

Heritage and Future of Willow Creek Stake

A Prayer for the Saints of the Willow Creek Stake

by David J. Sperry, Stake President

**Historical Glimpses into the Fort Union, Creek Road and
Willow Creek Communities**

by Loretta B. Derrick

Part I

Those Who Serve

The Mantle of Authority in the Willow Creek Stake June 1973 to June 1983

by Diane Stokoe

Part II

PREFACE

To commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Willow Creek Stake, President David J. Sperry suggested that a new stake history be compiled. Consequently Diane Stokoe and Loretta Derrick were called by James Wilson to do interviews. **Heritage and Future of Willow Creek Stake** was later published under the direction of the Stake Presidency, Sandy Utah Willow Creek Stake, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Diane gratefully acknowledges Presidents Sperry and Ruppel, Patriarch Saunders, President North and others for the information they provided. Diane also acknowledges the assistance of Tom Stokoe, Clyda Rae Blackburn, Melda Hacking and Judith S. Smith. Amy Liljenquist, Willow Creek Stake historian 2003, provided the pictures to update her section. Mona Clark edited the manuscript.

Loretta Derrick interviewed some early area residents including Lucy Proctor, Noleen Farnsworth Jessup, Ruby Proctor Woodhouse, John Merrihew, Tom Erickson and J. Leonard and Sandra Shurtleff. She interviewed one-hundred-three year old John Smart on June 14, 1983. Loretta also reviewed these articles, all by Ira Proctor: "Memories of Little Cottonwood Creek," October 13, 1970; "Mill Stone Monument," October 27, 1967; "Ira Proctor's personal history," October 10, 1967; "Fort Union Cemetery," August 1951; "History of South Butlerville School on Creek Road," March 31, 1967; "Little Willow Canyon," March 15, 1971 and "In Days Gone Bye," which was published in March 1971.

Loretta consulted "Background and Industries of the Union District of Salt Lake County" by Ezra Greenwood Pate, written before 1961; "Historical Glimpses of Little Cottonwood Valley" by Jane Lund; "Spiritual history of Willow Creek Stake" by Jane Lund; "History of Union Fort," by George A. Green, Jr., July 3, 1947; "History of Julia Van Valkenburge Proctor," written by her daughter, Ruby Woodhouse; "Buttermilk and Bran, These Turning Wheels" p. 89, Ora Pate Stewart; "Barber on the Boardwalk," a history by F. D. Farnsworth and "A Union, Utah History," by Steven K. Madsen, published in 1981.

A Prayer for the Saints of the Willow Creek Stake

President David J. Sperry, read in Stake Conference, October 1983

Help us Father to recognize that obedience to thy word is the first law of heaven. Bless us with the same quiet simple determination of Joshua when he admonished ancient Israel, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve. . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15) to the end that we may become like the faithful ancients, of whom it is written: “And because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.” (D&C 132:37).

Help us in our day and circumstances of bounteous material things and opportunities not to become casual in our relationships and in the commitments we have made with thee. Bless us with a constant inner stirring to do better, to build precept upon precept, line upon line. Humble our souls and touch our hearts that we might ever remember that all things are thine. May our simple and provident efforts bring us ever closer to becoming the Zion people we wish to be.

Help us to be smart enough to recognize the need for unwavering and faithful leaders who are both fearless and uncompromising in living and teaching the truth. Bless us to have and appreciate those who teach us with plainness. Help us when we listen to them and are prone to disagree, feel singled out, or unworthy not to be discouraged or angry but to be humble, submissive and to seek confirmation, light and understanding.

Help us recognize that even simple statements of discord, contention, envying, strife, unwise comparisons of church leaders, criticism, judgment, ill-will, hatred or disagreement canker and trouble the heart and soul. Bless us to control our tongues, to look for the good in others, to be restrained in judgment, to be forgiving, to be peace makers, kind and helpful, tolerant and charitable. To be patient with one another. To speak well of one another and to do good to all men. Help us to lift one another to our full potential. To recognize we are each different in background, understanding, commitment and strength of testimony. But help us not to forget we are literally brothers and sisters bound together by royal parentage. May that knowledge forever bind us in unity. And may our love for thee be manifest in the faithfulness of our individual lives, the strength of our homes and families, and in the physical and spiritual beauty emanating from this thy Willow Creek Stake of Zion I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen

Part I

Historical Glimpses into the For Union, Creek Road and Willow Creek Communities

by Loretta B. Derrick

Indian Springtime (1849)

A patch of white hung high in the mountains where the ridges made a cradle for the snow. It spread like the wing of a great white bird against the cliffs. Summer would be late again this year.

A Ute Indian half-slid down the sandy foothills to the floor of the Little Cottonwood Valley. For generations, his people had camped upon the surrounding hills and hunted in these fertile lowlands. The deep winter snows had driven the tribe south, and they had returned only weeks ago to set up camp near the mountains. The White Snow Wing had signaled the length of their seasons and safe return. By the heat of the day, the Indian knew Wa-ko-ne-kin had flooded its banks. There could be trouble getting back to his wickiup across the valley.

Hunting was always the best here in the forest of cottonwood and willow. There were grouse and deer in abundance higher upstream beyond the big rock, but he knew the shallow rabbit warrens at the base of the sand hill. He had learned to fish the streams as a young boy - respecting Wa-ko-ne-kin in its anger, and the cool death that rolled with it to the valley. The stream was too swift and full for fishing today, but the silly quail would be an easy catch. He set his traps and moved closer to the water.

