

The
OASIS WARD

A UTAH COMMUNITY OF FAITH,
HARD WORK, AND PERSEVERANCE

CORDELL SKEEM CROPPER

THE OASIS WARD: A UTAH COMMUNITY OF FAITH,
HARD WORK, AND PERSEVERANCE

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Adobe building painting was done by LaVean Gillen. It is displayed in the Deseret-Oasis Ward meetinghouse. The photo of the painting was made by Gene & Penny Stanworth

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EPIGRAPH

“Our prospects for becoming a large and wealthy settlement and eventually a city are beyond a doubt excellent.”

—John H. Henning 1884

“Oasis was a much bigger place in my childhood than it is today. Deseret didn’t seem to flourish like Oasis did. Delta was just a spot on the railroad.”

—Evelyn Skeem Hawley 1906-1993

“Deseret, Hinckley and Oasis were settled about fifty years before Delta. It started out as a lone box-car. “There was a railroad switch or siding [there]. It was named “Aiken,” meaning near to Oasis.”

—Waiora B. Wallace and Sebrina C. Ekins

Milestones, 620, 624

DEDICATION

For Reed Ervin Skeem

CONTENTS

Epigraph	iii
Dedication.....	v
Preface.....	ix
Lawrence Cropper—Oasis Resident and Ward Member	1
Oasis: Name and History	5
Oasis Ward: Creation.....	13
The Adobe Building.....	16
Oasis Ward Bishops & Their Wives.....	24
Hard Times	72
Good Times.....	107
Warehouse Remodeled: The Red-brick Building	131
Meetings and Auxiliaries	148
Missionaries from Oasis	205
Oasis Servicemen and Patriotism	222
Oasis Boundaries	239
Population: Rise & Fall	246
Early Views	248
Oasis Businesses and Services	257
Early Houses	349
Oasis Cemetery	361
Why Delta and Not Oasis?	363

Town Rivalry 366

Drainage371

Flowing Wells 1886–2023.....375

Oasis Ward Combined with Deseret379

Conclusion..... 383

Appendix..... 390

Indigenous Inhabitants..... 403

The Great Stone Face..... 407

Oasis Abstracts410

Former Residents412

Selected Bibliography418

Image Index..... 421

Acknowledgments 422

About the Author..... 425

Online Images 426

PREFACE

Stories were important in my Oasis years. Dad loved to talk about his family, school days, cars, and early experiences. I enjoyed hearing him tell of Halloween pranks, playing his cornet in the Millard Academy Band, becoming a barber, catching fish, etc. My surrogate mother, Auntie Evelyn, spoke about riding horses on her parents' farm in Oasis, playing baseball with cousins to make their own fun, getting lost in the tall brush as a little girl walking home from school, being baptized in the Sevier River, etc. The anecdotes they and other told became part of my DNA and extended to my hometown.

Oasis, Utah, was my permanent address from 1944 to 1973. This little, off-the-beaten-path community in west-central Utah is where I'm from. I used to joke that the population of Oasis was about 200 souls—counting “inactives;” meaning Church members who didn't attend. My point was the town was tiny and mostly all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, aka Mormons. It is a fact that Oasis is small; it never exceeded 400 in population. In area it is much bigger—or not—see Oasis Boundaries below. It is also true that most Oasisites are Mormons, but not all. There have always been a few “gentiles” among the saints.

As a small boy in the late 1940s, I was well acquainted with two businesses: the Oasis Seed Plant and the L.D. Day Meats, Merchandise, and Mercantile. My father was the “boss” at the plant. I rode my tricycle all through the warehouse passing the tall stacks of bagged alfalfa seed. The Day’s store is where my mother sent me on small errands with instructions, “Have them put it on our bill.” Most the time, I ran across our vacant lot and crossed the never-busy street to get there—a distance of about 100 yards.

On the periphery, I was aware of the post office, the bee house, and the Union Pacific Railroad—the tracks were only fifty yards from our home and rattled our house whenever a train passed. The post office is where I mailed my letters to Santa Claus. The railroad was where my uncles worked.

I also knew church was important. Every Sunday we drove about a mile to get to an old dull adobe building. We climbed the wooden stairs, and sat for hours-on-end on the hard slated benches. It was cold in the winter and unbearably hot in the summer.

My understanding of Oasis expanded over time. At age 8 or so I learned that the town had once had a bank, a railroad station, a confectionary, and a hotel. The bank’s foundation was right by the post office. It was a great place to look for broken floor tile. The graveled mound by the tracks, where I caught the school bus for Delta, was the site of the Oasis train depot. The big unpainted wooden house opposite the tracks had been a hotel. Just down the road from it were the ruins of a building with a sign which read “confectionery.” I wondered what that was.

In my teen years, I came to understand that Oasis had been even bigger. It was, at one time, the commercial center for the entire county. Many of the business I learned about had simply vanished without a trace. I was struck that there had been a saloon. Really?

A bar in this devout Mormon town?! It seemed incongruous with the Church's stance against alcohol.

Much later, while doing the research for this book, I discovered that in an earlier day Oasis boasted of not one, but three hotels, a drug store, an electric power plant, at least two lumberyards, two butcher shops, a ZCMI store plus two others, barbershops, two restaurants, a modern elementary school with a swimming pool and electricity, two creameries, a short-lived auto dealership, and yes, a saloon.

The Church and the community were essentially the same thing in rural Utah when Oasis flourished. Although never incorporated, the town functioned well without the formal trappings of local government. Interestingly, the term "ward," a local congregation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was first used by the Church in Nauvoo, Illinois, and defined a political subdivision in the 1840s. In this history, "ward" refers both to the religious group and the entire community. For example, an Oasis marine, killed in action during World War II, stipulated in his will that his farm should go to Oasis. Since the community was unincorporated, it became the "ward farm." The brethren volunteered in its operation. Proceeds went to support Oasis missionaries and church budgets.

Oasis, and its parent Deseret, began as farming communities. What I hadn't realized, until recently, is how lucrative this venture had been. In my newspaper search, I found that by the 1920s, it was not unusual for some area farmers to make enough money in one seed crop to pay off their farms. Farming, stock and cattle were and remain important—horses less so.

A word about the ward's buildings. The adobe church was an important place of worship for my family, my friends, and me. Dedicated in 1908 by Elder David O. McKay, it served as the ward

meetinghouse for nearly 50 years. In the summer of 1954, a special meeting was held to address serious structural problems. Three options were presented: 1) build a new ward meetinghouse, 2) add onto the old one, 3) join with another ward, possibly Deseret. The decision to go forward with a labor-intensive, expensive remodel was a demonstration of great faith. Work began in earnest in the fall of 1955. The red-brick building was completed in 1956 and dedicated by Elder Harold B. Lee in January 1957. This new ward-house encompassed the old one, converting it into the cultural hall. After the flood of 1983, it served not only the Oasis Ward, but the wards from Deseret and Hinckley as well.

Life in Pahvant Valley has been both good and bad. Floods, economic depressions, and wars were among the challenges that beset Deseret and Oasis in the early years. Meeting these trials with faith, hard work, and perseverance was typical for rural Utah communities in the post-Brigham Young era. On the good side, Oasis folks enjoyed life. In the era before TV, they celebrated with dinners, plays, bazaars, quilting bees, and other get-togethers.

Many early settlements are now ghost towns, or what the government dubs Census Designated Places (CDPs), but they represent a significant, if largely forgotten part, of this nation's growth in the latter 19th and early 20th centuries. In a real sense, Oasis can be seen as a microcosm of similar villages throughout the West, particularly in the so-called Mormon Corridor. These small communities were once thriving locales that have all but disappeared in an era of mega-farms, internet shopping, and large box stores.

Within these pages, I have related accounts from pioneer time to present day. There's the miracle of an Oasis missionary who was shot but uninjured while serving in 1913. A humorous tale, published in a 1954 issue of the *Deseret News*, reports on a wild deer

making a visit during a Sunday service. In the Oasis Missionary section, I divulge details of the young couple called by a Church president in 1981 to perform an apocalyptic service at Adam-ondi-Ahman. There are fun stories about selling beer, trapping gophers, and catching wild mustangs. This history also relates spiritual experiences: a blind eye restored to sight through a priesthood blessing; a ward uniting in faith to construct not one, but two chapels; a people surviving and thriving by uniting together.

I was excited to discover pictorial evidence of Oasis at its zenith. These were of things I had never seen: the windmill, water tank, hotel, freighters, stores, etc. Are there more? I am indebted to many who furnished photos. My favorites are the Oasis Brass Band and Jerold Bishop's watercolor paintings. I also enjoy the collections of missionary photos, and former residents. Not all the images are in this book. Over three hundred additional pictures can be found online at Oasis Ward Picture History or by scanning the QR code below.

This book seeks to give voice to those who are frequently overlooked by historians. It is not my work alone. A former Oasis Ward bishop, an Oasis Ward Relief Society president, and many others helped in its creation. Without contributing friends in Oasis and elsewhere, the result would have been poor indeed. It is much more than the ruminations of a single author.



Today Oasis has almost disappeared—swallowed up by the US Census bureaucracy. The church was sold and became a private home. The Oasis Ward I attended no longer exists—it was combined with the Deseret Ward over thirty years ago. Yet, good

people still live in Oasis. Its citizens continue building productive lives. There are new homes, a modern water and gas system, and a sense of community. Church members there remain loyal to the Savior and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

—CORDELL SKEEM CROPPER

MAP ON RIGHT:

“Oasis is 155 miles by rail from Salt Lake City and nearly thirty-five miles northwest of Fillmore. It is the shipping point for the three wards lying adjacent and also for the Fish Springs mines, sheep camp, and the whole surrounding country so far as people are living or camping on its desolate and scourged surface.” —1900¹

Arrow pointing to Oasis on the Map

¹ Andrew Jensen, “A Veritable Oasis in the Desert” Church Historical Report 1900: Oasis Ward Manuscript History and Historical Reports, 1890-1983,” (hereafter Manuscript History), 25, Author/Creator: Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake, Microfilm, Call Number LR 6370-2.



MAP FOUND AT UTAH MAP—BING IMAGES (MAY 2023)

LAWRENCE CROPPER— OASIS RESIDENT AND WARD MEMBER

In his later years, my father, Lawrence Cropper, liked to eat his breakfast mush while looking out the dining room window of his home in Oasis. He could see the east mountain range some twenty miles away. There is plenty of open space in Oasis, and the view is unencumbered. Most homes are separated from each other by fields or open desert. From his breakfast nook, Dad could watch the sun slowly peak up over the distant blue mountain and send its rays across the Pahvant Valley of central-western Utah.

About a mile from our home is the Oasis Cemetery. Without getting up, Dad could see its outline from his breakfast table. Often, when I visited, he'd remark, "Mother is buried over there under that little pine tree." Somehow, he found solace knowing that she was there and that he could see that tree from where he ate.

Dad always insisted that when asked where I was from, I was to respond, "I'm from Oasis." I grew up in Oasis. It was my home and permanent address from 1944 until I moved to Idaho in 1973. He didn't want me to say that I was from Delta, even though it's the biggest town by far. (Population of Delta in 2020 was 6,622; Oasis

was 75 or 29 or maybe 250—depending on the boundaries. See “Oasis Boundaries” in this work for clarification). We both worked in Delta and that is where I attended school—elementary through secondary. Besides, lots of folks these days know where Delta is, but only a few know about Oasis.

I’m not entirely sure why he favored Oasis; I never asked him. Reflecting on it now, I suppose Dad had his reasons for instructing me to tell others I was from Oasis. Let me share four.



Inside Oasis Seed Plant. Lawrence Cropper weighing in, Howard Roundy checking accounts. 1949.” Photo Josephine B. Walker, Milestones of Millard: A Century of History of Millard County 1851-1951, (Art City Publishing Co.), 471

First: Dad liked Oasis because he spent the majority of his working life there. In 1939, at the age of thirty-seven, he began managing the Oasis Seed Plant. He faithfully served the area's farmers for nineteen years. Every morning he'd cross over the ditch and railroad tracks as he walked to work. He was the boss of a small crew of men who cleaned, bagged, and stored the farmers' alfalfa seed. In addition, it was Dad's responsibility to examine their product for any extraneous weed seed and give them a price for the "green gold" they produced.

Second: The only house he ever owned was in Oasis. In 1944, he and his wife Edna relocated from a leased farm in Hinckley to Oasis. He wanted to be closer to his work and by that time they had become members of the Oasis Ward. They bought a home less than a hundred yards from the railroad tracks, which ran through the middle of the town. It was an old place, but he and Mother fixed it up. In the 1950s, it was one of the best houses in town, with beautiful flowers, a nice lawn, good furnishings, central heat, and a telephone. We got used to the noise of the passing trains.

Third: It was in Oasis where Dad started to diligently serve in the Church. In his boyhood ward in Hinckley, he had few opportunities—boys at that time didn't pass the sacrament. But when he moved his membership to the Oasis Ward in 1939, things changed. Quoting from his history,

Dad [Leigh Richmond Cropper Jr.] told the bishop [Lars Hansen] in Oasis to put me to work. Well, a member of the bishopric got on one side of me and one on the other and said, "You're going to be the superintendent of the Sunday school."

I said, "Oh Judas, I can't do that!"

“Yeah, yeah,” they said, “you can do it.”

I worried quite a bit about it, but when I got into it I liked it.”²

Subsequently, he served as first counselor to Bishop Peter H. Peterson and eventually as bishop of the Oasis Ward. He then spent another six years representing Oasis as a high councilor in the Deseret Stake.

Number four: His wife, Edna, was born and raised in Oasis. Her parents, six siblings, and their families all lived there. Dad blended in well with them and they accepted him as one of their own. It was in Oasis that he raised me—his only child. We contributed to the Oasis Ward and community.ⁱ

This little unincorporated central-western Utah farming town became dear to his heart. He could have been buried next to his first wife and their baby son in Hinckley, but he chose the Oasis Cemetery instead.

I believe these are the main reasons Dad told me to answer any question about my origins with, “Tell them you’re from Oasis.”

² Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, “Autobiography under Church Service,” <https://www.FamilySearch.org/memories> (FSM).

OASIS: NAME AND HISTORY

asis is located about six miles south of Delta—now the acknowledged hub of West Millard County. In 1944, when I was born, Oasis was a town of about 200. All but one or two of them were members of the Church. Oasis had been a bustling metropolis and the main railroad shipping point in Millard County, but it was very much past its heyday when I arrived.

In her history of Oasis published in *Milestones of Millard*³, Betsy Skeem writes, “The early history of the settlement of Oasis is the same as Deseret. In 1860, forty men came with their teams from Fillmore to make a dam on the Sevier River [in order to farm]. Some of them were located on the east side of the river and this area became known as Oasis. It is an outgrowth of the Deseret Ward.”

There is a discrepancy regarding how Oasis got its name: either John Styler named it, or the Utah Central Railroad Company, or

3 Betsy Skeem, “History of Oasis,” in *Milestones of Millard: A Century of History of Millard County 1851-1951*, Stella Day and Sebrina C. Ekins, (Art City Publishing Co., 1951), 461.

both. Evidently, “Oasis” had a better ring to it than the original “Deseret Station.”⁴



*Hand-Operated Railroad Car—The sign on the railroad handcar reads “Union Pacific.” Those pictured are from Oasis: Axel Thompson, Peter A. Petersen, Nephi Petersen, Christian Thompson c.1880—
Photo from FamilySearch, Peter August Petersen KWZZ-VL8*

Skeem explains, “In 1878–79 the Utah Central [later Southern] Railroad Company extended the track from Salt Lake City to Milford, Utah. A railroad station was built on the west side of the track that ran near this settlement and it was called Oasis. The

4 Leo Edward Lyman, and Linda King Newell, *A History of Millard County* (PDF). Utah Centennial County History Series. Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society. ISBN 0-913738-38-7, 170.

railroad was later extended to Los Angeles and is the main line of the Union Pacific system.”⁵

According to Ida Styler, the origin of Oasis’ name is not in dispute. She maintains that John Styler (1855-1939), a Swiss immigrant and the first bishop of the Oasis Ward, gave the name “Oasis” to the area. “[John’s] mother died August 21, 1871, in Oak City, when John was just fourteen. Shortly after this, he took up land east of the Sevier River in what is now the town of Oasis. He being one of the first, he planted trees, helped build a canal, and he named the town Oasis... [John] named [it] Oasis on account of the many beautiful trees forming a green spot in the desert.”⁶ Dan Valentine, a veteran Utah newspaper columnist, agrees and adds, “When [John] first arrived at the site of the present community, there was nothing but desolation—greasewood and rabbit brush. But John Styler had a dream. So he planted cottonwood trees along irrigation ditches... and his dream came true—an Oasis in the desert!”⁷

Whatever the name’s origin, Andrew Jensen recorded in 1900, “Oasis is known for its beautiful shade trees which together with many orchards give the place the appearance of a veritable oasis in the desert.”⁸

[The settlement] became known as Oasis by 1885. In 1860, a small dam near Deseret provided all the irrigation water. This first dam failed as did others. Then in 1886, the Oasis

5 Skeem, *Milestones*, 461.

6 Ila Styler Messenger, “History of John Styler,” John Styler KW89-FPF, FSM.

7 Dan Valentine Jr., “Nothing Serious,” Salt Lake Tribune, March 28, 1980. The clipping is in possession of Mike Styler. 2nd paragraph (P) lines 8-12

8 Jensen, “A Veritable Oasis,” CHL.

and Riverside Canal Company and the Gunnison Bend Canal Company were organized, with ambitious plans to expand the cultivation of the surrounding land. The canal projects took years longer than expected,⁹ but supported steady population growth.¹⁰

Skeem says that “by 1900 Oasis was larger than any town in West Millard County.”¹¹ (See footnote for an explanation.) In its early days, Oasis had “a depot, three hotels, two lumberyards, a butcher shop, a school, a grocery, a dry goods store, a drugstore, a confectionery, a saloon, [barbershops] and a bank. It closed in February 1928, because of the Great Depression. Most of the other Oasis businesses failed at that time too.”¹²

But even before the Depression, there were signs of decline. In 1910, the Oasis Canal Company failed.

The Burtner project, on the other hand, was wildly successful, selling thousands of acres per month. In the 1910 census, Burtner’s population was nearly double that of Oasis. Homesteaders streamed into the makeshift railroad depot, which by 1911 was the busiest in the county. That year Burtner

9 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 162. My friends and I used to fish for carp by the lava boulders and rotted logs which we understood to be the pioneer dam. It’s west of Roger Stanworth’s home.

10 Wikipedia. 2011. “Oasis, Utah.” Last Modified July 12, 2023. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

11 Skeem, *Milestones*, 463. Skeem probably didn’t have access to population counts and may have been thinking of size in the sense of activity or area. See Population: Rise and Fall in this record.

12 Skeem, *Milestones*, 463.

*was renamed Delta, and the railroad built a new Delta station, the largest south of Salt Lake City.*¹³

The centrally located Delta was moving to permanently supplant Oasis in prominence.¹⁴ This is discussed in the section “Why Delta and Not Oasis.”

Oasis and Delta were essentially railroad towns—but so were Los Angeles, Chicago, and many other communities in the United States. The railroad created economic and social hubs not only in Utah but throughout the entire country. Before 1910, personal travel and long-distance freight were done by train. If someone said, “I’m going to Salt Lake;” it was understood they were traveling by rail.ⁱⁱ

Railroading had Brigham Young’s support. He saw it as central to Utah’s development, “In 1863, before the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) began construction, he purchased \$5,000 worth of stock. [He] believed that the railroad would bring new LDS Church members and much-needed cash to the territory. Soon after the [transcontinental] railroad line was finished, he began the Utah Central Railroad project to connect Ogden to the capital.”¹⁵

Historians Leo Lyman and Linda Newell note the arrival of the railroad in Millard County. “In 1878 the Utah Central Railroad Company made a railroad extending from Salt Lake City to Milford, Utah. It was located about one mile east of the Sevier River. This railroad, which passed through Oasis, eventually extended to Los

13 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 212-13.

14 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 218.

15 “Latter-day Saints on the Transcontinental Railroad,” Utah State University/ University Libraries, Digital Exhibits, <https://www.Latter-daySaintsontheTranscontinentalRailroad.org> · A World Transformed: The Transcontinental Railroad and Utah · USU Digital Exhibits.

Angeles. This iron band permanently and effectively connected [Millard County] to the outside world of commerce.”¹⁶

Skeem insists on the economic impact of the new rail line, “A railroad station was built on the [west] side of the track and it was called Oasis. Practically all the settlers around Oasis helped work on the railroad and [it] afforded them much-needed money.”¹⁷

Lyman and Newell seconded this assessment, spelling out the communities and economic sectors that benefited from the new station. Oasis’ main economic activity was as a railroad station. The precious metal mines of Frisco [in Beaver County], Joy and [Fish Springs in Juab] provided substantial freight traffic to the shipping point at Oasis.¹⁸ The station served communities as distant as Baker, Nevada, 100 miles away.¹⁹ It also made an attractive location for shearing sheep, shipping livestock, and outfitting ranches.²⁰ It was at this time that the [Oasis] commercial center began to develop.²¹

Six years after the railroad came to Oasis, in a blatant attempt to entice more business, John H. Henning wrote an editorial for the *Deseret News* extolling the virtues of this blossoming new community. Henning maintains that he is frequently asked, “Where is

16 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 163.

17 Skeem, *Milestones*, 461. The photos and painting in this work (See Early Views of Oasis) show the station on the west side of the tracks. Camilla Kimball’s reference to the Oasis says she was escorted across the tracks to the hotel. For these reasons, I believe the station was on the west side of the tracks and not the east as reported in *Milestones*.

18 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 164.

19 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 167.

20 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 176-77.

21 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 184.

this place designated Oasis?” Assuming this is not entirely hyperbole, Henning’s question implies that others in the Utah Territory, and perhaps elsewhere, had at least heard of Oasis. He goes on to call Oasis an “embryo city” with “prospects for becoming a large and wealthy settlement and eventually a city,” adding that Oasis’ “prospects are beyond a doubt excellent and anyone who closely examines the facilities of the place cannot fail to discern the same bright future.”. He concludes, “We cordially invite settlers... If you are intending to leave or change your residence—our bonanza is sure.”²² (The entire editorial is in the appendix. Look for 1884: Extolling Oasis.)

Whether it was because of the news editorial, word of mouth, or some other reason, people did indeed come to Oasis. They worked on the railroad, on dams, on drainage, on farms, and as freighters to the mines, or ranches. Reasons and employment varied—not all came to “build up Zion,” but many did.

An 1895 article in *The County Blade*, published in neighboring Deseret, further cements Oasis’ reputation as a railway hub. “The genial faces of conductor Wm. Adams and Engineer Thomas Hill of Juab were seen on the street yesterday. Both gentlemen are on the Milford Express division and while Mr. Hill rests and rubs down his iron horse at the Oasis Station, Mr. Adams continues to

22 John H. Henning, “Oasis: A Voice from the Desert of Sevier Valley,” Salt Lake Herald Republican, September 13, 1885, 8, <https://www.UtahDigitalNewspapers>. All newspapers referenced in this work can be found on the Utah Digital Newspapers website except for the Gazette which has not yet been digitized. Specifically, those newspapers referenced here are: The Salt Lake Herald Republican, *Millard County Blade*, *Millard County Chronicle*, *Millard County Progress Review*, *Deseret News*, *Deseret Evening News*, *Goodwin Weekly* and the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

mount the roof of the depot building to see if there are any belated passengers on the Deseret road.”²³

The zenith of the boom town of Oasis, Utah, had been reached by 1930. It had blossomed because of the railroad station into the vibrant shipping hub for the entire county. Commerce had quickly grown up around it. But with the Depression and the new railroad station in Delta, Oasis began to fade as quickly as it had bloomed.

Skeem links the economic decline of Oasis to the nationwide downturn of the late 1920s. “In February 1928, the Oasis State Bank, like so many of the other banks at that time, had to close its doors because of the depression which was a blow to everyone. The many businesses closed and eventually disappeared.”²⁴

The boom lasted from 1878 to 1929. The population high point was recorded in 1930 with 364 souls. Ten years later, it had decreased to 224 and by 1960 to 190.²⁵ For more on this refer to the section “Population: Rise and Fall.”

23 *Millard County Blade*, September 21, 1895, 1. *The Millard County Blade* was published in Deseret, Utah. It has 416 searchable pages from 1895-96.

24 Skeem, *Milestones*, 463.

25 Wikipedia. 2011. “Oasis, Utah.” Last Modified July 12, 2023. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

OASIS WARD: CREATION

Initially, people living in Oasis were considered part of the Deseret Ward of the LDS Church. Everyone met in a two-room school and churchhouse located in what is now Deseret. Members in Oasis used a boat to cross the river to attend their meetings. This continued until a bridge was constructed. In 1887 a large brick building became the meetinghouse for the Deseret Ward. It served as a stake center as well as for the ward's use. It was located "on the north side of the river."²⁶ *iii*

The first Oasis Sunday School was organized on February 26, 1888, three years before the ward. Skeem explains that "[its] meetings were held in the Oasis school house."²⁷ The school referred to here was built around 1884. It consisted of one room about twenty-five by forty-five feet and was located south of the Day Store.²⁸ On March 21, 1891, the Deseret Ward was divided into three wards because it had grown too large. The two new organizations were

²⁶ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 437.

²⁷ Skeem, *Milestones*, 465.

²⁸ Skeem, *Milestones*, 463.

the Hinckley and Oasis wards.²⁹ It is from this time that Oasis is generally considered a unique and separate community—more than merely an outgrowth of Deseret.³⁰

Four apostles were in attendance at this foundational meeting in 1891: Elder Frances K. Lyman, Elder John Henry Smith, Elder Anthon H. Lund, and Elder Abraham N. Cannon. The Millard stake presidency was also present.

John Styler was chosen as bishop of the Oasis Ward, Lars Hansen was selected as his first counselor, and Jacob C. Hawley as his second counselor. They were all three ordained high priests and set apart (that is, ritually blessed to carry out their ecclesiastical responsibilities) that same day. Anton C. Christensen was chosen as ward clerk. Soren Jorgensen, Jim Christensen, William P. Hawley, Lucas H. Noyes, John Anton Iversen, Niels Iversen, John W. Reid and Anton Christian Christensen were called as teachers for the new ward.³¹

Interestingly, the Oasis Ward auxiliaries (groups within the ward) were not created at the same time as the ward. Each organization came into existence on a different date. The Relief Society was organized a month and a half later on May 8, 1891, with Sister Mary Warren as president. The Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA) was organized on May 21, 1891, with Sister Mary F. Webb as president. The Primary Association was organized on the same date with Sister Agnes Reid as president. The Oasis Young Men Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) was

29 Skeem, *Milestones*, 465.

30 John W. Van Cott, *Utah Place Names*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. ISBN 0-87480-345-4, 279.

31 *Manuscript History*, CHL

organized on November 2, 1891, with Brother William P. Hawley as president.”³²

In 1897 a school was built across the street from the adobe/ later red-brick meetinghouse. Since “the town had grown, they needed a larger school building.”³³ The Oasis Ward moved there. The 1900 Church Historical Record states, “The only public building in [Oasis] is a schoolhouse in which meetings are also held.”³⁴ The Oasis Ward met in the smaller school building for six years and the bigger new one for ten.

32 *Manuscript History*, CHL. I can’t find a William P. Hawley on FamilySearch. there is, however, a William S. Hawley who lived in Oasis at this time. It may be the same person. William P. Hawley is mentioned among “early pioneer families of Oasis” by Skeem, *Milestones*, 561.

33 Skeem, *Milestones*, 463.

34 Jensen, “Veritable Oasis,” *Manuscript History*, CHL.

THE ADOBE BUILDING

To recap, the newly created Oasis Ward first met in the one-room school near the Day's store and when a bigger school was built, they moved there.³⁵ After the turn of the twentieth century, the Oasis Ward Relief Society made plans for a place to hold their meetings. "Each member was asked to do all they could in the line of donations. They made quilts, crocheted and knitted lace dollies and covers of different kinds, and sold them. They held bazaars, sold lunches, and did everything they could to raise money. Finally, in the fall of 1907, they had the foundation laid."^{36 iv v}

In the summer of 1907, an ad in the local paper invited everyone to come buy a dish of strawberries and cream for 10 cents to "help build the new hall."^{vi 37} While this was going on, it was decided that

35 Skeem, *Milestones*, 463. When I a boy, there was building rubble across the street from where we attended church. I was told it was the ruins of the old Oasis school. This would fit the description given as the location of the second school found in *Milestones*.

36 Skeem, *Milestones*, 467.

37 "Correspondence," July 5, 1907, 1, *Millard County Progress Review* (MCPR).

instead of just a small room for Relief Society purposes the entire ward would collaborate and together they would build a new chapel.³⁸

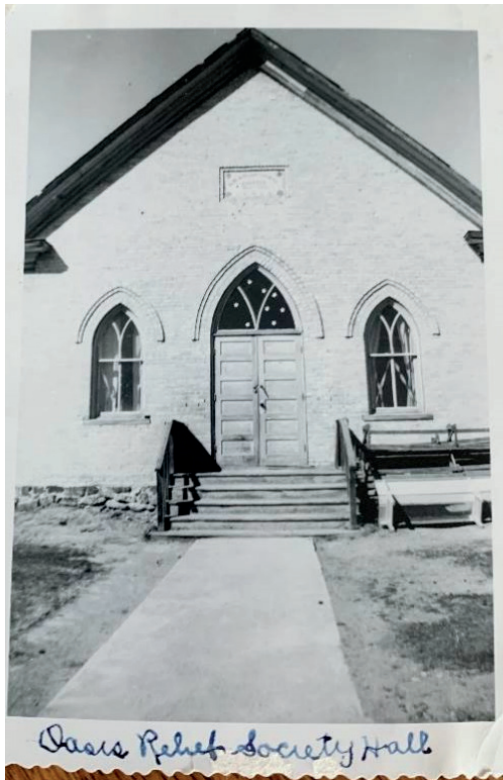


Relief Society presidency standing at southeast corner of adobe building c.1930.



Plaque on Adobe Church—This plaque is still above the adobe building entrance seen on the following page. The photo was taken in the attic of the red brick building which is now the private home of the Finlinson family. Photo by Jay Finlinson.

38 Skeem, *Milestones*, 467-68.



Oasis Relief Society Hall Photo—Brenda (Skeem) Cullimore

On March 1, 1908, masons began laying the adobe brick. With donated labor and a hired carpenter, the building was erected in a little over a month. The members of the Relief Society cooked a dinner each day for those who worked. The hall was dedicated in May 1908 by Brother David O. McKay who was then serving as an assistant to the superintendent of the Deseret Sunday School Union.³⁹

39 Skeem, *Milestones*, 467-68.

The Oasis Historical Manuscript succinctly summarizes the building's construction, "In 1908–1909 a Relief Society hall was erected in Oasis—an [adobe] brick building 31 by 47 feet—immediately south of the former schoolhouse. It was dedicated on August 1, 1909."⁴⁰ The building had a stone foundation as can be seen in the photo of the Oasis Ward Relief Society Presidency. The old car in the background helps date that photo to about fifteen years before I was born. Nevertheless, this adobe building is the one I remember from my childhood.

The name, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, did not appear on the building nor was there a sign welcoming visitors—both of which are prominent on meetinghouses today. The only exterior sign was centered between the apex molding of the main door and the roof. The arch-lettering inside the plaque reads "LDS Relief Society." Below this, it boldly states, "Erected March 1908." Along the bottom of the sign, we read the letters "YLMIA" for Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association. In each of the four corners of this rectangular sign is a six-pointed asterisks.

The inside was a large open hall with a stage on the west side (the church faced east). The podium and the sacrament table were on the stage. An outdoor toilet was located behind the building in the back on the west side. An additional structure was added on the back to provide additional classrooms.

Separating classes presented a problem in this old one-room meetinghouse. Drapes were hung from wires to divide groups. Behind the stage was the entrance to the lean-to with three small

40 *Manuscript History Manuscript History*, 27, CHL. I've not been able to resolve the conflict with the dedication date: May 1908 or August 1, 1908.

connecting rooms. Entering from the north side of the stage one could walk from one room to the next. These classrooms were unheated except for warm air that might drift in from the big coal-burning stove in the chapel—in other words, they were cold all winter long. Teacher Erma Styler directed her young students to stomp their feet to keep themselves warm in those rooms.⁴¹

Regulating the temperature was a constant problem. In the winter, those who sat close to the stove on the hard, slatted benches roasted; those who sat in the back froze. A furnace helped solve the heating problem when the building was remodeled in 1956. Hot summer days presented the opposite problem. The windows were left open in hopes that a summer breeze might waft through, and many sisters brought hand-held fans, some with a religious motif, to keep themselves cool.

I have a vivid memory of performing a solo at a Christmas program as a small boy while standing by the large coal-burning stove. I sang “Goodnight, Irene.” It was a number-one hit in the 1950s. Everyone laughed and applauded. I didn’t realize at the time that the song might be inappropriate for a church event—the lyrics are about a guy whose wife left him, so he’s going “to take another stroll downtown” to find a new one. “Jingle Bells” would have been a better choice.

There was no sound system. Quoting from my father’s history, “Peter [Bishop Peter Petersen] used to say, ‘Well, you guys just as well make up your mind that you’re going to get up there and do

41 Private conversation with Paul Ludwig, January 2022.

things. And when you get up there to talk—speak up so people can hear you or shut up!”⁴²



*Primary Junior Sunday School—
Photo in Reed Skeem’s Private Collection*

This photo is of the Oasis Ward Junior Sunday School taken about 1949. At the time, Primary was held on Thursdays after school; note that all these children were wearing their Sunday best—not usual school clothes like they would to Primary. We are standing on the wooden steps in front of the main entrance of the adobe church. I’m on the left, behind the girl whose hand is raised to her forehead. Next to me on my left is my cousin, Evan Skeem. He’s wearing a tie. The boy to his left looking at Evan and me is Roger Stanworth. Below Evan’s right arm is Dan Willoughby. Erick Gillen may be the kid to Dan’s left. The young man wearing bib overalls with his hands behind his back is my cousin Reed

42 Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Church Service, FSM.

Skeem. The short girl with dark curly hair on the front row is Sue Willoughby. The girl on her right is Gwen Stanworth and Colleen Gillen is on her left. Others are unknown.

This picture was taken at an Oasis Ward Gold and Green Ball, a formal dance for young and old sponsored by the Church's Mutual Improvement Association. It dates from about 1930. Standing on the stage of the adobe building are: Parly Elder, Wash Roundy, Ray Lovell, Ed Skeem, Vick Morris, Clark Bishop, Cecil Cahoon, Val Styler, Enoch Gillen, and Lawrence Cropper. Front row: Ruby Skeem, LaVean Gillen, Evelyn Morris, La Veda Bishop, Fontella Skeem, Erma Styler, and Evelyn Skeem Hawley (Auntie)



*Gold and Green Ball c. 1930—
Photo in author's private collection*

The adobe chapel was incorporated into the remodel as the cultural hall. Warren Peterson, the Oasis Ward clerk in the 1980s, made this observation. “Space can inspire sacred memories.” Here’s his entry in the ward’s record,

25 December 1983—All meetings for today were canceled except sacrament meeting [the main worship service] which was conducted in the cultural hall of the meetinghouse. The Primary presented the program. [Its] content and the location of the meeting in the older cultural hall portion of the building gave a certain warmth to the meeting. Many older ward members commented on the similarity to earlier times when all meetings were held in the old adobe-walled cultural hall before the building was enlarged to its present size.⁴³

43 Manuscript History, 290-91, CHL.

OASIS WARD BISHOPS & THEIR WIVES

Traditionally, members of the Church refer to their bishop as the “father of the ward.” He is often the priesthood leader most intimately involved with individual church members. The bishop is not paid for the time he devotes to his position. All local leaders in the LDS Church operate as a lay ministry; members donate their time to perform the duties assigned to each calling. Each bishop serves with two counselors, who together form a bishopric. Other members of this group are a ward executive secretary and various clerks.

