

# The History of a Valley Cache Valley, Utah-Idaho

Joel Ricks, Editor - Cache Valley Centennial Commission

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In 1878 **Alvin Crockett** was appointed county game commissioner.

...On August 1, 1881, the county court, having earlier approved the plans submitted by architect Truman O. Angell, Jr., gave the contract ...

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## EARLY GOVERNMENT

Fortified with grants of power, the cities organized their governments. The county court announced elections and appointed judges for election purposes. On March 5, 1866, Logan City held its first election, selecting **Alvin Crockett**, mayor, and John B. Thatcher, C. B. Robbins, and Thomas X. Smith, alder-men, and J. H. Martineau, Thomas E. Ricks, W. K. Robinson, P. Cranney, and C. O. Card, councilors. The city record states:

On Wednesday Evening March 14, 1866 the City Council met at the house of E. T. Benson and proceeded to effect an organization under the charter. At the request of **Mayor Crockett** President E. T. Benson opened the meeting with prayer after which he made a few remarks upon the duties of the City Council.

This presence of religious officials at meetings of the city council was characteristic of the harmonious and close relations between the church and state in early Cache Valley history. Needless to say, President Benson's advice was listened to attentively and probably guided the council in future meetings. The council then proceeded to select additional city officials.

*Early laws.* While life was simple in the late 1860's when the Cache Valley cities were organized under territorial acts of incorporation, the Cache Valley leaders were determined to pass the legislation to maintain the spiritual ideas which they felt were so necessary for the salvation of their fellow church members. Thus, in the early days of city government in the valley, the city councils passed ordinances that were reminiscent of the "Blue Laws" of early Puritan New England. Virtually all the cities of this period enacted ordinances punishing profanity, playing on Sunday, being cruel to animals, or being rowdy.

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Apparently the idea behind the Mutual Improvement came to some localities before the formal organization in Salt Lake in 1878. In 1875 Apostle Brigham Young, Jr., president of Cache Stake, called the young ladies of Logan to form a society for self-improvement. On August 23, 1875, a number of young ladies met at the home of Ellen Ricks and, under the chairman-ship of Phoebe A. McNeil, formed an organization with Ellen Ricks as president, Isabell Davidson and Caroline Olsen as counselors, and Lydia Crockett as secretary. They determined to meet twice a week for the "purpose of studying the church works and bearing testimony." A code of conduct and resolutions were adopted:

1. *Resolved.* That we will always try to do unto others as we would have others do unto us,
2. *Resolved.* That we cease from all loud laughter, light speeches, light mindedness and pride and all evil doings.
3. *Resolved.* That we always cultivate a kind, pleasant...

## LOGAN CITY SCHOOLS

During the winter of 1859 the seventeen families of Logan built their first school-and meetinghouse. Early records kept by George L. Farrell state:

On the 28th of Nov., we commenced to build our log School House on the S.W. corner of the 2nd. Block west of the Public Square.

Dec. 18th, 1859, we held our first meeting in our New Log School House, at which meeting a Deacon's Quorum was organized with Henry Ballard as President.

On the 23rd. day of Jan. 1860, the first Day School was started in Logan, in our log School House.

Edward W. Smith was the first teacher, but Charles Wright and Miss Davis also taught in this building. The Logan charter of 1865 provided for a school district, and the legislature gave the city its boundaries. Four adobe schoolhouses were built by means of individual donations of rock, bushels of wheat, books, buckets, paint, and labor. John Chambers, C. O. Card, Harriet Preston, Charles G. Davis, Phoebe Davis, and Ida Ione Cook taught in the First Ward stone school, built about 1870.

When the city was divided into school wards in 1872, a board of trustees and a school tax were provided for. Logan schools from 1872 on were under a single board of education and "developed what was probably the nearest [to] a consolidated organization of schools of any of Utah's earlier cities." Charles O. Card, Alvin Crockett, and Robert Davidson were elected as trustees. A school census showed 577 children between the ages of six and sixteen, but less than half of the children were attending school in 1875. By the end of 1873 a total of \$3,424.57 had been expended for schools, mostly for teachers' salaries. The record reads for December 10, 1872, that: ". . . it was decided to establish a High School [that is, a higher school] and for that purpose the Lindquist Hall was rented for one year commencing December 16, 1872 it was decided to appropriate the School Tax to the benefit of the Children attending School".

