

Ouray Indian Reservation 1907

In 1907, five years after they were married, Grandpa and Grandma moved with their three children to the Ouray Indian Reservation which is located southeast of Roosevelt. The creation of this reservation is described on this page <http://historytogo.utah.gov/chouray.html>. I've inserted several paragraphs to give you the basic idea of how big this reservation originally was, how it was cut down over time



because I want you to know of the bad-faith dealings of the Federal Government with Indians whose land your own great grandparents took with the blessings of that government:

"The western Ute bands originally occupied about 23.5 million acres or around 45 percent of the present state of Utah. By the 1870's, however, Utah's Utes were confined to less than 10 percent of that area, slightly over 2 million acres on the Uintah Reservation. The Ute lands grew to over 4 million acres in 1880 when the federal government removed the White River and Uncompahgre bands from Colorado and created the Ouray Reservation in Utah. Although Ouray, the prominent chief for whom the new reservation was named, died before the forced relocation, he had spent his life negotiating with government officials and trying to assure a peaceful existence for his people.

In 1863 Ouray helped to negotiate a treaty with the federal

government in which the Utes ceded all lands east of the Continental Divide. In 1868 he traveled Washington, D.C., to represent his people and was appointed "head chief of the Utes" by the government. Ouray and his wife made several visits to the nation's capital and on one occasion met President Ulysses S. Grant.

With the discovery of gold in Colorado and the resulting influx of miners, Indian-white relations deteriorated. Finally, in the spring of 1878, Nathan Meeker, an Indian agent, triggered a series of events that led to the relocation of Ouray's people to Utah. The White River Utes had become infuriated over Meeker's attempt to force them to farm. Meeker called in federal troops, but the Indians succeeded in killing him and seven other whites and took several women as captives. When the government appealed to Ouray for help, the influential chief intervened and secured the release of the hostages and even welcomed them into his home while the situation was defused.

Repercussions from this incident were devastating for the Indians. In 1880 Ouray traveled for the last time to Washington where he signed a treaty providing for the removal of the White River Utes as well as his own Uncompahgre band from Colorado to the Uintah and newly created Ouray reservations in Utah. Shortly after his return from Washington, Ouray died and was buried in southern Colorado. His wife, Chipeta, moved to Utah with her people and died in poverty and exile in 1924 on the reservation named for her husband."

In 1907, the federal government decided to open some of the reservation lands to homesteaders. Today, I see that this decision was another of the thousands of bad-faith actions taken by the white government that always harmed Indian interests. After forcing the Indians to enter into formal contracts and agreements, and forcibly removing them from their birth heritage lands, "granting" them minuscule bits of lands termed "reservations", an insult to Indians, the government proceeded to break those contracts and agreements.

The Indians were powerless to counter but that doesn't make it right that the government did what it did. In fact it makes it worse. The government had an obligation to protect the interests of the powerless people that had been robbed of their heritage and lives. If you want to get a good view of just how badly

Indians have been treated by whites, read "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee." If you have a heart, you'll cry. I am ashamed of my race. Blacks think they had a bad deal, and they did, but I think Indians got a vastly worse deal. Look at the two races today and judge for yourself. Do you see streets named for Indians, do you find a national holiday named for an Indian leader, do you find colleges created by Indians, do you find seminars and editorials ranting and raving about Indian rights, and the nasty things that have been done to them, is there a pseudo-Christmas Celebration named for an Indian celebration, do you see medical studies focused entirely on Indians, etc. ?

In any event, grandpa decided to take advantage of the Indians by taking the federal government up on its offer of farm land. I don't particularly fault him for his choice but I think it was wrong of the government to do that after it had promised to "give" the land to the Indians, land that was their in the first place. So he moved from his small holding in Jensen out to the reservation in 1907. He homesteaded 80 acres near Lake Fork. Homesteading is tough work so he paid for his "free" land with sweat. He had to rip out the trees and sage brush, had to build a habitation, had to plow the tough soil, had to get water to his crops and so on, not an easy living.

I don't know whether grandpa and grandma lived in one spot on the reservation but imagine they did. Homesteads don't move around, but I'm puzzled by the evidence I find about the birthplaces of the six children born to grandma while living on the reservation. Bessie was born back in Vernal in 1908, Myrtle was born in 1911 in Lake Fork, Pearl was born in 1913 in Lake Fork, Ray was born in 1915 in Lake Fork, Mable was born in 1916 in Myton, and Leo was born in 1918 in Lake Fork. Grandma apparently sort of alternated between Lake Fork and Myton for deliveries, since both are on the Uintah Reservation -I think- so she may have been following the midwife or doctor. Grandma's history says they lived in Lake Fork for 12 years so the different birth location must be related to the availability of a birthing location.

