

July 2016

# Hole in the Rock News

Newsletter of the Hole in the Rock Foundation

## President's Message

Bluff Fort, an Inviting Destination

— LaMar Helquist, HIRF President

Recently a family from Wisconsin visited the Fort. They were asked what brought them to the area. Their response was that they came to visit Bluff Fort. They read about it on the internet. Wow! They came clear from Wisconsin to visit Bluff Fort.

The Fort has become a destination place instead of a place you visit on your way to other scenic attractions. This has happened because we have a great story to tell. We have a delightful place to tell the story and friendly dedicated church service missionaries and docents who share it. Thanks to the nonprofit foundations and individual donors, this has been possible. We are grateful for the missionaries and volunteers who enthusiastically share the incredible pioneer stories.

The film commissioned by the Hole in the Rock Foundation and the films that Lamont Crabtree produced have made the visitors' experience at the Fort more meaningful. Our thanks go to Grant Taylor, Dick Jacobs and those who have assisted them, for their audio

contributions. They have made it possible for the remarkable stories associated with the pioneers of the San Juan Mission to be heard at various sites in the Fort. Many of the visitors have the opportunity to hear the stories in their own language. The facilities, the stories, the story tellers and the audio visual presentations combine to make Bluff Fort a destination attraction.

Thanks to all of you who have visited the Fort. We hope you will come often. If you have not visited, please come and experience this wonderful pioneer adventure.



Lee Wright, CSM, presents the refurbished hogan.

## Increased Visitation

Bluff Fort Visitor Center has seen a marked increase in the number of visitors from all over the world. There has been a steady increase each month. Since January of this year our guest register shows a total of 15,172. In March we more than doubled the number of visitors from March '15. We have added visitors from Belarus, Estonia, Jamaica, Myanmar and Mauritius. Many of the guests have expressed a pleasant surprise as they have toured the grounds, heard the story and made use of the facility. There are frequent comments about the cleanliness of the grounds, restrooms and visitor center, as well as the friendly and helpful manner of the volunteers.

— Kristy Combs, Church Service Missionary

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(Many of our visitors make unsolicited comments on the website, **TripAdvisor**. Their reviews have given Bluff Fort the highest ranking (4.5 of 5 stars) among places visited in or around Bluff. To see what they have said about Bluff Fort Historic Site, go to:

[https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g56937-d1728160-Reviews-Bluff\\_Fort\\_Historic\\_Site-Bluff\\_Utah.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g56937-d1728160-Reviews-Bluff_Fort_Historic_Site-Bluff_Utah.html)

## Bluff Fort Hosts First District Art Show

—Georgiana Simpson, San Juan County School District

For the first time, students from all San Juan School District secondary schools were represented in a district-wide juried art show held at Bluff Fort on a fine Friday evening in May. The centrally-located venue for this exhibit and competition was provided by the Bluff Fort in its brightly-lit, open upstairs dance hall, a space perfectly suited for creating a temporary art gallery.

Middle and high school students from Monticello, Blanding, Montezuma Creek, and Monument Valley competed in Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, and Mixed Media categories. Judges Mike Porter and Carol Van Steeter were impressed by the creativity and variety of art produced by San Juan County students including mixed media portraits, wire sculptures, ceramic creatures, landscape paintings, and comedic drawings.

Local families reveled in their children's creations while also enjoying music provided on the patio. Students, of course, could not pass up Bluff Fort ice cream and homemade cookies.

## New Directors for Bluff Fort CSM

—Jean Weiss, Church Service Missionary

The Hole in the Rock Foundation Board has appointed new directors for the Bluff Fort Church Service Missionaries.

Burnis Skinner and his wife, Lana, have accepted the appointment which will begin November 2016. They have been serving as missionaries at the Fort since February of this year.

The Skinners are natives of Wyoming. But have lived in Utah for many years.

Burnis began his career at Hill Air Force Base where he worked for 36 years for the Department of Defense. They lived 13 years of that time in Okinawa, Japan. Upon retiring from the Department of Defense he went to work for Science Applications International where he did business development and analysis work. Upon his second retirement he began his own business of Aerospace Consulting.

Burnis and Lana, a graduate from Ricks College in Idaho, are the parents of 6, grandparents of 19, and great-grandparents of one.

They are happy to be at Bluff Fort and eager to assume their new roles as directors of the missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and docents from the surrounding area.



## Respite for Marathoners at Bluff Fort

—Georgiana Simpson, Huff to Bluff Committee

The 6th running of the Huff to Bluff Marathon (and Half Marathon) found runners fighting a headwind on their way to the finishing sanctuary provided by the Bluff Fort. There were 73 finishers in the half marathon while another 44 runners completed the full marathon. Local runners were joined by competitors from 10 other states with one runner coming all the way from India.