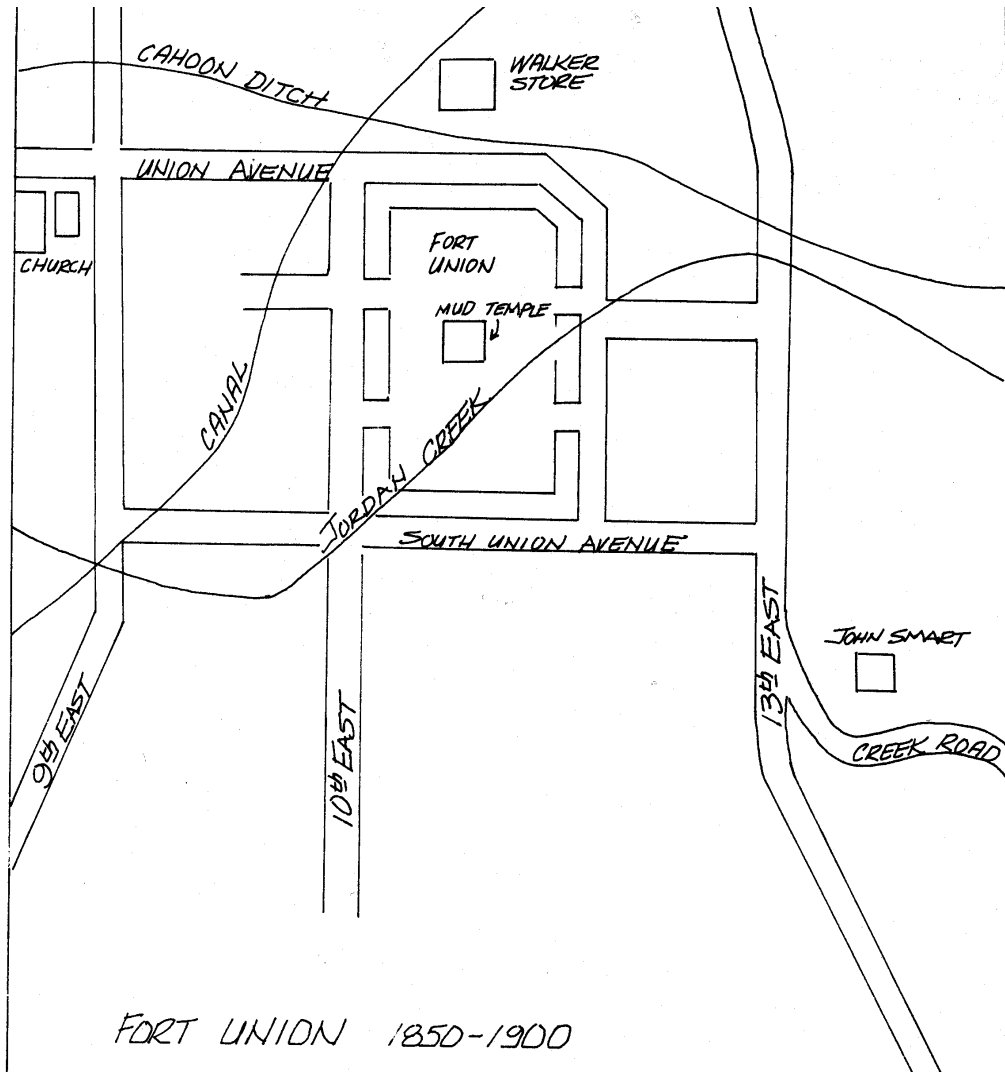
In full flow, the creek rushed brown-green over the rocks and spilled into the surrounding oak. Some seasons he had seen ponds grow into lakes and change form in the course along the way when floods subsided. Dead trees had come recklessly careening down the canyons during the night, making dams along the creek side and trapping more logs and debris. At full flow, the water troubled snakes from their dry hiding places, so he picked careful footing onto higher ground. He crossed the fields below the little forest and, skirting Wa-ko-ne-kin at its narrows, headed for the white man's settlement down river.

Walkara, chief of all the Utes, was angry with these white intruders. Indians had lived in peace from father to father with the Piute, the Goshiute, and Shoshone – sharing the salt fields to the west. Travelers passing through to California for gold had been anxious to trade and were no problem to Walkara and his people, but these white men had come with a strange sense of belonging. They built their homes and planted their crops upon Ute land and diverted the streams wherever they would. Now they threatened their ancient traditions.

Many days to the south, in the great desert lands of Mexico, their brother Indian tribes

a portion of the fort wall, and so the fort began to take shape. By June of the same year, Warren Foote reported to Brigham Young that the fort was completed, and all of the families were living within its confines.

They joined hands to build a “mud temple” in the center of the fort; and it became a school house, an entertainment center, and a spiritual haven. The flood plain of the Cottonwood began to yield to their labors, and there was wheat to mill and delicious fruit to eat.



Otis Lysander Terry, a prominent member of Fort Union, married two young orphan girls, Jane Hart and Levee Terissa Dancy. There were twenty-three houses in Union then. Only two contained a clock. One of them belonged to Otis who worked as a cooper, a blacksmith, and a miller at Gardner's Mill. Otis had a shepherd's horn which he blew to let his own family and others know when it was time to go to church and to entertainments.

Time drew on and the Indian trouble never materialized. The forts around the valley had discouraged the ruffled Walkara. The purpose of the fort had been accomplished, but a secondary blessing was also realized. Being thrown together in a struggle for survival, these families were forced to work together, to speak to each other, to understand each other. Representing at least ten different nationalities with varying customs – these were the saints who first named their cohabitation "Union".

When the tensions with the Indians eased, many farmers ventured out and made their home closer to their crops – building millraces by the stream, forging tools, quarrying rock, and hauling lumber. Thomas Smart was one of these young pioneers who brought little more than a wagon and a shovel to the valley. He moved his small tannery and glue factory to a hill southward and bought 106 acres a short distance from the fort.

His wife, Mary Ann, had graduated from college in England and had brought her great desire for learning with her as she crossed the plains. She was always willing to share her knowledge. The dust of the wagon wheels had hardly settled in the Salt Lake Valley when Brigham Young had asked her, "Mary Ann, what are we going to do for our children to go to school?"

She replied, "When you build a suitable place, fit for the children to come to school, I'll teach them." She was the first teacher in Salt Lake City and when she and Tom moved to Union, she brought her books with her.

"Little boy," a visitor called to young Johnny Smart, "is the dictionary at home?" He would always run inside, knowing that they meant his mother. She had insisted that each child know the spelling of every word in the dictionary and be able to use it in a sentence. So very few books were to be found in that little gathering of souls, and she held words in great reverence.

Thomas Smart took a compassionate outlook on the Indians that come to his door. Peeking from the window, young John could see the squaw at the gate and her little brown children, naked, hiding their heads only from fear of seeing the white man. They were never sent away empty handed. A 100 pound sack of flour seemed good insurance at the time. He had seen his father help to care for their dead, who were wrapped in the beautiful patterned blankets that they wove.

Johnny loved the trips to Salt Lake in the rough-riding wagon, for life was quite solitary out in the valley settlement. Father would dive the team into the shade of the stream bed and

leave the wagon standing in the water until the hard wood of the wheels sponged up the moisture, making the iron rim hold firm and taut. Then began the long, but happy journey to civilization. The city had begun to bloom, and there were so many people and things to see along the broad streets of this town growing out of the desert floor.

On a beautiful 23rd of July 1857, half the town of Union headed up the canyon. The wagons were brimming with excited children, homemade pies, and salads. They met other wagons, enroute from the city, and watched to see the arrival of President Young and the brethren as the annual celebration got underway.

It was a deeply joyful occasion. Everyone there was filled with memories of hardships shared and grateful for his present circumstances, as meager as they were. There would be races and games and food and speeches. Then in the evening, the cannons would boom over the mountains tops with Silver Lake reflected the long-awaited fireworks.

The arrival of four men on horseback seemed to create an agitated stir. General Daniel H. Wells was boosted up on a high rock to deliver his message to the gathering. He spoke in earnest tones, relaying the astounding news that the President of the United States had ordered military troops to Utah to replace its Governor and quell a supposed rebellion. Johnson's army was already underway.

The news evoked a surge of emotion. They had come to celebrate their freedom from religious persecution. They had paid a sore price to come to a place where they could have peace. These were people who had born their babies in straw filled wagons and forded swollen streams in tandem with their oxen. They had suffered theft and harassment from the Indians and escaped unbearable indignities within the eastward states. Now they were ignited with the unconquerable spirit of freedom. Never again would they suffer such persecutions or deliver up their precious liberties.

The proud citizenry of Union prepared for war. Twenty Union residents march out to defend the borders and report the progress of Johnson's army. Others at home made ready to burn their fields, pack their bags, and go.

