STAR VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
HISTORICAL BOOKS INVENTORY DETAILS

1. Overview

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3. Synopsis

The Star Valley Historical Society hosted the State Trek in 1998. This material was prepared for this event. A schedule outlines the planned activities.

Index (Items in this folder)
- Early Star Valley History
- The Elkhorn Arch
- Boiling Kettle Geysers
- Baker Cabin
- Salt Works
- Historical Rock Church
- The Lander Immigrant Trail
- Star Valley Aviation

4. Other A letter and an Index indicate that more topics will be covered.
February 10, 1998

Loren Jost
308 Moose Drive
Riverton, WY 82501

Dear Loren,

Thank you for material you so promptly sent.

In response to your letter of February 5, I am enclosing a bunch of PR on Star Valley, including pictures. Notice I have checked, on the index, items that are completed for the handout booklet we expect to print for distribution at the registration table. There are eight of the fourteen items done. As I complete the rest I will send them to you. If there is something that strikes your fancy and you want additional information don't hesitate to call me.

I have enclosed a current itinerary that you can publish at the appropriate time. And I haven't forgotten that I will send you a list of accommodations. My greatest concern is availability of motel space.

We appreciate being able to work with you on this. Please keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Jermy B. Wight
INDEX

1. Early Star Valley History ✓
2. Elkhorn Arch ✓
3. LDS Tabernacle
4. Archibald Gardner Monument
5. Intermittent Springs
6. Boiling Kettle Geyser ✓
7. Baker Cabin ✓
8. Freedom Arms Inc.
9. Cheese Production in Star Valley
10. Salt Works ✓
11. Historical Rock Church ✓
12. The Lander Imigrant Trail ✓
13. Star Valley Aviation ✓
14. University of Wyoming Research Center
THE WYOMING STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
TREK OF
STAR VALLEY WYOMING
June 26, 27, 28, 1998

JUNE 26th
2-5 p.m. Registration at Call Air Museum and visit to the Call Air Museum and Hospitality Room 1042 South Washington Avenue, Afton
3:30 p.m. State Executive Board Meeting in Call Office Annex, Conference Room.
6 p.m. Buffet Dinner, Senior Center with cowboy poetry and music and entertainment by Trail Dust.

JUNE 27th
7-9 a.m. Free breakfast courtesy of the Trailside Country Stores at Call Air Museum in conjunction with Call Air Fly In.
9-12 a.m. Tour A. To Intermittent Springs via Elkhorn Arch, Historical Tabernacle, Archibald Gardner Monument, Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum, Univ of Wyoming Research Center. Includes a short walk.
Tour B. To Oneida Salt Works via Cheese Factory at Thayne, Baker Cabin Historical Site, Freedom Arms Gun Factory, Boiling Kettle Geysers, Historical Rock Church at Auburn. The Lander Imigrant Trail. Also a short walk.
12:00 Noon Aviation Activities at Call Air Museum and lunch
1-4:30 p.m. Reverse Tours from the morning activities.
6 p.m. Milk Can Dinner- Auburn Community Shelter
7:30 p.m. Historical Theater Presentation at the Auburn Historical Rock Church.

JUNE 28th
7- 8:30 a.m. Breakfast Buffet, Homestead Restaurant, Afton
9 a.m. Departure
WYOMING

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TREK OF STAR VALLEY

JUNE 26 - 28

1998
EARLY STAR VALLEY HISTORY

Before the white man came the valley was the summer and fall hunting grounds for the native Americans. For many millennia they also came from great distances to procure the readily available natural salt. They were intelligent enough to move to warmer climates for their winter homes. The first recorded white men in the valley were the Robert Stuart party in September 1812 travelling back to the states from Astoria, Oregon. They were believed camp near present city of Alpine. From 1816 to 1840s the the Canadian, American and Indian trappers exploited the creeks and streams for beaver. In 1857 the United States of American surveyed a wagon road through the valley as a short cut on the trail to Oregon and California. The road was completed in 1858 under the supervision of Frederick W. Lander after whom the Lander Cutoff was named. The Oneida Salt Works as started in 1866 and large quanties of salt was extracted until 1879. The Salt Works was seasonal employment and no permanent settlement was made in the valley until 1879.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were the colonizers of the valley and the following is a condensed version of those earlies years.

President Brigham Young of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints died of cholera on August 29, 1877 and the mantle of leadership for the daily affairs of the Church fell upon the shoulders of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. The Church was to be without a first presidency for the next three years until the fall conference of 1880.

The Council of Twelve quickly reaffirmed the continuance of President Young's policy of expanding colonization to the western mountain valleys. You might even say they accelerated it. There was an air of urgency to do so.