Over 100 volunteers, including the welcoming group at the Bluff Fort, have made this event one of the friendliest in the road running world. Huff to Bluff Marathon is proud and grateful for the long standing relationship with the Bluff Fort and HIRF that embraces runners with a relaxing environment when they need it most.



## Summer Youth Conference

—Stuart Matheson, HIRF Board Member

The Hole in the Rock Foundation hosted its first youth conference of the season - the Richfield 10th Ward, Richfield East Stake youth conference held June 1 through June 4 at Camp Stickie-ta-tudy. Organized by Brother Todd and Sister Holly McAllister under the direction of Bishop Marvin Bagley, approximately 65 ward members participated in this four-day event that included an extensive tour of Bluff Fort and the Co-op Visitor Center, on-the-ground pioneer trails

hiking, service projects, firesides and overnight camping at the Camp. Using part of Jens Nielson's famous phrase, the theme of the conference was "Stickie-ta-tudy in Christ."

Shortly after arrival Wednesday afternoon the ward members were educated about proper public land use by Bluff locals Josh Ewing and Amanda Nichols.

In order to give context to Jens' phrase the participants were introduced to the Visitor Center and shown the movies telling the story of these heroic, hardy Saints called to the San Juan Mission. At the Wednesday evening fireside at the Camp President Robert McPherson, president of the Bluff Branch, a Utah State University Blanding campus professor and a widely recognized expert historian spoke to all about the typical activities and life of the pioneer and the Native American teenagers at the time of the pioneers.

Thursday's activities began with a hike along the trail followed by the four scouts who were searching for the route to Bluff who were lost and out of food but miraculously found their bearings on Christmas morning at the top of a hill which became known as Salvation Knoll.

Friday began early with shuttling small groups along the Comb Wash road to the base of San Juan Hill, where participants hiked up to the inspiring inscription "We thank thee O God" before returning to the Camp. During the evening the youth participated in an inspirational, sweet testimony meeting, describing what they felt and learned.

Several locals expressed grateful appreciation to this wonderful group of youth and adults who brought tools and participated in a number of service projects on the neighboring Navajo reservation.

Participants had the opportunity to learn firsthand about the values that helped the early pioneers succeed - faith, obedience, courage, strength and perseverance; values important for youth today to help them overcome their challenges in today's modern world. Many of the participants had researched the lives and stories of the early pioneers and related them during the conference.

Many thanks to the Bluff Fort LDS church service missionaries who worked in advance of and during the conference to make it a success.

# Bluff Fort Missionaries Volunteer as Junior Achievement Teachers

—Cheryl Deming, Church Service Missionary

Bright and early on May 19th, a brave cadre of Church Service Missionaries headed off to Bluff Elementary School with briefcase and enthusiasm in hand to spend half a day teaching every class in the school about the principles of business and economics as outlined by the Utah State Junior Achievement (JA) program.

According to the JA organization, “the program is the world’s largest organization dedicated to educating students in grades K-12 about entrepreneurship, work readiness, and financial literacy through experiential, hands-on programs.” Their motto is “Empowering Young People to Own Their Economic Success.” The unique approach of JA allows volunteers from the community to deliver the curriculum while sharing their experiences with students.

The Bluff Fort missionaries were a perfect choice to teach the students about the same principles of self-reliance, creativity, perseverance, and self-confidence that were evident in the original Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. And like those pioneers, the teachers were in fact “called from the pulpit” by the fort directors, having the same opportunity to be horrified, but say yes anyway. We stalwart souls hitched up our wagons and proceeded forward!

By quitt’n time—at lunch, thank goodness—the Bluff Fort teachers were exhausted, but had big smiles on their faces. We loved helping the children learn, and we loved serving the good families of our beloved Bluff and surrounding area. Who learned the most?—the kids or the missionaries? We learned that the kids are cute as bugs ears and smart as whips and that those dedicated school teachers are not paid nearly enough. We missionaries say “Ho, to the San Juan!” to the Bluff Elementary children as they build their rocky roads to the future.



Cheryl and Mike Deming with a group of eager 4th graders at Bluff Elementary

# ‘Taj-Ma-Cluck’ Opens

—Bev Black, Director Bluff Fort

## Six Reasons to Have Chickens at the Bluff Fort

- Bluff Pioneers Raised Chickens: Even today, keeping chickens in the backyard is becoming more popular all across the nation.
- Fresh Eggs: A warm egg fresh from the nest box is one of life’s simple pleasures. That may sound



Bob Combs, Tharon Judd, John Weiss, Mark Berrett, and Charley Weaver: The ‘Coop Crew’

## Co-op Coop Continued

gross to the Church Service Missionaries, but just wait.

