: the beautiful bright stars in the night sky, the red bluffs surrounding the town, the Fort and the wonderful people who have made it a reality with their vision and hard work.

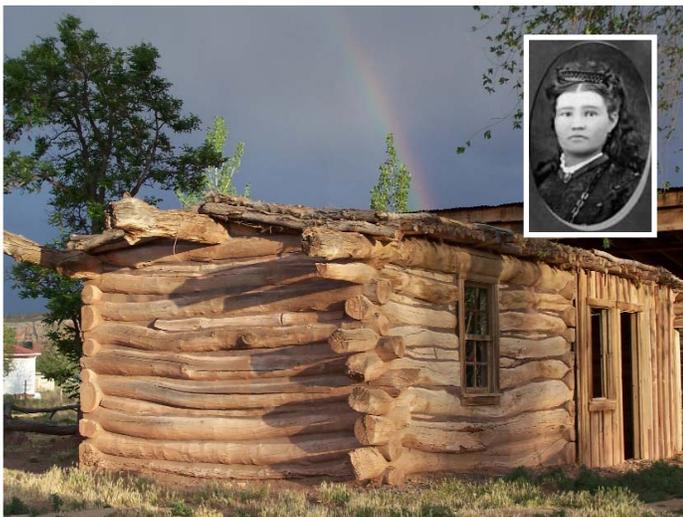
I wonder where my wife Jerri and her sister LeiMomi will be going on their morning walk before they begin their docent duties. Already, they have been to the river, the pond, the twin rocks, the cemetery, and around town. Later on, they will tell me about their walk and show me pictures, and I will promise to go with them next time. It will have to be next time because I am excited for a project that we're working on at the Fort, and I want to get an early start.

Bluff Fort was built in 1880 to protect the Hole in the Rock pioneers. Today it is being restored to preserve a priceless, half-buried treasure—the history and the memory of those noble pioneers. Working in Bluff Fort, I learned their stories, walked their paths, and experienced their joys and sorrows. The very special spirit here makes me feel like I belong.

Visitors come from all over the world. They are enthralled with the story and delighted with the Fort and its Old West feeling. I enjoy seeing the children laughing and being “pioneers” by dressing in authentic costumes and enjoying handcart rides while parents snap their pictures.

Being here has been a wonderful, life-changing experience. Jerri and I feel that anyone would love being a volunteer here. You will be able to make a difference. It's a very good thing. Jerri and I hope to return to Bluff again and again. We felt a real connection with and love for our brave, faithful pioneer ancestors, and we feel like we were able to make a difference.

Keith Nielson



SAN JUAN HILL, A SACRED PLACE

In the preface to the book *Sacred Places*, general editor LaMar C. Berrett states that, “many places are made sacred by the faith and testimonies of past generations.” Joseph Fielding McConkie, during a visit to the Bluff Fort, called it a sacred place. Places are made sacred by the faith and sacrifices of the people who experienced the story.

There are many sacred places along the San Juan Pioneer road (the Hole in the Rock Trail). One of these is San Juan Hill. San Juan Hill was the last major obstacle before the pioneers arrived in Bluff. The hill was another obstacle that tested the strength of both humans and animals. The rocks were stained with the blood of horses and oxen whose legs were skinned as they fell against the rocks, straining to pull the wagons up the steep rocky hill. One of Jens Nielson's oxen died in its yoke near the top of San Juan Hill. It has been said that Lemuel H. Redd Sr. shed tears years after the event occurred as he rerecalled the animals struggles to pull the wagons up the hill.

The Hole in the Rock Foundation, the San Juan County Commissioners, and the Jeep Club agree that no motorized vehicles should be allowed on San Juan Hill. Vehicles can park at the bottom and visitors can then walk up the sacred hill contemplating the sacrifice and courage of those who made it a place to remember.

LaMar Helquist



4-WHEEL DRIVE VEHICLES AND ATV'S NOT PERMITTED ON SAN JUAN HILL

Although San Juan Hill is accessible by 4-wheel drive vehicle, we ask you NOT try to ride your ATV up San Juan Hill. It is for walking only. We would like to preserve the trail for future generations, and trying to use an ATV on the dugway itself is destructive. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

The Bureau of Land Management has asked that NO motorized vehicles be used on San Juan Hill. We encourage all who visit the hill to support this policy.