The success of the missionary effort in northern Europe particularly among the poorer farmers of the Scandanavian countries was beyond their fondest dreams. These converts, being of the soil, desired land of their own yet all the land in the Salt Lake area and surrounding valleys had been taken by earlier settlers.

The railroad, completed these past eight years, provided an easy access, and was bringing settlers, converts and gentiles alike, to the vast expanses of the West.

The liberal homestead policies of the Federal Government provided an emigrant the opportunity of owning 160 acres of public land if he or she was twenty-one years of age and a citizen of the United States or declared his or her intent to become one. All that had to be paid was a $6.00 filing fee, reside on the land for five years and cultivate at least fifteen acres. With proper affidavids signed by his neighbors that he had fulfilled his obligations he could then receive a deed to the land for the purchase price of $1.25 an acre.

The federal government's land policy was changing in that western public lands were
being withdrawn from homesteads use and set aside for parks such as Yellowstone and other public uses.

The twelve decided broad measures needed to be taken and they designated members of the Quorum to travel to the edges of the Church empire and seek suitable areas and dedicate these areas for the colonization program and they were to return and report their efforts. Some were directed south to the Sanpete Valley of Utah and others north towards Idaho and Wyoming.

That is why on August 29, 1878, one year to the day of Brigham Young's death, Apostle Brigham Young Jr. found himself in the upper Salt River Valley. He came here with Moses Thatcher, the 36 year old President of the Cache Valley Stake and William Booker Preston, the presiding Bishop of the Church.

The political climate of Wyoming was ripe for the settlement of the Saints. The Territory of Wyoming was seeking population in order to qualify for Statehood. Territorial Governor Moonlight let it be known that state officials and State law enforcement Officers would not cooperate with the federal agents in enforcing the anti-polygamy laws.

The story is told that a young boy of the Thomas Lee Family of Thayne was stopped by a Federal Agent and was asked if his father had more than one wife. The lad responded, "No Sir", then apolgetically add, "But it is not his fault." Poor Thomas Lee never lived this comment down.

It was on a day much like today and in this pristine setting that these three men, Apostle Young, President Thatcher and Bishop Preston knelt together and Elder Young offered the dedicatory prayer. Though not recorded, he spoke with the spirit and he sanctified, dedicated, and blessed this land for the edification of the saints who would settle here and for their posterity for all time.

On that date August 29, 1878 there were no permanent settlers in the Valley. The Lander Road had been completed in 1858, twenty years before and emigrants still flowed through the Valley westward that summer along the road. Herds of horses, cattle and sheep were moving eastward along the same road to stock the ranches of central Wyoming.

George Gordon operated the Oneida Salt Works on Stump Creek but this was a seasonal activity and Mr Gordon and his workers left every fall only to return again in the spring.

The Welch Brothers, Ben, Joseph and John were trappers in the area and they made no claim to the land. They too were migratory.

The Saints of the Bear River Valley brought their excess stock here each summer to graze on the sweet grasses of the high mountain pastures as was the custom of the
Swiss people. And there were herdsmen with the stock who constructed rude shelters to protect them from the elements. They were called herdsmen as the term cowboy had not come into vogue.

Presiding Bishop Preston, a member of the group, was here to visit his herdsmen who were attending the tithing cattle herd of the church. These were the cows given as in-kind contribution for the tithe.

Word quickly spread abroad that the valley had been dedicated for colonization. As soon as spring broke in the early summer of 1879 and the passes were open the migration began. On June 10th that year six interrelated families from the Bear River Valley settled in the area that was to become known as Freedom. They chose this area because they felt there would be a market for their produce at the Caribou mining camp. These twenty-seven people were in the families of:

- William and Sarah Heap
- Abel Maroni and Cynthia Hunt
- John S, and Jay J. and Martha Rolph
- John Wilkes
- Frank Cross
- John and Hannah Hill

Following close on their heels that summer were five more families, mostly related came from Morgan, Utah. They settled along Stump Creek in an area later to be called Auburn. They were twenty-one souls consisting of the families of:

- Harmon Lehmberg
- James and Amanda Sibbett
- Dave and Mary Robertson
- William and Hyrum and Anna Simmons
- Jacob Grover

This made a total of 58 emigrant settlers in the upper and lower valleys that summer. The first child born of the settlers in the valley was on October 28, 1879 a boy to Anna Simmons. They named Theodore Simmons and a little girl, his cousin was born on December 19th to James and Amanda Sibbett and they called her “Labelle”.