This photo of an Ouray Indians celebration was taken a few years before Fuller and Teen lived on the reservation. It shows something about the conditions of the time. This occasion was an important festival or ceremony for the Indians



Figure 2 Myton Utah - Ouray Indian Reservation ca. 1900

<http://www.lib.utah.edu/spc/photo/p569/p569.html>

who prepared an enormous wall of brush as part of the festivities. The US flag indicates that the federal government was present, "helping" as it always tried to do, but never really succeeded. I have to speculate about how the Indians felt about this ceremony. By that time there were already the touristy types out taking photos for a buck and for posterity so this might have been staged for them, rather than for the Indians. There were other photos in this series that showed the prominence of the Army types with some pretty dejected looking Indians so I don't really like this photo or the ceremony it pretends to portray. The Indians probably did cleansing ceremonies after being used and polluted in this sort of travesty. Navajos simply refused to even let Europeans witness their most sacred ceremonies, a reasonable thing if the LDS secrecy is a reasonable thing.

This picture of women on the reservation was taken in 1918, while Fuller and Teen were living there. Remember that World War I started in 1918. This is how I



Figure 3 Portrait of sitting unidentified Native American Uinta (Ute) women and a girl, Fort Duchesne, Utah. The women, who are part of the Red Cross Auxillary, wear dresses and shawls and knlt.
<http://gowest.coalliance.org/cgi-bin/imager?10030733-X-30733>

remember the Ouray Utes who came into Vernal to shop when I was a kid. Heavy blankets, long black hair. I remember seeing enormous Indians on the sidewalk in front of the Penny's store, by the Thorne Studio. They were silent and looked serious. They frightened me even though they didn't do anything threatening. That's interesting because I knew that grandpa and grandma had lived with these Indians, and dad was always positive about things involving Indians. The fear must have stemmed from the difference between them and me.

I visited the Ouray reservation when I was a little kid and I remember the "strange" houses and odd entrances to them, leather doors coverings that had to be lifted up to enter. It was in late afternoon so the light was flat and shadows were long. The houses were made of unpainted boards and the doorways were hung with smoky skins instead of wooden doors. There were few windows so the inside of the homes were dark. I sensed the fact that we were out-of-place in the village. There was no threat or anger but there was an underlying sense of not being comfortable. Perhaps it was my own sense but I thought I felt it in the

adults who took me there. I was interested to go but being about 7, I was simply being pulled along. This trip took place when Joe O'Leary visited dad in Vernal. I saw Ute Indians on Mainstreet in Vernal, knew them in their blankets with large faces and square jaws, with long black hair pulled back in a braid. Intimidating, impressive people who said little in my experience.

Posey War

In the early part of the 20th century, conflicts persisted between whites and Indians. Some of them involved the Utes in eastern Utah and western Colorado. These conflicts invariably involved Indian lands that white men wanted. Period. There is no other fair way to understand what happened. True, whites would claim that Indians had killed someone, destroyed some property, taken livestock. Those things were their justification for retaliation yet if whites hadn't taken Indian land in the first place there would have been no reason for these things to happen.

On the Utah history page <<http://historytogo.utah.gov/utetrek.html>> is this quote from the Vernal Express that reveals the tenor of feelings the year before Fuller and Teen decided to actually move onto the Ouray Reservation:

"The May 26, 1906, Vernal Express spread the alarm: "Many of the residents of Uintah county may not be aware of the fact, but it is nevertheless true, that Indian trouble of gigantic proportion is brewing" A band of White River Utes from the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, numbering between 300 and 700, was on the move north. The Express continued: "They informed the settlers that they are going to one of the northern reservations where a great gathering of all the Indians in the west has been arranged for, to council over their supposed grievances. They express freely their determination to fight rather than return."



Figure 4 <http://historytogo.utah.gov/mesautes.html>

An example of the kind of bad dealings going on then involved one of the bands of the Paiutes that was named the Poseys. This group lived south of the Ouray reservation but consequences of their actions spilled over onto the reservation. Their leader in this time period became known as "Posey" also and he was accused of all of the evils of Indians. Here's a photo of him (standing, second from the left) and a group of Indian leaders who met with whites to talk about land allotments, which kills me. It is bizarre that things got so turned around that Indians were the supplicants.

Mom told a few storied that involved her family and Indians. She wasn't born until 2 years after the family had left the reservation so she either heard them from siblings or from her parents. One example involved food. One day while Fuller was away from the house, Teen heard a loud knock on her door. She wasn't expecting guests and wondered why her kids would knock or if a neighbor was coming to visit. . She wiped her hands on her apron and when she opened the door she was surprised to see two solemn Indian men. They didn't speak any English to her but pantomimed eating and drinking. Teen was not really comfortable at the prospect but invited them into the house because a refusal might have unexpected consequences, and besides, she was a nice person anyway. She took them in and set them at the table. Then she prepared food that was quick to prepare and gave it to the men. They ate it and indicated that they wanted more, so Teen gave them

more. At no time in this interchange that probably lasted half an hour did Teen show any fear. She treated them with respect and they were respectful of her. When they were filled to satiety, they got up, said words to her and walked out the door.