Lucy Richards wandered up the creek and through the pear orchard deep in thought, searching for divine guidance. She thought of her father Silas, a spiritual oak, who, as long time bishop and friend, had himself counseled Brother Brady to take a second wife. "Your wife is too ill to make the move alone, Marion," he had told him.

She thought of Marion Brady—a good man, a kind man, and, though much her senior, a man of God—faced with insurmountable problems. He was ordered to the front to ward off the invaders and could not help his poor wife pack and move.

She thought of Frances Brady, her own sweet sister, ravaged by so many years of illness,

unable to care for her own, to mill the wheat, or to see to the stock. She would never bear the strain of such a move.

She thought of parties and dances and beaux—one in particular who had caught her fancy over others. Then, knowing that her days of carefree youth would thus be ended, she turned back, ready to give Marion her answer—to offer love, to offer service, to sacrifice, and yet to gain and grow.

The exodus into Utah County lasted only a short time, and soon the town of Union was bustling with life again. John Smart was now a young man and frequented the Walker's store which had been built north of the fort. It was much more than a store, however. It became a gathering place and entertainment center for the community.

The cracker barrel, the penny candy jar, and the burlap bag of peanuts were of interest; but in the back of the store was a floor big enough for dancing and a stage for occasional dramatic productions. At times tempers flared and fists flew in the dirt outside the dance hall. Harry Munteer, being the body of the law at that time, would arrive to settle the rift and send the participants away \$5.00 poorer by the way of fines.

The young gentleman, at the close of the last reel, would escort the ladies home. "I would ride the horse and she would walk beside," remembered John. "Or if she wanted to ride in the saddle, she could," he added with a twinkle in his eye. He married at the ripe age of 38, she being a tender 21. "And that was too soon!"

The pioneer's propensity for the arts displayed itself in the great theater productions that were presented in the co-op hall back of Walker's store. The Union Dramatic Club presented such hits as "A Widow's Wiles", "A White Lie", and "East Lynne". These were the lighter times of a hard time, moments to lift hands from heavy work.

Rufus Forbush strode through the tall grass of his high south field. He had come to visit the spot where he had buried his dear wife, Polly. She had died in August of the previous year. Since the cemetery in Salt Lake was several miles away, he had brought her here on a rise in the valley that they both had come to love.

As he neared the revered spot, he could see the earth had been disturbed close by and several other little markers stood as sentinels around hers. Polly had acquired some permanent company.

Smallpox had claimed several lives during the winter. Rufus' heart went out to the needs of his neighbors, and he resolved to donate this ground to the community. The Fort Union Cemetery became the first cemetery outside of Salt Lake City.

Because of the growth of the area's population, Union citizens built a new chapel on the

corner of 9th East and Ft. Union Avenue. It was a grand brick building with a large recreation hall adjoining it. Its graceful arched doorways greeted the participants of many gala evenings. The pillared entry was set off by an expanse of lawn and shaded by pines which had been brought down from the canyons.

"Please, Daddy," the Brady girls would plead, "Please may we have new dresses for the dance?" They had been bred on a love of dance, for their father himself was the fiddler. He had tapped many tunes in his bare feet on the hardwood dance floors, too poor to own a decent pair of shoes.

"Not until the new church is built, girls," he replied. Every cent was going to the raising of the new church."

As the building was finished, the young people looked forward to holding their dances there. Bishop Phillips, however, for reasons of his own, would allow no dancing in the new edifice. No amount of begging or cajoling could weaken his resolve. A plan was soon devised and accepted by every soul who longed for a place to swing a partner.

A photograph was taken of the venerable bishop, then mounted and prepared to be presented to him at the appointed, auspicious moment. The girls had been at the church the day before, scrubbing the floors. The musicians were waiting in the wings. Brother Denny gave an appropriate flattering address. The cover with lifted. They all thought the good bishop would be sufficiently impressed to let them dance. He wasn't.

On a Sunday morning, through all seasons and in all kinds of weather, buggies would arrive from miles around for Church on Sunday and for Primary and Relief Society during the week. Mary Ann Smart was Relief Society president for 25 years—watching over the needs of the saints in primitive times, caring for the sick, distributing goods to the poor, and dressing the dead. The tithing yard lay in the center of the community without a lock or barred gate, and its contents remained as safe as if under lock and key. All knew and practiced the principle of sharing of their goods so that there were no poor among them. The large mill and granary held its contents in common, each man knowing that he could take the seed he needed if he came short.

Each family had a ledger sheet at Walker's store, with purchases set down throughout the month. Flour, sugar, coal oil for lamps, or a bolt of cloth for a pretty dress—all were charged until the bill was paid at the end of the month. The paying of the bill was a special day for the children, for Nettie Walker always rewarded payment with a large bag of hardtack candy.

Electricity became available with the building of a new power plant, and John Smart was filled with enthusiasm for the possibilities it would bring to this valley. The power company had promised him that, if he could get six families to bring electricity into their homes, they would put his in for nothing. It sounded like a great idea so off he went—through Butlerville, all through Union, and clear out to Granger—and could not find one family who would touch his proposition.

“We have no fire hydrants here,” they would say. “Electricity is dangerous, and we have no protection for our families.” John could see the little children carrying the coal oil lanterns from room to room at night and knew the danger they held was much greater than that of the light that he had promised. He resigned, discouraged with his attempt to bring progress to the valley.

Up The Creek (1880-1940)

Ruby Proctor thought of her father as she surveyed the new chicken coops that her brother, Bert, had built for her. “If you don’t have work, make work!” he would say. She had a good job down in Murray at the smelter, but her mother had gone too lame to keep up. Dear Bert’s wife had died leaving little children to care for, and he had moved back home. It was Ruby’s turn now to keep the house and see to the water, but there was no income for her—hence, the chickens. They brought a good price each day in the store down in Union.

It was difficult seeing her lovely mother incapacitated. She had always had such boundless energies. Julia Van Valkenburg had married David Proctor in Union, where she had grown up; and he had taken her ‘up the creek’ along with a few others who had followed the fertile soil eastward.

They had built a little home in the orchard north of Creek Road and west of the sand hill. Four children were born there in the seclusion of their little orchard home. Later, they had a brick home built closer to the road, and Ira was born there. Still, they had not felt settled until they bought a piece of wilderness in the beautiful little valley to the north with good stream footage and deep plowing silt ground.

David hauled logs from the canyons with his boys for his cabin, beveling and chinking until it was secure and watertight. They cleared the trees and brush from the ground to make room for the field crops and set aside one parcel for a house some day. They carefully carted evergreens down the mountains to landscape the property and planted an orchard and many flowers.

Ruby was born in that one room, log house. The boys slept in a tent in the back, cooking their meals in the summer in a small lean to.

It was a long walk down to the chapel on 9th East for Church, Primary, and Relief Society, so their attendance was sporadic. Soon there were enough children up the creek to warrant a school, and Ruby’s father helped to lay the foundation and build the brick schoolhouse on Creek Road. The Proctor children, along with the teacher Mr. Davidson, had worn a path through their back field to the school. He was rooming with the family and slept with the boys outside. There were eight grades all under one roof, and Mr. Davidson taught them all.