The unexpected cold winter of 1879-80 was terrible to endure. These saints lived in log cabins with sod roofs and dirt floors. They hungered and much of their stock perished and yet they hung on. They were ordinary people with extraordinary perseverance.

The council of Twelve in Salt Lake City at the October Conference of the Church in 1879 sustained Moses Thatcher of the Cache Valley Stake, then 38 eight years old to be an Apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints replacing Orson Hyde who had died.
The Twelve then commissioned Apostle Moses Thatcher and Apostle Charles Coulson Rich of Paris, Idaho to organize the Saints of the Salt River Valley into its first Church unit. Apostle Rich in contrast to the young Apostle Thatcher was 71 years old and had been a member of the Twelve for 30 years or since January 1849.

The two Apostle in consort with Presiding Bishop Preston and members of the Presidency of the Bear Lake Stake arrived in August of 1880 and organized the Saints of the Upper Valley as a Branch of the Bear Lake Stake with 21 members. They called Charles Drake Cazier of Bennington, Idaho as the presiding Elder and directed he move to Salt River Valley to fulfill his assignment, which he honorably did.

It was at the organizational meeting that the impetuous Moses Thatcher spoke and said, “When God made the world he reserved the finest part and hid it among these mountains” It was also accredited to him saying, “This is Star Valley for it is truly the star of all Valleys.

We don’t know for sure that Moses Thatcher coined the new name. But we do know at that first meeting it was proposed the name be changed from Salt River Valley to Star Valley and the voting of those present was unanimous.

Thus the flood gates of immigration were opened and the pioneers flowed in. During the first decade as reported by the 1890 census there were 2,219 saints and sinners in Star Valley. The first LDS ward had been formed September 21, 1887 and by 1892 the Star Valley Stake came into being with seven wards. In 1997 there are two stakes with fifteen wards and 6,214 members.
THE ELKHORN ARCH

The town of Afton boasts the world’s largest elkhorn arch. Larger by far then those in the square at Jackson, Wyoming. It spans 75 feet across Washington Street (Highway 89) in the middle of downtown Afton. It has a clearance of eighteen feet to permit the largest of eighteen wheelers under it. The top of the arch is 24 feet tall. There are a total of 3011 antlers in the structure. The structure consists of one long arch over the street and two smaller walk-way arches. There are over fifteen tons of antlers in the construction.

The term “elk horn” is a misnomer. A horn is a permanent animal head feature, such as horns of a cow or sheep or goat. Whereas, elk, deer and moose, all of the red deer family, have antlers which are shed annually, generally in late winter.

The antlers are greatly prized in the orient for medicinal purposes and as an aphrodisiac. Antlers sold at the annual auction in Jackson sell for over ten dollars a pound. To duplicate this arch at today’s prices would cost over $300,000.00 for the antlers alone.

This Elkhorn Arch is tribute to the perseverance of Newell and Blanche Gardner. The late Newell Gardner was the local game warden and it was his vision to construct this arch. He and his wife Blanche collected and donated over half the antlers in these arches. At the persuasion of Newell and Blanche the balance were given by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department from antlers found at the National Elk Refuge and the Alpine feed grounds.

In 1956 the two side walk-way arches, designed by Newell and Blanche were first constructed. The town of Afton provided the sand, gravel and cement. Owens Miles and Bill England mixed and poured the concrete footings. Keith Robinson did the welding of the frame. The Chamber of Commerce bought the steel.

Further construction was halted temporarily until June of 1958 when the Wyoming Highway Department finally granted permission to span Highway 89. Volunteers worked that summer in the early mornings so as not to disturb the tourist traffic. Most of the volunteers went directly from the work site to to their place of employment.

It was truly a community effort. Don Wood Tractor Company provided a fork lift for all the overhead work. Newell and Blanche dedicated all their free time that summer to work on and supervise the project. Volunteers came from all over the valley. Orson Treloar was the mayor of Afton and the city fathers lent their support to the effort, and continue to this day to provide maintenance to the structure.

The arch stands as a testimony and a monument of civic pride to what a community can collectively accomplish once it sets its mind to do so.
BOILING KETTLE GEYSERS

At the lower west end of the upper valley of the Salt River are a series of seventy two sulphur geysers known to the early Rocky Mountain men as Boiling Kettles. The geysers are located in Section 23 of Township 22, range 119 west of the 6th prime meridian. This is approximately two and a half miles north of Auburn and located on the base of the Freedom Fault and the Hemmert fault line. The springs can be reached by using State Highway 238.