The official handbook of the Church details a bishop’s duties in the following terms,

*The bishop has five principal responsibilities: He is the presiding high priest in the ward. He is president of the Aaronic Priesthood. He is a common judge. He coordinates the work of salvation and exaltation, including caring for those in need. He oversees records, finances, and the use of the meetinghouse.*⁴⁴

44 General Handbook: Serving in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2023, Salt Lake City, Utah), 6.1.

OASIS BISHOPS IN ORDER OF SERVICE	
1. John Styler	9. Ralph Skeem
2. Marcus Skeem	10. Lawrence Cropper
3. Sidney J. Ottley	11. Jack Willoughby
4. Alma J. Christensen	12. Russell Styler
5. J. Val Styler	13. Berdell Memmott
6. Lars Hansen	14. Dick Willoughby
7. Clark Bishop	15. Conard Stanworth
8. Peter H. Petersen	16. Dale Willoughby

In layman's terms, he is the point man for the ward—responsible for everything that goes on, both spiritually and temporally. The men who serve in the bishopric are some of the ward's best leaders and most capable men. Those chosen through inspiration for the Oasis Ward bishoprics are prominent citizens of both the ward and the community. Their faith and dedication to duty are exemplary. Many of the accomplishments that occurred in Oasis are due directly to their efforts.

The bishop's wife is sometimes jokingly called the bishop's third counselor. The 3rd chapter of 1st Timothy in the New Testament discusses the qualifications of a bishop; among other things, it counsels that a bishop should have a wife.

In our day, a bishop may consult with his wife "on issues that [are] not confidential." One bishop's wife, Jeannie, said she was grateful because this made her feel included. Concerning the confidences which were not shared, she thought they "were none of my business," and was grateful not to know all that was discussed. She explained that had her husband confided them to her, they would have been remembered, and "it just wasn't right. I knew

how violated I would feel if everything I told a bishop would also pass through the ears of his wife.”⁴⁵

A practice in the Church today is that if a man is called as a bishop and his wife is the Relief Society president, the wife is released. This exact scenario recently happened in my home ward here in Idaho. My wife Pam says, “A bishop needs his wife.” The calling of a bishop is like having a second job and requires him to be absent from the family from time to time.



Oasis Ward Bishops. 1-8, In order of service: John Styler, Marcus Skeem, Sidney J. Ottley, Alma J. Christensen, J. Val Styler, Lars Hansen, Clark Bishop, Peter H. Petersen. Josephine B. Walker, Milestones, 468–69.

45 Jeannie and Kathy Green, *Mormon Mamma*, “The Special Lives of Bishop’s Wife,” July 12, 2002, <https://mormonmamma.com>. Bishops must hold sacred trusts inviolate.



(Back: Ralph Skeem, Lawrence Cropper, Jack Willoughby, Russell Styler Front: Dale Willoughby, Conard Stanworth, Dick Willoughby, Berdell Memmott).

Photo from Cordell Cropper

To give a gender balance, I've added something about the bishop's wife in this section. Some wives were more demonstrably supportive and involved than others. My mother, for example, had physical limitations when Dad served as bishop and only infrequently came to meetings. Nevertheless, she was helpful in her way. In his biography, Dad said, "She'd go out of her way to see that I filled my [Church] assignments."⁴⁶ He loved and appreciated her.

46 Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Church Service, FSM.

JOHN STYLER—SERVED FOR 17 YEARS, 1891–1908

Bishop John Styler served as the first Oasis Ward bishop. Following the custom of the day, he and his counselors were most likely set apart by the four apostles attending the meeting held to create the ward in Deseret on March 21, 1891.⁴⁷



John and Almirante (Murray Black) Styler

All of Millard County was one stake when Bishop Styler presided over the Oasis Ward. (It was part of the Millard Stake until 1912 when the Deseret Stake was formed). Travel at that time was by horse and buggy. It would take days to go and return from stake priesthood meetings and stake conferences held in Fillmore, some thirty-five miles away. “It was the Oasis bishop’s work to take the

47 Apostles are designated general authorities of the Church. They are recognized throughout the world and not restricted to a particular ward or stake. Until the latter part of the 20th century, bishoprics and missionaries were set apart by a general authority. Today this responsibility has devolved onto the stake president.

men and women [leaders] who came from Salt Lake and got off the train at Oasis to the town in which conference was to be held. So, as bishop, [John] spent much time traveling in a wagon or buggy performing his church work. He was bishop for over nineteen years and was always at his post of duty.⁴⁸

A biography of Styler written by his granddaughter, Ila (Styler) Messenger, can be found on FamilySearch. It provides the following profile.

He was a man of great faith and a very good speaker. A testimony meeting never went by without Brother Styler bearing a very faith-promoting and wonderful testimony.

While he was bishop of the Oasis Ward, the [adobe] meetinghouse was built and his wife, [Almira Murray Black] was the Relief Society President. [She] served for over twenty-three years. [Together] they drove their blacktop Sitterud buggy pulled by their old mare Kate. They visited the sick [and troubled] and helped in any way they could... to cheer and comfort them. They visited the homes where death had taken a loved one. With kind and loving hearts, they prepared them for burial. There were no morticians and the bodies had to be taken care of by the authorities of the ward and Relief Society.

Many people in town testified to the kindness, consideration, and tireless efforts of Bishop and Sister Styler. It seems that the night was never too dark nor too long for them to help those who were in need. They gave over fifty years of their

48 Manuscript History, 1, CHL.

lives in untiring service and always seemed to receive joy and satisfaction from their effort.”⁴⁹

The official ward history record states that “in 1893, while John was bishop, the authorities of the Church called for donations to complete the Salt Lake Temple. The people of Oasis responded by subscribing \$143, nearly double the amount called for which was \$81.”⁵⁰ Under the centennial year 1900, we read this paean, “The Oasis Ward is presided over by Bishop John Styler, a young man who a few years ago came to Utah as a poor, almost friendless boy, but who through opportunities such as the Gospel of Christ only affords the humble and meek, has been appointed to his present position which he fills with honor. Elder Lars Hansen and Jacob C. Hawley are his counselors.”⁵¹

An article in the Millard County Chronicle explains that “Bishop Styler resigned and at a meeting held November 1, 1908, he was honorably released, together with his counselors Anton G. Christensen and Marcus Skeem.”⁵² John resigned because of the pain in his broken right arm which inhibited his ability to write. This injury was originally caused when he was kicked by a horse. The arm “wasn’t set right and gave him much trouble and pain.” He had it re-broken and reset several times without success.⁵³

John and Almira attended the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple as well as the Manti Temple. It was here they heard the angel choir singing and reported on the beautiful sound it made.

49 Messenger, “Biography: John Styler,” KW89-FPF, FSM).

50 *Manuscript History*, 23, CHL.

51 *Manuscript History*, 25, CHL.

52 “Change in Oasis Ward Bishopric,” *Chronicle*, September 16, 1926.

53 Messenger, “History of John Styler,” John Styler KW89-FPF, FSM.

They were the parents of 8 children—7 daughters and one son who later became bishop of the Oasis Ward. They “were a lot alike, so thoughtful of everyone... both very spiritual, always carrying out their church assignments to the best of their ability.”⁵⁴

MARCUS SKEEM—SERVED FOR 18 YEARS, 1908–26

The second bishop of the Oasis Ward is “Marcus Skeem. Milton Moody served as first and Peter A. Petersen as second counselor.”⁵⁵

Bishop Skeem, or Uncle Mark as my mother’s family knew him, is repeatedly mentioned in the *Millard County Chronicle* during his tenure of service. Only one of the news articles deals with his ecclesiastical role: on November 19, 1925, he presided and spoke at the funeral of Josephine Johansen Pedersen.⁵⁶ Other articles discuss his active civic life: bank director,⁵⁷ drainage bond supervisor⁵⁸, and bond election judge.⁵⁹ He is also mentioned as a successful farmer⁶⁰ and as a candidate for a two-year county commissioner seat on the Republican ticket.⁶¹ Such heavy involvement in civic

54 Messenger, “Biography: John Styler,” KW89-FPF, FSM.

55 *Manuscript History*, CHL (See also Stake Statistical Reports page 644. Ward Histories Record F:231. Brother Skeem was ordained a bishop by Apostle Francis M. Lyman and set apart to preside over the Oasis Ward. Milton Moody was set apart as first counselor by Apostle Anthony W. Ivins and Peter A. Petersen was set apart as second counselor by Apostle Lyman).

56 “Respected Citizen of Oasis Laid to Rest,” *Chronicle*, November 19, 1925, 1.

57 “advertisement” *Chronicle*, April 6, 1916, 2..

58 “advertisement” *Chronicle*, August 14, 1924, 3.

59 “Public Notice of Board of Education Bond Election,” *Chronicle*, April 17, 1924, 5.

60 “Crops in Sister Towns,” *Chronicle*, October 16, 1924, 1.

61 “advertisement,” *Chronicle*, October 26, 1916, 8.

affairs is not typical for an LDS bishop, but it demonstrates Marcus' recognized leadership abilities.



Marcus and Betsy (Jensen) Skeem

Marcus was married twice. His first wife, Mary Effie Hunt, died the same year they were married, 1904. She is buried in Oasis. He married Betsy Jensen in 1909. Together they had 8 children. Their son Ralph said of his mother, “She taught [the children] honesty, integrity, thrift and the ability to work;” this in addition to gospel principles such as being “kind and considerate of others.”⁶² Notably, it was Betsy who authored the section on *Oasis in Milestones of Millard*—a primary source for this work.

After 18 years as bishop, “at a meeting held at Oasis April 12, 1926, attended by the stake presidency, Bishop Marcus Skeem was honorably released together with his counselors.”⁶³ With eighteen years of service, Marcus Skeem holds the record as the longest-serving bishop in the Oasis Ward. His predecessor, John Styler, served

62 Ralph Skeem, “Betsey Jensen” KWCR-9CT, FSM.

63 Manuscript History, 30, CHL.

for seventeen. This was typical of early bishops in the Church. Today the normal calling for a bishop is from four to seven years.

SIDNEY J. OTTLEY—SERVED FOR 2 YEARS, 1926–28

Like his predecessors, Sidney had served a mission for the Church as a youth. Unlike them, however, he didn't serve nearly as long. The calling of a bishop is voluntary and sometimes compelling reasons arise to end the service early. "Sidney J. Ottley was sustained as bishop of the Oasis Ward with Herman Pederson as his first and Andy Ray Owens as his second counselor in September 1926."⁶⁴ He was married to Alice Warren. We learn more about Sidney by researching his wife.

Alice loved and taught music for most of her life. She served as a ward Primary president and as a ward and stake Relief Society president. Sister Ottley accompanied her husband when he served as the New Zealand Mission President. They also served a temple mission in London, England, and as workers in the Salt Lake Temple.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ *Manuscript History*, 29, CHL. Stake quarterly Reports of September 30, 1926. Brother Ottley was ordained a bishop by Apostle George F. Richards September 25, 1926, and was set apart to preside over the Oasis Ward. On the same occasion, Herman Pederson as first counselor by Apostle Richards who, the next day, set apart Brother Owens as second counselor.

⁶⁵ "Alice Warren Ottley Obituary," Alice Warren KWCV-R15, FSM.



Sidney J. and Alice (Warren) Ottley

According to the Millard County Chronicle, “Bishop Ottley is a young man of considerable talent and has been a staunch church worker for many years. Much of his time has been devoted to the interests of the young people and his appointment to this important office is looked upon with satisfaction by all members of the ward.”⁶⁶

His professional obligations meant that Ottley’s service was cut short. “Bishop Ottley, having accepted a position with the Bonneville Lumber Company in Salina, was honorably released at a meeting held at Oasis March 4, 1928, together with his counselors.”⁶⁷

66 “Change in Oasis Ward Bishopric,” *Millard County Chronicle*, September 16, 1926.

67 *Manuscript History*, 31, CHL. Stake Quarterly Reports of March 31, 1928.

**ALMA J. CHRISTENSEN—
SERVED FOR 7 YEARS, 1928–35**

Following the sudden departure of Bishop Ottley, Alma Christensen took over as bishop in Oasis. The quarterly report submitted by the stake, includes this description of the event, “At a stake conference held March 24 and 25, 1928, attended by President Heber J. Grant, Alma J. Christensen was ordained a high priest and bishop and set apart to preside over the Oasis Ward by President Grant with Andy Ray Owens as first and Peter H. Petersen as second counselor.”⁶⁸



Alma J. Christensen and Sylvia (Boletta) Christensen

Two years and nine months later, Church records provide this statistical information, “the numerical strength of the Oasis Ward December 31, 1930, was 200 souls including 11 high priests,

68 Manuscript History, 31, CHL. Stake Quarterly Reports of March 31, 1928.

1 seventy, 10 elders, 12 priests, 7 teachers, 15 deacons, 112 lay-members, and 32 children.”⁶⁹

Sylvia Boletta Christensen of Oak City married Alma in 1917 in the Salt Lake Temple. They had 8 children. She worked in the Primary for 30 years. She and Alma later served as stake missionaries.⁷⁰

In May 2018, Rondo Christensen wrote a memory of his father which shows how Bishop Christensen handled Church welfare during the Depression,

Alma was bishop [of the Oasis Ward] for 7 years during the Depression. He aided many families during this time who came to him in need. However, even though his family was also struggling to make do during those dark days, he never used the funds available to him as the bishop to help the needy in his ward for himself. He maintained that others had a greater need for them and that they would rely on blessings from the Lord and He would take care of them.

He was an entrepreneur and farmer. He worked hard to support his family and was successful in doing so even though they had some hard years. During the years that Rondo served his mission his father faithfully supported him. Many years later Rondo found out that he did this by not paying his taxes. It was the only way to come up with the money. When Rondo returned, his father faithfully worked hard to pay off the back taxes he owed. This shows his great faith

69 Manuscript History, 33, CHL.

70 “Spotlight Senior Sylvia Christensen,” Alma Christensen KWC2-353, FSM.

and willingness to sacrifice for his children and the furthering of the Kingdom of God.

Education was very important to Alma. He made sure all his children got the chance to attend college and attain a profession with which they could take care of themselves and their families.

He was a gentleman [who] respected his wife and children [and was] a great example of patience and forgiveness. He ruled with gentleness and example. He was a godly man, honest and trustworthy. He had a strong testimony of the Gospel. Alma served a mission in the northwestern states. His son Rondo also served in this same area.

Alma's grandson, Ferrin Dixon, added this insight: "He was a hard worker, a family man who loved cold watermelon and homemade root beer."⁷¹

JOHN VALENTINE (VAL) STYLER— SERVED FOR 5 YEARS, 1935–40

At a stake conference held Sunday, March 24, 1935,⁷² “the following were sustained as the new bishopric: J. Val Styler bishop,

71 Rondo Christensen, “Notes about Alma J. Christensen,” Alma Joshua Christensen KWC2-353, FSM.

72 *Manuscript History*, 37, CHL. Stake Reports of March 31, 1935. Val Styler was ordained a bishop and set apart to preside over the Oasis Ward by Apostle Rudger Clawson. Lars Hansen was ordained a high priest and set apart as 2nd counselor by Apostle Clawson. Petersen and Gillen were absent.

Peter H. Petersen 1st counselor, Lars Hansen 2nd counselor, Enoch Gillen ward clerk.”⁷³



J. Val and Erma (Turner) Styler c.1950

Val and his wife, Erma Aljaline Turner, had 6 children. Erma was well respected among ward members for her teaching abilities and for serving as president of the ward’s Primary, MIA, and Relief Society.⁷⁴ Her grandson, David Styler, shares this memory,

Grandma Styler was the kindest, sweetest, and purest person you would ever meet. She was tiny, just over five feet tall. She loved American history and the Church. Erma hero-worshipped the presidents and the prophets. She wouldn’t

⁷³ Manuscript History, 34, CHL. Stake Reports of March 31, 1935.

⁷⁴ “Obituary,” Erma Aljaline Turner KWC2-XW6, FSM.

even let us use slang words like “heck” or “dang.”... Her world was her family and she was a mother, homemaker, and gardener. She never got a driver’s license and never wanted one. Professionally and by nature she was a teacher. She was teaching at Hinckley when she met Grandpa but stopped when they got married. Whenever she had me [at her house], she was teaching me to memorize poems or stories and we were always reading books together. I could read before going to school because of her. Grandma Erma was a hard worker and a good mother.⁷⁵

Sister Styler was my teacher in more than one class as I was growing up. She was always kind, patient, and considerate. Once she helped several of us prepare and present the hymn *I Stand All Amazed* for a special musical number. Another of her students, Paul Ludwig, recalls that she was honored in the Church News for fifty years of service as a dedicated Sunday School teacher.⁷⁶

In her history of her husband, Erma gives us a good understanding of his character and obligations. She writes,

[Val] had many civic positions. He worked on the Deseret Irrigation Board for years, was a member of the Commercial Bank of Delta, member of the Crop Improvement Association, and president of the Oasis Sheep Association. He was a donor of our new [red-brick] chapel, giving two fat steers for the banquets we put on to make money for the building fund and the concessions for the Days of the Old West. He served as a ward teacher, superintendent of Sunday School and Mutual,

75 David Styler, “Erma,” Erma Aljaline Turner KWC2-XW6, FSM.

76 Private phone conversation with Paul Ludwig, January 2022.

*bishopric counselor... and bishop of the Oasis Ward from 1935 to 1940.*⁷⁷

I remember Brother Styler as a well-respected older gentleman who came to church meetings regularly. My wife and I attended his funeral and as his casket came into the chapel, it was accompanied by the song “My Old Kentucky Home.” Val had served a mission there in his youth. During his labors, he was shot by a mob, but not injured. This miracle is discussed in the section “Missionary Shot” in this record.

LARS HANSEN—SERVED FOR 2 YEARS, 1940–42

Bishop Hansen presided over the Oasis Ward when my mom and dad started attending at Oasis. My parents lived in Hinckley and had gone to the Hinckley Ward a few times, but decided to make a change. Oasis is where my mother’s family went to church and I’m sure she persuaded Dad that it is what they should do. Rules about attending the ward in which you reside were looser back then. Their membership records were transferred to Oasis. They moved from the farm to Oasis in 1944—just before I joined the family. Dad had started working at the Oasis Seed Plant in 1939, so living in Oasis was a logical move.

77 Erma T. Styler, “History of John Valentine Styler,” John Valentine Styler KWC2-XWD, FSM.



Lars Hansen and Albie M. (Nichols) c.1940

In 1940, “[t]he following were sustained as the bishopric of the Oasis Ward: Lars Hansen bishop, Clark Hinckley first⁷⁸ and Peter E. Skeem second counselor.”⁷⁹ Bishop Hansen was instrumental in issuing the first call to my father to serve in a leadership position.

Lars was born in Oasis. As a young man, he served a mission in Scandinavia. His obituary describes his profession as a retired

78 Manuscript History, 37, CHL. Stake Reports of September 30, 1940, Lars Hansen and Clark Bishop were set apart to their respective offices on October 6, 1940, in Salt Lake City by Elder Sylvester Q. Cannon of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

79 Manuscript History, 43, CHL. Stake Reports of March 31, 1940, set apart by Apostle Albert E. Bowen at stake conference Peter Edwin Skeem was set apart as 2nd Counselor to Bishop Lars Hansen of the Oasis Ward on March 9, 1941.

railroad worker and farmer. Many railroad workers in Oasis also ran farms. Lars won two awards for growing Pioneer Alfalfa seed, in 1940 and 1943.⁸⁰ He is buried in Sandy, Utah.⁸¹ His wife Albie Myrl Nichols was from Fillmore and worked as a waitress in the LDS Hospital cafeteria after they moved from the farm. They had 7 children.⁸²

Bishop Lars would have been the ward's presiding officer when World War II broke out. A news article mentions him at a party and dance given for two Oasis boys who were inducted for military training.⁸³ He was also serving as bishop when the ward celebrated its 50th anniversary.⁸⁴ Judging from how often it is printed in the paper, he regularly attended General Conference in Salt Lake.⁸⁵ He moved there after serving 2 years as bishop.⁸⁶

CLARK HINCKLEY BISHOP— SERVED FOR 6 YEARS, 1942–48

I was just a baby when Clark was the bishop, but I knew him well because he and his wife LaVeda visited periodically at my Aunt Evelyn Hawley's home to play Rook with her and Uncle Kelly.

80 "Win Awards at Seed Show," *Millard County Chronicle*, Dec. 19, 1940, 1 and November 13, 1943, 1.

81 Lars Hansen KWCN-GZV, Obituary, FSM, On Sept. 16, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Selective Training and Service Act, which was another name for the draft. It required all men between the ages of 21 and 45 to register for the draft.

82 "Obituary," Albie Myrl Nichols KWCN-GZF, FSM.

83 "Second Brother in Family Called for Training," *Chronicle*, April 10, 1940, 1.

84 "Group Serves 93 Years at Oasis Ward," *Chronicle*, April 3, 1941, 1.

85 "Oasis," *Chronicle*, April 10, 1941, 8.

86 Skeem, *Milestones*, 468-69.

Clark and LaVeda, lived along the Sevier River near Cropper Lane. He farmed and raised his family there. I got acquainted with him outside of church when Dad and I started hunting ducks on the river in the early morning before school. Clark would sometimes join us.



Clark and LaVeda (Hutchings) Bishop

He was set apart as bishop in September 1942. Arlyn Styler served as his second counselor, there's no mention of a 1st counselor,⁸⁷ but I'm sure there was one. After his ordination, he became Bishop Bishop—no redundancy intended.

Clark and his family of six children were active members. Following his release from the bishopric, he instructed the high priest quorum and served in other callings. LaVeda was the ward music director—forever. That's the way it seems to me. I know she

87 Manuscript History, 53, CHL. See also Stake Reports of September 30, 1942.

directed the music in Sunday School opening exercises and I can remember her doing the same in sacrament meetings. Her obituary says she held the position of ward chorister from 1940 to 1969.

Although unusual, she died in the Salt Lake Temple. She married Clark in the same temple forty-nine years before that. In addition to her music calling, she also served as a teacher in all ward auxiliaries, in their presidencies, and as a full-time missionary in Denver, Colorado. LaVeda loved the gospel and “all kinds of handiwork; [she] took two sweepstakes for her quilts at the Millard County Fair. For twenty-four years she made temple and burial clothing, over 1200 sets.”⁸⁸

There is an event in the ward record that occurred when Bishop was bishop. It caught my attention because of the negative feelings that sometimes pop up between Deseret and Oasis folks—see “Town Rivalry” in this work.

*Ward Conference was held on Sunday, November 9, 1947, attended by Stake President Harold R. Morris, First Counselor M. Ward Moody, and Stake Clerk E. Eugene Gardner. **The main issue before the people was as to whether the Oasis Ward should continue as a ward or be annexed to the Deseret Ward.**⁸⁹ The congregation voted to maintain their ward. (emphasis added.)*

88 “Obituary,” *Chronicle*, May 31, 1979. See also Laveda Hutchings KWCP-712, FSM.

89 *Manuscript History*, 47, CHL. Stake Reports of December 11, 1947.

At Clark's funeral in 1975, a tribute poem was composed by his son David. One of the stanzas reads, "Dad was Bishop Bishop many years / Mom blessed his life and had no fear / Knowing only good could come / Of a productive life's work done."⁹⁰

PETER H. PETERSEN—SERVED FOR 5 YEARS, 1948–53

Bishop Petersen trusted in the healing power of faith. When I was about ten years old, I sat in his front room while my dad and another priesthood holder anointed him with oil and gave him a health blessing in his bedroom. I was astonished when immediately after, Brother Petersen came out to greet me. He acted perfectly fine, although I knew he had been sick in bed moments before.



Peter H. Petersen and Inga J. (Christiansen) Petersen

90 David Bishop, "Tribute Poem," Clark Hinckley Bishop KWCP-71V, FSM.

“The following were sustained as the new bishopric of the Oasis Ward: Peter H. Petersen bishop, Lawrence Cropper 1st counselor, Washington Roundy 2nd counselor, Ralph Skeem ward clerk.”⁹¹ Before the new bishopric had even conducted a Sunday service, they were called upon to preside at a funeral. All their meetings were in the old adobe-brick church. There were no public address systems, so they learned to speak loudly to be heard. It was during the time Bishop Petersen was in charge of the ward that I first recognized the respect ward members had for the bishop. I would have been between 4 and 9 years old at the time.

PFC Peter Petersen served as a courier in France during World War I. It was common knowledge that he had been gassed near the front line. Reed tells me it was friendly fire; I didn’t know that. But while visiting him and his wife Inga in their home one day, I saw him chew his food and then spit it into a funnel attached to a tube to fill his stomach. His war injury made it difficult for him to swallow food. He was always very thin.

Peter married an Oasis girl, Inga Christiansen in 1921 and had two daughters. The couple kept a beautiful flower and vegetable garden. They lived next door to my aunt and uncle Kelly and Evelyn Hawley and would frequently share their produce.⁹²

For many years, Peter was the Oasis postmaster. (See “Post Office” in this work for a description of his duties.) Since he and his father, who was also named Peter Petersen, were members of the Oasis Ward, some would jokingly call him Peter Post-office to distinguish which Peter Petersen they were speaking of.

91 *Manuscript History*, 55, CHL. Stake Reports of March 31, 1948.

92 “Inga Josephine Christiansen KWZX-2ZM, FSM.

RALPH S. SKEEM—SERVED FOR 4 YEARS, 1953–57

“The in-coming bishopric was Ralph Skeem bishop, Howard Roundy 1st counselor, Fon Hawley 2nd counselor and Russell Styler ward clerk.”⁹³ Ralph’s wife’s name is Shirley. They were parents of twins; tragically Brent was killed in an accident in 1964 when he was only fifteen. He was already an Eagle Scout.



Ralph and Shirley (Owens) Skeem

Even though Ralph is our second cousin, neither Reed nor I ever addressed him by his first name, or as some of his friends did, “Punch.” I have no idea how he got that nickname. Mine was Hop or Hoppy. I used to hang out on my tricycle at the Oasis Seed Plant, where Dad worked. I had two holstered cap pistols that I liked to wear and some of the workers christened me with Hoppy

93 *Manuscript History*, “Ralph Skeem, Howard Roundy and Fon Hawley were set apart by John Longden Assistant to the Twelve at stake conference on March 22, 1952. Ward Clerk Russell Styler was set apart by L. Jay Nelson on March 29, 195363, CHL.

after Hopalong Cassidy, a fictional motion picture cowboy hero. Some sobriquets have stories behind them; others don't.

Bishop Ralph was the bishop when Reed and I were boys. Both of us liked him but for different reasons. Reed remembers him as his savior. At an outside Primary party one summer (today we'd call it an "activity day") our friend Erick was tormenting Reed—kicking him in the ankle just to irritate him. Reed took it for a while and then threw Erick into a rosebush. The Primary sisters didn't approve. When they approached, Reed started running. The chase continued around the church. At that point, Reed figured it would be better to just leave, so he headed for home, but not before sass-ing the sisters about not giving him his cookies.

As he walked the mile and a half to his house, he saw Bishop Ralph's truck headed down Skeem Lane toward his place and realized he was going to be in serious trouble. The bishop arrived there before Reed did. Almost immediately when Reed crossed the threshold, his dad called him into the living room. As he entered, Bishop Skeem, who was already in the home, turned to Reed's father and said, "Ed, don't get after that boy. He was just acting in self-defense." Reed got into some trouble for mouthing off to the sisters—that he deserved, but he's convinced Bishop Skeem saved him from a more severe punishment.

We Oasis boys were taken on a special trip by train to Salt Lake City in May 1955. I don't remember the bishop going, but he must have approved it. Several men from the ward went including Dad. We attended the Blue Angel Air Show and went to Temple Square and Liberty Park. It was a memorable super activity.⁹⁴ Dad

94 "Oasis," *Chronicle*, May 26, 1958.

took his 8mm motion picture camera along and the event is now recorded on DVD.

On May 17, 1956, Bishop Skeem took all the boys in the ward on a trip to Bryce Canyon in the back of his large pickup. I was invited because that fall and I would be twelve and ordained a deacon. The experience was made unforgettable by a surprise heavy snowstorm that covered those of us riding in the back. Bishop Skeem stopped at a service station and got some cardboard which he put up on the sides and overhead on the truck racks. That made a big difference! I was grateful.⁹⁵

Ralph's daughter, Brenda (Skeem) Cullimore, wasn't surprised that he took us in the back of his pickup with no seatbelts. She wrote,

Dad often took the scouts on trips in the back of his new truck. It was always an adventure. On one trip, the boys were all in the back enjoying some drinks when Dad hit a big rut in the canyon road. The truck tipped over! One of the scouts was so proud of himself because he kept his drink level and managed not to spill one drop of it as the truck slowly fell over. Luckily, no one was hurt.

Brenda shared another story when she went along with her dad on an Oasis Boy Scout trip.

On another occasion, Dad took me and my girlfriend on a trip with the scouts to Zion's National Park. My friend and I rode in the front of the truck with Dad and the boys in the enclosed back. And of course, my friend and I slept in our own tent. We hiked up the river in the narrows of Zion. The

95 "Oasis," *Chronicle*, May 17, 1956.

boys carried Jack Anderson on a deer cart that my dad had brought because he had an injured leg. We also got to swim in the Virgin River. We had lots of fun on that trip.⁹⁶

Following a service project, Bishop Skeem took us boys to the Delta Drug Store for sundaes. It was the first time I tasted caramel or had a sundae for that matter. Sitting at the soda fountain counter, I thought it was grand! (This was before fast food came to Delta.)

Years after he was released as bishop, Brother Skeem would seek me out after a priesthood meeting to chat. (Since the membership of the Oasis Ward was never very big, high priests and elders met together.) He would ask how I was doing in college and things of that nature. I appreciated his continued interest in me.

Ralph needed a little push toward the marriage altar. Andy Ray and Lilly Owens used to live just east down the street from Ralph's parents on Danish Lane. The two families were great friends. Shirley Owens had known Ralph since she was a child. When Ralph was 30, his father, Marcus Skeem, picked out his wife for him. Marcus called him into the study and said it was time for him to get married and that he should marry that beautiful Shirley Owens. Ralph replied that she was just a baby, only 18, and Marcus said that was not a problem. Ralph dated Shirley. They fell in love and married in 1945.

Shirley enjoyed handicrafts such as quilting, crocheting, and embroidery work. She also painted many pictures, now precious family heirlooms. Sister Shirley loved to sing and as a trio with

96 Private email to the author from Brenda Cullimore, January 10, 2024.

Glenda Roundy and Beth Day. They performed at many funerals and ward functions.⁹⁷

Bishop Ralph was a successful farmer and goose hunter, but in the ward, he is primarily remembered for having directed the construction of the red-brick Oasis meetinghouse. This was an immense undertaking and is more fully reported in the section “Wardhouse Remodeled: The Red-brick Building” in this work.

LAWRENCE CROPPER—

SERVED FOR 5 YEARS, 1957–62

The new bishopric was announced in the ward history using two clippings from the Church News. The first one is dated March 2, 1957; then on April 20, a photo of the new bishopric appeared.⁹⁸ See it online at Oasis Ward Picture History.^{99 vii viii}

“Lawrence Cropper Bishop at Oasis. The Oasis Ward bishopric was reorganized Sunday evening with President June W. Black officiating. Lawrence Cropper was sustained as the new bishop with Russell Styler as the first counselor and Jack Willoughby as the second counselor. Berdell Memmott was named ward clerk and Deon Gillen as assistant..”¹⁰⁰

97 Private text to the author from Brenda (Skeem) Cullimore, January 22, 2024.

98 *Manuscript History*, 97, CHL.

99 *Manuscript History*, 99, CHL.

100 *Manuscript History*, 97–98, Mar. 17 Stake Conference in Delta. Bishop Cropper and counselors set apart by Elder John Londen, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve CHL.



Lawrence Cropper and Edna (Skeem) c.1935

Dad said that during his service as bishop, there was never any trouble. He felt it was a great honor for him to serve. “All my church assignments have been a great blessing to me. I have always relied upon the Lord for help. I have a strong testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a privilege to serve the Lord wherever and whenever I am needed. I have spoken in many funerals, performed many marriages, blessed many babies.”¹⁰¹

Bishop Cropper and his counselors continued taking the boys on outings. About a dozen of us Aaronic Priesthood boys went to the Utah State Capitol, Hogle Zoo, and Lagoon at the end of April 1958.¹⁰² Dad went on several scout outings with us. On one occasion, he even blew reveille on his cornet to wake everyone up. He

¹⁰¹ Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Church Service, FSM.

¹⁰² “Oasis,” *Chronicle*, May 29, 1958, 8.

saw ministering to young people as one of his primary duties as bishop. There is a reference to serving the youth in his patriarchal blessing.

I turned sixteen and was ordained a priest during Dad's service as bishop—there were only about a half dozen of us. We held our quorum meetings on Sunday mornings in the new bishop's office.

During his life, Dad had worked as a farmer, barber, manager of the Oasis Seed Plant, and alfalfa seed broker and operator of the Cropper Texaco in Delta. In the Church he served as Sunday school superintendent, scoutmaster, bishopric counselor, priesthood leader, and stake high councilman; however, he wasn't always a willing church-goer.

When I was young, I had to go to a meeting or else get a whipping. I'll tell you, it was pretty hard to sit there in those hot afternoons—I'd rather have gone swimming than go to church, but I knew better. I never administered the sacrament until I moved to Oasis. I never had the opportunity; it seems like they gave it to older men. I used to go to Mutual and all of that. I offered the benediction at Mutual a few times when I was a kid, but as far as activity in the ward, I never did much until I got to Oasis.

They didn't want us to go to that ward because we lived in the Hinckley Ward, but finally, they sent our records over there.

Dad was married to Maudie Wright as a young adult. (See "Hard Times: Illness" in this work for the story about her death.) He married Edna Lenora Skeem in 1931. After 13 years of marriage, they finally had a son. He was their only child. Mother loved flowers and working in the garden. "Edna had a real sense of humor and

loved to play and tease the children. In the Skeem and Petersen family, each child had a nickname. All of her nieces and nephews called her Auntie Duskin.”¹⁰³ For the last fifteen years of her life, she was confined to a wheelchair.

After mother passed away, as a token of his abiding love, Dad wrote out his feelings thanking her for her “encouragement in all my church assignments, the sacrifices you made so that I could fill them, for your testimony of the gospel. My prayers will always be that we will be united again and I am sure we will be in the not-too-distant future.”¹⁰⁴

JACK WILLOUGHBY— SERVED FOR 4 YEARS, 1962–65

Bishop Jack was friendly with everyone. He loved to sing and occasionally performed solos in the ward with his wife, Loenza, as his accompanist. He was born in Utah, but shortly after his birth, his family moved to Birmingham, England. Jack returned to the United States during his teenage years and worked for a time in the Northwest. He and his brother moved from there to Pioche, Nevada, where a mishap occurred that brought them some unwanted notoriety. While celebrating the 4th of July, one of their fireworks landed in a church basement and burned it down.