*The original Barton cabin still stands at Bluff Fort today.
Inset: Harriet Barton*



MAKE YOUR ANCESTORS' HISTORY ACCESSIBLE ONLINE

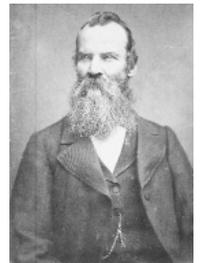
We are currently creating an online database of historical information for all of the San Juan pioneers. We thank all who have submitted biographical sketches of their Bluff Fort ancestors. If your ancestors' biographical sketches are not yet on our site, please email them to us. This will become a valuable resource for for generations.

We also welcome additions, corrections, and additional photos for existing biographies. **You can email your submissions to inquiry@hirf.org.** We prefer Word documents, but we can accept most types of files as well as hard copies. We will do all of the formatting/programming and design your biographical sketch as a standalone webpage that will be picked up by Google and other search engines.

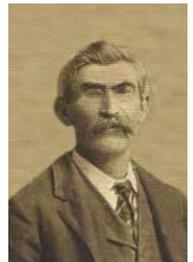
Here is a list of **current biographies and history/journal** additions to "Histories" page on the website.

Biographies

Adams, James
 Barney, Danielson
 Barton, Amasa
 Davis, Mary F.
 Decker James & Anna
 Decker Zachariah Jr. & Seraphine
 Guymon, Lafayette
 Haight, Isaac
 Haskell, Thales
 Lewis, George
 Lewis, James
 Lyman, Platte
 Lyman, Walter
 Mackelprang, Samuel & Adelia
 Mickelson, Peter & Harriet
 Redd, Lemuel Jr. & Eliza
 Redd, Lemuel Sr.
 Riely, James & Sarah
 Smith, Silas
 Stevens, Roswell
 Stevens, Walter



Lemuel Hardison Redd



Thales Haskell

New Histories and Journals

History of Thales Haskell	History of San Juan County
Journal of Platt D. Lyman	Journal of Silas S. Smith
Journal of Charles Walton	

WHAT'S NEW AT WWW.HIRF.ORG

Have you been to our online site www.hirf.org lately? Many new biographies, histories, and journals have been added to the Hole in the Rock Foundation's website including all 57 chapters of Albert R. Lyman's *Comprehensive History of San Juan County 1879-1917*. Most of what is known about the early years of Bluff and the Bluff Fort comes from this (unpublished) first-hand account written in 1919.



Four generations: Elsie Nielson, Julie Nielson Butt, Elsie Butt Decker, Austin Decker.



Thales Haskell Family



Platte D. Lyman

GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

A lot of exciting construction is going on at the Fort. Since our last newsletter, two new cabins have been built and the work on the Relief Society Building is now completed. We have also planted a vegetable garden which we call Grant's Garden. Perhaps this year, one of Bluff's famous watermelons will be harvested at the Fort.

Thanks to all who have made these projects possible by donating time and money. Many families and individuals have made donations. We continue to accept donations from visitors to the Fort. In May we received more than \$800 in donations. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the continued development of the Bluff Fort.

We extend our thanks to the following foundations who have made generous contributions.

George S. and Delores Dore Eccles Foundation
Sorenson Legacy Foundation
Charles Redd Foundation
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Foundation
The One Foundation
Letty Jones Heritage Foundation

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CONTRIBUTIONS! WE CAN'T DO IT
WITHOUT YOU!**

If you wish to continue to receive our newsletter:

Our next newsletter will be sent out by email. If you would like to continue to receive the newsletter, please go to our website www.hirf.org and click on the "Register" tab on the homepage. There you will be able to fill out all of your information.

If you do not have access to email and would like to continue to receive a paper copy of the newsletter, please send us a letter with your address and request to:

HIR Foundation
PO Box 476
Bluff, UT 8451

If you would like to donate:

If you would like to donate to the preservation and reconstruction of the old Bluff Fort and the trail taken by the original Hole in the Rock pioneers, mail your check to:

HIR Foundation
PO Box 476
Bluff, UT 84512

The Hole in the Rock Foundation is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization. **All donations are tax deductible.**



Hole in the Rock Foundation
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