It was a prominent location in the mountain man era for hunting parties to meet. It is on high ground and visible from great distances. The site provide a good camping area with wood and water and pasture for horses. Warren Angus Ferris, a clerk for the American Fur Company first visited the geysers in 1832 and wrote the following narrative description:

"We found the springs situated in the middle of a small shallow stream, in the open level prairie. Rising from the middle of the brook, were seen seven or eight semi globular mounds self-formed by continual deposits of a calcareous nature, which time had hardened to the consistency of rock. Some were thirty or forty feet in circumference at the base, and seven or eight feet high. Each of them had more than one aperture (similar in appearance to the mouth of a jug) out of which water boils continually, and these generally, though not invariably, at the top of the mound. The water that boils over, deposits continually a greenish, slimy, foeted cement, externally above the orifices, by constant accretions of which the mounds are formed. The water in these springs was so hot, that we could not bear our fingers in it a moment, and a dense suffocating sulphurous vapour is constantly rising from them. In the bases of the mounds, there is also occasional cavities from which vapours or boiling water is continually emitted. Some of the mounds have long since exploded, and have been left dry by the water. They were hollow, and filled with shelving cavities not unlike honey-comb. These singular springs are known to the Rocky Mountain hunters by the name of Boiling Kettles, and are justly regarded as great curiosities."

The Indians held the springs in high regard for their many healing properties, the greatest of which is its sulphur content. The sulphur is brought to the surface by the hot water in a highly refined state and deposited on the ground where when it dries become a sulphur flour. It has been assayed as 94 percent pure sulphur. According to Ruth Hyde, a local historian, the Indians were observed smearing the damped sulphur flour on their bodies and letting it sun dry. This reportedly had a healing effect. The medicinal property of sulphur worked well on some types of exzema or skin rash or itch or bug bites or fungus and was deadly in killing body lice which was a common bane among the mountain men and Indians.

At one time in the early part of this century a commercial swimming pool was built over the major geyser and it was where many a Star Valleyite learned to swim. It has long since fallen into disrepair and is no longer available for public use.
THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
OF THE BAKER CABIN

This building would be considered unique if only for its architectural style and superb craftsmanship. The structure has endured for 109 years, through two difficult moves and hard abusive use. The strength of the tight fitting dovetail joints, which is a sign of a master carpenter, withstood the skidding of almost two miles by a 12-horse team and then when the building was over 100 years old and after years of neglected maintenance was loaded on a semi truck and moved to this location and still remained structurally sound.

What is even more astounding is the master builder of this house was a 32-year old wife and mother of seven children at that time, who having learned the building trades from her contractor father, with the aid of her 12-year old daughter built this home in the summer of 1889. An act almost unprecedented in those days or even now.

One needs to appreciate her carpentry skills not only in the dovetailing and the squaring of the hand-hewn logs which in itself shows great artistry, but, also the loving meticulous care given to parts not readily discernible to the naked eye such as the floor and roof joists and chimney.

Historically this building is the oldest surviving home in the valley and was the first in the lower valley to have a wooden floor and a shingled roof. Prior to this construction the earliest pioneers lived in squat, rough-hewn, 12 x 14 cabins with dirt floors, sod roofs and oiled paper windows. Those primitive dwellings have long since deteriorated and returned to dust. This home demonstrates the ability of those early residents to utilize available natural resource materials in the improvement of their daily lives.

The historical significance of this place is not its unique construction or that it is a monument to its builder or to the Baker family. Rather it epitomizes the pioneer life style of those early settlers which was nurtured and cultivated within these walls. Our ancestors were in similar circumstances. In these two rooms the family grew and found sanctuary. Children were born and reared. The drama of life and death was played out. The family worked and prayed together and planned for a better future. They were responsible, God-fearing citizens.

The pioneers without the finer amenities of life such as indoor plumbing, water, central heating or electricity never considered themselves for a moment to be underprivileged or deprived or poor or sacrificing. Rather they considered themselves richly blessed and were eternally grateful for what they had.

The essence or spirit that emanates from this abode emits the pioneer spirit which serves as an example and a shrine to us of the indomitable will of these early valley people which is our heritage and duty to emulate.  

Jermy B. Wight
THE BUILDING’S HISTORY
by
Dennis Baker*
Alonzo Baker and his eldest son Lonny, then age ten, were absent in the spring of 1889 working in Montana. The family was living on the homestead here in Etna in a tent and an overturned wagon box. Anna Eliza was left alone with six children, the youngest but a baby. Wife Anna Eliza, my grandmother, having spent the previous winter under these primitive circumstances wanted a house. She had the knowledge and the skill to build a house and most importantly she had the will and determination. She hauled the stone for the foundation from the east side of the valley. Probably from Prater Canyon and selected the logs from the area around what is now the Star Valley Ranch. She carefully square-hewn the logs to the proper size and thickness. Uniform poles were used for the joists in the floor and ceiling. Note the log connections at the corners. It is our understanding that this was the first house in the lower valley with a shingled roof. Dirt roofs were common place. The Turners had recently opened a shingle mill on Willow Creek and the shingle probably came from there. Because of her construction methods this house has stood the test of time.