- Teaching Children Who Visit the Fort Where Food Comes From: Too many children think food simply comes from the grocery store.
- Chickens Will Eat Bluff Bugs: Our chickens will enjoy the grasshoppers, termites, caterpillars, worms, spiders, and snails here on the Fort. What we consider to be a pest, our hens will probably enjoy for lunch.
- Entertainment: You many not believe this, but I've been entertained just anticipating the building of the chicken coop (not to be confused with Co-op). I've heard that chickens are totally entertaining. After a hard day's work at the Fort I anticipate spending time with the other "hens" on the grounds... after all each one of us has a different personality and our own quirky behaviors. Just like us, some chickens are quiet and some are chatty. Since all chickens will probably associate people with food, I can't wait to see my feathered friends come sprinting towards us when they hear the back door of the Bluff Fort Visitors Center open.

We invite each of you to come take a "gander" here at the Fort...woops that's goose talk!

## Lyman Days in Bluff

— Bev Black, Director Bluff Fort



All four living sons of Platte D. Lyman (1905-1953) and Edith Gee (1904-1991) attended the Lyman gathering with their wives; (L-R) Scott (Lyn), Richard (MaryAnn), Brent (Jean) and Jim (Neva). Their father was grandson and namesake of Hole in the Rock leader, Platte D. Lyman.

The next morning, Lyman families visited some of the local red rock country in San Juan County and got a feel for the experience those San Juan pioneers had.

The Lyman family has a plan to create a portrait of Hole in the Rock leader, Platte D. Lyman, to hang in the Bluff Co-op. Some money has already been raised - but contributions to said project would be appreciated. For more information about this project contact Margaret Dayton ([ltmdmd@comcast.net](mailto:ltmdmd@comcast.net)).

On Friday, June 10, 2016, descendants of Amasa Mason Lyman arrived in Bluff. They explored Bluff Fort, set up camp at Camp Stickle-ta-tudy, visited graves of pioneer relatives, and drove by homes of the early settlers.

That evening, Lymans from Bluff, Blanding, Monticello, and points-more-distant congregated at the upper floor of the Co-op in Bluff Fort for a fireside about the San Juan Mission – its origin and role in settling southeastern Utah and in serving the Paiute and Navajo Indians there – delivered by Jed E. Lyman. Jed, a former Bishop and Stake President in Blanding, now serves as a Stake Patriarch, and shares San Juan roots with many others in the region.



Patti and Dennis King, and Lynn and Margaret Dayton, cousins of the Lyman brothers, also attended the gathering. These cousins are grandchildren of Albert R. Lyman.

# New Attraction under Construction

— Dale Black, Bluff Fort Director

The Bluff Fort Church Service Missionaries are currently engaged in constructing a new water



feature. It will consist of a 13 foot 'noria' water wheel which will have 16 buckets and will draw water out of a simulated river and dump it onto higher ground. The purpose of this water wheel is to demonstrate one of the methods used by the early San Juan settlers to draw water from the San Juan River to irrigate their crops. Black locust, which is the hardest wood in this country and the most rot-resistant wood, will be used to construct the water wheel. This lumber was shipped in from Colrain, Massachusetts. A 6,000 gallon concrete tank has been buried and will be used as the water storage and recirculation tank. A 3,000 concrete open-top tank is being used to simulate the San Juan River. Water flows 'downstream' and returns to flow into the water wheel tank and then run down a simulated river and the storage tank. The buckets will pick up water as the wheel turns and dump it into a flume which will then direct the water to an irrigation ditch that will flow to a small garden.

The water feature will also include a water table which will provide an opportunity for children to understand the fragile nature of structures along the river such as diversion dams which can get washed away. There will also be a gold panning area, representing the early 1890's gold rush along the San Juan River near Bluff.

Hopefully, this entire water feature will be completed in late summer and will be a "cool" attraction for future visitors.



Church Service Missionaries, Tharon Judd (left), Burnis Skinner and Ron Poulson (right) prepare portions of the water features.

# Kumen Jones Home Restoration

— Bev Black, Director Bluff Fort

The Kumen Jones log cabin was located in the northwest corner of the Fort. Near the turn of the century, The Jones' constructed an elegant stone home adjacent to their original cabin. Fire destroyed the home in 1975. We are in the processes of trying to



Above: Kumen Jones home (1894) under construction, sits between the log meetinghouse and the new school (cabin is behind meetinghouse and new home).  
Left: Home in 1896 with meetinghouse visible on left and cabin remains on right.  
Below: Ruins of home today.

reconstruct one of the rooms of the stone home and we are asking for donations to help with this cause. Donation checks can be made payable to the Hole in the Rock Foundation and mailed to the Bluff Fort – P.O. Box 476 – Bluff, UT 84512



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