The school also substituted as a branch Primary and Relief Society. Julia Proctor served the saints up the creek for many years as Relief Society president. Each month the visiting teachers would make their round, seeing to their sisters' needs and gathering flour, eggs, a ham, or some fruit for the fast offerings. On Fast Sunday, Julia would stay later taking these commodities to those in need.

The log house and lean to were abandoned for a comfortable frame house next door. Julia capitalized on the larger area with her talent for cooking. The smell of molasses drifted through the lilacs as she prepared pork cakes. Each morning saw a hearty breakfast with homemade buttermilk biscuits. Among her specialities was "spotted pap", a wonderful white boiled pudding.

Julia Proctor and her brother, Peter Van Valkenburg, shared birthdays. The combined celebration of that occasion created many fond memories. Pete had a farm downstream, and he had the only ice house around. He could cut ice from the thick frozen pond with an ice saw and store it in the ice house which was well insulated with sawdust. "Aunt" Mary Van could always be counted on to bring a huge freezer full of ice cream, and Julia would prepare new potatoes and peas and a large bowl of beautiful strawberries. This sumptuous feast was set under the large black willow in the back yard.

Left-over food often found its way into the little red wagon and, covering it with a clean cloth, Julia would march off down the road to share with those less fortunate. Two families in particular were often the recipients of her generous nature—one whose father was "crippled" and could not work and one whose father didn't like work. It made no difference to her. She could not stand to see anyone go hungry.

The children of Union and the surrounding settlements were full of exuberance and had an enterprising nature. After winter chores were done, they found fun sleigh riding. In the summertime, there were under strict orders to stay away from the creek. Julia told her children that "ratty bones" were in the creek and would get them if they went near.

One especially dark Halloween night, William Barrett and a group of his buddies went over to the old Pate mill on 7400 South and 1300 East with the purpose of doing mischief. They dislodged the old mill stone and rolled it all the way down to the church on 900 East leaving it there on the steps. There it stayed for some time until the adults got some help to move it. It was rolled off to the side of the grounds; and later, when Ira Proctor was given the assignment to erect a flag pole as a World War 1 monument, he chose the mill stone as a base.

Years later when the old church was torn down, the flag pole alone with the mill stone was moved to Union Community Park at 7200 South and 600 East. The dedication of this monument was pronounced by none other than William E. Barrett.

The schoolhouse on Creek Road had fulfilled its usefulness and was torn down, leaving

the “up the creek” children to go to school by covered wagon every day. The new school, Union Elementary, was located at 7200 South and 700 East.

The bricks from the Creek Road schoolhouse were carried down to 900 East and used in Charles Burgon’s store and George Proctor’s home right across the street from the pioneer church. Willard Burgon was bishop in the area during the period of time that Julia Proctor served as Relief Society president. He later became a stake president.

The delivery of the mail up the creek was a challenge to the local postmaster.

“Sorry about your mail box, Ira. Have to see about replacing it soon. I can’t exactly deliver the mail to your door.” Ruby Graves tucked the blanket closer around the heated bricks under her feet and drove the buggy down the muddy road. She took delight in knocking mailboxes down, seeing how close she could come on her whirlwind rides down Creek Road. She had always had a mind of her own and her father, being postmaster, thought this mail route would keep her occupied. The snow got deeper and she could see trouble if she carried the mail further, so she backed and turned the horse toward Union. “Those folks will just have to wait for the weather to clear or pick up their own mail in town,” she thought, soon trotting at a fast clip down the narrow, rutted road.

Other signs of progress were evident in the very enterprising community of Union. While horses were still used for many jobs, the automobile had come of age.

There had been a ratchet pump for gas at the old Walker store and a fancy glass bulbed pump at the side of Burgon’s store, but the first real service station in Union was built on 1300 East and Creek Road. The front columns were formed from the natural rocks found in the area, and a large garage was set to the rear of the lot.

Another landmark was the big red mill next to the mountain at the head of Little Willow Canyon. You could see that mill from anywhere in the valley. Shafts were started all over the area in search of precious gold. A bunkhouse was erected for the workers, and tents dotted the hills. The Jefferson Mine became the topic of conversation in wealthy circles in the East, and much capital was poured into its development. Mr. Smithcoach had seen to it that it was well advertised, and many of the funds seemed directed his way. Many of the promulgators from the East arrived by train for the great celebration upon its completion, but the enterprise ended in disappointment and the taint of swindle. Matt Eliason finally moved the big mill to Little Cottonwood Canyon leaving behind the foundations only and a few hopefuls who could still smell gold in those green hills.

Others put their hand to less lucrative work, but productive none the less; and the agrarian nature of the area took on a smart businesslike appearance.

Franklin Dennis Farnsworth closed the door to his barber shop early one night and headed

for his home eastward out by Pepper's Hill. There was so much to be done that evening in preparation for the trip tomorrow morning. He had gauged the season by the snowfall recorded in the patch of white in the great green mountain above his home and was sure there was no danger of flooding. The large garden was in. The sunflowers were blooming all over the fallow fields, and he was ready to head out once again.

All winter he had rehearsed his little band of players. Having little to do in the long evenings after chores, they helped each other memorize their lines, gather props, and make costumes. Dennis Farnsworth believed in busy children and worked hard to provide them with opportunities to grow. His first wife had died, leaving him seven children; and his present wife, Venola, had blessed him with another ten.

After one look at the brush and rocks up Creek Road, Dennis had determined that this was a good place to raise a family—a place with plenty of work. He built a home not far from the rock ditch. Johnny Farnsworth had written to his father requesting him to invest his army pay until he could get home, and Dennis bought up 120 acres of Willow Creek land in Johnny's name.

The traveling family dramatic troupe came soon after, as a natural outgrowth of his exuberance and talent. Their singing and acting became known clear to the south of the state, and they were booked up throughout the summer months. Venola and those children who were too little to travel were left to care for the garden and harvest and preserve its crops

This year he was especially pleased and excited to get under way, for tomorrow began the first performance of "The Pirates of Penzance". He foot was light upon the steps of home; and reaching out to his front door, he could feel the thick anticipation from within.



“Artist Boyhood Home, Union Utah,” © 1966 by Kenneth C. Madsen depicts part of the Madsen homestead.

Kenneth Madsen was about six years old in 1933 when his family moved to Union. In those early days he recalled migrating Indians would stop at his home. His mother would load them down with her great bakery goods and some vegetables from her garden. He also recalls Gypsy families who came by and asked to pitch their tents east of the house by a stream of water which flowed through a heavily wooded area several hundred yards away. The location allowed them complete privacy.

My blessed mother again helped those folks with food and her dried herbs and supplied their medical needs. One such family remained on our property for several months. Then one morning when we awoke, they were gone, tents and all. This large plot of land was a declared bird sanctuary and no hunting was allowed. Our jungle playground had two large natural swimming pools, surrounded by a forest of cottonwood trees, wild grape vines, lilies of the valley and other wild flowers. The majority of birds were quail and pheasants.