This house was originally constructed in the NE quadrant of Section 23 about two and a half miles south and a quarter mile west of Etna in 1889. The following year, 1890, the family acquired additional land and moved the house with a six span of horses approximately two miles north to the new location where it stood for the next 102 years.

Anna Eliza died in 1899 and Alonzo remarried in 1902 and the family continued to live in the house until about 1912 when Alonzo sold out. During the next twenty-five years the following subsequent owners and families lived in the house, although not necessarily in this order; Reynold Robinson, Rob Erickson, Roy Keeler, Kenneth Clinger, Cecil Skinner (twice) W. Schofield and Tol Chapman. Several children were born in this house, many are still living. Some are still living here in Star Valley. Some time about the beginning of War War II the owner of the property converted the building into a combination grainery and chicken coop and then the house became another farm utility building.

In 1991 the family learned the owner was willing to part with the building and through negotiations we were able to obtain ownership. Wayne Baker jacked the building up and JP Robinson of Jackknife Trucking moved the building without cost to this site on property owned by Lloyd Baker which had been filled-in by Lincoln County. Members of the family donated money and labor to restore the building to its original condition. In 1993 the site and the building were deeded to the Star Valley Historical Society to be listed on the National Registry. After three more years of work by the fine people of the Valley, the Historical Society, the family and Camp Eliza of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers the building is to be dedicated this date.

* Dennis A. Baker is the son of Lonny Baker and the grandson of Alonzo and Anna Eliza Baker.
THE BAKER FAMILY
(A SHORT HISTORY)
by Elcie Walker*

Anna Eliza Telford was born August 5, 1856 at Bountiful, Utah. She was the third child of the ten children of Sarah Matilda Coltrin and John Dodds Telford. The Telford and the Coltrin families suffered the persecutions of Nauvoo, Illinois and migrated across the plains with Brigham Young. Sarah and John married in Bountiful and resided there eight years before moving to Cache Valley, settling in Richmond, Utah. This is where Anna Eliza grew to womanhood. John Telford was an experienced builder having worked on bridges, mills and the likes. From her father Anna Eliza gained her construction knowledge and carpentry skills.

Alonzo Baker was born June 21, 1854 at St Joseph, Missouri. He was the twentieth child of the twenty-one children of Harriet Batt and William Simmons Baker. He moved to Richmond and on January 29, 1876 when he was twenty-one married the nineteen year old Anna Eliza. To this union was born twelve children.

In 1886, as work was scarce in Cache Valley, Alonzo and his brother Jim found work in Montana building a railroad bed. The construction camp had a male cook who was not the best and Alonzo bragged about his wife's good cooking. The company lent Alonzo a wagon and directed him to go get her and bring the family back to Montana. The workers then enjoyed her cooking very much.

While in Montana rumors were going around that the government was opening up new homestead land in Wyoming at the cost of $60.00 for 160 acres. Both Alonzo and brother Jim went back to Richmond and sold their homes and in May of 1888 moved to Star Valley in an area of Freedom, Wyoming which later was renamed Etna.

At the beginning of the migration Alonzo and Anna had six children and Anna was five months pregnant. Both Alonzo and Jim had each a covered wagon. Alonzo and Anna had two horses, three cows and some chickens in a cage which hung on the back of the wagon. At night the chickens would be let out of the cage to search for food. William Alonzo, the eldest son, called Lonny, walked behind and drove the cattle. At one place in the trek the wagon train had to traverse a steep hill. Lonny was put in the box of the wagon to drive the team and Anna Eliza and her children pulled ropes attached to the wagon to keep it from overturning. It was Anna Eliza's decision to have her son drive the wagon. It was her rationale that should the wagon turn over and the driver is killed the family could not survive in the wilderness without an adult male.

The family settled on the NE quarter of section 23 south of Etna and lived in a tent and an overturned wagon box that summer of '88 and the winter of '88-89. The seventh child was born there that September. This was a difficult time for Anna Eliza who remembered the comfortable home she had given up in Richmond.