Jack’s love of horse racing was probably the motivation that brought him to the Delta area. It was in Oasis, at the home of Ethel and Alfred Stanworth that he met his future bride, Loenza Stanworth. They were married on April 17, 1933. She was his

¹⁰³ Cordell Cropper, “Biography,” Edna Lenora Skeem KWCR-6TG, FSM.

¹⁰⁴ Unpublished autobiography of Lawrence Cropper in the possession of the author.

constant support. They had 6 children. I remember her best as the ward pianist. I'm not sure if anyone else could play other than their daughter Sue.



Jack and Loenza (Stanworth) Willoughby c.1990

Bishop Jack officiated at the wedding ceremony of Carole Nichols to Randy Clements. The wedding and reception were held in December 1962, in the Oasis Ward. I was honored to be the master of ceremonies—fitting in a way. I had had a crush on Carole since we were children growing up in Oasis. She was my date for our sophomore swing dance.¹⁰⁵ Tragically, just ten months after her wedding, Carole and her infant child perished in a car-train collision.^{ix}

¹⁰⁵ "Reception Honors Bridal Pair," *Chronicle*, December 13, 1962, 5.

Bishop Jack and his wife Loenza diligently served the members of the Oasis Ward without hesitation. Once, when Dad was busy at the service station and I was away at BYU, they came and helped my mother get to a doctor's appointment—no easy job since she was confined to a wheelchair with rheumatoid arthritis.

While I was living in Provo, I made frequent trips home to help out at the station and just to be with the folks. I had decided that going on a mission was something I'd like to do. Bishop Willoughby encouraged me and helped me fill out my papers to serve.

Jack had many jobs during his life, but in Oasis he was both a farmer and forty-four-year employee of the Union Pacific Railroad. Two of his sons, Dick and Dale, became bishops of the Oasis Ward. The current bishop of the Deseret-Oasis Ward, Kirk Willoughby, is his grandson. Bishop Kirk and his family, live in the same house where Jack and Loenza resided.

RUSSELL T. STYLER— SERVED FOR 6 YEARS, 1965–71

Unlike in previous years, the introduction of the new bishopric is reported in the history on a Church standardized form: Record of Officers Sustained at the Annual Conference of the Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is proposed that we sustain Russell T. Styler as Bishop of the Oasis Ward with Berdell J. Memmott as First Counselor, and Deon J. Gillen as Second Counselor. Those in favor manifest it; those opposed manifest it." Ward Clerk Loren D. Rowley. Asst. Ward Clerk Fon Roy Hawley.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ *Manuscript History*, 184–85, CHL.



Russell and Jennie (Olsen) Styler c.1980

I remember Bishop Styler as a capable, loving, and friendly bishop. He came to my home after I returned from my mission and asked how I was adjusting. I told him I felt like a round peg in a square hole. He remembered that and shared it with the congregation when I gave my homecoming report.

Russell experienced the gift of healing as a young adult. It was shortly after he received his patriarchal blessing. The patriarch, Charles R. Woodbury, had just blessed him with “the gift of healing,” and asked him to participate in the health blessing he was about to give a young girl who had fallen and put a scissor blade through her eye. Russell had never done anything like that before, but willingly accepted the stake patriarch’s invitation to assist in performing the ordinance. Because of a letter addressed to him dated March 23, 1946, from Patriarch Woodbury and his wife, we know the results.

All day I have wanted to write to you about the good news we have of the little girl you had the privilege of anointing here in our home last Sunday and hope it will encourage you to assist whenever you have the opportunity.

We thought since that was the first time you participated in giving a blessing, learning the results might help build your testimony in knowing that the Lord hears and answers prayers and respects his priesthood. I'm sure you felt the rich degree of the power of healing that was present here during the blessing and remember how, although that eye was blind, even though Brother Woodbury didn't know it, he promised her she should have her full sight and would never be handicapped in her mission and that when she should return to the doctor in Salt Lake they would find great improvement in her eye.

The next day, her folks took her up. The doctor marveled and said that by some way, there had been a miracle in her eye. She can see. [He also said,] there is a little scar where the scissors went right through, but she is looking around that and will probably outgrow it.

We went to Delta yesterday to see them and they were so happy over the great healing. The scum that covered her eye is almost all vanished and it looks about as normal as the other. Several people have asked her mother which one it was that was injured. They didn't tell the doctor anything about the administration.

Please yourself, but I think it would be nice to keep this testimony with your [patriarchal] blessing, being your first

experience. Hoping it will strengthen your testimony and make you feel as humble as it has us, we remain your friends, Bro. and Sister Woodbury.

In addition to the miracle of the blind eye, Russell's son Mike also gave me a humorous story about his dad's call to serve as bishop. It shows Russell's humility in a rather different way.

He was baling hay down on our farm by the old Oasis junkyard. President Golden Black drove down to the farm and caught Dad as he was greasing the baler. As President Black approached, Dad was holding the grease gun. They exchanged pleasantries. Then President Black said he was there to extend him a call to be bishop of the Oasis Ward. Dad was so startled, that he squeezed the grease gun lever and shot grease right across the front of President Black's white shirt! Dad was embarrassed and shaken and tried to explain that many more qualified men should be called. He said he didn't think he could do the job and would not be acceptable as a bishop. President Black was not to be deterred and Dad shared this quote from him, "Russell you just do your best, and then don't give a damn."¹⁰⁷

Deer hunting in the area is a popular sport. In the fall, a lot of guys get "buck fever" and head for the hills. Bishop Russell was no exception. Why not combine hunting with a scout overnight camping trip? It made perfect sense back then, but would be unacceptable today; again, another story from Mike,

¹⁰⁷ Private email from Mike Styler to author January 2024.

While Dad was bishop, he also acted as scoutmaster. There were many trips that he hauled me and the other scout-age boys camping. One year in particular, he took all the scouts up Oak Creek Canyon. That Friday and Saturday happened to be the last two days of the deer hunt. He took along his 30-30 rifle “just in case.” The boys were excited to do a drive and push a buck to Dad. He sat at the top of a draw and 12 boys scattered out at the bottom and drove the deer past Dad. One two-point ran past him and he shot it. The meat was donated to a family in the ward that needed it, but that night the scouts had venison heart and liver roasted over a campfire!

Reed’s brother, Jerold (Cope) Skeem introduced Russell to Jennie Olson at a dance, and love blossomed.¹⁰⁸ Jennie loved flowers and proved she had a green thumb when she moved from verdant Oak City to the alkali of Oasis as a newlywed in 1950. “She made the grass, gardens, and flowers grow as she raised not only plants but four children as well. She was devoted to farm life, doing everything from driving tractors and bottle-feeding calves to cooking for threshing crews.” She found employment in local doctors’ offices and as a recreational therapist. In the Church, she served as Stake Young Women’s President among many other callings.¹⁰⁹

Bishop Russell and his wife Jennie Olson were a wonderful couple. They were universally admired and respected by the community—perhaps because they were always so cheerful. Russell was the grandson of the first bishop of Oasis, John Styler, and the son of Bishop J. Val Styler, all of whom were successful Oasis farmers.

¹⁰⁸ Private text from Mike Styler to the author January 22, 2024.

¹⁰⁹ “Obituary,” Jennie Olson KWZX-3ZD, FSM.

**BERDELL J. MEMMOTT—
SERVED FOR 5 YEARS, 1971–76**

Again the change in bishopric is reported at ward conference on the officer form: Berdell J. Memmott as bishop, Dale S. Willoughby and Walter Eldon Rowley as counselors, Tony Lane Stanworth as clerk, and Dick J. Willoughby as executive secretary.^{110x}



Berdell and Helen (Skeem) Memmott

As with other retiring bishoprics, the ward gave a party honoring the service of Bishop Styler and his bishopric. “The MIA furnished the entertainment and the Relief Society refreshments. Each member of the outgoing bishopric received a combination Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Manuscript History, 227, CHL.

¹¹¹ Manuscript History, 239, CHL.

Bishop Berdell was a personal older friend. He was married to my cousin, Helen Skeem. My wife Susan and I looked forward to visiting with him and his family of four children whenever we were in Oasis. His son, Vincent, is a few years younger than me, but we have always had a good relationship. His daughter, Penny (Memcott) Stanworth, who lives in Oasis, has been one of my most reliable contacts for this work. Penny shares a few memories of her parents.

Mom and Dad were high school sweethearts, Dad was very active in high school in operas, school plays, football, track, and boxing, and was senior class president. He had a very good voice and enjoyed singing.

Dad worked for the railroad but got laid off when they cut back. We moved to Salt Lake hoping he could find a job. Everywhere he went, they would tell him he was too old. He finally found work at Eico in their machine shop as a press operator. Mom went back to work also to make ends meet. In April of 1961, Dad got a chance to get his job back with the railroad, and they came back to their home in Oasis. He worked for 18 years on the railroad, then moved over to the telephone company, and retired from there. Dad had a knack for knowing everyone's phone number, where they lived, and who was related to whom.

*He always planted a large garden which he delighted in sharing with many families—it was one way he helped others. Another of his talents was cooking—his chocolate pancakes were famous among the young men.*¹¹²

112 Private email from Penny (Memcott) Stanworth to the author, January 20, 2024.

Both Berdell and Helen were lifelong Oasis residents. As a bishop, he served faithfully and well.

DICK WILLOUGHBY—

SERVED FOR 6 YEARS, 1976–82

There is a ten-year gap in the official church record of the Oasis Ward, 1972 to 1982. During this time, Dick Willoughby was called and served as bishop. Bishop Dick chose his brother, Dale, as his first counselor.



Dick Willoughby and Sandra Willoughby

Dick was drafted into the army in 1958. After the mandatory training, he spent a year in Germany. Shortly after his return, he met his future wife at her family's restaurant in Fillmore. He married Sandra Rae Lowder on November 25, 1960. Their marriage was solemnized in the Manti Temple 8 years later.

The young couple started life for themselves when Dick found work, first in the Salt Lake area and then in Grand Junction, Colorado. On a snowy day, while traveling to be with family, he was involved in an auto accident. It was a single-car rollover which left

him paralyzed with a broken back. Despite the difficulty of life in a wheelchair, Dick and Sandy raised a family of two adopted sons.

Mike Styler had a close working relationship with Dick and shares his memories.

I recall Dick being very humble and nervous as a new bishop. He may have felt uncomfortable conducting meetings while being in a wheelchair. Everyone, including him, soon became accustomed to that.

Another worry he had was how to fund the ward. He needn't have. With support of the proceeds from the ward bazaar and the Oasis Seed Plant's annual meeting/dinner plus the income from the farm, there was plenty of money for the ward budget.

Dick had several jobs. For a time, he was a DJ on the local radio, then he worked for Millard County Weed Control driving a spray truck. For many years he and Sandy were staff for Deseret-Oasis Water District. Dick would drive around with one of his sons, or other youngsters, to read all the meters. Sandy did the billing. Dick also served as Chairman of Millard County Service District receiving funds from the state to be expended on county roads. I was on the board with him. ¹¹³

Dick's younger brother, Steve, shares a memory of Dick's desire to fly planes. "It was simply something he wanted to do. He went to Denver to pursue it, but was denied a license because of his eyes."

¹¹³ Private email from Mike Styler to the author, January 2024.

My family and I made periodic visits to the Oasis Ward from our home in Idaho while he was bishop. Yes, he conducted meetings from a seated position—it didn’t seem to be a problem. I saw him once during the week going on a solo exercise outing in his wheelchair. He was on the road, propelling his wheelchair with his arms going over the tracks. When I mentioned it to him, he said it was his way to stay in shape, “others go for a jog or a walk. I have my own way of doing it.” Despite his handicap, his attitude was good, and he carried the hope of the gospel in his soul.

**CONRAD G. STANWORTH—
SERVED FOR 5 YEARS, 1982–87**

I never knew Conard very well. In my view, there were two groups of people in Oasis: those who were active and came to church and those who didn’t. Conard was definitely in the second group.

His wife NeRee had been active as a youth and graduated from Seminary. She dated Conard; they fell in love and got married. After that, NeRee was a great support for her husband. She immersed herself in the farm, milking cows right along with the guys and doing the paperwork for the dairy. Occasionally, she went to meetings on Sunday and taught Primary and at Relief Society during the week. She wasn’t all that active but willingly joined with Conard when he decided the gospel should be an important part of their lives.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Personal email from Penny and Gene Stanworth to the author, January 2024.



Conard Stanworth and NeRee (Erickson) Stanworth

Ward leaders had made attempts to bring them into activity, but always without lasting success. Bishop Dick Willoughby and others were happily surprised—nearly blown away—when Conard and NeRee showed up together at church one Sunday.

For me, there’s a lesson here: don’t label people. I had categorized Conard and NeRee as “inactive.” As it turned out they not only became active, they made a huge contribution to the ward—especially during the flood of 1983. As President Russell M. Nelson taught,

The adversary rejoices in labels because they divide us and restrict the way we think about ourselves and each other. How sad it is when we honor labels more than we honor each other. Labels can lead to judging and animosity. Any abuse or prejudice toward another because of nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender, educational degrees, culture, or other significant identifiers is offensive to our Maker! ¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022, Gospel Library.

What brought Conard and NeRee suddenly into activity? Conard's second counselor, Mike Styler, asked him point blank one day, "Conard, you've always been a good guy and a good neighbor and supportive of everyone, but what happened? What caused you to get active in the Church?" In response, Bishop Conard told Mike about a dairyman's trip to the Midwest he and NeRee had made with other prosperous Millard County dairymen and their wives. Conard was deeply impressed with their fellow travelers. For the most part, they were active saints who were happily living their religion. This experience made a lasting impression. Conard felt the Spirit and decided he wanted to be like their friends. He told NeRee how he felt and made a decision to change his life. He committed to giving up coffee and swearing.

First Counselor Ken Skeem adds these insights,

Stake President Glen Swalberg knew that Conard smoked, disliked taxes, and had a dispute with the Intermountain Power Plant. Despite all of this, he felt inspired that the Lord wanted Conard as bishop. Over six months, Conard stopped smoking and shortly after that became our bishop. He chose to follow the Savior.

Because of something I believe that others thought controversial, President Swalberg thought I should be excommunicated. Bishop Stanworth came to my defense. He asked every member of the ward to come in for an interview on my behalf. They supported me and I retained my position as counselor. I am happy and grateful for the outcome.

*The bishop's motto was "We all need to be one with God and each other." He felt that all the ward members should be united and love each other.*¹¹⁶

Shortly after Conard and NeRee started attending meetings, the couple was invited to participate in a Temple Prep class, taught by Brother Mike Styler. This was a good experience for them and several other couples, who like the Stanworths, had been less active.¹¹⁷

Concerning his change of heart, his son, Gene, and daughter-in-law, Penny Stanworth, wrote, "We know that once he committed to get active in the Church, he put his whole heart into it and never looked back. We are so grateful that he was reactivated, and was willing to serve the people of the Oasis ward."¹¹⁸

A short time after Conard and NeRee became active, he was asked to accept the calling of a bishop. He requested a few month's delay so he could better learn what his duties would be and how a ward functions.

The ward sustained "Conard G. Stanworth as bishop at the Oasis Ward, Kenneth A. Skeem as first counselor and Michael Russell Styler as second counselor, as the executive secretary to the ward priesthood executive committee Roger Earl Stanworth, as ward clerk Warren Hale Peterson, and as assistant ward clerk Jody Fowler Aultman."¹¹⁹ They were set apart on February 21, 1982.

116 Private email from Ken Skeem to the author, January 19, 2024.

117 Private conversation with Mike Styler, November 19, 2023.

118 Personal email to the author from Penny (Memmott) Stanworth, November, 2023.

119 *Manuscript History*, 263, CHL.

In regards to their first 12 months, we read in the ward history, “Bishop Conard G. Stanworth and his counselors have continued to lead our ward in a most benevolent and wise manner throughout this year.”¹²⁰

The year after he became bishop, Conard and NeRee were deeply involved in helping the ward through the ravages of a devastating flood. For more on that disaster, and how the Church and ward helped, see “The Flood of 1983” in this work. Conard’s wife, NeRee gave her full support. They had a family of three boys. Ten years after serving as bishop, the two of them filled a senior mission in Dallas, Texas, and afterward became ordinances workers in the Manti Temple.

DALE WILLOUGHBY—

SERVED FOR 4 YEARS, 1987–91

Bishop Dale was the last bishop of the Oasis Ward. His counselors were Rex Stanworth and David Styler; Carl Webb was the clerk and Paul Cahoon was the executive secretary.

Dale operated a successful farm on the east end of Cropper Lane for many years, but he didn’t do it alone. On Christmas Eve in 1957, he went on a blind date with a girl from Holden who would become his wife. He knew from the moment he met Nadine that he wanted to marry her. She accepted his proposal on graduation night and they were sealed together in the Manti Temple on October 8, 1958.

¹²⁰ *Manuscript History*, 270, CHL.



Dale Willoughby and Nadine (Stevens) Willoughby

They soon settled into life together on a farm. He was surprised and upset when his request for a farm deferment was denied and he was drafted into the army. But it turned out okay, during his two years of service the couple spent a year in Germany and enjoyed touring other countries.

Together Dale and Nadine had seven children. The farm was a good way to teach work ethics, something they felt was very important. Everyone had their responsibilities and were taught that a family is a team that works and plays together.¹²¹

Dale served for four years as bishop. During his tenure, the Oasis Ward had some 160 members. Sacrament meeting attendance was at 48% when they took over and increased quarterly until during the last quarter of his bishopric it achieved an average of 75%. When asked what accounted for the increase, he responded that aside from the

¹²¹ Millard County Chronicle Progress, "Nadine Stevens Willoughby obituary," November 7, 2013.

influence of the Holy Ghost, he and the bishopric members made it a goal to visit every ward family at least once during the year.

Concerning this increase in activity, Bishop Dale said, “At first, some ward members were hesitant about these visits thinking they were going to receive a calling or be asked for a contribution to the ward budget. But slowly this attitude changed and members accepted them for what they were—a friendly fellowship opportunity.”

Faithfully, Bishop Dale made calls to every ward member on their birthday and encouraged baptisms of children of record on the day they turned 8—making it a special occasion with treats. He reasoned, “Members are frequently asked, ‘When were you baptized?’ It’s easy to remember if you were baptized on your birthday.”¹²²

DESERET-OASIS WARD BISHOPRIC

On Sunday, February 24, 1991, Oasis rejoined the Deseret Ward. Those chosen for the new bishopric were Dale Jensen bishop, Bryan Richardson and Jay Finlinson counselors, Mike Styler ward clerk, and Preston Eliason executive secretary. Dale, Bryan, and Preston live in Deseret; Jay and Mike in Oasis.¹²³

Some were relieved when this happened. It had always been difficult to fully staff a ward with so few members. Others were upset. Ever since a separate community began to form on the opposite side of the river, the “us-and-them” attitude had arisen. To better understand these feelings, and what the situation is today, refer to “Town Rivalry” in this work; for more about the wards combining see “Oasis Ward Combined with Deseret.”

¹²² Private conversation with Dale Willoughby, December 2022.

¹²³ Personal email with Mike Styler, December 23, 2023.

HARD TIMES

Mormon history is replete with persecution and suffering. From the time of Joseph Smith's first vision, he and his followers were driven time and again from their homes. Within a twenty-seven-year period, they were forced from four states, trudged over 1300 miles of wilderness, and settled in an isolated desert. Almost immediately after arriving, their crops were set upon by a plague of crickets. Persevering with faith is a legacy these stalwart pioneers passed on to succeeding generations.

Speaking of trials, President Howard W. Hunter once said, "Struggle, persecution, and sorrow have been the lot of our forebears. Kirtland, Jackson County, Clay County, Haun's Mill, and Nauvoo seem synonymous with suffering—a part of the tribulation the Lord promised that his people would have to endure."¹²⁴

DESERET AND OASIS SETTLERS

Before the creation of the Oasis Ward in 1891, the history of Deseret and Oasis was the same. Thirteen years after the Mormon pioneers

¹²⁴ Howard W. Hunter, "God Will Have a Tried People," General Conference, April 1980.

crossed the plains, those who answered the call of their prophet leader to settle West Millard and establish the town of Deseret showed similar resolve in the face of adversity. Their burdens were not light.

Bread stuff was very scarce [in the 1860-70s in Deseret]. Early settlers had to subsist almost entirely on fish—plentiful in the Sevier River. No one went hungry at any time as neighbors shared. Fish were taken to the mountain settlements and traded for fruit and vegetables. Large barrels of fish were salted down for the winter. Fruit, squash, and beef were dried for winter use—the settlers knew nothing of canning. Alfalfa greens, pigweed, and lumpy dick (a cooked mixture of flour and water) were common food items. When a beef was killed, everyone had a fry; when cheese was cut, everyone had a taste.

The winter of 1879 was a bad one. It was so cold the cattle froze and starved by the hundreds. When spring finally came, the people were in terrible circumstances. Bishop Joseph Black went to Gilbert Webb, who owned many cattle up the river, and told him the people needed food. Mr. Webb allowed him to go and kill any that were fat enough and bring them to the people. The animals brought in were thin and the meat had to be boiled to be of use. Everyone was thankful to get it

The people were ambitious and thrifty, but poor. Many grownups went barefooted in the summer and in the winter they wore moccasins made from denim or skins. All the children went barefoot in warm weather. One large family

lived in one room. The children had to stay out in the straw stack (even in freezing weather) when a new baby was born.

Christina Warnick tended cows, churned the butter, and every morning before the sun rose, she was up and taking her precious pounds of butter to Oasis to sell—before the sun would melt it. She walked both ways and got home in time to fix the breakfast. One summer she sold 405 pounds of butter. She helped on the farm, grubbed brush, hauled manure out on the land, helped cut the wild hay, sheared the sheep, washed and spun the wool, and wove the cloth for their clothes...

In 1889 a plague of black diphtheria ran rampant in Deseret and many of the people died.¹²⁵

As can be seen above, the scarcity of food, clothing, and money were hardships these Deseret pioneers had to endure. Life without modern conveniences demands hard work for survival. There were no medical facilities as we understand. Death, even of the young, was common.

My great-grandmother Cropper was among the first residents of Deseret. A 1926 article in the Chronicle tells us of: 1) her feelings when she came 2) an unusual special treat and 3) how the settlers kept up their morale.

Mrs. Leigh R. Cropper [Fanny Louisa Powell 1845-1931]... came over from Fillmore and was much discouraged to come to this bleak flat desert waste and longed to get back to the clear streams and vegetation of Fillmore. She thought if she ever got away from here she would never come back.

¹²⁵ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 445-47.

She told of one special occasion, as a marked treat for the hard-working men, who were to be rewarded exceptionally well. She asked them what they wanted. By unanimous consent, they asked for "potato soup." Their common diet those days was game, fish, and a very scanty supply of other edibles, so [for them] soup was a real treat.

They kept up morale by singing "Hard Times Come Again No More." She said that people nowadays don't know what the words "hard times" mean. They should have lived then as did the actual pioneers, and then they would know. Nevertheless, the people enjoyed themselves. There was unity, good fellowship, and oneness that cemented all.¹²⁶

The grit and perseverance of these hard-working men and women laid the foundation for the prosperity that came later.

My great-grandfather Mahonri Moriancumer Bishop (1848-1910) was an early settler of Deseret and well acquainted with hardship. Scarcity, sickness, a knife wound, a flight to Mexico, prison, family deaths, and a divorce underscore his trials. Despite his difficulties, Hon was well liked and had a happy life. Angela Bishop posted his story on FamilySearch in 2021,

Mahonri came to Utah with his parents when he was two years old. When he was seventeen, Hon was called to go back across the plains and assist emigrants make the trek to Utah. All he received for his labor, and the use of his team and wagon, was the goodwill of those he helped.

¹²⁶ "Daughters of the Pioneers Meet," *Chronicle*, October 14, 1926.

At age nineteen he married Mary Amanda (Gibbs) and established a home in Fillmore.... [Around 1873. they] moved to Deseret where he was [called to be the] first counselor to Bishop Joseph V. Black. [He served] for 15 years.¹²⁷

Troubles were many, food was scarce and clothes were made of flour sacks. They had sickness and many accidents on the farm and water trouble.

One evening in the summer of 1874 another farmer came to the house, and an altercation over water followed. As a result, Mahonri was stabbed in the left side, between the lower ribs, bending the knife blade nearly double. He was taken into Deseret; the distance was covered in a farm wagon and when they reached there only a midwife was available. In addition to the pain and seriousness of the wound and Mary's anxiety over his condition, there was much valuable time lost which a settler could ill afford at that season of the year.¹²⁸

Plural marriage was practiced in the Church—especially among those in leadership positions. It produced hardships that today are difficult for us to understand. In 1882, [Mahonri] married Janett Brunson. She was taken into the family and lived in the north part of the house with Mary living in the south part.

In 1886, he was led to believe that he should go to Mexico to avoid prosecution for living in polygamy. He sold his home and fitted out horses and a wagon for the trip. He left a good supply of flour with Mary and then started with Janett and her two

127 "Biography," Mahonri Moriancumer Bishop KWCP-71P, FSM.

128 "Biography," Mary Ann Amanda Gibbs Bishop KW87-L9Z, FSM.

sons. They left early in the spring in company with about seven other wagons [from Deseret]. After traveling for about two and a half months, he received a letter from his wife Mary stating that at a quarterly conference in Fillmore, Apostle Francis M. Lyman had said that the people that went to Mexico did so on their own and not from advice of the leaders of the church. When Mahonri received this letter, he said, "Brothers, this is where I go back to Utah." And so he did.



Mahonri, Mary, Janett Bishop

Upon his return, he left Janett in Escalante and returned to Deseret where he built another home for Mary. He later returned to Escalante and moved Janett and her three children to Fillmore and then to Deseret.¹²⁹

Death was another hardship he endured. Each of his eighteen children was precious to him. On April 7, 1888, his small toddler, Lewis Moreancumer born July 10, 1883, suffered an accident.

¹²⁹ Stella H. Day, "Builders of Early Millard: Biographies of Pioneers of Millard County, 1850 to 1875." Art City Pub. Co; ASIN B0007BSJ8W, 1979, 63-65.



Mahonri M. Bishop is pictured here (center back row with a beard) in his prison uniform. The other prisoners' are identified on FamilySearch Memories (FSM) KWCP-71P.

[Little Lewis] went down [to the river's edge] lost his balance and fell into the river. Everything possible was done by an understanding and sympathetic community to recover the little boy, but all in vain. The father watched for days hoping the body would raise and give him a chance to recover it. He kept the vigil alone, a mile below the scene of the accident, until he lost hope. [Two months after the tragedy,] on June 13 herd boys found the body near a slough, nearly buried in mud, about five or six miles down the river. At the time of the accident, Janett [the mother] was taken to Mary's [Hon's first wife] where she lay prostrate for several days.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ "Biography," Mahonri Moriancumer Bishop KWCP-71P, FSM.

During these years, prosecution for the infraction of anti-polygamy laws was causing a lot of trouble. Men were being imprisoned by the hundreds. Friday, January 28, 1887, homes in Deseret were raided by deputy marshals in search of polygamists. On this same date, Mary and Erminnie, Mahonri's oldest children, were subpoenaed to appear as witnesses before the Grand Jury then in session at Provo, Utah, in a case charging unlawful cohabitation against their father. For nearly four years he was on the "underground." On September 19, 1890, he voluntarily appeared before Judge Blackburn of the First District Court in Provo and was sentenced to six months imprisonment. During his incarceration, his and Janett's son died of spinal meningitis.¹³¹

Ironically, five days after Hon was sentenced for polygamy, the Church adopted the Manifesto, today called Official Declaration 1, which abolished plural marriage as a tenet of faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The abandonment of this practice brought other hardships. The end of plural marriage required great faith and sometimes complicated, painful, and intensely personal decisions on the part of individual members and Church leaders."¹³² Mahonri and Mary disagreed as to the application of the abolishment of "the principle" and what it meant. Their disagreement was of such a nature that it led to their divorce.

[Hon] labored as a freighter, tiller of the soil, builder of Fort Deseret, and many other jobs. This life sapped the strength and undermined the health of many of the pioneers. The lives

¹³¹ "Biography," Mahonri Moriancumer Bishop KWCP-71P, FSM.

¹³² "The Manifesto and the End of Plural Marriage," churchofjesuschrist.org.

*of Mahonri and both of his wives... were full of hardships incident to pioneer life. Many things came into the lives of polygamists to disturb them—things which are not known or thought of in the monogamist family.*¹³³

Before coming to Deseret, Bertha Jensen (1854-1925) married Niels Peter Jensen, a Danish soldier. They came directly to Deseret via New York City from Denmark after their conversion to the Mormon faith. Soon after their arrival, they moved to Oasis. Her biography talks about how wages were paid during those early days and how people in Deseret looked out for one another,

[Neighbors] would often exchange work. [Both she and her husband Neils] took jobs whenever they got a chance. Most wages were about 50 cents a day, and they were seldom paid in cash, [but] in script—the tin coins [that] could only be used at the store issuing them or by agreement between a store and the employer. A neighbor, Lars Hansen, would hire [Neils] to work for him and would compensate him with molasses, meat, flour, and other goods as pay. [Bertha] would often shear sheep to help out.

*[Bertha] was always a hard worker and was a good neighbor in deed as well as word. When anyone was sick, she would kill a chicken, make chicken soup, and send the children over with it—perhaps miles away.*¹³⁴

¹³³ “Biography,” Mahonri Moriancumer Bishop KWCP-71P, FSM.

¹³⁴ Donna Eldora (Jensen) Sundquist, “Bertha Marie Pederson Jensen.” Bertha Marie Pedersen KWC5-2W3. FSM.

One often-overlooked hardship of many of the early settlers of Oasis was the challenge of living in a foreign culture and speaking a different language. Lyman and Newell explain that “most of the [original] families [in Oasis] were from Denmark. Norway [and Switzerland]. The Hansens, Jensens, Pedersens, Skeems, Christensens were all [Danish] converts to the LDS Church.”¹³⁵ The Stylers came from Switzerland. My mother grew up in a bilingual home and I inherited a few small books in Danish from her sister. Neils and Bertha Jensen “were Danish immigrants in the area and they used to get various Danish papers and would share them with others.”¹³⁶ This struggle was mitigated somewhat by the Church offering an English program for these adult convert immigrants.¹³⁷

ILLNESS

Sickness and accidents are incidents of life and early area residents had their share of both. Death was a common occurrence—even for the young. Modern hospitals, sterilization, and vaccines were unknown. The following depiction of a plague and the deaths it caused in the Croft family is especially poignant.

In 1889, the plague of black diphtheria ran rampant in Deseret and many died. [It] caused great fear among the pioneers. The streets were roped off around homes where the disease had struck. Clothing and furnishings were all burned. There was no antitoxin known at this time, and anyone contracting the disease seemed doomed.

135 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 163.

136 Sundquist, Bertha Marie Pedersen KWC5-2W3. FSM.

137 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 163.

There was a home-brewed medicine made of sage, vinegar, alum, honey, etc. which was called “Mrs. Dame’s Remedy” which settlers felt was preventative.

Typical of the death and sorrow the disease brought was the case of the George Croft family. Ten-year-old Thomas Croft was the first victim. He was taken to Fillmore for burial and his funeral was held outside [to control the spread of the disease.] That same night, the mother, Letitia, became ill and two days later she died. On the same day, her father, Thomas Davies, died of the dreaded disease.

After the mother’s funeral, the children returned to Deseret. On August 11th, Florence became ill. She died on the 13th. Mary Evelyn became ill that day and died on the 15th. Both girls were buried at night in a heavy rainstorm by the elder brothers, George and Jacob, and a friend, Rich Cropper.¹³⁸

Following the dam collapse and flood of 1909, “there was a terrible epidemic of typhoid fever caused by so much water under the floors of [Deseret] homes.”¹³⁹ Another scourge that hit the area was the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918. Dad told me that he and his family were quarantined in their Hinckley home because of it. Those of us who survived COVID-19 in 2020 can easily empathize. This proclamation about the closure of public places ran on page one of the *Millard County Chronicle*, October 10, 1918:

Proclamation—That dreaded malady, Spanish Influenza, has almost surely made its appearance in Delta and in order that

¹³⁸ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 447-48.

¹³⁹ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 437.

it may be held in check it is necessary that every person cooperate in its quelling.

For the present, it is thought necessary to close the public schools, the moving pictures, the pool hall, and all public gatherings, and the same is proclaimed. Signed J.W. Thurston, Pres. Of Delta Town Board, October 10, 1918.

By the time the contagion had run its course, at least 91,799 Utahans had been infected and 2,915 had died. “This pandemic was so lethal that it took more lives than all the combined military deaths of World War I and World War II, and life expectancy in the United States fell by about 12 years from 1917 to 1918.”¹⁴⁰ Ironically World War I ended a month after the above proclamation was issued.

My father and his family escaped relatively unaffected by this worldwide influenza, but his first wife, Maudie Wright, was taken from him as a result of an antiseptic administered during the delivery of my brother. It is a family story filled with pathos. I recorded it as Dad related it to me in 1978—fifty-one years after her passing.^{xi}

[Maudie] got pregnant and then our baby was born, but he died. She wanted him named Lawrence and that’s what’s on the stone. It was just ten days later that Maudie died. He and his mother are buried in Hinckley.

Maudie had some fluid around her heart from the antiseptic. I don’t know—if we had been in a hospital it might not have happened. If it had been today, she wouldn’t have died.

¹⁴⁰ Lauren Fields, “The 1918 Spanish flu killed 50 million people worldwide. Here’s how it affected Utah,” *Deseret News*, December 22, 2018.

She seemed to know she was going to die. She made that remark and I tried to talk her out of it. [At the time of her passing,] I was working up at the mill on the Thirty-foot [cutting ice for summer use.] The folks phoned the mill and [some men] came and told me to go home. I went down. Then is when Maudie told me goodbye. Hon [Dad's brother] was there too, and she said, "Goodbye Hon, you've always been so good to me." Then she said, "There's been a lady sitting on my bed all afternoon telling me when to breathe." Maudie's mother had been with her and she said she couldn't see anyone. But Maudie could see her and talked with her. That made a believer in the afterlife out of me.

We decided to take Maudie to Salt Lake, but she didn't make it. We got quite a way up there in the old Buick. The doctor was in the backseat with her and I was driving. Suddenly the doctor said, "Stop!" He gave her a shot and Maudie said, "Oh, you're just being mean to me." I guess that's the last words she ever spoke. We drove on for a while and got nearly to Silver City when the doctor said, "Stop. She's dying." I got in the back and held her on my lap. Doctor Warnis drove the car and we turned around and came back.

She died December 23, 1927—just before Christmas. This event just about finished me, but of course, we accept life as it comes to us and make the best of it.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, "Autobiography under Maudie Wright Cropper," An audio version is also available "Maudie's death, LC's first wife," (FSM).

Did Maudie receive a health blessing? I suppose she did. In his history, Dad said, “Maudie and I always had our family prayer and lived close to the Lord. She was a teacher in the [Hinckley] Ward Sunday School and I was a home teacher.”¹⁴² If she had a blessing, why wasn’t she healed? Concerning illnesses and how we should treat them, I particularly like what Elder Dallin H. Oaks said in a 2010 general conference address.