By the fall of 1876 all the upper rooms and the four west rooms on the first floor of the city hall were being rented for Classrooms. Tuition at "the school No. 6 formerly known as the high school" was set at \$5.00 per quarter, while for the five wards it was \$2.50 per pupil; intermediate school cost \$4.00 per quarter. If a pupil could not pay delinquent fees in money, wood might be substituted, or the collector would proceed by law, however, after remitting the tax for fifteen persons, the board inconsistently ruled that the delinquent taxes must be collected. Sometimes wheat was taken on delinquent bills, and a little income came in from stray cattle that were sold; *but* delinquent fees continued to be remitted, even though the board declared that children would not be admitted at all if delinquent tuition fees of former years were not first paid up. In 1881 the Logan School District had resources of about \$14,000, and about \$3,000 was paid out in salaries; the territorial school fund brought in \$1,435.30 and tuition fees, \$2,659.22.

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**Payson**, nestled against the foothills of the southern Wasatch Range about eighteen miles southwest of Provo, was originally settled by the families of James Pace, Andrew Jackson Stewart, and John Courtland Searle in October 1850. A LDS church branch was established shortly after the first settlers arrived in the area, with James Pace acting as presiding elder. When Pace left Utah for a church mission to Europe, James McClellan was sustained as the presiding leader of the branch. Later, Benjamin Cross became the bishop (1851-59); he was followed by Lorenzo D. Young (1859-61), Joseph W. Young (1861-62), John B. Fairbanks (1862-71), and Joseph Smith Tanner (1871-91). Originally named after the nearby creek, **Peteetneet Creek**, the community was incorporated on 21 January 1853, covering the area south known as Spring Lake Villa and Summit (Santaquin) to the southwest. **David Crockett served as the first city mayor (1853-59)**, followed by John T. Hardy (1859-63), Benjamin F. Stewart (1863-67), Orrawell Simmons (1867-75), Jonathan S. Page (1875-79), Joseph S. Tanner (1879-83), James Finlayson (1883-86), and John J. McClellan (1887-90).

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One example illustrates the workings of the shadow government. When Logan's first elections were completed, the first mayor, **Alvin Crockett**, called a meeting and he, the three alderman, and the five councilmen met at the home of E.T. Benson, the Mormon apostle-in-residence. Although **Crockett** conducted the meeting, Benson offered the opening prayer, "after which he made a few remarks upon the duties of the City Council."

P95-99 [David W Crockett is murdered]

On one earlier occasion those who enforced the laws lost control and Cache County witnessed shameful acts of violence. To a degree they were alcohol-related in the initial phase, but mob violence determined the final outcome. **On Valentine's night, 14 February 1873, a number of young men were walking toward a dance being held at Logan Hall. They had been drinking heavily and laughed, jostled, and quarreled as they moved toward the dance.** Ten days earlier county coroner Charles O. Card complained to the Logan City Council that brewer Henry Worley was dispensing of his product too freely. The council asked two of its members to see if Card's accusations were true regarding "frequently large drunken crowds." Worley was warned, but nothing more.

It is not clear whether **David [W] Crockett**, Charles Benson, and their friends had been at Worley's or at some other establishment. However, **an argument turned nasty and suddenly Benson drew a pistol and shot Crockett in the chest.** The gunfire sobered the companions and homeowners came to their doors to check on the commotion. **Crockett lay bleeding in the snow; he had died instantly. Benson, a young man with a mean reputation, holstered his gun and ran away. There was no doubt that he had murdered an unarmed man. Benson, the eldest son of deceased apostle Ezra T. Benson,** doubled back to his home, reported the event to his mother, grabbed some bread and cheese, wrapped himself in a buffalo robe, and disappeared into the night. For some reason he did not take or even seek a horse, but left on foot. By the time he had left his mother's home, the community of Logan knew of the murder. **Alvin Crockett, the sheriff and uncle of the victim,** joined with Logan U.S. Marshal Mark Fletcher to coordinate the search. Crockett wired other communities and reported the slaying. Knowing that Benson was armed, some citizens kept an all-night vigil. Houses were locked and

armed deputies prepared for a house-to-house search the next day.

Meanwhile, young Crockett's body lay in an open coffin in his parent's home. Hundreds of family, friends, and curiosity seekers filed through the house to view the victim's remains. Others went to Charles Benson's home to console his mother. Almost everyone in Logan knew the young men. That Saturday the searchers found no one. On Sunday the search continued and church services were shortened because of the emergency. Rumors spread about sightings and escapes, but there was still no actual sign of Benson. Marshal Fletcher tried to convince the sheriff and others that Benson had to still be in town. As rumors circulated and the search continued, a type of paranoia swept the community.