In the spring of 1889, while the snow was still on the ground, very much in need of cash, Alonzo and Jim contracted with the railroad to build a section the road bed near
Deer Lodge, Montana. Alonzo and Jim left their families in Wyoming and taking Lonny with them as a water boy went to work. When they had gone Anna Eliza was determined to build a house. One winter in the tent was enough. With the help of her twelve year old daughter May she cut and hauled the logs from the east side of the valley and hauled the stones for the foundation from the canyon and she built the house that you see here that summer. Note it also had a wood floor. In her lifetime Anna did carpentry work for others and also built furniture.

In 1890 Alonzo not wanting to go back to Montana went to the Wayan area to learn the art of cheese making. (Probably from the Kunz Brothers, recent emigrants from Switzerland). The Bakers then made cheese at their home. First in a copper boiler and later in a wooden vat. As they expanded they took in cows from neighbors on share basis to have enough milk available. This operation lasted a dozen years.

Brother Jim decided to move to Swan Valley, Idaho and Alonzo bought Jim's quarter section plus an additional quarter section tripling the size of the family's farm land south and east of Etna. Thus in 1890 this house was skidded by horses north for almost two miles on to the new land and used as a dwelling by the family.

Anna Eliza worked hard all her life and was pregnant most of her adult years. She died on March 25, 1899 in the dead of winter, in this house, at the age of 42 years, giving birth to her twelfth child. Her obituary tells she was mourned by many family members and friends. There were more than 200 people in thirty-five sleighs at the cemetery in Glenco (Thayne) for the burial. Her grave was dedicated by Bishop Low.

Her daughter May preceded her in death. May died at the age of fourteen in Logan, Utah in 1891 of diptheria while attending school. Another baby had also died earlier. Thus in 1899 the two oldest daughter ages 16 and 19 were left to care for the new baby and the others. They remembered their mother scrubbed the floor every day and scoured and burnished the floor with sand. This became part of their daily routine.

The daughters did the family shopping in Afton, Wyoming. This was a 50-60 mile ride and they made the round trip by wagon in one day arriving home after dark. Daughter Vinnie tells of coming by Strawberry Canyon at night and having cougars scream at the horses. After that she said she would get the horses running as they approached the canyon.

One year in mid-winter Alonzo and another man went to Montpelier, Idaho on homemade skis and carried back a badly needed sack of flour. The homemade skis were formed by soaking wood slats in a tub of water and bending them to shape.

Alonzo Baker on April 9, 1902, at the age of 48, married Louisa Kathrina Speidel in the Salt lake City Temple. From this union six more children were born, three of which were born in this house. Alonzo died in his 62nd year at Bell, California.

*Elcie Baker Walker is the daughter of William Alonzo (Lonny) Baker and the granddaughter of Alonzo and Anna Eliza Baker.
SALT WORKS

Under the surface of the Salt river valley at a depth of about five hundred feet is a bed of salt. A residue of an ancient lake formed during the Pliocene age of the Tertiary Period of time. This salt layer is overburdened with glacial till and alluvial fan deposits laid down over a long period of during the several ice ages that formed these drainages and valleys.

The salt beds are closest to the surface on the western side of the valley. A natural phenomenon occurs when a spring runs subterraneously over the salt bed and then surfaces causing a salt brine to flow along the water’s course. When this brine flows over rock outcroppings it crystalizes and forms salt deposits on the rocks. After the crystals dry the salt can then be broken off the rocks in clumps and gathered.

This occurs in at least four different places in the immediate area in sufficient quantity to have at one time or another been processed for commercial use. Such a salt field is located on Stump Creek, on Tygee Creek, at the Hall’s Ranch on Crow Creek and on Salt Creek, a tributary of Thomas Fork just south of the Salt River Summit on Highway 89.

The Native Americans utilized this salt since time immemorial. Osborne Russell in his book, “The Journal of a Trapper,” and also Warren A. Ferris in his book “Life in the Rocky Mountains,” both report of gathering salt at Stump Creek, as mountain men, for culinary purposes in the early 1830’s. The pioneer diaries of the westward bound emigrants report of obtaining salt at this location.

In the early 1860’s gold was discovered in Montana and Northern Idaho which made the commercial exploitation of this salt feasible. Gold and silver were separated from the ore rock by a method called the Patio Process using salt and mercury. There was a demand created for salt. To meet this demand two entrepreneurs, John H. Stump and Benjamin Franklin White, opened the Oneida Salt Works on what is now called Stump Creek, in 1866. This location at that time was located in Oneida County, Idaho Territory, from whence the name comes. J.H. Stump went on to become prominent in the Idaho Legislature and later B.F. White moved to Montana and became that state’s Governor.