The use of medical science is not at odds with our prayers of faith and our reliance on priesthood blessings. When a person requested a priesthood blessing, Brigham Young would ask, “Have you used any remedies?” To those who said no because “we wish the Elders to lay hands upon us, and we have faith that we shall be healed,” President Young replied, “That is very inconsistent according to my faith. If we are sick, and ask the Lord to heal us, and to do all for us that is necessary to be done, according to my understanding of the Gospel of salvation, I might as well ask the Lord to cause my wheat and corn to grow, without my plowing the ground and casting in the seed. It appears consistent to me to apply every remedy that comes within the range of my knowledge, and [then] to ask my Father in Heaven... to sanctify that application to the healing of my body.”¹⁴³

¹⁴² Lawrence Cropper, “Maudie Wright,” Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Maudie Wright, FSM.

¹⁴³ Dallin H. Oaks, “Healing the Sick,” April 2010, <https://www.churchofjesus-christ.org/study/general-conference>, and *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 163.

WARS' EFFECTS

The hardships and losses associated with the Black Hawk Indian War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the War on Terror impacted individuals and their families in Oasis. My great-grandmother Cecilia Skeem (mother of Bishop Marcus Skeem) related the following story. It demonstrates the suffering caused by war and typifies the feelings of many others.

The bright stars, which I have always so loved to watch twinkle in God's eternal heaven, are still beautiful to me. Thus, I have kept my faith brightly blazing through the years, for I feel I am rewarded at the sunset of life by the vision of a better world. Little did I know that a great world war (WW1) would soon raise its ugly head and dash my beautiful vision.

Young men were drafted into the army. My oldest grandson, Neils A. Skeem, being in the first draft. He was a big, strong, stalwart youth in the prime of his life. On leaving, he put his arms around me. While thus embraced, I felt my pulse quickening. Must it really be goodbye? Following him out, I shrugged my shoulders, saying to myself, "It must not be," but seeing me standing there, he said, "Grandmother, pray for me. I would rather be killed than come home maimed for life." That touched me deeply. I supported myself against the porch post, staring up the road as long as my eyes could see them. His parents (Andrew S. Skeem and Martine Jensen Skeem) accompanied him to the train.^{xii}

I sat down, waiting for the train to go by. At last, I heard its whistle; a screech involuntarily came from my lips. I struggled to my feet so I could wave as they went by. There were many

soldiers on the train, all waving farewell. They quickly faded from view.

A short time later, my next oldest grandson, Peter H. Petersen, was drafted. He who had been raised near me now had to go. There were a few days in his life I hadn't seen him. Sitting and reading one day, a knock came at the door. In answer to my 'Come in', entered my grandson, who also had come to bid me goodbye.

I started toward him, fighting my breath, for a choking sensation was in my throat. Finally, I blurted out, "My son, my son, so you too must go!" He replied, "Yes, grandmother, now I am going. I will try my best to make a good soldier. Don't worry about me. Everything will be all right, and I'll see you again when the war is ended. I am going to fight the Huns and get them where they belong." Then again, I was embraced by one of God's most noble youths, going to fight for freedom. This time I was brave enough to go with him to the gate, but going through it he said, "God be with you till we meet again." At those words, my mind refused to function. I shuddered and then got my throat cleared enough to say goodbye. Alas, he too was gone.

I could only see the dust the buggy left behind. In a few minutes, my son with whom I lived, came and said he was going to catch them in his automobile. He invited me to go, but then seeing I could hardly stand, he came to the gate where I was and supported me to my room.

There I lay on my bed with a vacant mind until they returned. I am usually the bravest of all in helping others, but war is

so horrid! During my life, I have seen some horribly mangled bodies caused by war. They were tormented so cruelly, I never want to think of it. I wanted to forget it. Now these brave lads, my grandsons and others, in their full bloom and pride of manhood, have brought it back to me with double, gruesome force.

Sometime later, a letter came stating that my oldest grandson was killed in action. His wish had been granted; he had been killed. This made me worry more about my other grandson; he had been hurried to the front and had been wounded twice, but first aid had found him and got him going again.

One day, being stiff in my limbs, I was lying on the bed when my daughter, Hannah Sophia Maria Skeem, came in chatting. Then I noticed her smile was forced. Of course, I could think of nothing but her son, my grandson. Getting upset, I blurted out, "Have you heard from your boy lately?" Seeing there was no way out, she admitted they had. He was wounded in his knee and would carry his hurt through life.

While thus talking, her youngest son, Lance Elmer Petersen, came in. Seeing the situation, he approached his mother. Putting his arm around her neck, he said, "Mother, dear, don't worry so over my brother. I am just as sure as I live that he will return home safely, but for the wound in his knee that we know will always bother him. These words came from the son who had just been examined and was ready to go at first call. Another strong brave and noble youth, who was anxiously waiting to go forth and do his best.

*A few months later the Armistice was signed. Oh, happy day, the world was again at peace! Late the next spring our boy came home with some of the last to return. My heart swelled with gratitude at the sight of him. One of my grandchildren had come back while the other son's body was lying somewhere in France. (Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, Belleau, France.) This fine old globe whereon we dwell was worth living in again. Oh, glorious day, the shadow has now been lifted!*¹⁴⁴

Bertha Jensen, who had two sons fighting in France during World War I, shared in Cecilia's joy when the war ended. "She was heard to [exclaim] how happy and thankful she was that her boys could return home without being crippled and how sorry she felt for parents whose sons couldn't return."¹⁴⁵

War's devastating effects reach far beyond the battlefield. When Neils Skeem said goodbye to his grandmother and family, no one fully realized they would never see him again nor that he would be buried in a foreign land. Such KIA losses are never healed. When I married Pam (Hicken) Hall in 2018, I became part of a Gold Star Family. Her son, Curtis Hall, was killed in action in Iraq in 2007. Relatives continue to grieve, whether in Nampa, Idaho, or Oasis, Utah.

We will discuss Oasis servicemen in more detail later in this work.

144 Cecilia Skeem, "Reader's Biography" Cecelia Jensen Svendsen KWJH-9TJ, FSM.

145 Sundquist, "Bertha Marie Pederson Jensen." Bertha Marie Pedersen KWC5-2W3. FSM.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

This period of economic collapse began in New York City when the stock exchange crashed on October 24, 1929. The Great Depression was a world-wide event which lasted until 1939. One might think that something like this, which happened over 2,000 miles away, would have little effect in Oasis—but that would be wrong. As Utah historian John S. McCormick explains,

Utah was among the states hit hardest by the Great Depression. A few statistics make the point. In 1933, Utah's unemployment rate was 35.8%.... By 1932, the wage level for those who had not lost their jobs had declined by 45% and the work week by 20%. By the spring of 1933, 32% of the population was receiving all or part of their food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities from government relief funds. Thirty-two of Utah's one hundred and five banks had failed, and corporate business failures had increased by 20%.¹⁴⁶

This dire situation was due, in part, to the agricultural economic downturn of the 1920s—sometimes referred to as the National Farmers' Depression.¹⁴⁷ “Half of the 25,662 farms [in Utah had been] mortgaged because farmers and ranchers had borrowed money to expand them. Unfortunately, the end of World War I caused the demand and prices for Utah farm goods to drop.”¹⁴⁸ The problems

¹⁴⁶ John S. McCormick, “The Great Depression,” *Utah History Encyclopedia*, 1994, History to Go Blog.

¹⁴⁷ Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 272.

¹⁴⁸ “Utah Studies: Changes & Challenges (1920s-1930s): Agricultural Hard Times and The Great Depression,” <https://utah.agclassroom.org/lessons/cc1920>.

of the 20s turned into crises in the 1930s. By 1932, there was 33% unemployment in the state—one of the worst rates in the nation.¹⁴⁹

During that era, Dad had to quit barbering when the price of haircuts fell from 50 cents to 25. He and Mother moved from Delta and worked together on a farm. Everyone had to cope as best they could.

My parents, and the adults I knew in the Oasis Ward during my adolescence, had lived through the Depression. They talked about it occasionally. It had a profound effect on how they managed their lives. I learned something of its depth when I was visiting Uncle Ed Skeem, Reed's dad,

[Uncle Ed and I] were standing in the field just north of his house enjoying some of his good plums from the trees planted there along the ditch. I asked him about his struggles during the Great Depression when money was scarce. He said that folks back then just helped one another. No one really had much. He told me that during this time, he was standing there in that very field when some friends drove up to visit them. Aunt Fontella, his wife, was a little upset because they didn't have anything to offer them to eat. Just at that moment, he turned over a pile of hay with his pitchfork and found a clutch of pheasant eggs! He said they made a real tasty treat for his friends and family.¹⁵⁰

149 Jill Mulvay Derr and Joseph Darowski, "Episode 20: Hard Times," Podcast Saints Season 3, Church History, churchofjesuschrist.org.

150 Peter Edwin Skeem KWCW-1V6, Autobiography of Peter Edwin Skeem under Cordell Skeem Cropper-Nephew, FSM.

Probably everyone from the Baby Boom Generation has heard stories their parents told them about the Depression. Auntie Evelyn talks about it,

During the Depression money was scarce but we always could find something to eat. In Oasis folks got along pretty well. As a ward, if we decided to have a party, and we'd have one about once a week, we'd all take and share just whatever we had. We'd make cake or ice cream for our dessert. Sometimes, during those hard economic times, I only had one dress—a house dress. I remember once I didn't go the Relief Society Union Meeting because I didn't have a decent dress to wear. Soon after that, [my mother-in-law] found out and gave me a piece of cloth and I made myself a dress for the next time around.

She also shared this experience about helping to raise her nephew when money was scarce.

“Calvin [Skeem] wanted a nickel and I said, ‘I haven't got a nickel.’”

And he said, “Well, give me an egg.” (They would trade an egg for candy at the store.)

I said, “I haven't got an egg this morning.”

He said, “Well then, you can write me a letter.” I gave him a note, and he took that over to the store to get what he wanted.

*“We used to have chickens and we’d have a go out and get a fryer for dinner. Calvin would drag an ax along and I’d cut its head off and then we’d have it for dinner.”*¹⁵¹

These stories illustrate the personal cost of the Depression. This economic downturn affected many banks as well since they were involved in the stock market. When the crash happened, the value of their holdings plummeted. The Oasis Bank was no exception. This local failure meant that investors lost their personal savings and local farmers and other businesses found themselves without their main source for loans.

When the State Bank of Oasis was forced to close in March 1928, it sent a letter to its patrons. The bank directors added a personal note following the official letter. (See “State Bank of Oasis” in this work for a copy of the letter.) Here’s the note,

*We are sorry for more reasons than one that the bank closes, but far be it from us to holler too loudly [or] shout hard times. Last year when the Delta State Bank closed its doors, we couldn’t see any silver lining to anything, but we have all survived and prospered. This community, like all others, receives its share of hard luck, and still we grow. We are not entirely dependent upon any one institution or crop here for our prosperity, and can always rally. Another seed crop is in the offing, there are still checks being paid for butterfat and eggs, and if the worst comes, [we know a] fast doesn’t hurt anyone.*¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Evelyn Hawley, “Evelyn Skeem Hawley History,” Evelyn Cecelia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

¹⁵² “The State Bank of Oasis Closes,” *Chronicle*, March 1, 1928, 1.

Every cloud has its silver lining. The bank directors were exercising their faith by putting on a brave face of optimism as they continued to confront the coming economic adversity which continued for a decade.

Even though many lost their employment during the Depression, “the Utah Mine at Fish Springs still made regular shipments of ore keeping ten teams of horses and wagons busy transporting ore to the railroad at Oasis.”¹⁵³

Mom and Dad returned to what they had grown up with. They leased a farm and worked as their forbearers, growing and harvesting crops using horses for much of the work, planting a garden, raising and slaughtering their livestock, milking cows, brooding and raising chickens, gathering eggs, bartering, sharing, and helping others. As the expression goes, they learned to “make do or do without.”

EARLY FLOODS

There were numerous floods during pioneer times which had dire consequences for the area settlers. The history of the attempts to control the water in the Sevier River is complicated. It involves natural river bends, old channels, attempts at diversion dams, hauling rock, digging through frozen ground, and a Utah Supreme Court case. Roger Walker delineates all this as he discusses the Webb Dam, the Cropper Cut, the Low-line Canal, interlocking cedar cribs filled with lava rocks, and the Petersen ditch. These are intermingled with various irrigation companies: Salt Lake Agricultural and Manufacturing Canal Company, Abraham Irrigation Company,

153 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 303.

Delta-Melville, Leamington Irrigation Company, and of course, the Gunnison Bend Reservoir. Concerning the early floods, Walker states, “Every high-water period saw the dam washed out. Brush and rock were just not adequate.”¹⁵⁴

Following advice from Brigham Young, forty men came from Fillmore to construct the first dam. The site chosen was about a half mile west of the Oasis Seed Plant near Roger Stanworth’s home. The work began in January 1860. The workers suffered because they lacked both warm clothes and adequate shelter.

It was bitterly cold, the weather thermometer often stayed at 20 degrees below zero. The ground was frozen so hard brush had to be burned on it to make excavation possible. The dam was built of willows and rock. The rock was hauled about 7 miles from the quarry [near Black Rock Ridge]. The ground was dry and soft and heavy greasewood brush made it difficult to get [a wagon] through. Heavy timbers served as gates to dam the water between the abutments.

Unfortunately, this dam “gave way on June 8, 1862, and greatly discouraged the people. The dam failure didn’t stop there. A similar disaster occurred almost every year.”¹⁵⁵

Finally, after all the hard work, sacrifices, and deprivation of food, good drinking water, clothing and fear of the Indians (this is the group that constructed Fort Deseret in 1865) they decided to pull up stakes. Here’s the story,

154 Roger Walker, “Gunnison Bend Reservoir, <http://www.waterhistory.org/histories/delta2/delta2.pdf>.

155 *Among Deseret’s First: Leigh Richmond and Fanny Powell Cropper Family History* Vol. 1, Orem, Utah: Remember When, 1982, 51-52.

Fear of the river—the old Sevier, which for thousands of years had run unmolested, submitted reluctantly to harness. In 1868 the settlers abandoned the settlement and moved away.

For about 6 years the area was entirely vacated except for a few stockmen who came to winter in the houses built by the first settlers. It wasn't until 1875, with an understanding the dam would be rebuilt, that some of the families returned to their abandoned homes.¹⁵⁶ [The new dam] was reestablished farther north.”¹⁵⁷

Water is always a concern when you live in a desert. Ironically, for these early settlers of Pahvant Valley, there was too much water. Controlling the river and making the water go where they needed it for crop production was a struggle. “Earth-filled dams were completed and filled with water only to have the dams wash out again as the reservoirs filled. Finally, in 1924, some fifty-six years after the first attempt, a dam was completed that held. It was called the U.B. Dam.”¹⁵⁸

The name of the dam used to cause snickers because of the obvious euphemism. Of course, the tone denoted whether the speaker was talking about the constructed dam or cursing the listener. The name was later changed to Yuba.

Local farmers and ranchers had to build the dam themselves or risk losing their water rights. The men working on the structure called it the U.B. Dam. As they worked, they sang a song that stated they were damned if they worked and damned if they

¹⁵⁶ Among Deseret's First, 51-52.

¹⁵⁷ “Daughters of the Pioneers Meet,” *Chronicle*, October 14, 1926.

¹⁵⁸ Ambrose Nutter Stanworth KWZX-3NK, FSM.

didn't. Probably to get away from this ungracious appellation, the reservoir's name changed to Yuba.¹⁵⁹

Val Styler, later a bishop of the Oasis Ward, worked on the construction of the U.B. Dam. He started there in 1916 when he was seventeen years old. He continued until its completion some 8 years later. The work was done with horse-drawn tongue scrapers. Val received \$2.50 in cash and \$2.50 in wages but was required to pay \$2.50 for his meals and feed for his horse. When the project was finished, young Val jumped into the reservoir and swam across to the amazement of his fellow laborers.¹⁶⁰

As the dam was nearing completion, a problem developed. Ambrose Willoughby was summoned to help. It was discovered that the fill had weakened and it was in danger of going out. The call went out one Sunday afternoon for volunteers with scrapers, horses, and wagons. Ambrose and his young son, Alfred, were among those who spent long hours of hard work, not knowing if the dam was to collapse, or if they could escape the impending flood. Through their efforts, and many more like them, the dam still stands today as a tribute to their courage and unselfishness.¹⁶¹

These early floods were a serious matter to those involved. Cecilia Skeem gives an insightful description of what happened to her and her family during a flood shortly after arriving in 1884.

159 Wikipedia. 2010. "Yuba State Park," Last Modified December 7, 2023.

160 Erma Aljaline Turner, "History of John Valentine Styler," K2C2-XWD, FSM.

161 Ethel M. Stanworth, "Biography," Ambrose Nutter Stanworth KWZX-3NK, FSM.

We moved into the shack Peter had built. It was in a low place. My husband had scraped it down to make a level floor. Mud walls and willow roof with dirt on top was our home now. We immediately set to work, determined to do our best farming, which was new to us, but we could learn.

Just before they had all the crops in, the men and boys were called out to help build a dam across the river so they could irrigate their crops. Constructing the dam was difficult and challenging work. The water kept breaking through the rocks which caused the men to continue working there until June. People had just started to irrigate their land when a heavy thunderstorm swept the country. It only lasted a short time, but the water was rising in the river. Every man hurried to the dam to try and save it, but it was swept away before their eyes. Our shack, being built on a low place, was in a lake. Water poured in from all sides! I piled the children on the bed and threw a canvas over them, while boxes and things were swimming around the room. When the rain stopped, we got buckets and carried the water out. Then I dug a hole in the center of the mud floor to get out the last of the water and let it dry out more quickly. There was still time to save the crops, so every man and able-bodied boy went to work night and day rebuilding the dam. They worked very hard hauling poles, willows, rocks, and brush to make it tight. But, as before, water kept leaking through and sometimes it would wash away as fast as they could put it together.¹⁶²

162 C. Skeem, "Reader's Biography," Cecelia Jensen Svendsen KWJH-9TJ, FSM.

Mother Nature does not give up easily; water can be a terrible and destructive force. Here's another early example of its effects.

"In June 1909, the Delta dam broke and a flood came down the river washing away the big bridge, stables, haystacks, corals, and killing many farm animals. The flood also caused the north wall of the adobe house Mahonri [Bishop] lived in to fall. The family lived in a tent that summer while the house was being repaired."¹⁶³ This is the flood that brought an epidemic of typhoid in its wake.¹⁶⁴

THE FLOOD OF 1983

On June 23, 1983, the emergency spillway of the DMAD¹⁶⁵ Dam, 5 miles northeast of Delta, failed following four months of record runoff. As some 17,000 acre-feet of water rushed downstream from DMAD, the Gunnison Bend Reservoir was breached at the reservoir spillway to prevent an uncontrolled breakout. This surge of water destroyed or over-topped every road, railroad, and irrigation channel crossing along the river.¹⁶⁶

Walker asks, "How does the 1983 flood compare with the previous disasters?" His answer: "The flows in the river above DMAD were more than three times as much water as any previously

163 S. Day, *Builders of Early Millard: Biographies of Pioneers of Millard County 1850-1875*, 64.

164 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 437.

165 DMAD is an acronym of the four irrigation companies involved in its construction: Delta, Melville, Abraham, and Deseret. It is also known as the Delta Dam.

166 Roger W. Walker and Lynn R. Walker, "The DMAD Dam Failure—The Engineering Issues," PDF, <https://www.delta1.pdf.waterhistory.org>.

recorded peaks.”¹⁶⁷ This water inundated a large area with Oasis approximately in the center, leaving about 70,000 acres of farmland with no means of irrigation that year. The flood caused the evacuation of 400 people from the Deseret-Oasis area.¹⁶⁸

At Deseret, flood waters inundated the town, damaged 90 percent of the houses, and destroyed thirteen. Some 5,000 acres of cropland were flooded and other property was severely damaged.

Recovery work began as soon as the flood waters subsided. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and state emergency funds of \$550,511 and \$106,522 respectively were provided for cleanup and recovery of the estimated \$3 million in damage. The LDS Church immediately set up shelters and helped with cleanup and even some rebuilding of homes.”¹⁶⁹

What follows is a detailed account of how this flood affected Oasis residents as recorded in the *Oasis Ward Manuscript History and Historical Reports, 1890-1983*. Ward clerk Warren Peterson kept thorough notes that not only add significantly to our understanding of this devastating flood and who was affected, but also provide a warning that is both temporal and spiritual in nature. It is a chronological record that predates the collapse of the dam on June 23 and continues two months into its aftermath. The report is instructive not only for its historical content but also serves as a warning to those who think it will not happen again. I am responsible for the bold type that is added.

167 Roger Walker, “Gunnison Bend Reservoir,” <http://www.waterhistory.org/histories/delta2/delta2.pdf>

168 Reed Madsen and Twila Van Leer, “Dam Collapse leaves Millard towns awash,” A1-A2, *Deseret News*.

169 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 404.

22 March 1983—A special fast was held for all members in this area [petitioning the Lord to] temper the elements. The fast lasted from noon on 22 March to 23 March at noon.

30 March 1983—The Sevier River appears to have reached its peak and is subsiding somewhat, although the water continues to flood in record-setting amounts.

29 May 1983—Bishop Conard Stanworth and Roger Stanworth, president of the Deseret Irrigation Company, reported that the late storms and heavy snow melt would continue to cause extensive flooding along the Sevier River. The home of Jim and D'Ann Stanworth continues to be threatened with flood damage already sustained in the basement. Farms owned by Jim Stanworth, Bishop Stanworth, and Roger Stanworth have all received flood damage. Pastureland, belonging to Arlo J. Skeem has also been flooded. Emergency plans are being prepared for the ward and the neighboring Deseret Ward.



*Flood of 1983, front page from The Gazette June 29,1983
—Photo by author*

5 June 1983 Ward members have been involved in volunteer efforts to reduce flood damage in Deseret and Oasis by sand-bagging. Also, extensive volunteer efforts are underway to protect the spillway structures at the DMAD and Gunnison Bend Reservoirs upstream from Oasis and Deseret.

23 June 1983—*The disaster that had been impending all spring finally occurred.* The DMAD Dam upstream from Oasis and Deseret was destroyed when channel erosion undermined

the spillway structure and released 16,000 acre-feet of water that had built up in the reservoir. Millard County officials ordered breach of the Gunnison Bend Reservoir to let off water before DMAD water arrived. Due to the distance up the river from Oasis to DMAD, sufficient time was available (approximately 9 hours) for significant evacuation efforts.^{xiii}

The Delta and Delta Utah West Stakes both sent numerous volunteers to the downstream area. Many non-member volunteers also assisted. There were at times more vehicles and volunteers than could effectively be used. **Many people did not believe that flood water would reach their homes, so they turned away volunteers who came to help.** There was much regret later. **The refusal by some residents to acknowledge the impending disaster was not unlike scripture accounts of those who ignored the prophets.**

When the water began to subside, damage assessment began. The following homes were eventually declared to be unsafe and were demolished in the Oasis Ward:

Floyd Skeem
Glen Skeem
Peter Skeem
Dick Willoughby
Jack Willoughby

Each of these homes, except the Jack Willoughby and Peter Edwin Skeem homes, were rebuilt with Church aid. The Peter Skeem home was rebuilt by his son and grandsons with additional help from a grandson-in-law. The Jack Willoughby home was rebuilt with insurance funds. The Jim Stanworth and

Steven Pearson homes, located along the riverbank, received severe damage. Each of these homes still required time to determine whether they were a total loss.

The homes of the following ward members received interior water damage, but were not replaced:

Douglas Cutshall
Walter Eldon Rowley
Erma Skeem
Kenneth Skeem
Rex Stanworth
Kevin Styler
Russell T. Styler
Steven Willoughby

Roger Stanworth also received serious damage to outbuildings, as did each of those listed above, but his house was, ironically, built on a sand hill and was not damaged.

Many farms owned by ward members suffered **damage by the flood waters**. Many more were **damaged by the following drought** caused by loss.

June 1983—The rebuilding from the flood, aided by the Church Federal Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross, the State of Utah, Millard County, and others, continued into 1984. The members of the ward were all settled into new homes by December, except Steven Pearson's family, who sold their unusually beautiful home rather than return to the scene of the disaster.

During the time their homes were being rebuilt, many families lived outside the ward in temporary housing but would drive to Oasis for Church meetings.

Since the Deseret warehouse was extensively damaged by the flood, the **Oasis Ward meetinghouse was used jointly by the Oasis Ward and the Deseret Ward** until cleaning and repair work was sufficient to allow a return to the Deseret building.

Special note should be made of the **singular dedication of Bishop Conard G. Stanworth and his wife, NeRee Stanworth**, in both personal services to flood victims and in directing the relief effort.

When the flood was behind us, there was still the problem of paying for replacement homes. In many instances, those who lost homes had neither insurance nor sufficient resources of their own [to cover their losses.] In addition to the financial aid described above, a great deal of volunteer aid was given. Each ward in the two Delta stakes was assigned several families to care for and aid in resettling the family and their belongings, as well as seeing to their spiritual needs.

Thus, **for many, the flood experience brought growth, joy, and an increased faith**, once the initial hardship was eased. Others, however, were bitter and resentful.

July 1983—The major events of July involved cleaning up after the flood and restoring farms so that the remaining crops could be harvested. On July 7, 1983, ward members Michael R. Styler and Warren H. Peterson assisted with a presentation to the Utah Legislature, which resulted in funding being made available for rebuilding irrigation structures.

28 August 1983—*The Deseret Ward met for the last time as the Oasis warehouse for the present. The Deseret Ward meetinghouse is still heavily damaged from the flood, but the Deseret Ward members have cleaned it and strongly desire to meet there.*¹⁷⁰

The Deseret chapel was condemned and the members returned to worship in the Oasis red-brick building until the new building was ready.

Rain falls on the righteous just as it does the wicked. Trials, tribulations, hard times are all part of this mortal existence. What is important is how we face them. In the words of Elder Russell M. Nelson,

*When the focus of our lives is on God's plan of salvation... and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives.*¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Warren Peterson, *Manuscript History*, 282–91, CHL. For newspaper coverage of this event see pages 293–308 *Manuscript History*. See Oasis Ward Picture History for a painting of the Deseret Church.

¹⁷¹ Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 82.

GOOD TIMES

Sports, dances, picnics, holiday parties, musical presentations, etc. make up an important part of LDS life. The Mormon philosophy is to enhance the entire man.¹⁷² Georganne Arrington, in an article about play in LDS communities, explains the counter-cultural nature approach of Church founder Joseph Smith.

Early nineteenth-century ministers preached against the evils of recreation; work was the proper activity of the righteous. Play—especially dancing—was forbidden in the strongest terms. Within this environment, Joseph Smith set an unusual precedent by encouraging and himself engaging in dance, drama, and other recreation in the Mormon community. He was a “competent, skillful performer in active sports,” he encouraged walking, wrestling, baseball, pulling sticks, and hiking. He also participated in music, drama, dancing, and woodcutting bees.¹⁷³

172 Joseph Smith Jr., Articles of Faith #13.

173 Leona Holbrook, “Dancing as an Aspect of Early Mormon and Utah Culture,” Brigham Young University Studies 16 (Autumn 1975):121-22.

On various occasions, Joseph Smith hosted parties in his home, such as the one on Christmas Day 1843, when his guests “spent the evening in music, dancing, &c., in a most cheerful and friendly manner.”¹⁷⁴ Such activities were very much a part of early Mormon life.¹⁷⁵

EARLY SOCIALS

Ekins and Warnick describe the social life in Deseret in the second half of the 19th century up until the middle of the 20th. Life is more than work.

Although the [Deseret pioneers] had to work hard, they found time for parties and social entertainment. Dancing was their favorite pastime. Even before the schoolhouse was built [1877], they would take a picnic and go to different homes where they would dance. The girls would ride horse-back behind their partners to dances. [They] kept time to the strains of a fiddle, harmonica, and accordion.

The 4th of July celebrations featured the firing of guns before daybreak, raising the flag on a high pole, a parade headed by a marshal of the day, a goddess of liberty, and young ladies on horses representing the states. The patriotic program included an oration, the singing of the national anthem, the reading of the Declaration of Independence, and a closing

174 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1950), 6:134.

175 Georganne Ballif Arrington, (1980) “Dance, Mormon, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith,” *Inscape*: Vol. 1: No. 1, Article 4. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/inscape/vol1/iss1/4>.

prayer for the guidance of our country. There were children's dances in the afternoon, ball games, and a dance in the evening. The 24th of July [Utah Pioneer Day] celebrations were similar, only they honored the Utah pioneers. Other towns joined in these joyous celebrations.



*Fanny Louisa (Powell) Cropper Goddess of Liberty
c.1920 Photo—Among Deseret's First, 65*

There were always Rag Bees to make homemade rugs, quilting bees, and picnics of all kinds. Skating and sleigh riding in the winter; swimming, fishing, and horseback riding were some of the pioneer pastimes.

Baseball was a favorite sport as early as 1879 or 1880 when the county championship was won by the Deseret players.

Every Saturday afternoon was a holiday, for there was always a game.

At Christmas time, a community program would be held in the church. A large tree held gifts for all the children. [I recall tall Christmas trees put up for the community by the stores in both Oasis and Deseret when I was a boy.]

A fairground was built and the first fair was held in 1915. In 1947 a memorable Millard County Celebration was held there. Seating capacity accommodated six to eight thousand people.¹⁷⁶

The next few paragraphs are a chronological depiction of events and activities that demonstrate good times for West Millard residents.

PIONEER DAY—1892

It has always been popular in Utah to celebrate the arrival of the pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. The way of doing this has changed over the years. When I was a boy in the 1950s, there was always a rodeo and parade in Hinckley. The following newspaper article from 1892 shows how the day was celebrated in Oasis in the 19th century—no rodeo.

*A Great Time Expected, Horse Races, Baseball, Pugilism. Etc.
Correspondence of The Herald—1892*

¹⁷⁶ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 443-45.

Oasis will be “strictly in it” beginning on the 22nd with horseraces and continuing until the 25th. All those having horses which they think can run will have an opportunity to test their speed. There will be horses here from eastern Nevada, southern Utah, in fact from all over Utah, besides our own.

The greatest event will come off at 10 a.m. on the 25th. [July 24 fell on a Sunday that year.] Red Cap, an Oasis horse, is to run a quarter [mile] with the Snake Valley horse, Sorrel Top. \$500 a side. The horses are evenly matched for size; neither has been beaten.

In the afternoon of the 24th baseball; the “Deserets” to play against a picked nine. To conclude the afternoon exercises, a match has been arranged between Barney Mayher, our local slugger, and an unknown, for a purse \$50 and 60 percent of gate receipts. Three-ounce gloves will be used; fifteen rounds, Marquis of Queensberry rules. A dance at Betty’s hall in the evening will wind up everything.

It is to be hoped that there will be representative horses here from every town south of Salt Lake. We have lots of alfalfa; also new potatoes and green peas and probably it won’t be out of place to remark three “civilizers” [policemen/bouncers] running at full blast.”¹⁷⁷

177 “A Great Time Expected, Horse Races, Baseball, Pugilism. Etc.,” July 13, 1892,3, Salt Lake Herald-Republican, <https://www.Utah>.

For many years, Millard County residents had an avid interest in horse racing. As early as 1913 horse races were part of the county fair, with annual open invitations to participate.¹⁷⁸

UTAH STATE DAY—1896

On January 4, 1896, Utah became a state. Its entry had been delayed because of polygamy. It was a momentous occasion. The event had been anticipated in Deseret, Oasis, and Hinckley. A committee had planned a program and a marshal of the day had been selected. Utah Day was well commemorated.

Statehood found Deseret and her sister wards alive to the important event that occurred last Saturday when President [Grover] Cleveland put his autograph to the proclamation that opened the great door of Uncle Sam's magnificent federation and bade waiting for Utah to step in out of the cold and take a front seat.

In anticipation of the important event, a committee had been selected to formulate a program that was well carried out by the citizens of Hinckley, Oasis, and Deseret.

O.G. Campbell, marshal of the day, pulled his boots on early and made the welkin or heavenly ring with repeated salvos of artillery.

The morning frost hung over the valley and obscured King Sol who, seeming to realize the importance of the occasion, was

178 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 294.

doing his best to dispel the hazy mantle and by ten o'clock shone out warm and bright and gave us an ideal winter day.

Wm. V. Black was made chairman and conducted the entertainment with becoming dignity. Bishop John Styler of Oasis offered up a brief but eloquent prayer for the safety and progress of the young state. L. R. Cropper delivered the opening address and reviewed the history of Utah and her repeated pulls at Uncle Sam's latch string. W. A. Ray made a few terse and appropriate remarks.¹⁷⁹

OTHER FUN TIMES

Outside of these formal ceremonial occasions, Auntie, my mother, and other children from Oasis were hard at play in their own way.

We lived on a farm a couple of miles south of [the center of] Oasis so we had to make our own fun. Every night we would play baseball. We had a baseball diamond between our place and Uncle Pete's. Most days we'd all play baseball and run races. We'd also go swimming. When I got a little older, I'd work all day and go swimming all evening. My brothers, sisters, cousins, and I would walk up to the mill. (The mill was located between an irrigation canal and the Sevier River about 3 or 4 miles northwest of Oasis.) Close to it was a large deep pond of water which was called the "Thirty Foot," it was thirty feet deep. This was a favorite swimming hole.¹⁸⁰

179 "Deseret Dots —Statehood," *Millard County Blade*. January 11, 1806, 1.

180 "Evelyn Skeem Hawley History," Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

OASIS BRASS BAND

We might ask what music was available in Oasis at the turn of the 20th century. Thanks to this photo and a comment in the newspaper dating from 1890,¹⁸¹ we know that Oasis had a band. Music enlivens the soul, relieves stress, and makes life more enjoyable. In the early part of the 20th century, it was common for growing towns to form a band. At that time, before radio and TV, making your own music provided both personal and social enjoyment. The phonograph record business was just in its infancy.



*The Oasis Band c.1913. Ed Skeem seated on left with clarinet. Others unknown.
—Photo from Kathy Babbitt*

Notice the inscription on the bass drum—Oasis Brass Band. (That was its name although it had reed instruments and a couple of drums as well as brass.) Milestones of Millard shows that

¹⁸¹ Suburban Resident, “Oasis and Deseret,” *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, November 4, 1890, 6.

Oak City had a similar band.¹⁸² A search of local newspapers from 1880 to 1930 confirms that bands were very popular in this area. Lynndyll, Hinckley, Delta, Fillmore, and several other towns all had bands. They performed at patriotic events, at dances, and elsewhere. Pictures of many community bands can be found online.

Uncle Edwin Skeem, Reed's dad, played clarinet for the Oasis Brass Band. My dad played in the Millard Academy Band and also in a dance orchestra. He frequently talked about his love of music and how he liked playing. What he said also shows how much others enjoyed music.

After I got into the Seventh Grade [1915] I started playing trumpet, and I continued to play all through my days at the Millard Academy in both band and orchestra. The second year that we had an elementary school band, we were so good we could outdo the high school band. By the time I got in the Millard Academy High School Band, we had a pretty good bunch. When I was a junior, there were enough of us to form a junior orchestra. Harry Terry played drums. He was a good drummer. Clem Hilton played the trombone and he was good, too. Golden Webb, we called him Goose, played violin. Owen Bunker played the clarinet; we called him Bunk. I played the coronet. I don't remember who played the piano—we had several of them. We might have had a saxophone, I don't recall. There was a little gal from Delta, Erma Morrison, she was a drummer. I'll never forget her! We ran all over the country playing for dances. I used to think I was pretty darn good.

182 Jane Rawlinson Geersten and Josephine B. Walker, *Milestones*, 485.

One night I went up to Leamington to play at an open-air dance. We played 'til two o'clock in the morning. We were going to quit—we were pooped. That bunch of hoodlums was crazier than they were out to Abraham. They passed the hat around and got some more money. I don't know how much longer we played, but we still kept playing!