Charles Benson never left Logan. He hid in Moses Thatcher's stone barn behind Thatcher's house. By Monday night the bread and cheese were gone and as he hid beneath hay and the buffalo robe he made a decision. On Tuesday morning he would try to escape during the early hours, because he reasoned vigilance must have relaxed. Benson wanted a horse, so he went to the home of a rancher friend, Fredrick Goodwin. In the predawn hours, Goodwin refused to let Benson in the house and asked him to leave and not cause any more trouble for his friends. Benson, still on foot, moved southwest and began following the Logan River. The leafless trees and willows did not afford much shelter, so patrol deputies easily spotted him, summoned the marshal, and, when reinforced, pursued Benson west of Logan. Faced with the inevitable, young Benson surrendered to Fletcher and was taken to the jail in the rear of the original county building.

Unfortunately, a crowd of posse members and town citizens did not disperse but milled around the building reliving the terror and events of the past four days. The anger, hatred, and paranoia combined to turn a crowd into a mob. With the bravado of a mob mentality, some men rushed the building, broke into the cell, and dragged Benson outside. A rope with a tied noose was thrown over the Cache County courthouse signpost. Willing hands put the noose around Benson's neck and other hands hoisted him up until he strangled. By 10 A.M. on Tuesday, 18 February, Charles Benson was hanging dead at the hands of vigilantes.

That very afternoon coroner Charles O. Card impounded a jury which filed the following summation of the events of that morning: "the said jurors upon their oaths do say that the said Charles A. Benson came to his death from strangulation, caused by a rope around his neck, and that we further find according to the evidence here presented that the said Charles A. Benson unharmed was taken from the officers by a mob with violence and that the said mob hung the said deceased to the sign in front of the county court house until dead."<sup>26</sup> Three men, Sylvanus Collett, Eli Bell, and O.G. Beach, signed the affidavit. This tragic event led to much criticism, especially from the *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*. This was still the American frontier in 1873 and, although Logan was considered a religious community, violence still most certainly existed. Arms were plentiful and so was alcohol, which the locals blamed for the tragedy. Nevertheless, the writer for the *Tribune* made some excellent points about what justice should be, even on the frontier:

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David W. Crockett and Charles A Benson were both buried in the Logan Cemetery...

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It seemed as though most positions of power were in the hands of a very few people. The stake leaders, bishops, bankers, officers of the Utah Northern, and directors of ZCMI were the very same people. They were school trustees, legislators, and holders of mining and timber grants from the government. Their power was great and many also were officers of the People's party. A good example of this is the 1874 municipal election in Logan, which was the first time that the Liberal and People's parties appeared on the ballot. Until that time the official slate had been nominated and

elected without opposition. There were 528 ballots cast and the People's party candidates who included Preston for mayor, and Moses Thatcher, Charles O. Card, Thomas Ricks, and Thomas X. Smith as alderman-all got 421 votes, except Thatcher who received 422. The opposition candidates each received 106 votes. Card, Alvin Crockett, and Robert Davidson, the latter two elected as city councilors, were also elected school trustees by the same 421 to 106 count. Although this appears to be a landslide, it does show that over 20 percent of the voters preferred an alternative. There was a most pronounced political division. Another consequence of this political disaffection is the way it was viewed by the local Mormon hierarchy. Since there was no secret ballot in Utah, the very act of casting a vote for the opposition was deemed a significant act of courage.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Utah law provided that the voter fill out the ballot, fold it, and give the judge the ballot's number. A clerk then recorded the name and number. In other words, it was very easy to check how an individual voted. So, although Bishop Henry Ballard could say the opposition "got only 106 votes to 421 of ours" and the "Apostates were again busy;" he could also check to see if any of his ward members voted for the opposition slate...

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When Logan consolidated its LDS ward districts into one school district in 1872, the city was one of the first Utah communities to do so. The district, under the direction of trustees Charles Card, Alvin Crockett, and Robert Davidson, decided in 1872 to open a high school under the leadership of Ida I. Cook. Cook's school was really a county school located at Lindquist Hall in Logan, which "the more advanced pupils of the various settlements may attend. . ."