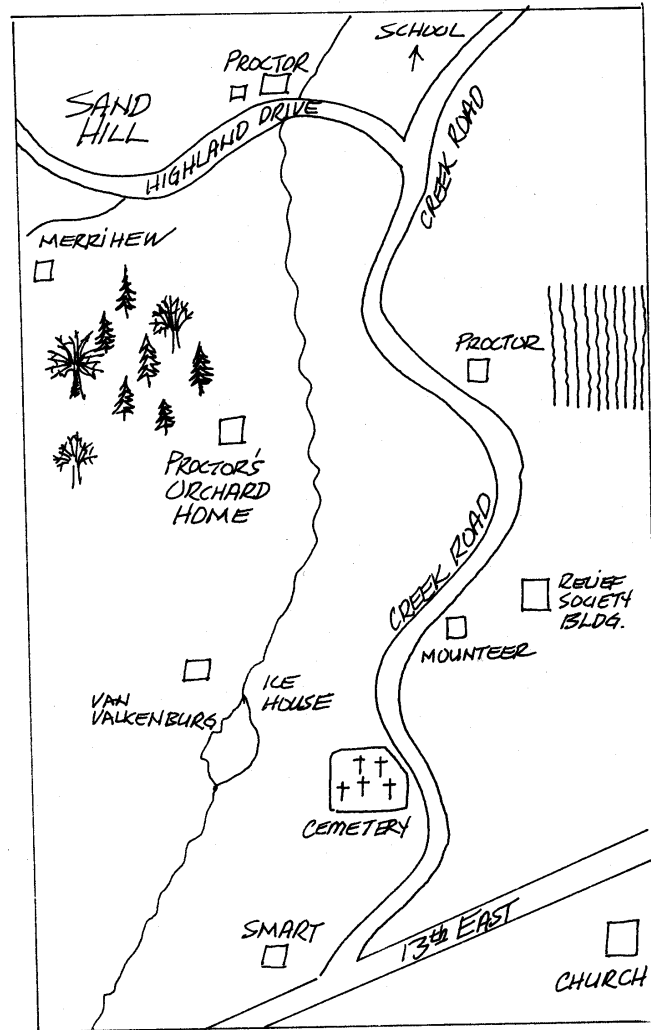
The Madsen residence was located about 890 East and 6600 South. Ken Madsen served as a counselor in the Union 2nd Ward bishopric. The up-the-creek community began to build a church of their own on the hill at 1300 East. These saints were rich in blessings, but poor in cash. The progress was very, very slow. All could see that it would take a minor miracle to finish it.

The bishop humbly made the round of each person in the community several times, asking members and non-member alike for donations to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. One Japanese family, who were Buddhists, willingly complied once again with the humble bishop’s request. Puzzled by his visit, they politely requested, “Who is this Jesus? And why is He broke all the time?”

Everett H. Belcher, a Lincolnesque figure of a man, was called to preside over this little flock with the specific purpose of building them a chapel. He labored hard and long; then, as a final measure, he decided to sacrifice his own means of livelihood in order to spend more time on the project. He was blessed with a unique gift, and in his own kindly way, talked many businesses into donating both materials and labor for the new chapel. Still the work dragged on. In due time, the noble efforts of the bishop and his little flock came to fruition; and the chapel was prepared for dedication. Although the Belcher family underwent much hardship during that time, the principles of dedication and sacrifice blessed them in many ways.

The possibility of spring flooding had always been an annual concern. The early pioneers had dammed the creek above Highland Drive, creating a pond and marshland. This saved them from the heavy run-off downstream. Farmers now irrigated their crops in Little Willow Valley through the Last Chance and Nickle Ditches off the Little Cottonwood Creek.

The first bridge over the Little Cottonwood was built by David Proctor. The side walls were logs, hewn and cribbed to hold fast. The planking for the bridge was ordered from Whipple's mills in Big Cottonwood Canyon.



UP THE CREEK 1880-1940

Through years of use, the recurring danger of flood wiping out the only passage, it was decided to construct a more permanent bridge to hold the heavier traffic and withstand the torrents. Much of the work was done by plow and scraper drawn by a team of horses. So much water was being lost upstream due to seepage that the Cut Off Ditch was planned and lined with rocks. The bridge on Highland Drive was formed with cement walls, deck and side rails.

A third bridge was constructed in 1939. Requests were granted that it be made of local

rock, indicating that the rocks had come to have more meaning than any outsider could possibly understand. The bridge was made with stream bed rocks.

One more improvement was requested by the project's overseer, Ira Proctor. He got permission to straighten out the curve in the road just past the bridge. The school bus had trouble negotiating the sharp turn, creating a hazardous conditions. Permission was granted, but Alma Proctor had to volunteer half of his strawberry patch to accommodate the new roadway.

The area up the creek seemed to have come of age, with many of the conveniences of a modern day; but the homes still lay in rugged wilderness. Upon a snowy day, and not so long ago, wildcats followed stream water down to the bend in the forest hunting pheasants, rabbits, and the neighbors' chickens. The dogs would then take chase with men and rifles following after. Cornering the cat up a tree, they had an easy target.

Just Yesterday (1940-1964)

"How beautiful they are," mused Jane, gazing across a field of goal at Mr. McCormick's Clydesdale horses. "The must be the only plow team left in this whole valley." She often spent her early morning walk in this direction in order to see the beauty of their work. The soil received the fodder, dry and rasping, folding it over to bare long brown furrows past the blade.

Her own experience with horses was limited to what she had read in books, though her admiration for them ran very deep. Admiration of horseflesh had gotten her in trouble on one occasion. Ellis Bringhurst had come by to visit her husband Val on Susie, a handsome quarter horse. Using her book-learned jargon, Jane gave the impression that she knew more about the animal than her city upbringing could have afforded. Before she knew it, Ellis was giving her a hand up on Susie's bare back.

Ellis gave a slap to the horse's rear and Jane was off like lightning, bareback, on her very first ride. To compound the problem, she had not had time to grab the reigns and galloped on without any means of changing the horse's mind. Collecting her wildly racing thoughts, she began talking to the horse. Susie soon began to cock her ears back the better to hear, and slowed to a walk.

Like many who came to the valley to get back to nature and the honesty of the land, Jane had learned the way of farm animals. Through trial and error and the expertise of others, she could now produce a crop in which she could take pride.

The sun had since edged higher in the cloudless sky. Shielding her eyes, she turned back up Creek Road, perusing the beauties unique to the day. The farms and vegetable gardens, the flowers (wild and planted along the way), the sound of the creek to the north, the modest homes spaced at a goodly distance—these spoke to the eye and ear of home.

She noticed Lucy Proctor sitting in the front yard of her small white home and waved, pausing to visit just for a moment. Lucy could chat with every soul who came down the road—knowing each one personally, their trials and their joys. She had spent time in many homes caring for the families who had new babies or an illness. She had worked for a time in the laundry of the hospital, spending hours at a heated iron pressing the crisp cotton uniforms of the nurses and the white starched aprons, hats and bibs.

Her sister, Nora, lived in the house just east of her. When Norah's husband had passed away leaving her a baby and four children, Lucy took Norah's little girl and raised her as her own. Lucy and Ira's silent home was now filled with joy.