Another night Goose Webb, his mother and I went out to Abraham to play for a dance—just the three of us. There was a violin, a coronet, and a piano, but we gave them plenty of music. Those crazy lunatics would come in there and knock your music stands all over. It was a wild bunch, I'll tell you!

Anyway, after the dance it was so dark we couldn't see, so we just gave the horse its head and it brought us back okay.

Playing for dances and barbering gave me plenty of spending money.¹⁸³

One warning: if you type in Oasis Band on a search engine today (2023) you'll be taken to a rock band website. That is not the one pictured here.

OASIS SKYLINES—1930

We know the Mormon pioneers danced on the prairie when they crossed the plains. It is also true that one of the first buildings Brigham Young had built in Salt Lake was a theater and that he

¹⁸³ Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Hobbies and Interests, FSM.

participated as an actor.¹⁸⁴ I remember being part of a play when I was a teenager in Oasis. Later in this work, you'll read about how important roadshows were in the Oasis Ward. The following news article relates a few details about a play and a formal dance.

The M Men Gleaner Department of the Oasis Ward staged "Ireland" for the Ward Mutual last Tuesday. Given Sampson acted as Markey, Clem Olsen as Smith, and Saurleen as Bridget. Ranna Owens and Eathel Skeem were other characters. Our M Men are busy arranging for the annual stake M Men's banquet, so watch for a real affair.

Arrangements are complete for the annual Gold and Green Ball to be held Friday. Miss Jean Dodds was chosen queen after a lively contest last Tuesday."¹⁸⁵

Gold and Green Balls were best-dress dances put on yearly. Within the confines of limited budgets, the best band available was hired and the cultural hall was decorated as lavishly as possible. Sponsored by the MIAs, the dances typically attracted young and old. In later years, most people had forgotten the significance of the colors gold and green [MIA colors], but the dances continued to be popular until changing tastes in music and dancing made it somewhat difficult to put on a dance that appealed to both adults and youth.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2007, 143-156.

¹⁸⁵ "Oasis Skylines," *Chronicle*, January 16, 1930, 8.

¹⁸⁶ Sheridan R. Sheffield, R. Scott Lloyd and Mike Cannon. "Some Things Uniquely LDS," 25 Jan 1992, Church News thechurchnews.com.

WARD'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY—1941

Special occurrences like centennials, golden anniversaries, and 80th or 90th birthdays were turned into community events. The Oasis Ward's 50th year was reported in the local paper with two separate articles. Their revelry is typical for their time.

Oasis Ward Celebrates Its 50th Anniversary —1941

The Oasis ward celebrated its birthday Monday night. The entertainment commenced at six p.m. with a hot chicken dinner under the direction of Mrs. Hilda Gillen Mrs. Erma Styler and Mrs. LaVeda Bishop. Approximately 275 people were served. Following the dinner, a program was given:

Remarks—Bishop Lars Hansen

Minuet—LaVeda Bishop, Inez Kelly, Edith Anderson, and Eula Day

Ward Report—Enoch Gillen

Modern Dance—Dawn Kelly

Monologue—Leona Whiting

Songs and jokes by a group of sisters. They were: Inga Peterson, Biah Sjostrom, Erma Skeem, Eva Holt, Ethel Stanworth, Loenza Willoughby, Evelyn Morris and Edna Cropper

Harmonica selection and tap dance—Jim Manus

Song—Deloris Johnson and Irene Holt

Remarks—Pres. Jos. T. Finlinson

After the program, the remainder of the evening was spent in dancing.

The report showed four Oasis Ward bishops were present Bishop Marcus Skeen who served seventeen years, Alma

Christensen for seven years, Val Styler for five years, and Lars Hansen for four years. Members of the stake presidency and their wives were special guests.¹⁸⁷

In addition to the party, a photo of some of the ward leaders made headline news on the paper's front page:

Group Serves 93 Years at Oasis Ward—1941



Group Served Oasis Ward for 93 Years

[This photo] pictures four bishops and officers of the Oasis ward, [whose] combined service in the ward is almost 93 years. From left to right front row: Mrs. Hilda Gillen, Mrs. J. C. Hawley, and Mrs. Betsy Skeem. Back row left to right: Lars Hansen present bishop, J. Val Styler, Alma J. Christensen, and Marcus Skeem. Mrs. Gillen and Mrs. Skeem served as

¹⁸⁷ "Group Serves 93 Years at Oasis Ward," *Chronicle*, April 3, 1941, 1.

*Relief Society presidents for 25 years between them and Mrs. Hawley served as first counselor under three presidents or [for] about 35 years. All of these persons were present at the fiftieth anniversary of the Oasis ward held on Monday night of this week.*¹⁸⁸

Good times include social occasions like parties, but just hanging out with one's friends is decidedly fun too—especially if everyone can engage in an activity.

QUILTING BEE —1944

During my adolescent years, I spent lots of time with my Auntie Evelyn and Uncle Kelly Hawley. It was a common occurrence to see quilting frames taking up a good portion of their front room. Auntie would invite her family and friends to come help. The women would seat themselves around the quilt and begin to sew the two layers of fabric and the inner quilt batting together a stitch at a time. Occasionally, they would tie a quilt, but most of the time, their process involved stitching blocks or geometrical patterns that were remarkably decorative. These “quilting bees” were not just at Auntie’s, but took place in other Oasis homes as well. Here’s a report on one that made the paper in the year of my birth. It must have been popular because of all the ladies who participated. One of them was pregnant.^{xiv}

A quilting bee was held at the home of Mrs. Lillie Roundy. Those who participated in sewing were: Mrs. Inga Peterson, Mrs. Evelyn Hawley, Mrs. Erma Skeem, Georgetta Petersen, Edna Cropper, Mrs. Betsy Skeem, Mrs. Eathel Skeem, Erma

¹⁸⁸ “Group Serves 93 Years at Oasis Ward,” *Chronicle*, April 3, 1941, 1.

Cahoon, Ella Christensen and Fontella Skeem. Dinner was served and the quilting continued throughout the day.¹⁸⁹

For Auntie, and most of the other women mentioned above, quilting and hand applique was an art form and a social event. They excelled in it and entered many beautiful quilts at the Millard County Fair. Most women earned a blue ribbon or two and even an occasional sweepstakes prize.



Evelyn Hawley at Quilt Exhibit. Millard County Fair c.1985. Author's Photo

Auntie talks about her love of quilting and how she learned and then excelled at it.

Relief Society is where I started to quilt, that's where I learned how to do it, and I've been quilting ever since. Over the years, I've made a good many quilts, but I've failed to keep track of how many and where they've all gone. I've given many of

¹⁸⁹ "Quilting Bee," Chronicle, April 13, 1944, 8.

*them away. For many years, I had a bowl full of ribbons that I'd won, but I've quit saving them now. A couple of years ago, I was awarded a grand sweepstake for one of my quilts.*¹⁹⁰

Quilting was something the Oasis sisters did together at their Relief Society work meetings, as well as in their homes. These quilts were frequently given as wedding gifts or to a needy family. Such handicraft items were sold also at the Oasis Ward annual bazaar to raise money for the building remodel and other activities.¹⁹¹

OASIS STITCHERS FORM 4-H CLUB-1950

Oasis women not only quilted, but they also crocheted, embroidered, and made many fine needle points. There was even a Knitting Circle for the ladies.¹⁹² *The Chronicle* also reports a club formed for young women that reflects this talent in its name, "Stitchers." Sewing, crocheting, etc. were skills to be passed on to the younger generation.

A 4-H club was organized on May 11 at the home of Helen Memmott in Oasis. The name chosen for the club was "Stitchers in Time." Officers are Marilyn Stanworth, president; Evelyn Kae Skeem, vice president; Hazel Skeem, secretary; Martha Stanworth, social leader; and Inez Ann Kelly, reporter. Other members of the club are Mary Jean Lovell, Gloria Day, Mae Jean Barber, Jean Winfield, Veola Memmott, and Inga

190 "Evelyn Skeem Hawley History," Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

191 Private conversation with Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Conk, February 2023. Private conversation with Evelyn (Skeem) Webb who as a teenager worked at many of the catered dinners.

192 "Oasis," *Chronicle*, May 1, 1941, 5.

*Mae Memmott. Leaders are Helen Memmott and Eathel Skeem. Next meeting will be at the home of Inez Ann Kelly.*¹⁹³

DEER VISITS OASIS WARD—1954

During my 35-year career as a public school teacher, there were a couple of times class was interrupted by an unexpected event. No, not fire drills. I'm thinking of an earthquake tremor when my hanging plant went into pendulum mode, and when a stray dog entered the classroom. Who wouldn't laugh at having a deer come into a church meeting? This is an amusing story that I'm happy to pass on. Oasis folks had a good laugh.

It all started when a friend gave Deon Gillen a fawn to raise. The deer was a real pet until it became larger, then it turned from pet to pest—not only to the Gillens but to neighbors. And that was a mistake.

When it was about 7 months old, its appetite seemed to increase. One day it got a taste of rayon underwear hanging on the clothesline at the Gillens and from then on it had a mania for clothes—not only at home but worse yet, at the neighbors'. One day it was visiting one of the neighbors and before it left, the deer ate the mop rag and a half-bushel of rotted apples.

It was impossible to keep it in a corral as it got older. It would leap over the fences and wander where it pleased.

193 "Oasis Stitches Form 4-H Club," *Chronicle*, May 18, 1950, 9.

One Sunday it even went to church. The people had just assembled for Sunday School. The last person in had failed to shut the door and suddenly, to the amusement of everyone, in walked the deer and came down the aisle. It wasn't afraid of anyone or anything because it had been petted so much.

But when the pet became a nuisance, it was time to put it back in its habitat. Game Warden Stapley trucked the deer into the nearby hills to let it find its kind.

Maybe the deer will come back. Maybe it won't. But there won't be any hunters around these parts who, before shooting a deer next fall, whistle once or twice to see if the fawn they had raised is in their gunsight.



Deon and Deer

A CHURCH-GOING DEER—Here's perhaps the only deer in the country that can boast of going to church. A pet of Deon Gillen, the animal entered the church one Sunday at Oasis. The pet eventually became a pest and was turned back into its own habitat.¹⁹⁴

Reed Skeem remembers how startled he and everyone else was when the deer came into the chapel. I had seen and petted the deer at Gillens but must have been absent when it came to church. Shucks!

There was a follow-up article on Gillens' deer which appeared in the *Millard County Chronicle* a month after it appeared in the *Deseret News* with Deon's photo,

A week ago last Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. Enoch Gillen, Mr. and Mrs. Deon Gillen, and their children went to American Fork. They expected to see the Deer Bambi that they raised last year, but he had gone onto college. They had taken him up to the A.C. [Agricultural College, now Utah State University] at Logan.¹⁹⁵

The following two reports from 1966 and 1971 tell of fun, normal Church activities for their time and place. Oasis folks enjoyed working and being together.

194 Sebrina Ekins, *Deer Visits Oasis Ward*," 5, *Deseret News*, February 13, 1954.

195 LaVeda Bishop, "Oasis," *Chronicle*, March 3, 1954, 6.

SNAPSHOT—1966

May 8—A special Mother's Day Program was given at Sunday School and a gift was presented to each mother of the ward.

June 2—The Relief Society catered a banquet for the ASCS employees at the Oasis Ward Hall. Ward members furnished and prepared the food and the money earned was to go toward the new seminary building. A total of \$102.00 was raised.

June 24-25—The Oasis Ward had the concessions for the Millard County Fair and Days of the Old West Rodeo as another seminary building fund project. All the members of the ward helped and a good profit was realized. The ward farm project has been progressing through the summer. Grain was planted in the spring and has been irrigated three times. It will be harvested in July. The livestock project has also been helping raise our finances for the budget needs. Calves and pigs have been fed through the winter and spring months and some have been marketed. Spring was late with a frost in June which delayed the crops. The first crop of hay is poor throughout the entire area. The winds blew continually during June which hampered the harvest of the early hay crop.

The ward entry for the Days of the Old West parade [in Deseret] took second place. Members of the ward built the float using blue foil for a heart as a backdrop for the queen who stood at the rear. Two other girls rode near the front.¹⁹⁶

196 Oasis Ward Confidential Minutes 1960-1975, LR 6370-10, CHL.

SNAPSHOT—1971

Jan. 9—Laurels and MIA Maids enjoyed a Laurel Conference at the stake house.

Jan. 27—Oasis Ward graduated another Teacher Trainer Class under the direction of Sister Ethel M. Stanworth.

Feb. 2 Young Artists Festival was held in the Oasis Ward combining Oasis and Deseret Wards. A good program was presented with many young people taking part. (emphasis added).

Jan. 30—Nineteen young people attended a baptismal for the dead at the Manti Temple and were baptized for 610 persons.

Feb. 7—One hundred new chairs were purchased for the Oasis Ward. Our ward's share of the expense was contributed by Harold Skeem.

March 18—Annual Relief Society birthday party for all married people of the ward. A lovely dinner was served and an entertaining program was presented.

May 27—Oasis Ward Boy Scouts participated in the district's annual camp at Fish Springs. They also had a camp at Oak Creek Canyon in April.

June—On Father's Day, a group from the Oasis Ward presented sacrament meetings to the extended care wing of the West Millard Hospital.

July—The hay has been harvested on the ward farm yielding 22 tons. This was sold to Floyd Skeem. A group of the ward members hauled the hay.

August 3—A sock and handkerchief party was held for Vincent Memmott, who is leaving soon for his mission. This was sponsored by the MIA.

July 27—Hilda T. Gillen, one of our oldest members, died at the home of her son Elmo in Oasis. She was one of the first settlers of Oasis. She and her son Enoch built a small adobe house and homesteaded land to farm here.

July—A fire at Conard Stanworth's feed yard destroyed about 40 tons of hay and burned part of the mangers. The efforts of neighbors saved part of the haystack.

Sept. 7—Opening social for **combined Deseret and Oasis MIA**. Powderpuff football was played. (emphasis added)

Sept 30—A sock and handkerchief party was held for Michael T. Styler who is leaving soon for his mission.

Oct. 26—Halloween parties were held for the Primary and MIA. Games were played and refreshments were served.

Nov 21—The stake president presented a new bishopric to the Oasis Ward: Bishop, Berdell Memmott; 1st counselor, Dale Willoughby; 2nd counselor, Walter Eldon Rowley; ward clerk, Tony Stanworht; executive secretary, Dick Willoughby.¹⁹⁷

Oasis folks love to have fun. Joking around is a coping mechanism when dealing with the harsh realities of living in an unforgiving desert. One example: I brought my BYU roommate, John Madsen, home to spend a weekend in Oasis. We started our

¹⁹⁷ Oasis Ward General Minutes 1892-1975, LR 6370-11, CHL.

Saturday with a good sourdough breakfast at Auntie's. This was a normal occurrence during my college days. For some reason, the pancakes were mysteriously hard to cut. I looked over at my roomy and he was attacking his stack with a knife. In the meantime, Auntie was laughing until the tears came. She had put a piece of cloth in each flapjack—it was her April Fool's joke.

After breakfast, John and I did some of the usual activities: shoot guns, climb the Great Stone Face, hunt for arrowheads, travel to the canyon for a picnic, etc. My California friend enjoyed his time in Oasis. He wasn't my only BYU friend I invited to come experience the good wholesome life away from the city.

I had fun at the ward socials in my formative years. One occasion was a dinner in Oak Creek Canyon about 1950. It stands out, not only because of the location but also because of the potential fire hazard it occasioned. When the food was ready and everyone sat down, the forest became too dark to see well. This was remedied by some of the railroad men going to their cars and returning with fuse flares, which they ignited and stuck in the trunks of nearby pine trees. I can't help but think this would be against regulations now—if it wasn't then.

There were many dances, roadshows, and group games at MIA. One of our favorite activities was Steal the Bacon. An object is placed midway between two lines of participants. Everyone in the facing equal lines was given a number. When the leader called yours, you and the person with the corresponding number from the opposing line rushed to the center to retrieve the "bacon." If you could return to your line with it without being tagged, your team got a point. We had a lot of fun together!

Oasis Ward members enjoyed gathering for social occasions. Christmas parties, weddings, funerals, summer BBQs are all

examples of these get-togethers. Television didn't come to Oasis until the mid-1950s. Before that, the entertainment was local. My uncle, Kelly Hawley, was well-known as an actor in ward plays. Sister Norma Moody, from Deseret, popular for her challenging piano solos, made guest appearances at Oasis Ward socials. Some of the children (myself included) were encouraged to learn to play the piano accordion and perform in church meetings, weddings, and other functions. These were events that brought everyone together as a community of neighbors as well as saints.

WARDHOUSE REMODELED: THE RED-BRICK BUILDING

In 1956, the original adobe building was completely remodeled and expanded under the leadership of Bishop Ralph Skeem and his counselors. A red-brick exterior wall was built around the adobe walls and the old chapel was converted into a cultural hall. A Relief Society Room was added onto the east side of the original structure and a kitchen on the south. The big window seen in the photo of the red brick building looks out from the Relief Society Room and is centered on the original door of the old church. The new addition extended to the right. It added a chapel, bishopric office, classrooms, and lavatories onto the north side. A new cement area for BBQs and outdoor parties reached out to the north from there.

THE DECISION AND THE MEANS TO BUILD

In the ward's annual reports for 1954-56, we learn that ward members took incremental steps in the extensive remodel of their place of worship. They first recognized the problems and through inspiration, cooperation, and considerable effort began the process of remodeling.



Redbrick Chapel

April 10, 1954—[The Oasis] Garden Club erected a fireplace on the Church lot, and the lawn was planted north of the church.¹⁹⁸

June 1—Alma Western was hired to do some work on the [adobe] chapel. Ceilings were fixed and some new stops were erected inside and outside of the church.

August 8—Oasis got the concessions at the rodeo at Deseret and made about \$650 which will be applied to the ward building fund.

August 22—A special meeting was held to see what the members of the ward would like to do. There were three choices: 1) build a new ward meetinghouse, 2) build onto the old one, or 3) join with another ward, possibly Deseret.

¹⁹⁸ Manuscript History, 79, CHL.

November 23—Plans were made to raise money to start a new addition to our chapel.

December 21—A fence was erected on the south side of the chapel by members of the ward.

January 19, 1955—A meeting was held to discuss plans for the new chapel and ways for raising finances.

March 8, [1956]—Deseret Sentinels entertained at Oasis Ward. Money was raised for the building project.

March 31—Garden Club gave an Easter Bake Sale.

April 1—At this time our building has progressed nicely. We are starting to lay the brick.¹⁹⁹

May 6—A meeting was held to discuss ways and means to raise money for the new building. Also discussed was the ward welfare farm. Not much will be raised this year because of the water shortage. In May a good number of ward members turned out to help with the new chapel as has been done in previous months. Oasis Ward served at the Millard County Stock Show banquet. Money raised went to the building fund.

May 28—The Garden Club presidency got men together and poured a beautiful cement parking lot and tennis court. Many changes have been made around the chapel such as planting flowers trees, etc.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Manuscript History, 83, CHL.

²⁰⁰ Manuscript History, 87, CHL.

June 30—The building has progressed very well. It has been sparked by much enthusiasm by every member of our ward and we can be justly proud of our new chapel when completed.

July 20—Had a meeting to agree on ways and means to raise more money for the building fund.

July 29—Oasis Ward was awarded concessions for Days of the Old West.

August 21—It was learned the ward made approximately \$700 toward building funds on concessions at the fair. (emphasis added)

September 29—Harvested 37 bags of alfalfa seed from our ward welfare farm under the direction of Harold Skeem.²⁰¹

December 27—Cleanup of church grounds getting everything ready for dedication to be held January 6, 1957.²⁰²

SUPPORT FOR THE WORK

In the spring of 1953, the Oasis Ward had a new bishopric. These new leaders were willing workers in the Lord's vineyard and enjoyed the support of faithful members.

Ekins saw a connection between the bishop's last name and its homonymic equivalent, "schem-er"—one who makes plans. Her article, published in the *Deseret News* in April 1953, as a fun read

²⁰¹ Manuscript History, 89, CHL.

²⁰² Manuscript History, 91, CHL.

is indeed a pun on the bishop's name, but it also points out some of the support available for the remodel.

Bishop Skeem Has Many Skeems to Help

Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake, boasts 11 Mrs. Skeems and a new Bishop Skeem.

Sunday the Oasis Ward bishopric was reorganized with Ralph Skeem being sustained as the new bishop; Howard Roundy, first counselor, Fon Hawley, second counselor, and Russell Styler, ward clerk.

Having a Bishop Skeem in the ward is not new, as the new bishop's father, the late Marcus Skeem, served as bishop of the Oasis Ward for 18 years.



*This photo accompanied the Deseret News article
“Bishop Skeem Has Many Skeems to Help”*

The new bishop will find plenty of support in his new calling if relations mean anything. In the ward are eleven women who answer to the same Mrs. Skeem. Of this number, one is his mother, Mrs. Betsy Skeem, and one is his wife, Mrs. Shirley Skeem; all the rest are relations, either aunts or cousins.

Oasis Ward is one of the units in the stake with only fifty-one families and about one hundred fifty members. Of this number, half of the membership is related to the new bishop.

Perhaps the reason for this is that the Skeem family became established in Oasis in 1883 when the Hans P. Skeem family came to Utah from Denmark to take up land and build a home. The younger generations have stayed and today they are still farming some of the original land taken up by their great-grandfather.

*The eleven Mrs. Skeems are Mrs. Annie Skeem, about seventy-five, and the oldest, Mrs. Betsy Skeem; Mrs. Vernessa Skeem, Mrs. Erma Skeem, Mrs. Fontella Skeem, Mrs. Norma Skeem, Mrs. Ruby Skeem, Mrs. Evelyn Skeem, Mrs. Elva Skeem, Mrs. Shirley Skeem, and Mrs. Eathel Skeem.*²⁰³

There were at least two other Skeem ladies in Oasis not mentioned above which is understandable since when they married they changed their last names: Evelyn (Skeem) Hawley and her sister Edna (Skeem) Cropper, my aunt and mother.

The Skeem family was not the only Oasis Ward family that contributed to the remodel. The Stylers, Stanworths, Willoughbys,

²⁰³ Sebrina C. Ekins, "Bishop Skeem Has Many Skeems to Help," *Deseret News*, April 11, 1953, 33.

Andersons, and Christensens among others were “no less serviceable.”²⁰⁴

To have the backing of ward members was a critical factor in taking on a project of such magnitude and financial commitment. With everyone’s support, success was certain.

RAISING THE MONEY

Bishopric counselor Howard Roundy was tasked with organizing the local work. One of his responsibilities was to track and issue receipts showing the number of hours of labor local members gave toward the building. The hours donated were given financial consideration and accredited toward the remodel by the Church.

Members were also asked to make a substantial financial contribution to the building. This was in addition to their regular tithes and fast offerings. I remember ward leaders coming to our home and asking my parents to make this special donation. I’m sure they did the same with other Oasis Ward families.

At that time, the Church encouraged members to donate to the building of their own meetinghouses. The ratio of Church to local financial participation in building projects has changed over the years. Then it was 70–30; meaning Church Headquarters would finance 70% of the construction and local members were to come up with the remaining 30% as their share.²⁰⁵ Today the ratio has changed to where the Church finances the entire construction and places no financial obligation on its members.²⁰⁶

204 *Book of Mormon*, Alma 48:19.

205 Private conversation with Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Conk, February 2023.

206 “Dedication,” <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/dedication>.

One thing the ward did to raise money for construction was something they had always done—put on a bazaar. The Oasis Ward hosted this big event every fall. Handmade quilts, crocheted afghans, hand appliques, embroidered towels, flannel dolls, services, etc. were auctioned off for Christmas gifts or personal use. I remember my Uncle Ervin (Derb) Skeem, in good-hearted fun, putting on a lady's apron to entice higher bids. Everyone was involved and a lot of money was brought in for the ward and the Relief Society fund, which the sisters used for quilting supplies and other purposes.

These sisters prepared and served meals for different businesses. They had a reputation for their exceptional cooking. This catering service went far beyond the occasional dinner. Everyone in the area knew and supported their efforts to raise money for a new chapel. The Oasis Seed Coop and other companies requested the Oasis Ward Relief Society to host their annual dinners and were as generous as their budgets allowed.

One unique way some of the men raised money for the building was by catching wild mustangs and selling them for \$12-\$14 per head. Probably their most effective technique was to wait where the mustangs came for water. Once the horses had drunk their fill, they were sluggish and easier to catch.²⁰⁷ I'm sure this event was more than just a money-raiser—the men undoubtedly enjoyed the camaraderie and challenge of roping wild horses.

Brenda (Skeem) Cullimore remembers how her dad, Bishop Ralph Skeem, had his corral full of horses. "I was just a little girl sitting on the fence post in awe when my dad turned to ask which

207 Private conversations with Roger Stanworth February 2023.

horse I wanted. I took that offer literally and spent a lot of time picking out just the right one, but to my dismay, I never got it.”

Operating concession booths at the Days of the Old West Rodeo in Deseret²⁰⁸ presented a unique problem. To obtain this money-making opportunity, the ward had to agree to sell beer along with soda pop. The Church’s stance against alcohol was in direct opposition to operating this concession. The ward leaders hesitated over this conflict of principles. When word got out about the ward’s dilemma, several Oasis men, not observers of the Word of Wisdom, offered to sell the beer and give the proceeds to the ward. Thus, a compromise was reached and this situation was resolved. Hundreds of dollars were raised for the building remodel by selling hamburgers, hotdogs, soda pop, and yes—beer. The Oasis Ward continued to do this for several years—not just to raise money for the remodel.²⁰⁹

The Oasis men and women combined their efforts in other fund-raisers as well. One was to host singing groups who came to perform for area residents. Another source of revenue at their disposal which was rather unique, was the Oasis Ward farm. It had been inherited from a World War II veteran who was killed in action. He had specified in his will that in the event of his death, his farm should be given to the community of Oasis. The ward had taken it over since Oasis was unincorporated. The brethren took turns caring for it with proceeds going to the budget and later to

208 This professional rodeo, begun in 1947, Utah’s centennial year, was a very popular event during the 1950s. It attracted spectators from across the state. The rodeo was held in Deseret, but has moved to Delta.

209 Working the concessions at the rodeo/county fair is mentioned several times in the historical record. See: Quarter Historical Report April 1- June 1956 and Historical Events 1966-June 24 in this record.

outgoing missionaries.²¹⁰ I remember hauling baled hay at the farm and setting traps to catch gophers—their digging caused washouts during irrigation.

Money from the farm gave financial stability to the ward up to the time, and even after, it was combined with the Deseret Ward. One year during the tenure of Bishop Dale Willoughby (1987-91), the Delta West Stake asked its smallest ward (Oasis) to contribute to its budget early to help with stake finances. This request was willingly fulfilled.²¹¹

DONATED LABOR

Ward members were unified in their commitment. The question about building was probably settled at the special meeting held on August 22, 1954, when the options were presented. There is no record of anyone ever dissenting or wavering in that decision.

Acting with the ward's backing, on November 22, 1955, Bishop Skeem hired LaMont Works as a building supervisor. First Counselor Howard Roundy directed the work. Clifford Evans, from Salt Lake, drew up the plans as architect.

I have never seen a record of how many man-hours were given to the project, although I am certain that one was kept. My father was given a 4" x 2½" slip of paper which dates from this period,

*Receipt for Work in the Church Welfare Program/Date
April 1955.*

210 Private conversation with Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Conk, February 2023.

211 Private conversation with Dale Willoughby, March 2023.

*This is to certify that Lawrence Cropper of Oasis Ward of the Deseret Stake has voluntarily donated to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 4 hours of work. Nature of work: burning weeds. Place of work: ward farm. Project Supervisor: [signed] Howard Roundy.*²¹²

True, this is not for working on the construction project, but I'm confident the record was kept—just like we sign in for Church welfare projects today. My guess is that the foundation was completed in the fall and winter of 1955-56. The labor of the men on the building project was significant. I know they poured cement for the footings and foundation. This was hard work; much of the concrete was moved in wheelbarrows. The Church matched their efforts by giving an equivalent monetary amount for whatever the value of the labor performed on the building.²¹³

I was 11-12 years old at the time of the construction and remember helping clean up at the site. One special memory was of a carpenter who was an amateur ventriloquist—probably Brother Works. He tried to convince us boys that there was a guy trapped under the floorboards. He would talk to him through an open knot-hole in the floor and the trapped man would answer back, “Help! Get me out of here!” We were not convinced anyone was there, but we were entertained.

212 The receipt is in the possession of the author.

213 Private conversation with Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Conk, February 2023. Her husband, Howard Roundy served as the bishopric work coordinator for the building. Private conversation with Evelyn (Skeem) Webb who, as a teenager, worked at many of the catered dinners.

OASIS WARD CHAPEL IN THE NEWS

A new chapel in the valley was worthy of note. *The Chronicle* ran a story about the dedication on its front page, on January 3, 1957, under the headline: “Apostle Lee to Speak at Conference—Dedicates Oasis Chapel.”²¹⁴ In the same issue, we find this summary of what had been accomplished.^{xv xvi xvii xviii}

*The completion of the new ward building and dedication is a joyous occasion for Oasis Ward members. The building project was commenced on Nov. 22, 1955, and during the year following the ward members have joined hands in many activities to raise the funds and provide the labor to bring the project to its successful completion.*²¹⁵

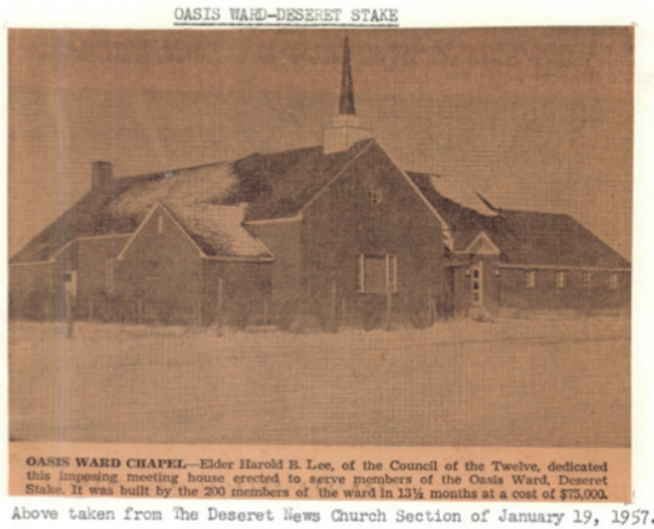
Also in the January 3rd issue, the Oasis columnist, LaVeda Bishop, added her assessment.

*Happy New Year to you all. We are happy our chapel is completed and is ready to be dedicated next Sunday. This has been a wonderful opportunity for us to work together and become better acquainted. Our leaders have been out in front and set a great example of diligent and unselfish service.*²¹⁶

²¹⁴ “Apostle Lee Dedicates Oasis Chapel,” *Chronicle*, January 3, 1957, 1.

²¹⁵ “Apostle Lee to Speak at Conference: Dedicates Oasis Chapel,” *Chronicle*, January 3, 1957, 1.

²¹⁶ “Oasis,” *Chronicle*, January 3, 1957, 4.



*Remodeled Oasis Ward Chapel—Picture from
Deseret News Church Section January 19, 1957*

In the issue following the dedication L. Bishop describes what happened at the building dedication,

Sunday was the day this community has been waiting for about thirteen months and now it has come and gone. The dedicatory service was all that we hoped it would be. We were honored by the presence of Apostle Harold B. Lee who gave such a timely talk and such a beautiful prayer.

Other speakers were Bishop Skeem, Counselors Howard Roundy and Fon Roy Hawley, Clerk Russell Styler and LaMont Works, Building Supervisor and [Deseret Stake] Pres. June W. Black.

Brother Lee said, [with] ‘such a Skeem-er as a contractor, a Rounder to round up the workers, a Hawley or Howley to

advertise, a Styler to give us style and a Works to supervise the thing—no wonder we got results.'

*There were so many people there from neighboring towns and we were happy to have them with us."*²¹⁷

The ward record contains a copy of the newspaper with an addendum as to the time involved and cost, "Oasis Ward Chapel, Elder Harold B. Lee of the Council of the Twelve dedicated this imposing meetinghouse erected to serve members of the Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake. It was built by the 200 members of the ward in 13 ½ months at a cost of \$75,000."²¹⁸

DEDICATION

A copy of the four-page dedication program for the renovated Oasis Ward meetinghouse can be found under Building Dedication online at Oasis Ward Picture History.²¹⁹ It features a photo of the new structure on the cover. The sacrament meeting program with a small photo of Elder Lee, a black and white picture of the bishopric, and a history of the area. A transcription of the program and history follow.^{xix}

Dedicatory Program

Prelude Music —Loenza Willoughby

Opening Song —We Thank Thee Oh God for a Prophet

Prayer —Peter H. Petersen

Sacrament Song —O God, the Eternal Father

²¹⁷ LaVeda Bishop, "Oasis [Chapel Dedication]," *Chronicle*, January 3, 1957, 2.

²¹⁸ *Manuscript History*, 93, CHL.

²¹⁹ The program was provided by Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Konk.

Sacrament

Remarks —Ralph C. Skeem, Bishop

Remarks —Howard W. Roundy, First Counselor

Remarks —Fon Roy Hawley, Second Counselor

Remarks —Russell T. Styler, Ward Clerk

Remarks —J. LaMont Works, Building Supervisor

Song —Oasis Singing Mothers, Thanks Be to God

Speaker —June W. Black, Stake President

Dedicatory Remarks and Prayer —Elder Harold B. Lee

Closing Song —Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow

Benediction —Val Styler

Postlude Music —Loenza Willoughby

Ushers —Ward Elders

OUR PRESENT BISHOPRIC was sustained to office March 22, 1953. Left to right—Russell Styler, ward clerk, Howard W. Roundy, first counselor, Ralph C. Skeem, bishop, and Fon Roy Hawley, second counselor.

On behalf of the bishopric, the auxiliary organizations, and the [Oasis] Garden Club presidency, we express our gratitude to you on this day of dedication.

We are grateful for the presence of Elder Harold B. Lee, our general authority, who has come to dedicate this building.

We also wish to thank our building supervisor, J. LaMont Works, for his ability, skill, and untiring efforts on this project.

We are grateful for our stake authorities and for the support, the stake has given us.

We want to give thanks to all the wards that have given their support in helping us in our projects to raise finances for our building and to everyone that has helped in any way.

May we show our appreciation and give thanks to Our Heavenly Father for this beautiful building by better attendance and remember that it is the House of the Lord at all times.

The first historical account of Deseret, Millard County was the visit of Father Sylvester Vele de Escalante who came here in September 1776.

The second account of Deseret was the visit of Lieutenant Gunnison who came to Utah under the command of Captain Howard Stansbury in 1863.

During the following thirty-eight years the county grew so rapidly that on March 21, 1891, a meeting was held to divide the Deseret Ward which had become too large. It was divided into three wards: Hinckley, Deseret, and Oasis. Mr. John Styler was sustained as bishop of the Oasis Ward. At this meeting, it was decided that all the people living on the east side of the Sevier River and east of the Deseret Irrigation Canal were to be members of the Oasis Ward.

The ward population at present is one hundred ninety-five families.

The building project was commenced on November 22, 1955, with Bishop Ralph C. Skeem appointed contractor. J. LaMont Works building supervisor, Howard W. Roundy ward work director, and Clifford Evans Salt Lake City architect.

The wardhouse consists of a foyer, chapel, four classrooms, bishop's office, recreation hall, Relief Society Room, kitchen, and Boy Scout room.