Forrest W. Kennington in his book, “A History of Star Valley, Formerly Salt River Valley,” best describes the processing of the salt brine. He writes; “The methods of processing the salt brine was straightforward. Large sheet iron pans, with tongue and groove (lumber) side, were constructed on the site. They were set over fires burning in ovens constructed of native stone. The brine was then channeled through split log flumes from the springs to the pans. The brine was heated and stirred with wooden hoes until all the moisture has evaporated leaving only salt. The salt was then shoveled out and placed in a storage shed. More brine was run through the pipes and the process as repeated.”
The salt was transported by oxen in triple trailer wagons north up the Lander Trail to Gray's Lake and then north to Taylor's bridge across the Snake River and on the Salt road to the Montana gold fields. This was a seasonal operation and no permanent settlement was made at this location.

Barzilla W. Clark wrote the following in the “Snake River Echoes, A quarterly of Idaho History” Volume 14, No. 3, Autumn 1985;

“Dr F.V. Hayden tells of meeting Mr. Stump at Soda Springs (Idaho) in 1871, and in an interview got the following data: In 1881 the daily output was 6,000 pounds, but the flow of the spring would yield four times that amount; the price was $30.00 a ton at the works in 1871, though the first price, in 1866, had been five cents per pound. The output had been, for 1866, 100,000 pounds; for 1867, 300,000 pounds; for 1868, 500,000 pounds; for 1869, 650,000 pounds; for 1870, 750,000 pounds; for 1871, 850,000 pounds. An analysis of the salt by A. Snowden Piggot, M.D., showed, Chloride of sodium, 97.79 percent; Sulfate of soda, 1.54 percent; Sulfate of magnesia, a trace.”

Mrs. Clark goes on to explain the production of salt continued to increase until it reached a million pound per annum by the mid 1870’s making the mine owners rich men. However like most good things the prosperity came to an end with the discovery of a new and cheaper process for reclaiming of metal from ore. This was the use of cyanide. As the Montana mines gradually changed to the new process the demand for salt diminished and by the early 1880’s it was no longer profitable to process the salt and Oneida Salt Works closed. The resource was not depleted and still remains intact today.
OLD ROCK CHURCH

In Auburn, Wyoming, in the midst of the community park, is an imposing structure referred to as the Old Rock Church. It has a distinguished, solid aura about it and optimizes the stalwartness of the early pioneers.

Auburn was settled in the summer of 1879 by a group of Mormon pioneers. At first they held services in the homes of the members. As they grew in numbers they soon constructed a log building to use as a meeting house. In 1888 the progressive founding fathers established the town site and laid out the city blocks of the town of Auburn. The community met and the decision was reached that a new meeting house is what was needed to replace the log cabin and set off their new town. The new meeting house would be of stone and would serve community social needs and ecclesiastical purposes.

Following the established Mormon organizational structure a three man committee was appointed. Joseph Holbook was to supervise the construction of the building assisted by Heber Smith and George Walton. It was to be a volunteer project and the whole of the community participated. A great deal of the credit is given to Henry J. Harrison and his two sons, Henry H. and Will Harrison, who were masons and laid the rock for the building.

This project was not an easy task and fully utilized the energy of the community that fall and winter of 1888 and 1889. The rock was quarried at Stump Creek Canyon and hauled to the town by wagon and stone boats where it was piled and sorted to size. They crushed native lime stone and kilned it on Stump Creek to provide the mortar for the joints. The nearest lumber mill was at Gray’s lake and the selected wood materials were hauled the thirty miles down the Lander trail by wagons to the site in Auburn. When they were finished eight months later, all with volunteer labor, they had a thirty feet by fifty feet stone building which was the center of civic pride. At that time it was the largest building ever erected in the valley.

It served the community well for the next forty years. The congregation met regularly in the church. It was used for community dances and plays and parties. The building was even used as a sanctuary during the Indian scare of 1895. It was reported that LeRoy Parker aka Butch Cassidy had attended dances there. Weddings were performed and babies blessed. There is a story that bootleggers once hid contraband whiskey under the speaker’s platform to keep the sheriff from finding it. That tale can not be substantiated.

A new meeting hall was built in 1929 and the Old Rock Church was relegated to the status of an annex. The building fell in disrepair and eventually abandoned, used only for occasional storage. A group of historically minded citizens became concerned about this local treasure. After negotiations the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints graciously deeded the building and the property on which it stands to the Star

The Star Valley Historical Society, with the community behind it, restored the Old Rock Church as nearly as possible to its original configuration. In January 1986 the building was accepted for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Old Rock Church is currently being put to use by the Historical Theater Group of the Star Valley Historical Society and produces original historical plays and music on Friday and Saturday evenings during most weekends of the summer months. All of the productions are written, directed and performed by volunteers of the community, in the spirit of those early pioneers. Revenue from the performances is used for the insurance and maintenance and repair of the building.
STAR VALLEY AVIATION

Star Valley has been a center for small aircraft manufacturing for six decades. Rueul Call, pioneer aviator and plane designer developed the "CallAir" plane for mountain flying in the year 1937, at facilities south of Afton on Highway 89, adjacent to the Afton airport. The Call Aircraft Company operated for twenty three years and developed and manufacture six different aircraft and aviation related products at its Afton plant. Famous among then was the ag-plane used for commercial spraying.