Jane followed the narrow road up, passing Fred and Flora Erickson working in the circle of their garden. She went on past Eldredge's and Auer and Beth Johansen's, who were neighbors to Verne and Jen Finlayson. The mink sheds spread out beyond the houses. It would soon be pelting time, and the women would gather together to skin the long lean bodies after the men had made the kills. The little children would carry tiny mink feet in their pockets for good luck.

As virtual newly weds, Val and Jane Lund had moved into the tiny home of Annie Matilda Johnson, approximately 2300 East on Creek Road. Val's father had bought a fifty acre tract of land from Mrs. Johnson in 1949. It was bisected into two portions by Little Cottonwood Creek. A pioneer pond lay on the west end of the property and the oak, chokecherry and cottonwoods were thick all the way to the hill.

Below that acreage, toward Highland Drive, lay a large orchard and truck garden owned by the 33rd Ward of the Bonneville Stake. The garden was used for the production of vegetables suitable for canning, and also there was a substantial area for the raising of chickens. All of this was one of the early "welfare projects" of the Church.

Drawing closer to the Lund property, Jane stopped to view the breathtaking sight of the Japanese pansy farm on the south side of the road. Spreading beyond that were fields thick with strawberries. People came from miles away to buy those huge delicious strawberries, unequaled in the valley. Jukus Inouye and Leo Iseki had been neighbors for years and had a magic touch upon the land. One raised fields of berries and the other had rows and rows of vari-colored pansies. Each man labored hard to support his own family and the aging parents living with them.

A tractor motor roared in the distance, and Jane supposed it would be Venola Farnsworth in her huge sunshade of a hat, grading off some weeds. Venola and Dennis worked a Grade A Dairy along with their son Johnny. Dennis believed in hard work.

Venola and the children could always be found at some task and soon would be picking chokecherries for sale to customers in the city. Chokecherries had paid for the amenities in her

life: her drapes, her furniture, and small pleasures. The berry bushes grew in patches all over this little valley clear back to the canyon.

There were chokecherries to be picked on Lund property, too, as well as the golf ball sized strawberries in Grandmother Lund's garden. She remembered with a smile the city family who had come to gather the straggling crop at the end of the summer one year. The parents and the children bent and stooped and picked through the hot day to glean the small fruit remaining. They completed their task in the afternoon, leaving several large tubs of strawberries sitting in the driveway. Near to tears with aching muscles and exhaustion, they stopped to rest and visit with Grandfather Royal and his wife. In the meantime, the Farnsworth pigs had come across the street and discovered a feast of a meal all set out for them. By the time the family came back to their bounteous treasure, the pigs had eaten every berry.

Jane crossed the dusty road and headed for the creek. There were chores to do in her little hillside house. Grandfather Lund had opened the way to the development of the area beyond the creek with the building of a cement bridge over the Little Cottonwood. In 1961, he had sunk a well 338 feet deep so that Val and Jane could build a home.

The security and seclusion of her home against the hill meant a great deal to her, and although she loved her frequent jaunts up and down Creek Road, it was always a great source of satisfaction to come back to this haven. Here she kept the treasures of her hand, the furniture she lovingly and artistically refinished, the vines she cultivated, the gleaming bottles of fruit upon the shelf, and the perfect rounded loaves of bread on the counter top. Her innermost thoughts often found their way to paper, her pen so often flowing with poetic wisdom.

These people who had made their home near the mountains were still imbued with the true spirit of Union. Each man willingly helped his neighbor, and all were responsible for the work and the recreation of one another. They often got together on a moment's notice to play cards, to picnic, and to square dance. At first they hired a caller. Then one evening, with no caller available, they asked Dave Jessup to call the dance. He hesitating but good-naturedly consented, starting a life long avocation of good times. The bishop could call saying the building was not being used, and within thirty minutes, the hall would be filled with swirling couples.

It was a great treat to be together. The children enjoyed each other's company as well, as it was so far to go to play with friends. The Jessup's land was the furthest up the creek; and when the family had an illness or some other reason to keep them home from Primary or Relief Society, the children would beg their mother for a ride down to the church where they could play with the other children. They could always find a ride home.

The Jessups were the bulwark of their ward. David served as Elders Quorum president for twelve years and extended his hand of service to everyone in need. It was not uncommon to find him using his building talent to help a friend or administering to or visiting the sick. Through service he demonstrated unconditional love.

Over to the west by Sand Hill, a young John Merrihew, recently discharged from the service, stood upon his father's land in the depths of the forest. He had tired his hand at other things, but the four walls of an office had seemed as a tomb to him. He had come back to the glens that he had haunted as a boy for what was supposed to have been a brief respite. His mind was made up at that moment, and he pleaded permission to start some mink upon that ground. Truly, it was as close to paradise as you could ever find on this earth, and he longed to make it part of his life.

Taking some of his savings, he obtained a start of mink form Mr. Johnson, a man whose heart lay as deep in the soil as he own, and moved into a little hut down the land under the brow of the hills in true Thoreauvian fashion. The rabbits were prolific company. The quail and pheasant made pleasant noises throughout the underbrush; and one family of deer were his neighbors, year 'round. His dog was careful not to offend the bunnies he had adopted as pets in his front yard, but he was given free license to harass the cats who stole into the woods and devoured the game.

A barn hidden off to the north side of Creek Road and west of Pepper's Hill became an object of great interest during those times because it was there that some sporting fellows had initiated cock fights. This became a regular event and soon the police were raiding them with some degree of consistency because gaming with cocks was illegal.

One evening, there arose a smell of smoke throughout the woods, and soon there was a glorious, billowing blaze. The barn was razed to the ground; and, although some hints were made at arson, nothing further was said.

After World War 11, the idyllic setting of the valley began changing. Johnny Farnsworth had been busy running the dairy and the large acreage that his father had acquired for him. The sixty acres up on the oak-covered hill to the south had partially been planted in grain the year before, and he had to set the mower blade up almost two feet to avoid shredding it in pieces on the rocks. The crop there had been good, as well as had the garden he planted on the sixty acre piece down by the stream flow.

This year he had neglected to seed the hill at all and was astonished at his neighbor's query, "When are you going to mow the high field, Johnny? It looks about ready to me." The grain had sown itself and volunteered a crop without a hand. All he had to do was harvest the wheat.

On a Sunday afternoon, without formal invitation, his family would bake a cake or prepare a salad and walk over to Grandmother Farnsworth's house to spend the remainder of the day with the family. His sister, Noleen, who had moved on to the land to the east, would often be there with her husband, David Jessup, and their children. There was always plenty of food, and the acre of lawn by the side of the house was perfect for volleyball and the restful comforts of a cool evening. The canyon breezes created a contrast to the day, no matter how hot it had been.

The harvest of his handiwork was soon to yield another unexpected crop. Others had seen the beauty of the land and had a different vision for its possibilities than any of its residents had yet imagined.

A land development corporation had made plans to create a golf course in the upper valley and purchased much of John Farnsworth's land. He was able to quit the dairy business and sell the remainder of his property for a substantial sum due to its enhanced value. John left the area a wealthy man.