The landscaping was sponsored by the Oasis Garden Club and includes the parking lot, fireplace, cement walks, fencing, lawn, flowers, trees, and shrubs.

The entire cost of the project including building, furnishings, and landscaping was approximately \$74,000.00.

I attended the rededication of the Oasis Ward building—I even took part. As deacons, we were tasked with passing the sacrament. I was sort of unanimously chosen by my peers to pass to the authorities seated on the stand. None of us was exactly sure who should receive the sacrament first—in other words, we didn't know which man was the visiting general authority.

Very soon after the dedication of the new Oasis Ward building, Ralph Skeem was released as bishop and a new bishopric was installed. Lawrence Cropper was called as bishop. Quoting again from Dad's journal, "Everything was new when I took over—office, desk, filing cabinet."²²⁰

220 Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Church Service, FSM.

MEETINGS AND AUXILIARIES

Dad used to say, “Death is a part of life.” Latter-day Saints believe that life continues and death is merely a step in one’s eternal progression, “the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life.”²²¹

FUNERAL SERVICES

Time is taken to celebrate the life lost to us here in this world in a funeral service that seeks to honor the deceased and comfort the bereaved. Over its 100-year history, there were many funerals held in the Oasis Ward.

Before the remodel was complete, the Oasis Relief Society President, Lilian Roundy, died unexpectedly of a blood clot following a hysterectomy. Her viewing was held in the unfinished Relief Society Room. The sisters worked hurriedly to make drapes for the

²²¹ *Book of Mormon*, Alma 40:11.

windows and the brothers quickly rolled out the carpet over the bare wood floor to make the room presentable for the occasion.²²²

My mother, Edna (Skeem) Cropper, died in 1977. Her funeral program consisted of friends and relatives. The two main speakers, Ralph Skeem and Russell Styler, were not immediate family. My wife Susan sang a solo and was criticized by some. At that time it was felt that close family couldn't possibly be stable enough emotionally to perform at a funeral. When dad, Lawrence Cropper, died in 1996, this feeling had modified. My son Corry and I were the main speakers with other family members taking part.

WEDDINGS

My maternal grandparents were lifelong members of the Oasis Ward. Their wedding was probably a very social occasion celebrated with other ward members and perhaps even some of the customs brought over from Denmark. (Grandfather Peter Skeem was born in Denmark; his wife Annie Petersen was born in America but raised in a home where Danish was the primary language.) One thing is certain—they had a wedding cake. (See photo below.)

Bishop Cropper performed the marriage of Evelyn Skeem and Gary Webb on the bride's birthday, August 24, 1957, in the cultural hall of the newly remodeled Oasis Ward. It was a beautiful ceremony with many in attendance. Evelyn shares her thoughts about her wedding and changes that have occurred since her marriage.

222 Private conversation with Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Conk, February 2023. Lilian was Glenda's mother-in-law.



Peter & Annie Skeem
(Cordell's maternal grandparents)
Wedding Cake Crown
Dec. 15, 1896

Cake Crown from Peter and Annie Skeem's Wedding on December 15, 1896—This Cake Crown is in the Author's Private Collection



Gary and Evelyn's Wedding Line, Left to Right: Glen and Eathel Skeem, Leslie, Nellie, and Calvin Webb, Gary and Evelyn, Hazel (Skeem) Babbitt, Veola (Memmott) Hansen, Iris Holman (Harris), Delene (Skeem) Leonard, Linda Galli

Wedding receptions weren't a drop-by event like today, but people came and stayed through the evening. Guests were welcomed by a line of people consisting of the bride and groom, their parents, best man, bridesmaids, and flower girls. The photo of our wedding line is made up of our family members and friends. On the left are my parents, Glen and Eathel Skeem, then Gary's parents, Leslie and Nellie Webb. Standing next to Gary is his bestman, his brother Calvin Webb. Gary and I are in the center. Hazel (Skeem) Babbitt was my chief bridesmaid; she's on my left. Veola (Memmott) Hansen, Iris Holman (Harris), were my bridesmaids. Delene (Skeem) Leonard and Linda Galli were our flowergirls.

There was typically a program with a couple of musical numbers, a poem or tributes. My mother was often asked to present a humorous reading on which she spent many hours compiling and personalizing. After Tony Mendoza married Susan Rowley, he would often sing and serenade with his guitar. This was followed by a dance. The new couple was the first on the floor for others to watch. Usually, a small local band played the music to dance by. Others would join in after watching the first dance.

These receptions were a town event. Guests visited and ate refreshments, which often included a yellow sheet cake with white frosting and an icing rose on each square, with a little cup of homemade mints and peanuts. There was an ornate punch bowl with small cups on serving plates—all made of glass. The only paper goods were embossed napkins. Some sisters opened the gifts in the Relief Society Room and displayed them on tables. A number sticker was attached and

noted in a book with the giver's name. It was fun to look over the gifts but in following years, couples opted to open their own gifts at a later time."²²³

Evelyn remembers the ward ladies going to the well-equipped church kitchen the day of her wedding to cook the meals and banquets together. Meat was put in the ovens, while rolls, mashed potatoes, gravy, and desserts were made. Church kitchens were functional, not serving stations.

An important part of the wedding reception was watching the bride and groom cut their wedding cake. Symbolically it represented the first act the new couple do together. Today wedding cakes can be very elaborate and cost hundreds of dollars. The tradition in the Oasis Ward wasn't nearly so expensive. Inez Kelly, who lived in the community and was well-known for her pastry decorating skills, produced lots of them. She made the cake for Gary and Evelyn and then twelve years later baked and decorated another one for Susan and me.^{224 xx}

When Susan and I got married twenty-two years later, things hadn't changed much from Evelyn and Gary's wedding. This news article is typical of how weddings were reported in the paper and gives some insight into the bride's gown, bridal attendants, and the role of best man and ushers.

—Couple United in Manti Temple ^{xxi}

Cordell Skeem Cropper of Oasis claimed Miss Susan Kathleen Woods for his bride on May 28, 1969, in Manti LDS Temple

²²³ Evelyn (Skeem) Webb and Vicki (Webb) Judkins, private email to the author, November 2022.

²²⁴ Private conversation with Evelyn (Skeem) Webb, March 2022.

rites. Bridal parents are Mr. and Mrs. Jack Woods of Las Vegas, Nevada, and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Cropper, Oasis.

The young couple was honored at a reception at Oasis LDS Ward on May 31, 1969. The bride was radiant in a gown of lace with a matching veil. Her gown featured a hoop skirt, fitted bodice, long sleeves. Pearls and sequins trimmed the gown. Her veil was released from a pillbox of lace, pearls, and sequins. She carried a bouquet of gardenias surrounded by yellow carnations.

Bridal attendants were Mrs. Gary Webb of Spanish Fork, Brenda Skeem Oasis; Camille Cropper, Ogden, all cousins of the groom. Flower girl was Shelly Memmott of Oasis. They wore street-length gowns of yellow satin accented with peach chiffon and white lace and carried long-stemmed yellow carnations.

Best man duties were filled by Bob Barber of Salt Lake. Usher was Vincent Memmott, Oasis. The newlywed couple is at home in Hinckley. Mr. Cropper leaves soon for the service.²²⁵

PRIMARY

Sister Aurelia Spencer Rogers, while praying about the welfare of the “mischievous boys” in her community, heard a voice say, “that there was an auxiliary organization [in the Church] for all ages except the children.”²²⁶ Inspired by this answer, she met with

225 “Couple United in Manti Temple,” *Chronicle*, June 26, 1969, 4.

226 Church Education System, *Church History in the Fullness of Times*, rev. ed., Salt Lake City: LDS Church, 1993, 410.

President John Taylor who permitted her to organize a Primary association in her ward in Farmington, Utah.

The first meeting was held on August 25, 1878, with one hundred and fifteen children in attendance. That day, boys were specifically taught not to steal fruit from orchards, and girls were taught not to hang on wagons. In addition, they were given lessons on faith, manners, obedience, and other principles.²²⁷

Two years later, the Primary Association was organized at the general Church level, with Louie B. Felt as the Primary General President.²²⁸

OASIS PRIMARY CREATED

A Primary Association was organized at Oasis on May 21, 1891, on the occasion of a visit of several stake officers including Dalilah Olson, stake president of the Primary Association. [Ward officers chosen and sustained were]: Mrs. Agnes Reid president, Mrs. Sarah Lovina Noyes first and Mrs. Mary Iversen second counselor, Miss Pearl A. Hawley secretary and treasurer, Miss Betsy Kinder organist.²²⁹

Primary in those early years was conducted somewhat differently from the way it is today. Here are the minutes of an Oasis Ward Primary meeting held on Friday, September 2, 1904.

President Emma Ward presiding. Singing by the Primary Catch the Sunshine; Who's on the Lord's Side [the first Primary

227 Barbara B. Smith and Darlyn Thatcher, *Heroines of the Restoration I*, Bookcraft Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah 84119, 186.

228 "Primary Organization Time Line," <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org>.

229 *Manuscript History*, 11, CHL.

songbook wasn't published until 1905].²³⁰ Prayer by President Emma Ward. Roll was called and minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved with one amendment. Second grade then marched to the adjoining room and proceeded with the program. Nora Styler read the lecture and questions were asked by Cou. [counselor] Minnie Anderson. Lecture for first grade was given by President Emma Ward. She also told a story. Della Church and Emma Anderson also told stories. Second grade then marched back. Rec. Nora Hawley, Rec. Inga Jensen, President Emma Ward spoke a short time to the Primary. Singing by the Primary In Our Lovely Deseret, Benediction by Minnie Anderson. Attendance, Officers 3, Boys 8, Girls 21, Total 29.²³¹ xxii

In the 1950s the Oasis Ward Primary was held on Thursday afternoons. During the school year, our big yellow school bus would stop at the corner of what is now W. 4500 S. and 2500 W. on its way home after school and all students wanting to attend Primary would get off. We then walked some 100 yards to the church where our teachers would greet us.

The service began with an opening exercise which consisted of hymns, a prayer, children sharing a short spiritual thought, and song practice. Popular Primary songs were *Give Said the Little Stream* and *Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam*. We didn't sing *I Am a Child of God*; this hymn was not introduced until 1957 and by then, I was no longer in Primary.

²³⁰ "Primary Organization Time Line," <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org>.

²³¹ Oasis Ward Sunday Primary Association Minutes and Records, 1904-1972, LR 6370-18, CHL.

After the opening, children would attend classes according to age group. Those between 10 and 12 would study the Thirteen Articles of Faith, which one was required to memorize for graduation. Usually, parents would be waiting in their cars to retrieve the child when Primary was over. We lived about a mile away.

To prepare for a performance at a stake conference, I remember going to the Deseret Stake house in Delta to practice. One sister came close to listen to each of us individually. She was tasked with separating us by altos or sopranos. I thought singing loudly was the determining factor, so I sang out with gusto, hoping to be classified as an alto. (My friend, Bob Barber, was in the alto section.) I didn't get selected and was instead shuffled in with all the rest of the sopranos. We sat in the choir seats and sang in the afternoon session of a quarterly stake conference—a possible effort to increase attendance.

Primary children aged 9-11 received a bandlo—a pointed piece of neckwear made of felt. It was used to display emblems and awards that showed the progress of each girl and boy in their respective class. Each child would wear the same bandlo for their last three years of Primary. My wife, Pamela, has a photo of her Fourth-Grade public school class. In it, a boy is wearing his bandlo on “picture day.” He was proud of it or his parents wanted him to wear it.



*Primary graduates with bandlos:
Cordell 1956 and Pam Cropper 1958*

The girls participated in Home Builder (later Lihona) activities with the group names: Larks, (age 9), Bluebirds (10), and Seagulls (11). As a Seagull, Pam repeated the Seagull Code in class each time they met. In class, she made a cross-stitch of what she considered the most important lines.

SEAGULL CODE

*I will strive to do my best in word and deed
To worship my Father in Heaven
Be loyal to my country
Honor my father and mother
Greet the day with a song
Make others happy
Serve gladly.*

This page from the Seagull Scrapbook explains four emblems on her bandlo,

1. *Temple: Spirituality*
2. *Open Book: Knowledge*
3. *Lamp: Service*
4. *Winged-foot: Health and Recreation*

Below is a transcription from her Seagull Scrapbook.

Along the Path of Spirituality: I have paid my tithing; attended sacrament meeting three times since becoming a Seagull; borne my testimony in fast meeting; I can repeat the sacrament prayers from memory.

Along the Path of Knowledge: I have made my bed, folding the sheet so as to make square corners; ironed all my own clothes for one week, filled out the sheet “My Genealogy” in the Seagull Scrapbook; I can name at least 6 rules for safe bicycle riding.

Along the Path of Service: I have acted as hostess to my family at a “Mind Your Manners” family hour; spent an afternoon with a shut-in or sick person, been a babysitter while a mother did church work; acted as a hostess in my Seagull class.

Along the Path of Health and Recreation: I have memorized the promise in the Word of Wisdom D&C 89:18-20; I can name the seven basic foods; I have made a meal for my family and prepared at least one dish; I can set the table properly.

The manual also contains: The Seagull Hymn, My Seagull Code Song, Cricket Chart Requirements, recipes, Ten Rules for Safe Bicycle Riding, Baby Sitting Rules, Rules of Etiquette, Word of Wisdom Check Sheet, etc. In addition, Pam learned in class how to crochet, and how to do cross-stitch. She still has her framed cross-stitch done in violet, green, yellow, and pink thread. It displays a home in the bottom left corner with a tree on the right. The three lines she chose from the Seagull Code are: “Greet the day with a smile/Make others happy/Serve gladly.”²³²

We boys participated in the Trail Builder activities, Blazer (age 9), Trekkers (10), and Guide Patrol (11). Cub Scouting was not an Oasis Ward program when I was there. In Senior Primary, I was anxious to become a Boy Scout. Some of our Primary activities were oriented towards scouting, which was the activity arm of the Aaronic Priesthood. For example, on one occasion, we were given rings that held a small compass. Other than “the needle always points north,” and “the compass is used for finding your way,” we had little understanding of how to use it. Nevertheless, we had fun stumbling around on the church lawn trying to “follow our compass.”

When I turned 12, Bishop Ralph Skeem interviewed me to determine my worthiness to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and my readiness to graduate from Primary. I was concerned that he might ask me to recite all 13 Articles of Faith, but that didn’t happen. All I remember is that he was kind and supportive. Pam was asked to recite one of the Articles in her bishop’s interview in the Edgemont 2nd Ward, Provo, Utah. We both successfully graduated from Primary and advanced to Mutual.

232 Miller, *Seagull Scrapbook*, unpublished document bound with brass clips.

MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION (MIA)

The first official youth association of the church—the Young Gentlemen’s and Young Ladies’ Relief Society—was formally organized in Nauvoo, Illinois, on the advice of the prophet Joseph Smith, in March 1843.²³³ Under the administration of Brigham Young, these organizations changed their names to the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) and the Young Ladies’ National Mutual Improvement Association.²³⁴ Today they are called the Young Men Organization and the Young Women Organization.

The following ward history entry deals with the creation of these two organizations in Oasis. They both occurred during the same year, but not the same date, when the ward was established.

A YLMIA was organized at Oasis on May 21, 1891, on the occasion of a visit of Susannah Robinson, stake president of the YLMIA with the following officers: Mrs. Mary F. Webb president, Mrs. Kate M. Day first and Miss Effie L. Duggins second counselor, Miss Betsy Kinder secretary and Mrs. Sarah Lavina Noyes treasurer.

A YMMIA was organized at Oasis by Frank Hinckley of the stake presidency of YMMIA on November 8, 1891, with the following officers: William P. Hawley president, Anthon C. Christensen first and George Christensen secretary and

²³³ “A Short Sketch of the Rise of the Young Gentlemen and Ladies Relief Society of Nauvoo,” *Times and Seasons* 4 1 April 1843, 154–57.

²³⁴ Wikipedia. 2007.” Young Men/organization.” Last modified April 2, 2023. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=YoungMen>.

counselor, and David Day librarian. Soon afterward, David Day was chosen as second counselor.²³⁵

The following is an article from the *Chronicle*. It tells of an Oasis Ward event in 1953 with both adults and young people on the program. I have used bolded text to identify the youth; they were kids I remember.

MIA CONFERENCE

“Meet Me at Mutual” brought a large attendance Tuesday night at MIA. Stake visitors present were Talmage Christensen, president, and Mrs. Deona Black.

The program, directed by Eathel Skeem, president YWMIA, consisted of a talk by Peter H. Petersen, who introduced the Mutual theme, a talk by Talmage Christensen, a song by **Montie Moore, Bruce Anderson, and Charles Howell**, skit by **Margaret Stanworth, Mary Jean Lovell and Mae Jean Barber**, song by **Gloria Day**, story by **Erma Styler**, song by **Jerold Bishop**, harmonica solos by **Berdell Memmott**. After Mutual, the group had a melon feed outdoors by the bonfire.²³⁶

MIA OPENING EXERCISES

In my youth, the Oasis Ward MIA held their weekly meetings for those ages 12-18 on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm. The Young Men’s and Young Women’s presidencies presided over the opening exercises which began with a hymn, a prayer, and the recitation of the

²³⁵ Manuscript History, 9, CHL.

²³⁶ LaVeda Bishop, “Oasis,” *Chronicle*, September 24, 1953, 6.

MIA theme. These changed from year to year, but during the time I was involved, the themes we stood and recited in unison were:

1957-58: *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)*

1958-59: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

1959-60: *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32)*

1960-61: *Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers. (D&C 112:10)*

1961-62: *I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them. (1 Nephi 3:7)*

1962-63: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him. (D&C 59:5)²³⁷*

²³⁷ Ardis E. Parshall, “Keepapitchin, The Mormon History Blog” MIA Slogans and Themes.

Following the opening exercises, we separated. The boys went to scouts and the girls went somewhere else. Occasionally there were special combined activities that preempted the classes.

From the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association Minutes, the 1962-63 report was chosen because it typifies many others. It lists the special events—not the routine classwork.

YWMIA Report

On Tuesday, September 4, [1962], we held our opening party. Games were played and refreshments were served. A large crowd attended.

*October 31 Halloween. **Hinckley Ward invited the Oasis Ward to their party.** They had a very nice time and it was enjoyed by a large crowd.*

*On Tuesday, December 4 we had our "An Evening in Social" ball. **We invited the Deseret Ward.** They helped with the program. We served fruit cake and punch. It was enjoyed by a large crowd. Thanks to the Deseret Ward.*

On Tuesday, December 18, we held our Christmas party. We went caroling. Had chili and crackers and exchanged gifts.

*February 9th [1963] was the **Gold and Green Dance held at the Deseret Ward.** Both the wards joined together. Had a floor show and a very good time.²³⁸ (emphasis added)*

²³⁸ Oasis Ward Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association Minutes and Records, 1947-1973, LR 6370-17, CHL.

ROADSHOWS—1950-1970S

In the Oasis Ward, there were joint activities for the young men and the young women. Going on a hayride, playing group games like ‘Steal the Bacon’ and ‘Pom-Pom Pull-away’, dancing, and caroling were fun activities, but one of the most memorable was the roadshows. Scouting and YW programs were put on hold every year for this event. Each ward was to write and stage its original production of a fifteen-minute skit involving musical numbers and dancing which was then taken literally on the road. The roadshows were performed in a single night, with actors traveling between church buildings to present in different wards throughout the stake. We would start in our ward, and after our presentation, load actors and props into cars, travel to a neighboring community and be there in time to follow the preceding group.

We just accepted roadshows as something we did in Mutual. It wasn’t until I started researching for this book that I discovered some of its history. Here’s a little of the background,

In 1928, the Mutual Improvement Association adopted the roadshow as a church-wide program. Roadshows continued to grow—with the 1950s and ‘60s being the height of their popularity—through the 1960s and 1970s before they began to dwindle. But even in the 1980s, the Church published an article in the Ensign detailing how to stage a roadshow. Latter-day Saint roadshows grew to include families—and nonmembers and less-active members had an opportunity to join in a fun activity.²³⁹

239 “Roadshows,” The Mormon Church, Beliefs, & Religion—MormonWiki, <https://www.mormonwiki.com/>.

The show I remember best was called “Mr. Sandman.” It was based on a popular song of the time by the same name. I think our skit was written by Sisters Loenza Willoughby, Illa Stanworth, and LaVean Gillen. The lyrics are in part,

*Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream/Make him the cutest that
I’ve ever seen/Give him two lips like roses and clover/Then
tell him that his lonesome nights are over/ Sandman, I’m so
alone/Don’t have nobody to call my own/Please turn on your
magic beam/Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream...*²⁴⁰

Because our skit was based on a young man who needed a date, pronouns were changed from me to him, etc., and there may have been other word changes to make the song more applicable to our little skit.

I was surprised when I was asked to sing the solo. A couple of the ward’s more gifted singers had refused. While I sang, Reed Skeem performed a pixie/Sandman dance and sprinkled stardust on the sleeping protagonist, Dan Willoughby, whose dream was granted shortly after he awoke. The girl, who had previously turned him down, suddenly had a change of heart. I discovered I loved performing—Reed not so much.

A 1957 news article gives a good idea as to the scope of these shows. It reports that Delta 2nd Ward’s skit, “Matrimony on the Farm,” was chosen to “represent the Deseret Stake in the Roadshow Festival at Spanish Fork.” It was selected “by the Y.W. and YMMIA

²⁴⁰ Pat Ballard, “Mr. Sandman Send Me a Dream,” 1954, [https://www.mistersandmanbringmesomedreamlyrics—Search\(bing.com\)](https://www.mistersandmanbringmesomedreamlyrics—Search(bing.com)).

boards with a roadshow judge from each of the eleven wards of the stake.”

Oasis was one of the participating wards. Its play was entitled “Shorty’s Nightmare” written by Loenza Willoughby, Paul Ludwig, Ila Stanworth, and Evelyn Kay Skeem. The article ends with praise for all who participated,

*The stake drama directors... wish to congratulate all the wards on the record set this year for participation and audiences. There were 360 people actively participating in the roadshows, 1500 people in the audience, a total of 43% of the stake population, and they traveled 4824 miles without an accident. This does not include the Thursday night performances by 8 wards at the District Roadshow in Fillmore which was also well attended and was accomplished without an accident.*²⁴¹

Roadshows continued well passed my time in Mutual. On October 17-18, 1972, “All wards [in the stake] participated. *Oasis combined with Deseret won the ‘Best Costume Prize.’*”²⁴² (emphasis added).

SCOUTS

The Scouting movement was founded in England by British General Robert Baden-Powell in 1907. In 1913, the Church officially joined the Boy Scouts of America as its first charter organization, adopting the program as the activity arm of its Mutual Improvement

²⁴¹ “Delta 2nd Ward Named to Enter Division Shows,” *Chronicle*, November 14, 1957, 1.

²⁴² Church Historical Report, 239, CHL, LR 6370-2, CHL.

Association for Young Men. In 1952, the Church announced that the Primary would sponsor Cub Scouting—but it was never implemented in Oasis when I was there. In 1954, the Duty to God Award was created for boys ages 12–18.²⁴³

Dad had been in scouts when he turned twelve in 1914. He recalled an experience of camping with other boys at Packs Bottom near the Gunnison Bend Reservoir, but nothing about advancing in rank—only that he and his fellow scouts had a good time.

A 1930 newspaper lets us know that there was a scouting program in Oasis at that time. “The Oasis scouts are now organized. The troop committee is: J. E. Works chairman, Marcus Skeem, Peter H. Peterson. and Arthur Turner. Kelly Hawley has been chosen scoutmaster with Clem Olsen as an assistant.”²⁴⁴ Clem spoke at Kelly’s funeral and talked about the fine program they had had.

The Oasis Scout Troop was featured with a photo on page one of the local paper in 1949.

Tenderfoot badges were awarded to these Oasis boys of Scout Troop 146, at a Court of Honor held in the ward hall recently. Pictured here with their scoutmaster, Howard Roundy, are Melvin Memmott, Keith Stanworth, and Grant Memmott, back row: Voy Stewart, Dick Willoughby and Gerald Bishop, front row.

²⁴³ Scott Taylor, “Timeline of the LDS Church and Boy Scouts of America,” <https://www.TimelineoftheLDSChurchandBoyScouts.org>, and Deseret News archive, May 8, 2018.

²⁴⁴ “Oasis Skylines,” *Chronicle*, January 16, 1930, 8.



Oasis Boy Scouts featured in 1949 news article

Scouter Ben Robison awarded badges and made a short talk. The program was given by the boys, each taking part.

Of interest was the fact that it was the first Scout meeting in Oasis since the night of Pearl Harbor. Arthur Reeve, district chairman, and Lionel Taylor and Waldo Warnick, commissioners, were present for the ceremonies.²⁴⁵

I became a scout when I finally turned 12, in the fall of 1956. Yes, I was excited and had been looking forward to the campouts and having fun. It seemed like a dream come true. I liked the idea of wearing a uniform and doing scouting things. I wasn't disappointed.

²⁴⁵ "Oasis Boy Scouts Hold Court of Honor," *Chronicle*, May 5, 1949, 1.

In my scout meetings, we always began with a recitation of the Scout Oath and the Twelve Points of the Scout Law as we brought our arms to the square in the scout sign:

SCOUT OATH: On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty, to God and my country, and to obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times; To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

*SCOUT LAW: A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.*²⁴⁶



Cordell Cropper in scout uniform at Camp Maple Dell

²⁴⁶ *Handbook for Boys: Boy Scouts of America, Fifth Edition June 1952, 19, 27-28.*

Mostly in our meetings, we worked on rank advancement. These were: Tenderfoot, 2nd Class, 1st Class, Star, Life, and Eagle. For the first three there was a list of requirements in our scoutbook. These had to be passed off to the scoutmaster. They dealt with camp skills, first aid, cooking, etc. The rank of First Class was a stumbling block for many. It required sending and receiving a message in Morse Code. The last three ranks involved earning required and optional merit badges.

The weekly scout meeting was held in the church's basement. This was a room next to the furnace and was sometimes referred to as the coal room, but I never saw any coal in it. The room was ideal until Oasis Troop 146, Flaming Arrow Patrol, got too big.^{xxiii}

Our scoutmaster, Martin Ludwig, took a real interest in us and was a man of integrity. Both Martin and Arlo (Tom) Skeem, who was for a time our assistant scoutmaster, had been in World War II. Martin was aboard a US Navy ship; Arlo in the Army Air Corps. Arlo had had an exciting World War II experience which I knew of but never heard him speak about. He had to bail out over Germany where he was captured and held as a POW for 9 months. (For that story, see the section "T/Sgt. Arlo Skeem.") Several others helped with the scouts including Dad.

BSA CAMP MAPLE DELL 1957-58

We looked forward to our camp-outs and especially summer camp—an adventure at Camp Maple Dell in Payson Canyon. The week spent there was the greatest of all scouting experiences.^{xxiv}

My Oasis troop went twice. The first year none of the men of the ward were able to accompany us. Arrangements were made to employ a professional scouter. His name was Mr. Ellis Hemley. He wore the scout uniform every day and took an interest in us

and what we were doing. There were lots of things to do at Camp Maple Dell, a set time for getting up, preparing our meals, training, and activities. After the evening meal, the whole camp would gather at the lodge for powwow, games, skits, songs, and spiritual time before lights out.²⁴⁷

In the middle of the camp was a small lake. Here we swam and fished. We also learned how to paddle a canoe and rubber raft. The day before going home, the different troops would have races on the lake to see which was the best. The Oasis troop never won, but it was fun trying.

There were lots of fish in the lake and we could each catch three a day. We fished from the bank. There were so many fish that it usually didn't take long for us to catch our limit. We ate plenty of trout and even had a few to take home at the end of the week.^{xxv}

There was also a rifle and an archery range. They were two of the most popular spots. One of our Oasis boys, Danny Willoughby, sat the camp record at the obstacle course. Dan was small but very strong. He climbed the rope, ran the distance, and surmounted all the obstacles in record time. Our troop was also recognized and presented ribbons for a variety of other honors: biggest fish caught, cleanest camp, archery, and rifle, matter of fact, we won 17 of the 24 awards given.²⁴⁸

During our week there in 1957, the troop chose me for the Order of the Arrow. The OA is the BSA honor group. It is composed of scouts who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives as selected by their peers. I was thrilled to be chosen, but

247 "Oasis," *Chronicle*, August 1, 1957.

248 Private conversation with Reed Skeem who remembers this sort of thing.

nervous because it meant sleeping alone on the mountainside and spending the next day in silent service.

At church the Sunday following our return, I was asked to give an impromptu report on our campout. This was during Sunday School opening exercises where the whole ward was present. I remember speaking of my OA ordeal and induction and that there was “a bunch of secret stuff that I wasn’t supposed to tell.” My report was well received.

Aside from Camp Maple Dell, there were other outings closer to home—a district campout in Fools Creek with a hike to the saddle, floating the Sevier River in a motorized rubber raft, and merit badge workshops at BYU, among others.

I was happy to see the Oasis scouts remained active after I left. The following is a 1982 entry from the ward history. “The Oasis Ward Scout Troop was awarded the Best Troop Award at a multi-district camporee held at Yuba Lake State Park. This was an outstanding accomplishment for a small ward and small troop. The scoutmaster, Michael Styler, was justifiably proud. This was the second time such an honor was earned under his leadership.”²⁴⁹

Basketball is big in the Church—especially among the youth, and yes, in Oasis we did, on occasion, play with a basketball. There were hoops in the cultural hall, but the room was not regulation size. I don’t recall ever actually playing a game—there generally weren’t enough boys. Once we were invited to play a game in Deseret. To see how that turned out, and why a rematch was not wanted, read “Town Rivalry” in this history.

²⁴⁹ *Manuscript History*, 266, CHL.

YWMIA 1957-1964

For their part, the Young Women Mutual Improvement Association comprised three different groups: Beehive, ages 12-13, Mia Maid, 14-15, Laurel, 16-17. These groups were disbanded and the YWMIA was reorganized under the Church's Children and Youth Program in 2019. In the photo, you can see Pam wearing her sash and holding her Bee Hive Girls Manual and Beehive Honor Bee Program booklet. I assume this was part of what the girls were doing in the Oasis Ward. I didn't have sisters, so the booklets and sash are news to me. It reminds me of how scouts display their merit badges.



Pam Cropper with Young Women's sash and books

At the top of Pam's sash is a beehive. The single hexagon-shaped cell represents Pam as a new Beehive and a member of the hive. (Honeycombs are made of six-sided cells). Next is a red rose

symbolizing wisdom and dignity. (This was her choice. Flowers are important to bees, so each girl was allowed to choose a flower for her very own.) The cluster of cells represents the hive or group of girls. Honor cell badges come next. These are earned. The requirements are in the Bee Hive Honor Bee Program booklet.²⁵⁰ The beelines are used to represent the years. The line above the hexagon with the girl's profile represents her first year in the program; the second line is for the second year. At the bottom is the swarm symbol. The back of Pam's sash is covered with honor badges. She was an overachiever.

Once a few friends and I went to the Girls' Camp in Oak Creek Canyon to check on the young ladies. We were met at the gate and insured our help was not needed or wanted and we were sent on our way. It was a stake event, but we knew a lot of our Oasis girls were there. We just wanted to be sure they were okay.

CERTIFICATES xxvi xxvii xxviii xxix xxx

In my formative years the Church readily acknowledged achievement—especially for the youth. At the Oasis Ward Picture History, you will find copies of awards presented to my family and me over the years. I've transcribed what was written on the Aaronic Priesthood Award and the Duty to God Award to give you an idea of what was required and the recognition.

*Individual Aaronic Priesthood Award. Cordell Cropper a Priest
in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints having*

²⁵⁰ Bee Hive Honor Bee Program booklet, (Published by The General Board of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1950), 7.

completed the following minimum requirements is presented this Testimonial of Achievement 75% attendance at Priesthood meeting; 75% attendance at Sacrament meeting; 36 Priesthood assignments filled; Observance of the Word of Wisdom, Full payment of tithing, if not exempt; Attend annual tithing settlement; 2 addresses in Church meetings; Participate in a quorum service project in Church welfare project; Serve as a ward teacher; Participate, as a speaker, in cottage meetings for Priests. ^{xxxi}

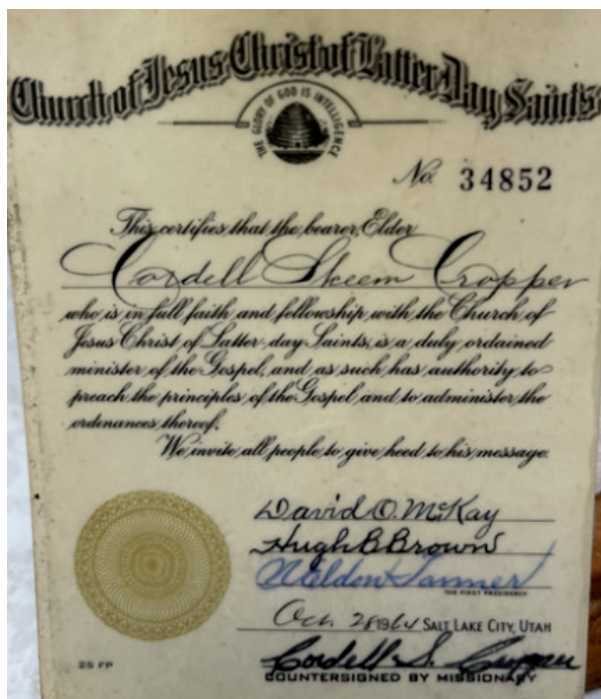
Duty to God Award: Know all men by these presents Cordell S. Cropper who is a Priest in good standing and an Explorer in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is hereby awarded the Duty to God Award having faithfully and efficiently done his Duty to God in the Church by his attendance at quorum meetings; filling priesthood assignment; attending sacrament meetings; observing the Word of Wisdom; paying tithing; giving service to the Church; Sunday School participation and YMMIA membership and activity. 21 February 1961 ^{xxxii}

These certificates were not limited to children and youth. At the Oasis Ward Picture History you will also find a certificate given to Dad when he was ordained a Seventy (1944), and another when he was ordained a bishop (1957). I've also included a certificate given to my grandparents from the Territory of Utah when they got married (1893). ^{xxxiii}

Dad's Bishop Certificate reads,

"To whom it may concern. We the undersigned Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hereby certify that on the 17th day of March 1957, Lawrence Cropper was

ordained and set apart as a bishop by Elder John Longden, Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, to preside over the Oasis Ward of the Deseret Stake in the County of Millard and State of Utah in conformity with the rites, regulations, and discipline of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In testimony whereof we hereunto subscribe our names at Salt Lake City, Utah, this 29th day of March 1957. David O. McKay, Stephen L. Richards, J. Reuben Clark Jr. Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” xxxiv xxxv



Cordell Cropper Missionary Credentials, October 28, 1964 >

This is a copy of my 3½ x 4½ inch missionary credentials that I carried in my shirt pocket during my full-time mission. I was

never asked to present it, but it somehow helped me feel secure. Nametags, like those all missionaries wear now, were not in use when I served.

This certifies that the bearer, Elder Cordell Skeem Cropper, who is in full-faith and fellowship with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a duly ordained minister of the Gospel, and as such has authority to preach the principles of the Gospel and administer the ordinances thereof.

We invite all people to give heed to his message.