The company was sold to a Texas Ag-operator Jeff Magnus in 1960. Rueul Call went on to develop Maverik Stores Inc., which he sold to his sons and went on to develop Trailside Country Stores. Rueul retained an interest in aviation and in 1994 built and dedicated the CallAir Museum located south of Afton on Highway 89.

Jeff Mangnum shortly sold the airplane manufacturing plant to Doyle Child and Ted Frome who formed the Intermountain Manufacturing Company (Imco). Herb Andersen of Imco redesigned the CallAir ag-plane and it was a very successful plane with several hundred units sold.

In 1967 Aero-commander, a division of North American Rockwell purchased the company and most of the operation was moved to Albany, Georgia in 1968.

In 1970 Herb Andersen opened Aerotec, Inc., as a small aircraft repair facility at the Afton plant. Areotec Inc., reached an agreement with Curtis Pitts of Homestead, Florida to manufacture a small aerobatic airplane. A partnership was formed between Doyle Child and Curtis Pitts and production of the "Pitts" bi-plane began. Child took over full ownership of the company in 1976.

In 1982 the company was sold to Frank Christensen of Christen Industries. At the time Christen Industries was building a kit airplane similiar to the Pitts and that operation was consolidated at the Afton plant as the "Eagle" kit.

1987 the "Husky", a light utility aircraft was added to the Christen line of the Pitts and Eagle models. A British businessman Malcolm White purchased the company in 1991 and the productions of the three models, the Husky, Pitts and Eagle continued under the new name of Aviat Inc.

The Aviat operation was again sold in 1996. This time to Stuart Horn and currently continues to operate under the name Aviat Aircraft Inc. Mr. Horn has recently developed the S2C super Pitts model for aerobatic competition.

Over the years more than two thousand aircraft have been built at the Afton plant under auspices of the several owners.
THE LANDER TRAIL

The first wagons crossed the continental divide at South Pass in 1836. However, the first wagons did not reach Oregon until 1843. With a route established to the west coast people came by the thousands, including the Mormons in 1847. The original road led from South Pass to Fort Bridger and then to Cokeville, Wyoming and to Montpelier, Idaho and to Soda Springs and on to Fort Hall, Idaho before proceeding westward to Oregon and California.

This original route known as the Oregon Trail or California Trail soon became crowded, over-grazed and generally unacceptable. By the mid 1850s the public was clamoring for the Federal Government to do something to improve conditions for the travelers. Money was finally appropriated in 1857 by the Congress.

In 1857 the United States Department of the Interior hired Frederick W. Lander, an engineer of Salem, Massachusetts to locate a new route. That year 1857 the Utah War with the Mormons was going on and the stated congressional desire was to establish a new road to avoid the Salt Lake Valley in general and the Mormons in particular.

Lander and his small engineer group surveyed this area in the summer of 1857 and proposed a road from South Pass to Big Piney and hence up Piney creek to Labarge creek and then over Commissary Ridge to the Smith Fork river. From there his road would go over to Salt river and enter Star Valley at the south end and then to Auburn where it would leave the valley up Stump creek and on over to Wayan, Idaho and then to Fort Hall, Idaho.

The advantages of the new road were; it was shorter by at least seven days and there was fuel, game and good water. The disadvantage was they had to climb steeply over 9,600 ft high mountain passes. The Utah War was over by the summer of 1858 so Mr. Lander hired Mormon emigrant labor from Salt Lake City to do the labor on the new road. The work was accomplished by September of that year and the road was opened to traffic.

The following year 1859, the first full year of operations, over 13,000 people and 79,000 head of stock crossed over the new route. From that time on the cut-off became the principal road west and was officially named the Pacific Wagon Road but called the Lander Cut-off by those who used it.

Following the westward migration the road was used as a stock trail to bring sheep, cattle and horses from the coastal states to stock the vast cattle and sheep ranches of central and eastern Wyoming in the 1880s. Until the mass production of the automobile and improvements of the highways the Lander cut-off was used by the locals to go back and forth to the Green river country. The last covered wagon observed on the Lander cut-off was in 1912.