The Jessup boys became the self-appointed overseers of the Willow Creek project. Large equipment was moved in and began moving the brush, sand, and rocks from place to place. In the evening when the workmen would go home, the children would come out and play on the newly formed hills and valley. One unexpected hazard was the snakes. They had never been much of a problem heretofore, but, with their rocky caches disrupted, they moved closer into peoples' lives.

A new litter of puppies rested in the cool shade of an old dog house over on the Lund property. One tiny furry pup had rolled out the door and under the crawl space of the hut. A concerned young admirer reached his small hand underneath to retrieve it and received the fangs of a rattlesnake instead. He ran screaming for help, and Uncle Val administered first aid on the spot. The poison still took many fevered days to wear through his system.

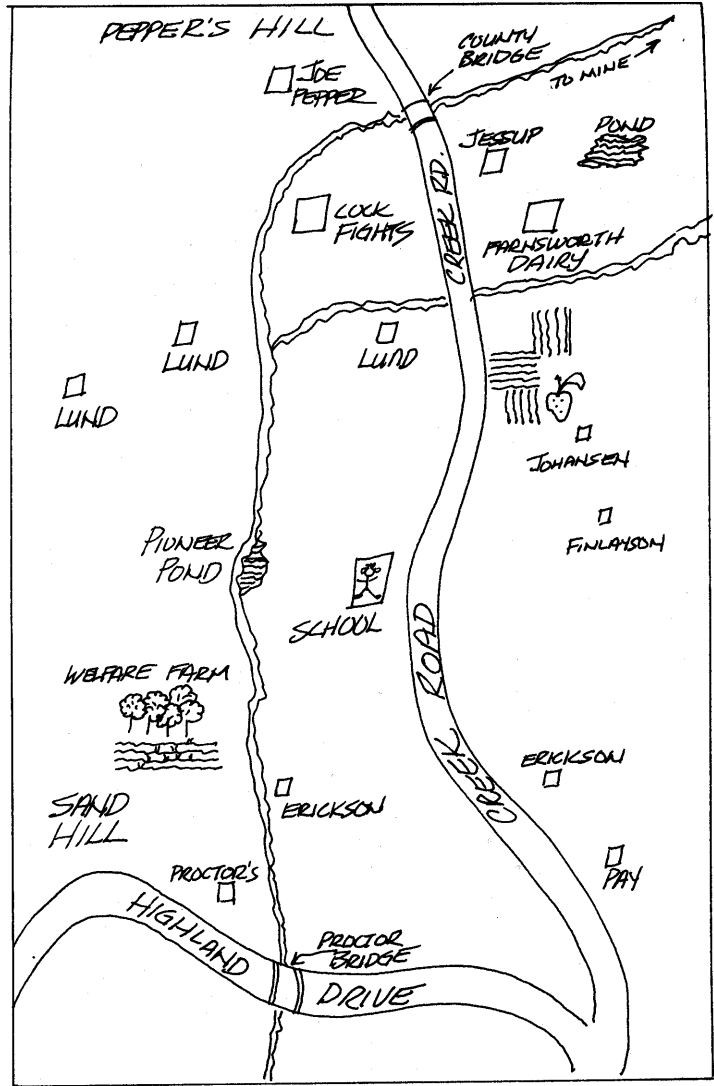
The influx of the reptiles became a serious danger for all those living in the vicinity; and the construction workers carried side arms, killing many each day.

Once the bulk of grading work was over and the clubhouse built, the yards and greens were piped for watering, and the landscaping began. Out of the rocky, willow strewn valley came the rolling green fairways and pine dotted walkways.

Other areas up and down along the road followed suit, developing according to the times. One of the first to submit to subdivision was the Church Welfare Farm area along Willow Stream Drive. A large selection of homes was built down through the farm land, and the population began to grow.

Michelle Way was the next to be developed by Evan Hanson and George Marquette. The sale of this property was a little unusual in that the owners initially refused to sell to anyone who was not a member of the "Church." The building up of that area took place in the late 1950's. The effect of this restricted dealing resulted in the establishment of a very strong spiritual leadership while the entire Little Cottonwood Creek population was all one ward.

The construction of the first chapel to be built on Creek Road was during the years 1964-65. Folks throughout the creek vicinities would car-pool to the "white church" on the hill for many years.



LITTLE WILLOW VALLEY - 1940

Through the real estate interests of Robert Busch, the entire flood plain of the Little Cottonwood was filled with homes, extending to the few homes upon the bench lands. Those families moving this far south from the big city enjoyed the rural natures, the quiet, and the seclusion that it offered.

New Developments (1964-1983)

The summer heat of 1975 beat down upon the bare backs of three young boys climbing

the rocky slopes near their homes. Fat black tubes were flung over their shoulders, and two stream-soaked dogs panted after them. They were headed to the point where the Nickle Ditch cut off from the Little Cottonwood Creek. far to the south, for the cool relief of a fast ride down the ditch.

Some days, when enough water was diverted their way, they could cascade down the big hill by the flats and on to the spot where the culvert swallowed up their free ride, carrying the stream underground.

Only a few summer ago, they had spent their time catching tadpoles at Pudding Pond or camping out overnight at Big Rock. The Old Mill at the head of the valley provided many hours of exploring interest each buried discovery having some tale to tell. With not much more than the foundation left, you could still tell where the water flowed through the turbines creating the power for the plant.

The Shurtleff home was on the edge of civilization, wilderness just out the back door. Of the few homes in this new region, half of them were for sale. Even with this wide selection, the Shurtleffs opted to build. With a few empty homes and the fields as their neighbors, they took possession. They moved in 1964, looking for a place to raise their four sons. Mark would become Utah's attorney general. Willow Creek was a heaven for boys.

The saints were few and far between and everyone was needed. Each newcomer was welcomed and put to work. Stake conference was held in the East Jordan Stake Center, just five blocks east of State Street. The ward encompassed the entire Little Willow Valley from 1300 East to Pepper's Mill.

Individual home sites kept creeping in on them, filling up the empty lots, but the boys still had the hills to ride. The golfers on the course below gave ample opportunity for a young man to learn a little business sense and make a profit. The golf balls they could fish out of the stream could make a fellow comparatively rich. Small lemonade stands were strategically placed awaiting the thirsty sportsmen, who would welcome something cold and wet. This did not agree with the policies of the country club whose refreshments, a little higher priced, were being neglected.

Whack! Whack! The huge heads of the sunflowers would topple to the wooden swords of three young swashbucklers. The streets would be strewn with flowers, and yet the fields remained a mass of golden blossoms. Gophers, field mice, and meadow larks made this paradise their home. Occasionally a skunk would come trouping by to add its perfume to the summer air.

In the snowy winter months the hills became ski runs; children young and old took advantage of the opportunity to slide down the slopes on anything they could find. No fences withheld them from the pleasures of the site, and wide open spaces still prevailed.

The Shurtleff boys attended the old Union School on 700 East until Mountview School was opened; they transferred. This was only the beginning of their moves, for they were soon to attend Canyon View to the North of 7200 South. Ira Proctor sold his hay field to the school district, and Oakdale Elementary was erected. Times had turned full swing and there was now a school once again on Creek Road, the first true neighborhood school the Willow Creek Children would be able to enjoy.

