

A HISTORY OF TOOELE CITY

By

HAROLD MARSHALL

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LEONARD J. LEE

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A general history of the city of Tooele
from the founding of the city to the present
time by

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Nestled closely under the western slopes of the rugged Oquirrh, is the busy, little city of Tooele. The city has grown from a tiny pioneer settlement to a thriving agricultural, mining and smelting city. Its boundaries stretch from the mouths of Settlement and Middle canyons northward about two miles into the valley. Two mountain streams gush forth from these two canyons and wind their way down into the valley. These streams were the determining factors which made this city possible.

In the fall of 1847 when Orson Pratt, Judson Tolman and Phinus Wright,--who were at the time on an exploring party from Salt Lake--, rounded Lake Point, they saw to the southward only a dry, arid valley about eighteen

miles long and sixteen miles wide; bounded on the north by the Great Salt Lake, on the south by a low pass, on the east by the towering Oquirrhys, and on the west by the barren Stansburys. The valley did not look very promising but when the party travelled further along the eastern bench they found several small mountain streams wending down from the snow-capped mountains and losing themselves in the parched, sunbaked land. Coming as far south as the present site of Tooele they found the two streams above mentioned flowing to the north-west. They returned to Salt Lake and reported the prospects of the valley and in October, 1849 several families, among them were the Kelseys, Bevans, Whitneys, and the Wrights, came from Salt Lake and founded the present city of Tooele. The town at that time, however, was called Springtown but was later changed to Tooele. The city receives about twenty inches of rainfall and the climate is one of the best in the state,--the thermometer seldom reaching one hundred degrees (F.) in summer or zero in winter.

The social life of this community was very commonplace and unelaborate. All social gatherings were free and everyone was invited. All such gatherings were first

held under a bowry, which stood on the lot now called Atkins Park. Later, however, about the year 1860, a one room adobe building was erected and this took the place of the bowry as the social center of the town. The little group of settlers came together as often as their busy work would allow and had a real old-fashioned time. Most of the social meetings were held indirectly under the church and consequently all gatherings were of a religious nature or had a religious feeling present. The social gatherings were quaint but nevertheless they had their good times and appreciated them more than we do today.

In 1860 there were not more than two hundred souls in the entire town and these were cuddled together inside the town walls. This wall, built entirely of mud, was nine feet high, three feet thick at the bottom and surrounded four square blocks. This wall enclosed all the houses of the town and persons would not leave the enclosure without their guns, for fear of the Indians. Each family owned a small lot on the inside of the wall which they used for gardening. But all had their farms clustered around the outside of the wall as there was not enough room for such large areas on the inside. For a long time after the town

had been settled there was only one clock or other time piece in the settlement. This clock was owned by Mr. Shields and he was presented with a horn so that he might rise at six o'clock in the morning and wake the rest of the town.

The first school house, a one room, homebaked adobe building similar to the first Social Hall, was built in 1856. One of the first teachers was Mr. Foster. There were not many boys and girls to go to school in those days and the conveniences were not the best. Seats, benches, and desks were all homemade and the floor of the building was of the choicest Mother Earth. Books were scarce and what little the pupils did learn was told them by the teacher who very often was rather harsh to them. But these people were strong, sturdy pioneers who were fighting for a principle and they ever strove on working hard to better their conditions. They would not give up and as a result of their struggle we today have a prosperous city. In 1869 the first church was built,--that is a permanent building; up to this time the Social Hall had been used as the Church. This church is the same building that the L.D.S. South Ward uses today. The social gatherings now

moved from the adobe hall to the church. About 1880 the town Opera House was constructed and this structure along with the church have served as the city's Social Center up to the present time.

In the year 1863 the town was chartered and incorporated as the city of Tootle. Before this time the people had been governed by a town meeting, similar to those of New England, in which all persons eligible to vote took part. Here at this meeting the voters made laws and transacted business which their local conditions demanded, such as preserving law and order, protection for its citizens against the Indians, election of town officers, etc. This government was purely democratic, more so than were the early town governments of New England, because of the fact that that all persons, men and women, over a certain age were allowed to take part. All the able-bodied men were organized into companies for protection and had to go and battle with the red savages many times before they were finally subdued.

During the first ten or twelve years (1849-1860) of its establishment the town grew very slowly: at the end of this period there being only about two hundred inhabitants.

Consequently during this period industries were somewhat limited. Farming was the chief occupation. In each home all the butter, cheese, fruit, stockings, and clothing, and sometimes the shoes were made that were used in that home. Cane and beet molasses were made by one or two of the settlers by home-made machines. This molasses was bartered or traded to the other people for grain, flour, sugar or whatever they wanted and did not have. Honey and molasses took the place of sugar in most of the homes as sugar cost about forty dollars per hundred pounds.

On account of the slow means of transportation from the East to Utah, which was entirely carried on by the ox team, luxuries, or necessities as we call them today, were extremely scarce and high-priced and so most of the people got along without them. Sometimes, however, these things, or a substitute, was made in the home. The home then was both the social and industrial center during the early period. Gradually the population of the town increased and with this increase came a gradual increase in town industry. The settlers now began to cultivate larger tracts of land outside of the wall and as water was not plentiful enough to irrigate the whole tract, dry

farming was inaugurated. The cattle industry began and it has made rapid strides in growth ever since. In 1868 a large flour mill was built at the mouth of Settlement canyon and today it supplies many families in both Utah and Idaho. This mill gave the farmers a market for their grain and in return gave them the finished product. Thus the grinding of the wheat and corn passed from the home to the new industry. About this time or perhaps a little later (1875) the mining industry was begun and today mining is one of the most important industries of the city and its surrounding country. It was because of the fact that this city was in the midst of a mining district that in 1910 the International Smelter was constructed. The coming of the smelter was in a way a detriment to the farms but it immediately gave new life and energy to the city. For instance, in 1910 the population of Tooele was about 1800 and at the present time (1917) it is estimated to be between 3500 and 4000. Industries grew very rapidly and they are still progressing, making Tooele a bigger, greater and more important factor in the development of our State.

The early inhabitants were mostly from the British

Isles, --England, Scotland, and Wales,--yet some came from the Scandinavian countries. The settlers were of the middle class of these countries and comprised a sturdy, plain, and hard-working people. They were always energetic and prosperous and strove for the best and good of the community. Their ideas and ideals were strictly democratic and they always upheld this principle.

Since the coming of the Smelter (1910) there has been a great influx of people from the southern countries of Europe (Italy, Greece, and Austria), into this city and as these people come from the lower classes it has been a detriment rather than an advantage to the city social life. Today nearly every country in Europe and some in Asia are represented in this little city of ours, English, French, German, Russian, Scandinavian, Swiss, Japanese and the Negro are all here in our complex population. The English are by far in the majority.

To our old English grandfather pioneers, who conquered and subdued this wild and barren valley, we owe the greatest reverence and we take pride in honoring their names by pointing out to visitors this wonderful little city of ours,