Bear Dance

This image was taken in 1925 on the reservation, 5 years after Teen and Fuller had returned to Naples. The dance they were performing was the "Bear Dance" described thusly:

"One aspect of the social and religious life of the People is the Bear Dance, traditionally performed in the spring. Symbolically, it was a ceremony taught by a bear to the Utes to help the animals awaken from hibernation and to strengthen the relationship between man and this very powerful creature. The brush circle in which the dance is performed is called "cave of sticks" and is constructed of cottonwood limbs, juniper boughs, and sagebrush. The structure opens to the east and represents a bear's den, while the rasping sound of a wooden stick dragged across another serrated stick represents the noises of a bear."

(<http://historytogo.utah.gov/mesautes.html>)



Figure 5 <http://historytogo.utah.gov/mesautes.html>

The "cave of sticks" referred to here must be the large encirclement of brush shown in the first photo above of the reservation.

Freighting between Price and Roosevelt

In order to raise some cash to buy the goods he needed to build up his homestead and to provide for his family, grandpa did familiar work. He loved and understood horses so was able to find work as a freighter. This image is from page



381 of Rodger Polley's history of the Uintah Railroad and shows Uintah Railroad Freighters in Vernal in 1905, two years before the family moved to the Indian Reservation as they called it. Freighting was tough, physical labor both in terms of handling the freight and heavy wagon as well as handling the teams of strong, wilful horses. Grandma said he did a lot of this freighting work while she "took care of the family and did chores." That's a mild way to say she took care of everything around the homestead for days at a time while he was away working with these wagons horses.

Reading the second volume of Polley's history of the Uintah Railroad is sort of like reading a history of my own family, particularly the sections dealing with Watson, Rainbow, Vernal and Jensen.

Annual Visits to Reservation

Mom said that they would take trips out to the reservation some years. They'd load the wagon with their food and bedding, hitch the horses up and make the trip out to Ioka. That's where Grandpa Angus moved some time after Teen got married. Ioka is a few miles from the reservation so the family could spend the night at Grandpa Angus's place, go over to the reservation during the day for the

ceremonies and return to spend the night. They'd stay as many days as the ceremony lasted and then return to Naples.

Mom said that they also made annual trips to Ioka for Easter or other important celebrations. They obviously had to do this by wagon and loved it. It's hard today to imagine what it would be like to travel 45 miles behind horses that were just walking. A long slow trip but when you didn't know anything else, it was fine I suppose.

Bottle Hollow

Footnote to the Ouray Indian Reservation. It is a sad commentary on the consequences of the clash between the industrialized Europeans and the pre-technological Indian cultures to see the place called "Bottle Hollow." It is now a run-down, sad-looking inn-motel combination on US 40 near Roosevelt.

The name is the key to the sad story. Not far from this hollow, a gulch that runs across US 40, is the entrance into the reservation. When Indians would go into town, some of them would buy alcohol. The feds had decreed that it was illegal for them to have alcohol so a guard might be standing at the entrance to check the Indians and their vehicles before they were allowed in. To prevent tickets and incarceration, Indians would drink down their bottles and then pitch them from the highway into this hollow. That way they could pass the guards. Pretty sad story.

The tribe tried to make money by building a spiffy looking motel and restaurant in the 1960's but it didn't succeed. The motel was well-planned, was constructed of concrete and had a pleasing form and design but the traffic was not sufficient to make it succeed. Tourists on that stretch of the highway are headed further east or west before they plan to stop for anything more than gas, so the plan failed. The name is a reminder of this sad dimension to white and Indian cultures.

Move to Naples

In 1920, Fuller decided that conditions there weren't as good there and they were about back in Naples area. He doubtless heard things from his and Teen's extended families who still lived in Jensen along the Green River. Plus,

grandpa may have just gotten tired of the hardships of homesteading. In any event, they decided that the time had come to make the move back to Naples.

Grandma's history says that a major reason for making this move back to that area was so that Harold could go to high school in Vernal. But they went to Naples. I'm not sure how that worked. In those days there were no school buses to get kids to school, and grandpa didn't have a car, so how could Harold make the 4 miles trip each morning from Naples to Vernal to be in school when it started around 8:30 a.m. I just called Harold and asked him how that worked. He said that the problem of how to get to school on time was solved by moving into Vernal during the week. That way he didn't have so far to go. Then on the weekends he'd go back to the farm in Naples to help out.