“Constancy amid change” became the motto of the residents. Many families living in the same house could boast membership in two stakes and five wards by the time things became stable. Some of the early residents resisted change and objected strenuously to the development of the land, contending this it would lose its pioneer flavor and purpose.

One young developer began to build two small houses on the north side of Creek Road, a short distance apart. One of the homes stood on the site of the old brick schoolhouse. A petition was circulated to stop the progress of these dwellings with the complaint that lots facing Creek Road should be a least one acre in size, in keeping with existing property. The objection stood and work was halted. For years the two framed shells stood as objects of theft and vandalism. Eventually, the High Priest Group of the Union 8th Ward purchased the house just across from the new stake center on Creek Road and began to renovate and refurbish it. It was prepared for the emigration of Rrudi and Burni Seehagen from Germany. Brother Seehagen had been employed by the Church to care for the new building, and the ward members had a home waiting when they arrived.

Brother Seehagen had been a prisoner of war in Russia during World War II. He had seen much Church service in his native country (including his calling as the first president of the Berlin Stake – following the erection of the infamous “Berlin Wall” by the Communists in August 1961.) He was, by profession, a master of porcelain art. His presence greatly enriched the stake, and the protective care he showered upon the Lord’s house was an inspiration to all. He was able to further his career in his chosen profession and shared his great talent with many.

A wide open building boom created an interesting phenomenon peculiar to Willow Creek. Out in the desert, south of the golf course, a huge tent was erected, and the careful construction of several model homes was begun. This marked the beginning of the home show era. Two such shows were held in lower Willow Creek, resulting in the building of several unique edifices. The third show as held up on the bench land on a vast field of weeds past the Shurtleff home on Aspen Way. A large tar pad was laid, the homes were built, the gaudy tent went up, and the crowds came. The site of the tent became Brookwood Elementary School.

The road began to carve higher up the hill each year and Alta Canyon Drive soon extended into the Quail Hollow Subdivision and back to the north and west. Circles and drive ways networked up the hill.

In a touching testimony, it was common to hear a newcomer say that he was led into this

valley or that he knew there was a reason for him to be here at this particular time. All loved the close knit spirit, the compassion for one's neighbors, the learning and loving and growing together.

The spring of 1983 produced a catastrophic run-off from the snow-laden mountains and the swollen mountain streams. The streets of Salt Lake City were filled with torrents of water. The mountains to the north in Farmington refused to hold their bounds and sloughed off in mud slides which engulfed some peoples' homes. The river Wa-ko-ne-kin of the Utes was rushing brown-green once again. The pioneer spirit of Union filled the valley, as young and old turned out to lend a hand.

Calls were made ahead to warn the residents down stream. Surely the Royal Land Bridge would not hold. Many rushed to watch and help if possible, but the tree never came. It had jammed upstream against the curved bank at Wes Hardy's, protecting his property from further yards of erosion.

The Lord's hand rests upon Willow Creek Valley. It is yet a tranquil haven from the outside world with its majestic mountains and the country feeling of the winding Creek Road. The provident life of the pioneers is still evident in Willow Creek. Trials may differ, but they offer just as great a sifting and strengthening. That long ago tradition of pulling together has not ceased; the spirit of Union has veritably come up the creek.

The passing of youth, in all its free exuberance, is not to be mourned, but celebrated. It was a time of beauty – placid running waters, hay and horses, seed and harvest, and the quietude of gentle snow upon the mountains. That beauty still surrounds us. The spirit lives on here. Little Willow Valley will yet put on her beautiful garments and, in her maturity, truly prove a paradise.

Noting a beautiful fall on Creek Road, Vern Bringhurst asked if there wasn't some way of "capturing" it on paper.

AUTUMN REVERIE

The chattering squirrel and raucous jay
Soliloquize the close of day,
And as I gaze, I too am awed
To view the handiwork of God!

These graceful trees today are dressed
In mid-October's brilliant best.
A touch of red, a patch of gold,
Reveal the frosty breath of cold.

The somber brown of bark and limb
Add solemn dignity within
The gay kaleidoscope of tone,
That now adorns my Autumn home.

A bumptious pumpkin hides its face
Beneath the corn stalks noisy lace
That whispers, "Poet, lift your eyes;
Observe the drama of the skies!

Today, a field of brilliant blue
Tomorrow vague, of mottled hue;
Then ominous and dark again,
The thunderous overture of rain. . ."

With child-like wonder I behold
Familiar places draped in gold
And ponder, tranquil and alone;
The beauty of my Autumn home!

Jane Lund

The following names are pioneer that lived on Creek Road from 1300 East to the site of the Willow Creek Country Club Golf Course and on Highland Drive from Creek Road to the foot of Sand Hill:

First Generation: Approximately 1852

Baker, Charles and Lucy
Ball, Arthur and Ann
Ball, John and wife
Bissinger, Anna
Erickson, Caroline
Erickson, Henry and May
Erickson, Victor and Rachel
Forbush, Hyrum and Bessie
Foreman, Mr. and Mrs.
Gailbraith, Jacob and Eliza
Graham, Hyrum and Mary
Griffeth, Ephram and Julia
Griffen, Ben and Nora
Greenwood, Frank and Leona
Greenwood, Thomas and wife
Howcroft, John and Marry
Howcroft, Nephi and Alice
James, Mark and Elizabeth
Johnson, William and Annie
Koelliker, Edward and Catherine
Lind, Charlie
Lyons, Dr. Ira and Grace
Mounteer, Harry and Sarah
Myers, Ben
Nickle, David and wife
Pepper, Joe and Eva
Phillips, Jim, with his mother & father
Phillips, James & Elizabeth
Priestly, John
Proctor, Ann and Julia
Proctor, Frank and Ellen
Smart, Thomas H and Mary Ann
Steingruber, Anna

Second Generation: Approximately 1890

Baker, Chester and Larena
Baker, Elija and wife
Butterfield, Asa and Vera
Crosby, Julia Koelliker
Cummings, Bill and Mamie
Despain, Oral and Gertude
Erickson, Alma and Ivy
Forbush, Dellis and Ester
Forbush, Ervin and Leona
Forbush, Marvin and Ruth
Forbush, Ray and Nora
Forbush, Rubin and Millie
Graham, Clifford and Arvil
Graham, Shirley and Ethel
Greenwood, Frank and Ruth
Howcroft, Earl (Ed) and Sophia
Larson, Sidney and Marie
Mounteer, Bert and Verna
Mounteer, David
Mounteer, Joe and Flora
Nickle, Dell and Irene
Obern, William and Rhoda
Proctor, Bert and Sadie
Proctor, Clarence and Maud
Proctor, Ira and Luch
Proctor, Melvin and Vola
Tripp, Frank and Mary Ann
Van Valkenburg, Charles and Nora
Van Valkenburg, Ira and Lea
Van Valkenburg, Peter and Edith
Van Valkenburg, Peter Sr. and Eliza Ann
Van Valkenburg, Wells and Wilma
Winger, Joe and Grace