David O. McKay

Hugh B. Brown

N. Eldon Tanner

October 28, 1964, Salt Lake City, Utah

Cordell S. Cropper

Countersigned by missionary

The missionaries serving in our ward came over recently. Elder Fenn brought his ministerial certificate and we compared. His was almost identical to mine. There were some minor differences: the letterhead, his is in print, mine in script; his is dated, mine has a number but no date; his carried only the signature of the Church president, Russell M. Nelson, mine is signed by the full First Presidency. The verbiage was identical except mine says, “We invite all people to give heed to his message.” Elder Fenn’s reads, “We invite all people to heed his message.” You can see both certificates at Oasis Ward Picture History. ^{xxxvi}

Obviously, the Church still gives certificates. Children and Youth represents a worldwide group of individuals striving to become more like Jesus Christ. To represent that unity, children

and youth receive several certificates during their time in Primary, Aaronic Priesthood quorums, and Young Women classes.²⁵¹

RELIEF SOCIETY

The Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a women's philanthropic organization consisting of over 7 million members in 188 countries and territories. It is "one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the world."²⁵² Here's how it came about,

*In the spring of 1842 Sarah Granger Kimball and her seamstress, Margaret A. Cook, discussed combining their efforts to sew clothing for workers constructing the Latter-day Saints' Nauvoo Temple. They determined to invite their neighbors to assist by creating a Ladies' Society. Kimball asked Eliza R. Snow to write a constitution and bylaws for the organization for submission to President Joseph Smith for review. After reviewing the documents, Smith called them "the best he had ever seen" but said, "This is not what you want. Tell the sisters their offering is accepted of the Lord, and He has something better for them than a written constitution. I will organize the women. after a pattern of the priesthood."*²⁵³

251 Children and Youth Emblems, churchofjesuschrist.org.

252 Dirk Smilie, "Mormon Trek Now Has a Global Reach," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 23 1997.

253 Sara Granger Kimball, "Auto-Biography," *Woman's Exponent* vol. 12, no. 7, September 1, 1883, 51. See also: Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, 2nd ed., Chicago University of Illinois Press, 1994.

The organization experienced a hiatus in activity because of the saints' expulsion from Nauvoo and move to the West. Once established there, women's organizations sprang up in individual wards to assist the Indians and fulfill other purposes. In December 1867, Brigham Young publicly called for the reorganization of the Relief Society in every ward. Eliza R. Snow provided a historical account of the society and described its purpose to seek "not only for the relief of the poor but the accomplishment of every good and noble work."²⁵⁴

OASIS WARD RELIEF SOCIETY CREATED—1891

About a month and a half after the ward was created, "[Bishop John Styler] realized the need for a Relief Society organization in the new ward. He looked to the women to help in sickness, trouble, and sorrow."²⁵⁵

The official ward record shows "The Oasis Relief Society was organized at Oasis May 8, 1891, on the occasion of a visit of President Ira N. Hinckley, Daniel R. Stevens and Christian Andersen and the stake officers of the Relief Society."²⁵⁶ Sustained and set apart to preside and conduct in the Oasis Relief Society on that occasion were Mary Warren president, Vilate K. Hawley first and Agnes A. Hansen second counselors, Mary Webb secretary and Betsy Kinder

254 "Female Relief Society," *Deseret News*, April 22, 1868.

255 Skeem, *Milestones*, 467. This account disagrees with the date of the creation of the Oasis Relief Society as recorded in the Manuscript History. *Milestones* shows the date at (accessed May 21, 1891; the Manuscript History as May 8, 1891.) May 8 was a Thursday; (May 21 was a Friday. I'm guessing that since the ward was created on March 21a clerical error was made and that the official record is correct.

256 Manuscript History, 7, CHL

assistant secretary, Kate Day treasurer. Relief Society at that time was a separate stand-alone organization with its leadership and finances—independent of the ward.

The minutes gives us a snapshot of what dropping into an Oasis Ward Relief Society meeting would have been like two months after its organization.

Minutes of the RS Meeting held July 3, 1891, at the Oasis School House. Meeting presided over by President Mary Warren. Singing by sisters: Let Us Pray Gladly Pray. Prayer by Mary Warren. Singing by sisters: My God, Spring of All My Life. Roll was called and minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Sister Warren bore her testimony and asked the sisters to do the same. Reading from the Young Woman's Journal by Mary Webb. Sister Nancy Hawley said she felt like attending her meeting and doing all the good she could. Sister Agnes Reed said she felt like encouraging the president by our presence and being a united band of sisters. Sister Anis S. Warren tried to do right for she knew the principles of the gospel were true. Singing by sisters: Come Come Ye Saints. Sister Mary Webb and Ellen Petersen each spoke a short time. Julia Iverson said she knew the gospel was true or she would not have stayed.²⁵⁷

In 1906, the Oasis Relief Society was striving to build their adobe meetinghouse. The progress toward this goal, or rather the lack of it, is captured in these minutes.

257 Oasis Ward Relief Society Minutes and Records, 1891-1973, CHL.

Relief Society Minutes—December 5, 1906

*President Elmyra Styler presiding. Singing We Thank Thee Oh God for a Prophet. Prayer by Phebe Harvey. Singing Guide Us, Oh Thou Great Jehovah. Roll was then called. Minutes of the previous meeting read and approved. Sister Styler spoke a short time and said she was disappointed to see so few here on such a fine day. She expected to see a large turnout. She was sorry we had failed to get our meetinghouse but hoped we would succeed next year. [She's referring to the adobe building which was dedicated in 1908.] Sister Henry bore her testimony. Sister Cropper then spoke and bore a faithful testimony to the sisters to wake up and come to the meeting. She spoke of the necessity of being prayerful and attend to their duties. Sister Walker also spoke very enthusiastic to the sisters of the necessity of being grateful to the Lord for the blessings we enjoy at his hand. Sister Styler gave a few closing remarks. Sister Jensen spoke a few words. Singing by the sisters.*²⁵⁸

RELIEF SOCIETY DUES for 1919 were 25 cents + 10 cents for stake dues. Those listed as having paid are: Regina Hawley, Elmyra Styler, Hilda Gillen, Emma Day, Betsy Skeem, Phebe Henry, Mary Harder, Edith Redi, Mima Jackson, Hanna Petersen. NOTE: Dues are no longer collected from Relief Society members.

²⁵⁸ Oasis Ward Relief Society Minutes and Records, 1891-1973, CHL.

This statistical report from 1922 tells us the number of sisters and officers enrolled and the organization's activity. "Number of Officers—6; Number of Teachers—6; Number of Members—11; Total enrolled—23; Admitted to membership during the past year—5; Total enrolled—28; Number of meetings held—40; Relief Society organizations in Ward—1; Number of LDS families in ward—44; Special visits to the sick—25."²⁵⁹

The United States was wholly engaged in World War II when this 1943 report was given. The sisters' patriotism and commitment are evident.

*Enrolled 37 members; Ten families moved away; Thelda Webster admitted. 100% class work; Average 37 visits; 10 quilts made 2 for Church Welfare Store. A patriotic program honoring the men in the service. 16 pictures displayed during the program. March 17 annual party with games and light refreshments; Made and sold articles for the bazaar to help finance Relief Society. Through donations and contributions from the faithful Relief Society sisters, we had in our treasurer. At the end of the year, \$364.50. We aim to faithfully keep our organization rolling on.*²⁶⁰ (emphasis added)

There were seventeen Oasis Ward bishops and at least nineteen sisters who served as presidents in the Oasis Ward Relief Society.

²⁵⁹ Oasis Ward Relief Society Minutes and Records, 1891-1973, CHL.

²⁶⁰ Oasis Ward Relief Society Minutes and Records, 1891-1973, CHL.



Oasis Ward Relief Society Presidents— Back row: Celia Christensen; LaVeda H. Bishop; Glenda C. Roundy; Ethel M. Stanworth; Beulah W. Rowley; Claire W. Petersen; Front row: Hilda Gillen; Jensine Anderson; Betsy Skeem; Erma T. Styler; Ethel B. Stanworth. (RS presidents not pictured: Mary Warren, Elmyra Styler, LuAnn Styler, Helen Memmott, Shirley Skeem. There may have been others.)

Their records from 1891-1973 identify these great women leaders. Below is a list of those who served in that capacity. There may well have been others.

Mary Warren
Elmyra Styler
Lillian Roundy
Celia Christensen
LaVeda H. Bishop
Glenda C. Roundy
Ethel M. Stanworth
Beulah W. Rowley
Claire W. Petersen
Hilda Gillen

Jensine Anderson
Stella Hawley
Betsy Skeem
Erma T. Styler
Ethel B. Stanworth
Joyce McDermaid
LuAnn Styler
Helen Memmott
Shirley Skeem

The Relief Society president is the second most important calling in the ward after the bishop. The duties and responsibilities of a ward Relief Society president may have changed over the years. Today “the Relief Society president leads efforts to participate in God’s work of salvation and exaltation. She serves as a member of the ward council and, under the bishop’s guidance, counsels adult members of the ward. She also oversees records, reports, and finances.”²⁶¹ Many look to her as the “mother of the ward.”

ANNIE (PETERSEN) SKEEM

My grandmother, Annie Skeem, was never a president, but typifies many other Oasis Ward sisters. Speaking at her funeral in 1960, Sister Erma Styler reported on Grandma’s service as a lifelong member of the organization.

Sister Skeem... was chosen as a visiting teacher in 1923 and performed that work for twenty-seven years. She and her partner seldom missed visiting their district. It wasn’t easy for her as she lived quite far out. (This was before cars [were so prevalent] and she had to walk a long way to make her visits.) Sister Fontella Skeem was her companion. Often, they came carrying a baby. They walked summer and winter through the heat and the cold, taking cheer to members of their district, and were always welcome whenever they called. She also served for years on the Oasis Ward Relief Society Business Committee...

²⁶¹ Handbook 2 9.3.2.2, *Relief Society President*, <https://www.churchofjesus-christ.org/study/manual/my-calling-as-a-relief-society-president>.



*Annie (Petersen) Skeem 1878-1960—
Photo from Author's Collection*

When our Oasis [red-brick] chapel was being built, each family was asked to contribute \$100. She said to me, "I couldn't possibly give that much money, but I will give all the help I can because I do want to help." At that time, she had just completed a lovely bedspread. It had taken her months to make. She gave that to the cause. Chances were sold on this bedspread. It brought in over \$200!²⁶²

The Oasis Ward Relief Society was comprised of sisters who, like my grandmother Skeem, were strong in the faith. They were responsible for the original building and an influential force behind its remodel. In the ward's history we read that it was the sisters who took the initiative to build the adobe meetinghouse. Comments made by Auntie Evelyn support my belief that they also provided the impetus for the second.

²⁶² Erma Styler, Annie Johanna Petersen KWZ3-XNT, Biography under Erma Styler-Friend, FSM.

Until 1980 the Relief Society held their meetings during the week at an early hour so the sister could be home with their families in the evening. There was a theme for each meeting: quilting, gospel study, world literature, politics, etc. The Relief Society Magazine arrived monthly until it was discontinued in 1970.²⁶³

Sisters were told that if they attended Relief Society from the time they were eighteen, they would have the equivalent of a college education. This ward organization was best known for its bazaars, charitable service, dinners, hosting of ward parties, etc.²⁶⁴

The following edited report from 1974 talks about the annual dinner, provides insight into some of the lessons, and outlines other activities the sisters were involved in. It is typical of other years.

In March the annual Relief Society Birthday Dinner was held. Stella Hawley presided and conducted. A ham dinner was served to the sisters and their husbands. A beautiful birthday cake, made by Inez Kelly, was placed in the center of a small table. A quilt made by the Relief Society in 1947 was on display. Harold Skeem bought the quilt in 1947 and has kept it in very good shape.

March 23—The stake Relief Society held a rummage and bake sale. The Oasis Ward Relief Society donated many articles and \$14.95 for the bake sale.

²⁶³ “Relief Society Magazine Index (1914-1917),” [https://www.Relief Society Magazine Index \(1914-1970\), Digital Collections, Collections, HBLL \(byu.edu\).](https://www.ReliefSocietyMagazineIndex.org/)

²⁶⁴ Private conversation with Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Conk, March 2023.

May 28—A special cultural refinement lesson combined with a closing social was held. Sister Ethel M. Stanworth gave an outstanding lesson on the Republic of the Philippines, Land of Tropical Beauty. Philippine music was played and Judy Webb, Margaret Gillen, and Shelley Stanworth danced the Twinkling Dance. Carol Bishop, from Hinckley, displayed arts and crafts from those islands and talked about them. Sister Stanworth served different kinds of fresh fruit and cottage cheese topped with lime sherbet. There were 22 present.

August 12—The Relief Society prepared and served dinner to about 90 stockholders of the Oasis Seed Plant in the cultural hall. Money was given to the ward.

August 16-17—The Relief Society displayed many lovely articles at the Millard County Fair. They took 85 blue ribbons and 4 sweepstakes.

This is a photo of an Oasis Ward Relief Society dinner held about 1960 in the cultural hall. The husbands were obviously not invited this time and it was apparently an occasion to honor sisters seated at the head table. The sister seated center rear may be Jensine Anderson—perhaps the oldest living Oasis Ward Relief Society president as the guest of honor.



Oasis Ward Relief Society dinner c.1960. From left to right: Glenda Roundy, unknown, LaVeda Bishop, Stella Hawley, Evelyn Hawley, Beth Day, Jenny Styler, Eathel Skeem, (Several in the back are unknown) NeRee Stanworth front right. Possibly to NeRee's right are Shirley Skeem, Rose Nichols, Claire Petersen, unknown, LaVida Gillen, Unknown, Helen Memmott, unknown, unknown, Alberta Stanworth. The sister seated center rear at the head table as the guest of honor may be Jensine Anderson—perhaps the oldest living Oasis Ward Relief Society president.

— Photo from Great Basin Museum

The Oasis Ward Relief Society had benefited financially from their bazaars and dinners. For many years, the Relief Society had been independent of their assigned ward in the sense that they operated their own programs and finances. This changed in 1979 when there was a shift in the way finances were dispersed. From that point, individual organizations were not to keep their separate funds. Money was to be distributed through the ward to the organizations as needed, or for reimbursement. When this change in procedure occurred, the Oasis Ward Relief Society had a good

reserve and was hesitant to turn it over to the general fund, so they quickly bought some equipment they had been wanting.²⁶⁵

By way of summary for this section, I have chosen a couple of quotes that I feel epitomize this great women’s organization in the Church. The first is from President Joseph F. Smith, “We ask our Sisters of the Relief Society never to forget that they are a unique organization in the whole world, for they were organized under the inspiration of the Lord. No other woman’s organization in all the earth has had such a birth.”²⁶⁶

This second one talks about a Relief Society sister’s potential. “If we could comprehend how glorious a righteous woman made perfect in the celestial kingdom will be, we would rise up and never be the same again. We would gladly take upon us the name of Jesus Christ—which means following him, becoming like him, and dedicating ourselves to him and his work.”²⁶⁷

PRIESTHOOD MEETING

“In mortality, priesthood is the power and authority that God gives to man to act in all things necessary for the salvation of God’s children. The blessings of the priesthood are available to all who receive the gospel.”²⁶⁸

265 Private conversation with Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Conk, February 2023.

266 Joseph F. Smith, “A Centenary of Relief Society,” p. 7, *Deseret News Press*, 1942, found at “Relief Society: To know the history, purpose and destiny of the Relief Society, quotes.

267 Sheri Dew, “Knowing Who You Are—and Who You Have Always Been,” *BYU Women’s Conference*, May 200. See quotes in endnote 267.

268 Handbook 2, *Administering the Church*, “Priesthood Authority.”

Dad ordained me to every priesthood office I ever held. As a young man, these ordinations came regularly: deacon (age 12), teacher (14), priest (16). Responsibilities were attached to each office: deacons passed the sacrament; teachers filled the little paper cups with water, placed the trays on the table prior to the meeting and helped pass, and usher; priests blessed the sacrament (read the prayer aloud for the congregation while kneeling at the sacrament table). Priests could also prepare and pass the sacrament and perform baptisms. As a priest, I was called upon to baptize my cousin, Lee Skeem.

These duties, and the theology they embrace, were taught to us in our priesthood meeting which was held regularly on Sunday mornings at 9:00. Under the direction of the bishopric, these meetings began with a hymn, a prayer, and announcements. Following this opening, we separated into our quorums. We ended in our groups at 10:00 am to allow time for the brethren to return home and bring their families to Sunday School which started at 10:30.

The first Sunday of the month was Fast Sunday. The Aaronic Priesthood boys were divided into groups of two and sent out with adult volunteers who drove us to collect the fast offering. We'd go to the doors of the assigned members and hand them an envelope into which they could put their donations. The testimony meeting, which accompanies Fast Sunday, was held at the sacrament meeting that evening. ^{xxxvii xxxviii}

Each year, those of us in the Aaronic Priesthood who had participated and attended regularly were awarded a certificate (Examples of these certificates are shown online at Oasis Ward Picture History). These were produced in Salt Lake at Church Headquarters and were quite ornate. One of the most attractive features was the recipient's name. It was written in full by a

professional calligrapher. Once a young man had been awarded four of these, he was presented with his Duty to God award. (In later years more requirements were added. The Duty to God program 1954–2019, was roughly equivalent to the Personal Progress program for the church’s young women.)²⁶⁹

The award itself consisted of another certificate, a ribbon with a medallion, and a pin—the pioneer buffalo skull. The ribbon could be worn on a scout uniform, the buffalo head pins on a suit jacket lapel.

Usually, it was the bishopric who instructed the Aaronic Priesthood quorums in the Oasis Ward. These groups were always small because the ward had only some 200 families and some of them were not active.

The adult men, elders, and high priests met together. Below is a typical report for this group:

*“High Priests Group Minutes—June 4, 1959. Bp. Lawrence Cropper Presiding; same Conducting; Time 9:30 am; Hymn, Praise to the Man; Prayer: Peter H. Peterson; [Lesson] Book of the Early Apostles for 1959; Kelly Hawley instructor; Adjournment: 10:15 am. Benediction Clark Bishop; Signed Fon Roy Hawley.”*²⁷⁰

The priesthood and its offices are key to understanding LDS theology. The 5th Article of Faith states: “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer

²⁶⁹ “Duty to God,” <https://www.DutytoGod.churchofjesuschrist.org>.

²⁷⁰ Oasis Ward Melchizedek Priesthood Minutes and Records, LR 6370–13, CHL.

in the ordinances thereof.”²⁷¹ The Church divinely commissions its representatives, sets them apart, and directs his Kingdom through them—both male and female—by exercising the restored priesthood and its keys.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Today, Sunday School is held for only an hour on the first and third Sundays of the month. This is a big change from the way it was conducted in the Oasis Ward, where the service lasted for an hour and a half every Sunday. Like today, we were encouraged to study the scriptures outside of class, but there was no “Come Follow Me” program. Children now join the Sunday School in the year they turn 12. In Oasis, we had Junior Sunday School for children; Primary met during the week.

Sunday School has a long tradition among Christian religions. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints started [with] informal Sunday schools [where] children and teachers recited scripture verses in the temple in Kirtland, Ohio.²⁷² Later, Emmeline B. Wells sporadically taught a Sunday school in Nauvoo, Illinois, and at Winter Quarters, Nebraska.²⁷³

A standard program of Latter-day Saint Sunday School developed in Utah Territory beginning in 1849. Richard Ballantyne,

271 Pearl of Great Price, “Articles of Faith #5.

272 Helen Mar Whitney, *Woman’s Exponent*, vol. 9, no. 6, “Life Incidents,” Aug. 15, 1880, 42.

273 David O. McKay, “Sunday Schools of the Church,” *Improvement Era*, vol. 33, no. 7, (accessed May 1930), 481; Leonard J. Arrington, “Faith and Intellect as Partners in Mormon History,” *Mormon History Lecture Series*, Utah State University, Nov. 7, 1995, 12. See also Topic: Emmeline B. Wells.

who had organized a Presbyterian Sunday school in Scotland before joining the Church, considered it a duty to teach the gospel to children in a formal setting. He built a room in his house with wooden benches and gathered fifty children there on December 9, 1849, to teach them from the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants.

In 1866, editor and Apostle George Q. Cannon launched the semimonthly *Juvenile Instructor* magazine, which featured scripture lessons, music, and instructions on teaching methods. The following year Cannon was named superintendent of the Church-wide Deseret Sunday School Union.²⁷⁴

Three years before the creation of the Oasis Ward, “a Sunday School was organized in May 1888, just after the completion of the Oasis schoolhouse. John H. Kinder was superintendent (today we’d call him the president). A few weeks later, William P. Hawley and John Styler were appointed [his] assistants.”²⁷⁵

This photo of the Oasis Sunday School was taken about a year after the building’s dedication. Forty-three members are identified. The order of those listed with the group picture can be found in *Milestones of Millard*, page 465.

²⁷⁴ “Brief Review of the Sunday School Movement,” 668–69; see also Topic: George Q. Cannon.

²⁷⁵ Manuscript History 7, CHL.



Oasis Sunday School Group 1910–1911—Starting at the top: B. H. Peterson, Reta Styler, Carl Pearson, Sam Rutherford, Val Styler. Second Row: Enoch Gillen, Charley Thompson, Tecla Christensen, Fred Peterson, Nora Peterson, James Christensen, John Iverson, Roy Owens. Third Row: Annie Rutherford and child, Delores Alldrege, Erma Styler, Velva Styler, Clara Williams, Melba Howe, Emma Christensen, Peter Peterson, A. C. Christensen, Marcus Skeem, unknown child. Fourth Row: Tella Hawley, Pauline Norton, Norma Rutherford. Fifth Row: Ova Christensen, Lucy Peterson, Leon Jackson, Marvin Jackson, Edwin Skeems, Oscar Cornwall, Lawrence Christensen, John Styler, Hyrum Anderson, Fawn Hawley, Harold Lancy Rutherford, (hat on) unknown, Nina Hawley, two children unknown, Searle Reid, Rulon Jackson, Horace Roundy, a Roundy girl, Allen Peterson, Evan Hansen, Rollow Hawley, Children not known. —Photo from Milestones, 465

In 1920, “it was conceded by many ministers of other churches that the ‘Mormon’ Sunday Schools were the best that could be found in all the world.”²⁷⁶

From a 1925 newspaper article, we learn that the “[Oasis] Ward Sunday School Conference was successfully carried out [with members] of the Stake Sunday School Board in attendance. Home missionaries were also present during the afternoon session.”²⁷⁷

When I was a member of the Oasis Sunday School (1948-1973) all ward members came to Sunday School at 10:30 am. It was a stand-alone meeting presided over and conducted by the ward Sunday School superintend and his counselors. They welcomed everyone, announced the opening hymn, prayer, sacrament hymn, the sacrament gem, the two two-and-a-half minute talks, and turned the time to the chorister and pianist for hymn practice. Dismissal to classes followed the singing. This all changed with the three-hour block of meetings instituted in 1980.

Was the sacrament passed in Sunday School opening exercises?

Yes, the sacrament was passed twice on Sunday. First in Sunday School and then again in sacrament meeting—lest anyone should miss the opportunity.

Why two two-and-a-half-minute talks?

Yes, two-and-a-half minute talks. Not three minutes, not five minutes, but two-and-a-half minutes. [With two speakers,] this added up to precisely five minutes, just the right amount of time for a few brief thoughts before hymn practice and

²⁷⁶ Church News, March 13, 1999, 4-5.

²⁷⁷ “Oasis-Deseret P.T.A. Has Fine Program,” *Chronicle*, December 17, 1925.

dismissal to class. But the exact time was rarely achieved. The speakers either sat down after thirty seconds or rambled on for fifteen minutes. It didn't seem to matter.²⁷⁸

What's a sacrament gem?

For seventy years, sacrament gems were a familiar part of the Sabbath routine for Mormon children and adults. These (usually) short pieces of scripture, or sometimes verses from hymns, were part of Sunday School opening exercises and often marked a child's first address to the congregation. Sometimes parents drilled children at home through the preceding week so that the child could stand and recite the gem from memory and with clear diction; other times, a frightened or giggling child would stand at the microphone and stammer or bellow each phrase as it was whispered in his ear by a Sunday School worker.

The gems were normally assigned to a class for a month, with the teacher assigning one class member to give the gem each week. The one giving the gem would sit on the stand during Sunday School opening exercises; immediately after the sacrament hymn he or she would stand at the podium and recite the gem; then the congregation would repeat the gem in unison.²⁷⁹

278 Stephanie Nielson, "The Old Aurora Branch: Two-and-one-half-minute Talks," August 29, 2009, <https://www.aurorabranch.blogspot.com>.

279 Ardis E. Parshal, "Sacrament Gems," August 10, 2008, <https://www.latter-day-saint-blogs.com/nothing-wavering>.

Hymn Practice?

In Doctrine & Covenants 25:12, the Lord revealed that “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me.” In the same section, He also commanded Emma Smith to compile a selection of hymns into a Latter-Day Saint Hymnbook.²⁸⁰ In the Oasis Ward, hymn practice time was part of Sunday School opening exercises. This was usually the responsibility of the ward duo: LaVeda Bishop as chorister/hymn director and Loenza Willoughby as pianist. Sister Bishop would sometimes talk a little about the history of the particular hymn to be practiced and/or some of its technical musical peculiarities. Frequently, she would stop us while singing and have us repeat certain sections. When Sister Bishop was satisfied, she would ask if anyone had a favorite they wanted to sing and members would suggest the hymns they wanted. This put Sister Willoughby on the spot as the pianist, but she always came through. We would sing until it was time to be dismissed for our classes. The closing prayer for Sunday School was offered either in each class or members would reassemble in the chapel.

Sunday School was for everyone, so there was instruction for children, teens, and adults. The entire building was used to accommodate all of these classes. Usually, the Junior Sunday School, children under 12 years of age, filled the newer classrooms on the north side of the remodeled meetinghouse, one of the teenage classes used the stage with the curtain drawn, and the Gospel Doctrine class for adults was either in the Relief Society Room or in the chapel.

²⁸⁰ “History of LDS Hymns,” <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/hymns>. See also D&C 25:11

This schedule ended in 1980 when the Church initiated the “block schedule” and all meetings were held in a space of 3 hours.

Before opening exercises, Sunday School officers would convene in a prayer meeting with other officers and teachers to coordinate. The following two reports outline what happened,

Sunday School Report—February 24, 1957

Prayer Meeting: Officers and teachers 19, Present 14; Prayer by Howard Roundy; Remarks by Jack Willoughby.

Sunday School: Devotional Music Loenza Willoughby; Time of Service 10:32 am [pretty close to on time]; [Bishop] Jack Willoughby presiding and conducting. Announcements by Howard Warner; Hymn The World Has Need of Willing Men; Prayer by Charles Sledge; Sacrament Song No. 22 Come Unto Jesus; Sacrament Gem led by Sue Willoughby; Sacrament administered under the direction of the bishopric by Howard Roundy and Ralph Skeem; Administered by deacons Bob Day, Erick Gillen; Two-and-a-half Minute Talks Cordell Cropper, Reed Skeem; Practice Song No. 83 Jehova, Lord of Heaven and Earth; Separated for class Work at 11:00; Reassembled at 11:50. Today’s Chorister Norma Sledge; Today’s organist Loenza Willoughby.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Oasis Ward Sunday School Minutes and Records, 1957-1973, LR 6370-15, CHL

Department	Class Membership	Total Attendance	No. of Visitors	Total Absent
Nursery	14	10		4
Kindergarten	13	9	2	4
Course 5	11	7	1	3
Course 7	10	7		4
Course 9	7	6		1
Course 11	10	5		5
Course 15	9	4		5
Gospel Doctrine Course 27	83	21		62
Officers and Teachers (Including Bishopric)	19	18		1
Totals	176	89	3	89
		51%		

Sunday School Report—November 20, 1960

Prayer Meeting: Nov. 20, 1960; Officers and teachers enrolled 18, present 12, 67%. Prayer Cordell Cropper; Remarks Howard Roundy; Scriptural Reading Irene Stanworth.

Sunday School Double Session: [I think this means Junior and Senior Sunday School opening exercises were combined]; Prelude by Sue Willoughby; Time of meeting 10:30; Presiding Bishop Lawrence Cropper; Conducting Howard Roundy; Hymn 169 There Is Beauty All Around; Prayer J. Val Styler; Practice Come Ye Thankful People Come Two-and-a-half-minute Talks Jack Willoughby; Sacrament Hymn 217 While of the Emblems We Partake; Sacrament Gem Sherie Sledge; Sacrament Administered by Cordell Cropper, Mike Stanworth;

Assisted by deacons Sam Sledge, Robert Anderson; William Day, Stephen Willoughby. Separated for classwork at 10:55; Reassembled (or dismissed) at 11:45 (50); Closing Hymn 26 Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd; Today's chorister Janet Stanworth; Today's organist Sue Willoughby.²⁸²

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER—1962, 1968

Before graduating from high school in 1963, I was asked to teach a Sunday School class. To be called as a teacher at my young age (17) was an anomaly, but since the ward membership was small, and many of them had more than one calling, I became a teacher. I was assigned the 14-15-year-old class. I did my best, but I was not as spiritually prepared as I should have been. I remember Bishop Cropper (Dad) coming to the class to visit on one occasion. He thought I was doing okay. Our curriculum was the New Testament. There was a teacher manual for each class—none for the students. The classroom was downstairs under the stage on the west side of the building by the furnace room.

A few years later, I taught a youth Sunday School class on the stand with students seated in the choir seats of our small red-brick chapel. At that time, I was a returned missionary and a student at BYU making frequent trips home to Oasis. I chose to share what I was studying on campus: The Pearl of Great Price. No one objected. This was before 1971 when, under the new Priesthood Correlation Program, the name of the “Deseret Sunday School Union” was changed to simply “Sunday School” and the “curriculum planning

²⁸² Oasis Ward Sunday School Minutes and Records, 1957-1973, LR 6370-15, CHL.

and writing became more centralized and coordinated. For the first time, the Sunday School stopped providing unique lesson manuals each year and the Church began a four-year curriculum rotation pattern [of the standard works].”²⁸³

Those I taught were special students—forever friends. Since leaving the Oasis Ward, I have had many more opportunities to teach both in Sunday School and other Church auxiliaries. I enjoy learning and teaching about the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have felt the inspiration of the Holy Ghost while teaching and feel to praise the Lord for such a privilege.

SACRAMENT MEETING

On the front wall of the Oasis Ward chapel behind the podium, this image of Jesus knocking on the door was prominently displayed.



Painting of Jesus knocking

²⁸³ 100 Changes in the Church in the Last 100 Years,” <https://www.100ChangesintheChurchintheLast100Years—LDSLiving>.

It served as the focal point for all the meetings held in this area. To me, it always seemed especially appropriate for sacrament meetings. It's at this time when Christ's disciples approach Him in humility and prayer to renew their covenants by taking the holy sacrament. He is, and always has been, the focal point of our worship. I was delighted to see this same painting occupying essentially the same spot in the Deseret-Oasis Ward meetinghouse when I attended in the spring of 2023. Later, Dale Willoughby shared with me that it is indeed the same picture—taken from the Oasis Ward and placed in the new Deseret-Oasis Ward chapel.

Known as Christ at Heart's Door this Warner Sallman illustration exhibits several features which convey a symbolic message. Notice, for example, that the illumination from the Lord's face and person casts a heart-shaped light onto the wall and door. Many interpret this as Christ's enduring love for mankind. This light symbolizes the hope that the gospel gives to those who might be caught in the thistles of sin or the darkness of ignorance depicted in the work. Through the grill in the door, one may look out and see that he who knocks is a person full of kindness and goodwill. The absence of an outside knob or latch can represent that it is necessary to "open one's heart to Christ from within."²⁸⁴

This, Warner Sallman painting, is based on Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." The copy given to the Oasis Ward was a gift from Ray and Lilly Owens before the dedication

284 "Christ at Heart's Door," <https://www.warnersallman.com/collection/image>, excerpt from a 1994 exhibition catalogue by Dr. David Morgan, Department of Art, Valparaiso University. Used with permission. Sallman images copyrighted by Warner Press, Inc.

of the red-brick meetinghouse.²⁸⁵ At the time, they were no longer living in Oasis.

Like with any meeting that is open to the public, sometimes things happen that are not in harmony with its purpose. Auntie shares a couple of her childhood memories about sacrament meetings from about 1915,

Church was about the same then as it is now except they had more [people] go to meetings. One different thing is that everybody drank out of the same glass for sacrament. There were no little paper cups in a tray. I didn't care for the old guys with mustaches, they'd get their big mustache in the water, and then pass it on to the next person to have a drink from the same glass. I thought it was disgusting and tried to sit by someone who didn't have a mustache.

Some would hold up one hand when they prayed, but most of them didn't. John Styler was bishop for a long time, but the one I remember best was Uncle Mark Skeem. He was the one who was going to make us kids go outside if we didn't quit laughing in church one day. We had a bad case of the giggles because they had a chair in church that had a hole in its bottom. No one wanted to sit there and it was the only seat left. Some kid took a horse turd on a string, tossed it, and it happened to go in that chair. Then E.G. came in late

²⁸⁵ Private text from Brenda Skeem Cullimore to the author, January 2024. The Owens family resided in Oasis for many years, but were no longer living in Delta when they made the gift.

*and sat on that chair and we kids got to laughing. Uncle Mark was about to put us outside before we quit.*²⁸⁶

Uncle Mark was responsible for controlling the situation and maintaining proper decorum. The primary purpose of sacrament meetings is to take the emblems of Christ's body unto our souls in a physical way as we covenant to 1) take his name upon us, 2) promise to keep his commandments, and 3) remember Him and His atoning sacrifice. The taking of the sacrament is preceded by the singing of a sacrament hymn which focuses on the Lord's death, crucifixion, and atonement. It's a way of turning our hearts to Him.

The Oasis Ward reconvened every Sunday evening at 7:30 for an hour-and-a-half sacramental service. The bishopric presided and conducted from the stand. It was here that ward business occurred and the sacrament was administered for a second time. (For a discussion of this, see "Sunday School" above.) These meetings have always included sacred music, sermons, testimonies, and prayers.

Returned missionaries spoke regularly at Oasis Ward sacrament meetings. They frequently came with visiting stake high councilors. I enjoyed their reports. The RMs were enthusiastic and spoke with maturity and conviction. I admired them. They motivated me to serve a mission.

²⁸⁶ "Evelyn Skeem Hawley History," Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

MISSIONARIES FROM OASIS

MISSION FAREWELLS 1891-2002

In the Oasis Ward and throughout the Church, special sacrament meeting services were conducted when a newly called missionary was about to leave home. These Farewell Testimonials continued unabated until October 2002, when under President Gordon B. Hinckley there was a change—members of the departing missionary's family were no longer to be included on the program. In some cases, missionary farewells had become a sort of roast where the young elder or sister was subjected to jokes by family members—a practice not in keeping with the spirit wanted for the occasion.

I can't speak for the others, but my farewell was both spiritual and memorable.^{xxxix} A special program was printed and distributed to those who came. This was typical of many other outgoing missionaries from my generation. A copy of the dramatic cover of my farewell mission program can be seen online at Oasis Ward Picture History. On the next page of the testimonial was a photo of the missionary and his/her favorite scripture. This was followed by an outline of the evening's agenda. At the book's website, you will find the photos of many of these young handsome missionaries from the Oasis Ward. Below is a transcription of the program found inside the trifold.

Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. —John 4:35-36

FAREWELL TESTIMONIAL

In Honor of Elder Cordell Skeem Cropper Son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Cropper prior to his departure for the WEST SPANISH AMERICAN MISSION to be held in the OASIS WARD Sunday, October 25, 1964, 7:30 pm

PROGRAM—

Prelude Music—Sue Willoughby

Opening Hymn—Congregation

Invocation—Reed Skeem

Sacrament Hymn—Congregation

Sacrament Service—Aaronic Priesthood

Speaker—Calvin Skeem

Duet—La Veda Bishop, Evelyn Hawley

Speaker—Ladd R Cropper

Remarks—Bishop Jack Willoughby

Accordion Solo—Vincent Memmott

Remarks—Mr. and Mrs. Kelly Hawley

Remarks—Parents of Missionary

Response—Missionary

Closing Hymn—Congregation

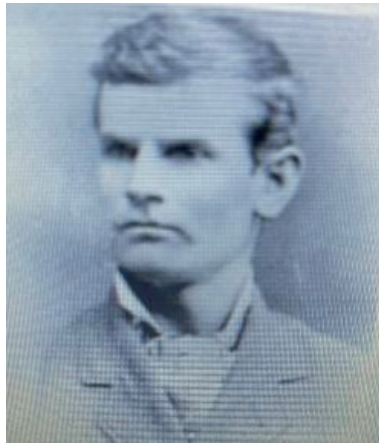
Benediction—Robert Barber

Postlude Music—Sue Willoughby

EARLY OASIS MISSIONARIES

JOHN STYLER—FIRST OASIS MISSIONARY

Before the creation of the Oasis Ward, John Styler responded to a call to serve a mission to the Southern States. He left in 1883, then age 29, leaving his young wife at home in Oasis. The following is taken from John's biography.



Elder John Styler

There was just one ward called Deseret at that time. Bishop Joseph Black called John to go on a mission to the southern states just shortly after he was married. He traveled without a purse or scrip [wallet or money]. He endured many hardships. His shoes were so worn and his feet so cut and bruised by the stones that he could be tracked for miles by the blood from his feet.

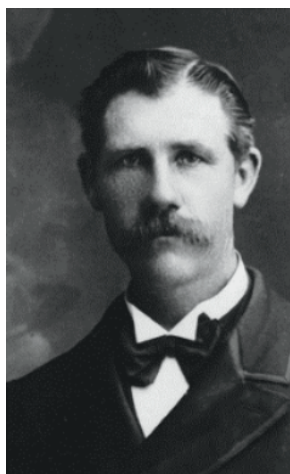
[There was] much persecution. Elders Barry and Gibbs were [murdered by a mob] at that time. John had traveled and

*worked with them and had held meetings in the house in which they were killed.*²⁸⁷

*Seven years after returning from his mission, John was called as the first bishop of the Oasis Ward in 1891 and served in that calling for 18 years.*²⁸⁸

ANTON C. CHRISTENSEN 1898-1900

The Oasis Ward Manuscript History mentions several missionaries who were called at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. In most cases, they are simply listed by date set apart, date returned, and the area where they served.



Elder Anton C. Christensen

287 Messenger, "Bibliography: John Styler KW89-FPF," FSM.

288 Skeem, *Milestones*, 468.

One noteworthy exception to this was Anton C. Christensen. Brother Christensen was serving as the Oasis Ward clerk when he was called to the Northwestern States Mission—Montana and Idaho. He was set apart as a missionary on May 4, 1898, and returned on August 16, 1900. Jacob C. Hawley acted as ward clerk during Brother Christensen's absence. On Anton's return, he resumed his former position as ward clerk.²⁸⁹

NEPHI MCCOIL PETERSEN 1899-1901

Elder N. M. Petersen served in the Eastern States from 1899-1901, working in Pennsylvania and Ohio. According to his journal, he and his companions would sleep in barns and among trees and shrubs.



Elder Nephi Petersen

People were good at feeding them—at least every other day they received a good meal. He did take time to do small jobs for money to buy food, although at that time missionary service was

²⁸⁹ *Manuscript History*, 25, CHL.

done without a purse or scrip. He and his companion bathed and washed their clothing in rivers along the way. Sometimes members were kind enough to help with their laundry.

To preach, they would go to the busier parts of a town and teach from the scriptures. Most of the time people would stop to listen as they shared messages. He wrote that the women generally had good hearts and wanted to listen, but it was harder to convince the men. He loved his mission and found it a joy to teach about the true church that had been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Nephi had a deep love for the Savior.²⁹⁰

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD 1910-1911

Unlike the other early missionaries, whom I found on FamilySearch.org, or learned of from relatives, I discovered Elder Rutherford during my research of newspaper articles. Here's what it said,

*Elder Samuel Rutherford made the Progress Review office a very pleasant call last Saturday. He has just returned from the Western States Mission where he has been laboring for the past seventeen months but had to return on account of the illness and death of his baby boy, age 6 years and nine months who had died on the 6th of March of diabetes. He came over last week to visit his mother and family and **returned to his home at Oasis** last Monday.²⁹¹ (emphasis added).*

²⁹⁰ Taken from email to the author from Nephi's great-granddaughter, Wendy Loe of Oasis, received September 2023.

²⁹¹ "Returned Elder," MCPR, March 24, 1911.

MISSIONARY SHOT

Elder J. Valentine (Val) Styler served in Tennessee and Kentucky from 1913 to 1914, (the same mission as his father, John Styler). As a missionary, he experienced a miracle that was well-known in the Oasis Ward when I was young.



Elder J. Valentine Styler

[The missionaries] were holding a meeting in a one-room log schoolhouse. Before the meeting, they noticed there were some men outside with clubs and guns [who] were swearing, arguing, and carrying on in a bad way. The elders felt like they might have trouble.

They began the meeting; Val's companion was up speaking. [Suddenly,] they heard a gun fire. The shot came through the wall of the building and hit Val in the arm. He put his arm down and the bullet fell to the floor. Without saying anything, he picked it up and put it in his pocket. When the meeting was over, Val showed [everyone] the bullet and told them [what had happened.] He found that it had gone through his coat and shirtsleeve, but hadn't broken his skin or injured his

arm in the least. It shows us the Lord can protect those who are working in his cause and also that the [temple] garment is a protection at all times.²⁹²

J. KELLY HAWLEY 1920-1921

Elder J. Kelly Hawley served in San Francisco, California, 1920-21. His online biography and missionary journal start with statistics regarding the Church at that time.



Elder J. Kelly Hawley

“As 1920 began, there were 507,961 members of the LDS Church. By the end of 1929, membership was 666,652. With membership still predominantly in Utah.”²⁹³ When we compare it to Church membership in 2023, with some 17,002,461 members, we can more fully realize how the “stone cut out of the mountain

²⁹² Erma T. Styler, “History of John Valentine Styler KWB9-FPF,” FSM.

²⁹³ Church News, March 13, 1999, 4-5. See also “Biography,” Jacob Kelly Hawley KWZQ-K9W, FSM.

without hands”²⁹⁴ is rolling forth to fill the whole earth.²⁹⁵ This growth is due in large part to the Lord working through His appointed missionaries.

MISSIONARY SERVICE INTERRUPTED

From 1928 to 1946 there were no missionaries from the Oasis Ward—at least none have appeared in my research. Why the hiatus? Two obvious answers come to mind: The Great Depression and World War II. There were missionaries during this time. Gordon B. Hinckley, for example, served from 1932 to 34, but when we read of him we find this caveat about his service, “an unusual occurrence for Depression-era Latter-day Saints.”²⁹⁶ The calling of full-time missionaries was also obviously curtailed during World War II, when many faithful Latter-day Saint young men were called to serve their country and others were needed at home to bring in the crops.

OTHER EARLY MISSIONARIES

Other Oasis Ward missionaries from this early period are Charles Alma Thompson, Antone Peter Andersen, Thomas George Reid, S.M. Hawley, J.C. Hawley, Samuel Rutherford, Alma J. Christensen, Lars Hansen, Marcus Skeem, and Peter M. Anderson who ended his mission in 1928.²⁹⁷ (For their field of labor and years of service,

²⁹⁴ Daniel 2:45.

²⁹⁵ *Old Testament*, Daniel 2:34-35.

²⁹⁶ Wikipedia, , “Gordon B. Hinckley,” Last modified Jan. 28, 2008, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>.

²⁹⁷ *Manuscript History*, 25, CHL.

see the list below. Many of their photos can be seen at Oasis Ward Picture History. *xl xli xlii xliii xliv xlv xlvi xlvii xlviii xlix*

ADAM-ONDI-AHMAN

Kevin Styler and his wife Michelle were called by the First Presidency in 1981 to manage the Church farm at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri. This was about 5 years after he returned home from his regular mission in Independence, Missouri. He was twenty-six at the time and newly married. During their mission, President Spencer W. Kimball expressed personal interest in their welfare on several occasions.



Kevin, Michelle and baby John at their home near Adam-ondi-Ahman 1982—Photo provided by Kevin

The call came while the young couple was attending the Oasis Ward. They were surprised when the stake presidency came in and even more so when they were invited to go to the bishop's office. The stake president told them he had received a call from D. Author Haycock, Pres. Kimball's personal secretary, and on behalf

of the First Presidency he asked if they would be willing to serve an 18-month mission in Adam-ondi-Ahman. “The Church was interested in making preparations for the return of the Savior.”²⁹⁸

An 1835 revelation now known as Doctrine & Covenants 107 explains that it was in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman that Adam bestowed upon his posterity his last blessing. In addition to its history,¹

*[this area] will also be an important place in the future: near the time of Christ’s second coming. Adam will come again to Adam-ondi-Ahman and hold a great council. All the prophets who have held keys of priesthood authority upon the earth will come to this council to give a report of their work to Adam. Jesus Christ will then come to Adam-ondi-Ahman, and Adam will return the priesthood keys to him. Christ will then return to earth to begin the Millennium, the thousand years when Christ will live on and reign over the earth.*²⁹⁹

At the time of their call, Kevin had just started working for Brush Beryllium near Delta. When he explained his mission to the company’s officials, they were understanding and supportive. He received their guarantee that he could return to his job after completing his mission.

Once Kevin and Michelle had moved to Missouri, the Church made monthly assessments of the progress they were making. The goal was to acquire the whole valley. Kevin reports there was one guy who stated that he would never sell to the Church. The situation

²⁹⁸ Private conversation with Kevin Styler, August 29, 2023.

²⁹⁹ “Lesson 30: Adam-ondi-Ahman,” [https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org.](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/), Primary 5: Doctrine and Covenants and Church History.

changed, however, when he died. Eventually, his family sold the property to the Church.³⁰⁰ Today 3000 acres of Adam-ondi-Ahman is owned and maintained as a historic site and remains largely undeveloped farmland.³⁰¹

17 April 1983—Kevin and Michelle Styler reported on their mission to the Independence Missouri, Adam-ondi-Ahman Mission. They said that as far as they knew, they were the only young couple serving a full-time mission in the Church. Their calling had to be confirmed by the First Presidency of the Church, as the Missionary Committee would not authorize the calling of a newly married couple without affirmation from [President Spencer W. Kimball]. Brother Styler reported that he believed they had been called to help prepare the Adam-ondi-Ahman area for the return of the Savior.³⁰²

MISSIONARY LIST

Oasis has had approximately 100 disciples of Christ who have served full-time missions for the Church. The following is a list and photos of those who were either members of the Oasis Ward when they were called, have a history with the ward, or live in Oasis now. Many of their photos are shown alphabetically on the book's website.

This list is not complete. There were other Oasis missionaries. As reported in the local paper in 1909, "S. M. Hawley left a few

300 Private conversation with Kevin Styler, August 29, 2023.

301 "Who Owns Adam-ondi-Ahman—Search bing.com.

302 Manuscript History, 283, CHL.

weeks ago for a mission that makes three from this little ward now in the field.”³⁰³ Other than what is stated here, we know very little about S.M. Where did he serve? Did he serve a 2-year mission? And what about the other three? Who were they? Despite these unresolved issues, this list represents the best efforts of several people. Any omissions or errors are unintentional. Some appear on the list twice—the first time as a young elder or sister, the second time as a senior missionary.

The photos were contributed by the missionaries themselves, the Deseret-Oasis Ward, or their families. A few were found online at FamilySearch or Utah Digital Newspapers. Regrettably, we weren’t able to find all the pictures. You can see what we did find listed alphabetically by family last name in the Oasis Ward Picture History online.

John Styler—Southern States 1883-1884

Charles Alma Thompson—Scandinavia 1896-1898

Anton Peter Andersen—Scandinavia 1897-1898

Thomas George Reid—Great Britain 1897-1900

William McLeod c.1898

Nephi McCoil Petersen—Eastern States 1899-1901

Enoch Gillen—Sweden 1905

J.C. Hawley—Northern States 1906-1907

S. M. Hawley—1909

3 unknowns—1909

Samuel Rutherford—Western States 1910-1911

J. Valentine (Val) Styler—Southern States TN/KY 1913-14

Alma J. Christensen—North-Western States 1917

303 “Correspondence,” MCPR, December 12, 1917, 1.

Sidney J. Ottley—Auckland, New Zealand 1914-1915
 Lars Hansen—Scandinavia c.1915
 J. Kelly Hawley—San Francisco, CA 1920-1921
 Marcus Skeem—Northwestern 1926-1927
 Peter M. Anderson—Denmark 1927-1928
 David Bishop—SD c.1946
 Calvin Skeem—North Central States 1950-1952
 James Christensen—West Central States 1950-1952
 Rondo Christensen—NC, VA 1950-1952
 M. Paul Ludwig West—Germany 1960-1963
 Bruce Anderson—Southwest Indian AZ 1962-1963
 Steven Rowley—Ireland 1964-1966
 Roger Stanworth—East Central States KY/WV 1963-1965
 Cordell Cropper—West Spanish American CA 1964-1967
 Mark Skeem—Germany 1966-1968
 Scott Rowley—Central America Guatemala 1967-1969
 Steven Willoughby—Central Atlantic States 1968-1970
 Susan Rowley—West Spanish American/Calif. 1969-1971
 Gary Stanworth—Japan 1971-1973
 Mike Styler—California South 1971-1973
 Vincent Memmott—Japan 1971-1973
 Shane Rowley—Tallahassee FL/AL 1973-1975
 Scott Roundy—Spokane WA 1973-1975
 Jay Finlinson—Albuquerque NM 1973-1975
 Kevin Styler—Independence MO 1974-1976
 Eldon K. Rowley—Belgium 1976-1978
 LaVeda Bishop—Denver, CO 1977-1979
 David Styler—Japan 1979-1981
 Kevin and Michelle Styler—Adam-ondi-Ahman 1981-1983
 Patricia Roundy—Tampa FL 1989-1990

Richard Willoughby—New York 1990-1992
 Conard and NeRee Stanworth—Dallas Texas 1991-1992
 Loren and Buleah Rowley—Deseret Cannery 1991-1993
 Kirk Willoughby—Milan, Italy 1992-1994
 Scott Chris Rowley—Australia Perth 1992-1994
 Nathan Brown—Halifax, Canada 1992-1994
 Shawn Rowley—Missouri Independence/Nebraska 1993-1995
 Glenda Roundy—Cove Fort, UT 1993
 James Carlos & Raina Bishop—New Jersey 1994-1995
 Dick Willoughby—Cove Fort, UT 1995
 Betty Cahoon—Church Service Mission 1995—1997
 Shannon Lewis—Oakland Visitors Center 1996-1998
 Brandon Stanworth—Calgary, Canada 1996-1998
 Sarah Skeem—Nagoya, Japan 1997-1999
 Nathan Lewis—Rome, Italy 1998-2000
 Stanley Skeem—Guam, Micronesia 1999-2001
 Keith Lewis—Detroit, Michigan 1999-2001
 TJ Finlinson—Bristol, England 1999-2001
 Travis Pllum—Padua, Italy 1999-2001
 JD Stanworth—Ribeirao Preto, Brazil 1999-2002
 Trevor Stanworth—Edinburgh, Scotland 2001-2003
 Ben Willoughby—Seattle, WA 2001-2003
 Daniel Brown—Salta, Argentina 2002-2004
 Jeremiah Skeem—Tallahassee, FL 2002-2004
 Russ May—Calgary, Canada 2002-2004
 Michael Brown—Lansing Michigan 2002-2004
 Stephen Styler—San Diego, CA 2003-2005
 Abby Finlinson—Santa Maria, Brazil 2003-2004
 Derek Finlinson—Catania, Italy 2004-2006
 Dustin Skeem—Lansing, Michigan 2004-2006

Daniel Stanworth—Porto, Portugal 2005-2007
 Alyssa Ann Peterson—Utah Deseret Industries 2005-06; 2008-09
 Brandon Loe—Columbus, OH 2007-2009
 Jason May—Kingston, Jamaica 2008-2010
 John Stanworth—Columbus, OH 2008-2010
 Marcus Finlinson—Taichung, Taiwan 2008-2010
 Samuel Skeem—Raleigh, NC 2008-2010
 Weston Stanworth—Hamburg,—Germany 2009-2011
 Ian Stanworth—Porto Portugal 2009-2011
 Justin R. Loe—Philippines 2010-2011
 Cordell and Susan Cropper—NYC, NY 2010-2011
 Cory Finlinson—Wellington, New Zealand 2010-2012
 Steven and Louise Willoughby—Tallahassee, FL 2010-2012
 Stephen Stanworth—Fort Worth, TX 2010-2012
 Brendan Willoughby—Seoul, Korea 2010-2012
 Bryan May—Raleigh, NC 2011-2013
 Cody Mendoza—Montevideo, Uruguay 2012-2014
 Brian Willoughby—Madrid, Spain 2012-2014
 McKade Loe—Majuro, Marshall Islands 2013-2015
 Angela Skeem—Tampa, Florida 2013-2014
 Steven and Louise Willoughby—FL 2014-2015
 Matt and Wendy Loe—Delta, UT 2013-2016
 Paul and Sue Ludwig—GA 2014-2015
 Brooke Finlinson—Cleveland, OH 2014-2015
 Dale and Janice Willoughby—Cincinnati OH, 2015
 Trace Willoughby—Suva, Fiji 2015-2017
 Dillon Loe—Taichung, Taiwan 2017-2019
 Ethan Kirk Willoughby—Cape Town, South Africa 2018-2020
 Vincent and DeAnn Memmott—Kobe, Japan 2019-2020

Tate Willoughby—Yakima, Washington/Barcelona, Spain
2021-2023

Austin Loe—Lubbock, TX 2022-24

Emmie Willoughby—Bello Horizonte, Brazil 2023-24

The Book of Mormon encourages believers to “raise up seed unto [the Lord].”³⁰⁴ The above list demonstrates the success of Oasis Ward members in rearing a righteous posterity. These missionaries, products of homes where the gospel of Jesus Christ is lived as well as taught, have sought to praise God through their dedicated service to Him. Even though comparatively few in number, they have had an impact worldwide.

³⁰⁴ Book of Mormon Jacob 2:23.

OASIS SERVICEMEN AND PATRIOTISM

I served in the military for twenty-seven years.³⁰⁵ During that time, there were moments when I felt proud to be an American. But, in this regard, it's my wife's story of pure patriotism that continues to bring tears to my eyes. I share it here in honor of Oasis servicemen and their devotion to Duty, Honor, and Country.

I'm the product of a loving [Mormon] American family. Mom and Dad always taught us to be good citizens and show respect for the flag. One could say I was patriotic—proud of my country and the freedom it represents to the world. However, after my youngest son was killed in Iraq, these feelings intensified.

On my birthday in 2007, he called from Kirkuk, Iraq. His call is now a treasured memory. The very next day, two men in Navy dress blue uniforms came to my home with the news that EOD 2 Curtis Ralph Hall had been killed in action. A few

305 I was a draft-motivated enlistee in 1969. After training, I was assigned as a Voice Intercept Operator stationed in the Republic of Panama. Following a 7-year break, I reenlisted in the reserves.

days later, the casket arrived in Twin Falls, Idaho, and my son's body was escorted by police, a motorcycle service group, and others to a mortuary near our home in Burley. Many came to watch the procession along this 38-mile route. Farmers left their tractors, stood, and saluted from their fields as Curtis' flag-draped coffin passed by. School buses stopped and the children descended to wave goodbye.

It was Curtis' sailor friends who, at the cemetery following taps, took the flag from his coffin, folded it into a perfect blue star-covered triangle, and presented it to Curtis' commanding officer. Salutes were exchanged in a most solemn manner as the flag was passed to him. CDR Beck turned, approached, and kneeled before me. As he handed me the flag, he emotionally spoke these words, "This flag is presented by a grateful nation. It is an expression of appreciation for the honorable and faithful service rendered by your loved one. Please accept my sincere condolences."

That flag is now on prominent and permanent display in my home. Since then, whenever I see our flag being publicly displayed, tears come easily and softly to the surface. I cannot help but think of my Curtis and of his sacrifice. In my heart I say, God bless America. May he and others like him never be forgotten.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ Pam Hall Cropper, *The American Legion Dispatch*, "Our Rally for Old Glory, Commander's Message" June 2021, <https://www.legion.org/dispatch/252695>.

The Doctrine and Covenants clearly teaches that we should, “renounce war and proclaim peace.”³⁰⁷ So what of those who serve in the armed forces? Are they disobeying God as they prepare to kill or engage in hostilities on the battlefield? The following is the Church’s answer,

The Lord has said that in the last days, there will be “wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them.”³⁰⁸ As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are a people of peace. We follow the Savior, who is the Prince of Peace. We look forward to His millennial reign when wars will end and peace will be restored to the earth.³⁰⁹ However, we recognize that in this world, government leaders sometimes send military troops to war to defend their nations and ideals.

Latter-day Saints in the military do not need to feel torn between their country and their God. In the Church, “we believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.”³¹⁰ Military service shows dedication to this principle.³¹¹

307 *Doctrine & Covenants*, 98:16.

308 *Doctrine & Covenants*, 45:26.

309 *Old Testament Isaiah* 2:4.

310 *Pearl of Great Price*, Articles of Faith 1:12.

311 “War,” World Wide Discussion for Youth: I Am a Disciple of Jesus Christ, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topic>.

BLACK HAWK INDIAN WAR

The war, which began in Sanpete County in 1865, quickly spilled over to the Deseret settlers. The Indians, who were far more numerous than the whites, “killed eight head of cattle and ransacked [some] wagons [near what today is Gunisson Bend Reservoir].” ^{li lii}

*“The people at Deseret held a council meeting and decided to send four men to the Indian camp to offer beef and flour to persuade [them] to be peaceful.”*³¹²

*In addition, they requested the federal government to send troops, but due to the U.S. Army’s obligations in the Civil War, local settlers were advised to take measures to defend themselves, resulting in the construction of [Fort Deseret]. The fort was constructed of mud and straw. It measured 550-foot square with 10-foot-high walls. [It] proved useful when Chief Black Hawk appeared at Deseret demanding cattle in 1866. The security provided by the fortification allowed a peaceful settlement to be negotiated.*³¹³

An appeal was also made to President Brigham Young. He advised them to use their militia and build a fort. “So they erected old Fort Deseret made of mud, chalk (pahkeen or gypsum) and straw. It stands on a rock foundation. The walls were put up by chosen teams who competed one with the other. The winning

³¹² Among Deseret’s First, 50-51.

³¹³ “Fort Deseret”. Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership. 2008-11-04. Archived from the original on 2008-12-03. Retrieved 2008-11-04. See also Wikipedia, Fort Deseret.

side finished in 9½ days. There was a dance and supper after in a bower.”³¹⁴

Hannah C. Ashby composed a seven-stanza poem that speaks eloquently of the fort’s construction, its necessity, and the honored memory in which it should be held. She tells us, “Portholes were left along each side, at corners bastions stood. / Two heavy gates of timbered beams were made of native wood. / It took 18 days to do the job. The fort was now complete. / The men had worked from dawn to dark, in scorching July heat.” Two lines from the penultimate stanza read: “The walls of that old fort still stand—but settlers don’t forget / They served their purpose long and well for the pioneers of Deseret.”³¹⁵



Black Hawk Indian War Veterans

This photo from 1903 shows the Black Hawk Indian War Veterans at Fort Deseret. Those pictured are: Back row: Wise Croppier (mounted), Joseph S. Black, Harrison and Lewis (organizers from Springville), Harry Roper, Leigh Richmond Cropper Sr., Thomas Cropper, Joshua Bennett, Frank Slaughter, unknown,

314 “Daughters of the Pioneers Meet,” *Chronicle*, October 14, 1926.

315 Hannah C. Ashby, *Milestones*, 432-33.

Henry Mace, Henry W. Hales, Daniel W. Morris, George Theobald, Joseph Damron, N.E. Webb, James P. Terry, Mahonri M. Bishop, Lewis Phillips, N.E. Lewis, William D. Black, Thomas B. Allred, unknown, Chris Overson, James Hudginson, Wilson (with flag). Front row consists of wives of the veterans.

A monument honoring the workers was erected at Fort Deseret September 1937. It lists the names of those who built it. Descendants of the fort builders provided the stones for its construction. The fort was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.³¹⁶

OASIS VETERANS

This photo page below is taken from a 1965 ward history book housed in the Deseret-Oasis Ward.



Oasis Servicemen's Group

³¹⁶ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 432.

Captions Under the Servicemen Photos

1st row: Stanley Anderson (U.S. Navy), Floyd V. Skeem (U.S. Army), Ray Lovell (U.S. Army), Ray W. Johnson (U.S. Navy), Floyd Evan Skeem (U.S. Army), Jim Kelly (U.S. Army),

2nd Row: Dick Willoughby (U.S. Army—1958), Ladd Kelly (U.S. Air Force), Dale Willoughby (U.S. Army—1962), Carlos Bishop (U.S. Army), Deon Gillen (U.S. Army),

3rd Row: Marine Gunnery Sergeant Nathan J. Roundy, Killed in Action on March 3, 1945, on Iwo Jima. [There's more on his story below] Awarded the Bronze Star for heroism during the battle of Saipan. [Also awarded] the Presidential Unit Citation. Peter H. Peterson June 1918, (U.S. Army Argonne, France [World War I]) Voy Stewart (U.S. Army), David Bishop (U.S. Army), Cpl. James W. Christensen (U.S. Army 1953-55).^{liii}

In addition to the 16 veterans pictured above we respectively add other Oasis veterans:

World War I: Amos Petersen (U.S. Army), George W. Stanworth, Golden M. Hawley, Axel Jensen, George Jensen, Lawrence Christensen, Edwin Christensen, Norvel Christensen, Hilding Sjostrom, Ray Cahoon, George H. Roger, Arthur L. Cahoon (KIA France, September 1918).³¹⁷

World War II: Clarence Anderson, Parley Anderson, David Bishop, James Carlos Bishop, Theron Anderson, Willard Anderson, Paul Blackburn, Cecil Cahoon, Ray Cahoon, Roland

³¹⁷ Arthur Larson Cahoon K2WH-6MJ, FSM. Arthur was from Deseret, but is buried in the Oasis Cemetery.

Cahoon, Charles Craft, Gilbert Day, Leo Day, Elmo Gillen, Fon Roy Hawley, James Kelly, Vivian Kelly, Woney Key, Harold Skeem, Gale Morris, Conard Stanworth, Earl Stanworth, Thirl Stanworth, Ellis Stevens, Dee Stevens, Bee Welch, Leland Williams, R. LaVar Owens, James Owens, Bernard E. Owens, Millard V. Owens, Eugene H. Owens (U.S. Navy).

Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, War on Terror: Norman Sjostrom (USArmy), Ladd Kelly (USAF), Karl Stanworth, Bill Day (U.S. Army), Sam Sledge (U.S. Army), Gary Webb (USN), Thomas Stanworth (U.S. Army), Robert Willoughby (USMC), Jason Willoughby (USAF), and Cordell Cropper (U.S. Army), Mitch McDermaid (USMC), Poncho Carcamo (USMC), Brian Willoughby (U.S. Army), Trace Willoughby (USAF), Greg Skeem (U.S. Army), Kristel Skeem (Air Force/ Army), Ian Stanworth (U.S. Army NG).

I did find a ward record entry made before World War I concerning 5 servicemen. “The Relief Society sent Christmas boxes to our missionaries and 5 servicemen.”³¹⁸ There is no indication as to who the recipients might have been or if they were from Oasis. The fact that the sisters chose to give gifts to servicemen shows their feeling of patriotism.

Amos Petersen, a World War I vet and my great-uncle, was allowed to come home from training when his mother died in 1918 before deploying to France. “He was in the same company as Arthur Cahoon [from Deseret] and saw him killed. [The American Legion Post 89 carried Arthur’s name in honor of his service.]

³¹⁸ Church Historical Report 1900, 73, CHL, LR 6370-2, CHL.

When World War I was over we had a big barbecue down by the schoolhouse and they burned Kaiser Wilhelm in effigy.”³¹⁹

WELCOME HOME-1919

My Aunt Fannie Lee (Cropper) Hilton writes that upon returning from Salt Lake City in the spring of 1919, “A large crowd was at the depot in Oasis as we got off the train. There were cheers for a soldier boy [her husband Roy Hilton] now home. People were very patriotic in those days, and it as so good to have Roy home again.”³²⁰

Before World War II, one place the Oasis folks chose to demonstrate their patriotism was at the cemetery. This newspaper article from 1924 details the honors rendered.

Memorial Day Program at Oasis

At early morning, flags will be placed on the graves of the World War Veterans by the [American Legion Arthur L. Cahoon Post 89].

Afternoon Program:

Prayer

Solo-Mrs. Mary Black

Recitation, “In Flanders Fields”-Mrs. J. Juhl

Selection-Mr. Deloy Reid

Oration-Mr. F.G. Eyre

Solo-Miss Eva Cropper

Legionnaire’s Prayer read by Mr. Allen Pederson

319 “Evelyn Skeem Hawley History,” Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

320 Fannie Lee Cropper Hilton, *Among Deseret’s First*, 358.

Selection-Oasis Quartette

Reminiscent Lecture by Indian War Veteran Leigh Cropper

America by congregation

Prayer

Taps

The Memorial Day Committee, Arthur L. Cahoon, Post 89,
American Legion, Oasis, Utah.³²¹

FAREWELL PARTIES

During World War II, special ward parties were given to honor those who were entering or already serving in the military. Here's what Auntie Evelyn said about these sad/happy events,

I remember how we hated every time to see the boys go, but they all went. We gave a party down at the church house any time one left. Except for Vin Blackburn and Nathan Roundy, they didn't get one. The military took them right to the front. They were already enlisted.

Vin and Nathan were over in Midway Island for eighteen months. Then they got to come home on a short leave and the ward gave them a party. Vin told me there that he'd never come back—and he didn't. There were only six left in his company when they were through fighting on the island. He was buried at sea. Nathan didn't come back either. We were really happy when that war came to an end.³²²

321 "Memorial Day Program at Oasis," Chronicle, May 29, 1924, 4.

322 "Evelyn Skeem Hawley History," Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

Vin Blackburn, Auntie's nephew, sat on her lap during the party and told her he would not return. Nathan Roundy had a similar premonition. He arranged to leave his 40-acre farm to the Oasis community in the event of his death. Both were killed in action. Since Oasis was not incorporated, the farm was taken over by the Oasis Ward.

T/SGT. ARLO SKEEM

One Oasis World War II vet is especially remembered for his war-time experience. T/Sgt. Arlo (Tom) Skeem bailed out over Germany when his plane was shot down in April 1945. He avoided capture, escaped to neutral Switzerland, and was then tricked, taken prisoner and held for 9 months until the end of the conflict.³²³

The local paper ran three separate articles with T/Sgt. Skeem's photo: 1) August 3, 1944—reported missing; 2) August 31, '44—POW; 3) May 24, '45—liberated. Other papers carried the story of his fate, as well. Below is the transcription of a news article that describes the medals he was awarded, his service, and accomplishments.

T/Sgt. Arlo J. Skeem, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Skeem, Oasis, who has been missing in action over Munich, Germany, since July 16, has earned the air medal for "meritorious achievement" while participating in sustained combat operations over enemy-occupied continental Europe, sent word recently received from the commanding general of the Eighth Air Force.^{liv}

323 Karen Jensen, "Grandpa Arlo's War Story," Arlo Jensen Skeem KWZZ-M73, FSM.



Arlo Skeem—Photo from Family

The citation accompanying the award reads in part, “The courage, coolness, and skill displayed by this enlisted man upon these occasions reflect great credit upon himself and the armed forces of the United States.”

T/Sgt. Skeem, radio operator-gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress received his training at Sioux Falls, S.D., and Hartigen, Texas. He was graduated from high school in Hinckley in 1939. Before entering the army April 19, 1942, he was engaged in farming. His wife, Mrs. Norma Hardy Skeem, is from Hinckley.³²⁴ *lv*

³²⁴ Arlo Jensen Skeem KWZZ-M73, FSM. More about his war-time experiences can be found at this website.

WAR BOND LOAN DRIVE-1944

Oasis folks not only waved the flag to show their patriotism, they willingly invested in the war effort with their hard-earned cash. Their donation is praised in this 1944 news article.

Oasis Goes Over the Top in Fifth War Loan Drive

According to J. Val Styler, Fifth War Loan Drive chairman for Oasis, the latest effort to raise funds in this drive is all buttoned up. In fact, Oasis, population, 151, went over the top on Wednesday. Their quota was \$6,000.

Before the Fifth War Loan Drive could even get underway. Oasis has reported that they have subscribed the full quota of \$6,000, and it will remain, until complete check has been made, to see just how much they have oversubscribed the present issue. Oasis has always oversubscribed the quota issued to them, but this is the first time that they have oversubscribed the quota before the drive got underway.

Chairman Orran Ashby is extravagant in lauding the efforts of the small community of Oasis and states, "All our hats should be raised for Oasis. They have done in a short time what all of us must do—oversubscribe the quota and then buy more. I am very proud of Oasis and especially the workers who put their drive over the top. My heartiest congratulations to them."³²⁵

325 "Oasis Goes over the Top in Fifth War Loan Drive," *Chronicle*, June 8, 1944, 1.

HONORED VETERANS

In the middle of the Oasis Cemetery is a rather impressive stone monument surrounded by service flags with our national banner in the center position. The inscription on the plaque reads,^{lvi}

Buried at Sea
Vincent Blackburn
July 13, 1920—Sept. 18, 1944



Sargeant Vincent Blackburn

*Nathan Roundy**Dec. 25, 1920—Mar. 3, 1945**Gunnery Sergeant Nathan Roundy*

Nathan Roundy and Vincent Blackburn of Oasis were seasoned marines before the United States' entrance into the war. Roundy had just recovered from a broken leg before his medical examination and to prove he was fit to enlist, he jumped up and down on his recently healed leg for an hour. The recruiters were convinced. Roundy later was awarded a Bronze Star for heroism before being killed at Iwo Jima in February 1945.

Vincent Blackburn was also killed, along with other Millard marines Lt. Bryant L. Larson and Myron Lane Abbott, who also saw action at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan before being killed.³²⁶

³²⁶ Edward Leo Lyman and Linda King Newell, *A History of Millard*, (Utah State Historical Society, Millard County Commission), 312.

A memorial service was held to honor Sgt. Blackburn and GySgt. Roundy at their monument dedication in the Oasis Cemetery in June 1952. Below is the newspaper write-up of the occasion. It gives insight into the character of these two marines and outlines the program.

Special memorial services and dedication of the monument in memory of Vincent Blackburn and Nathan Roundy were conducted on Memorial Day in the Oasis cemetery. The services opened at 11:30 a.m. with a bugle call. George Cahoon, of Arthur L. Cahoon Post No. 89, American Legion, was in charge of the services and gave an introductory talk. Prayer was offered by Cameron Adams, the chaplain.

Vincent Blackburn and Nathan Roundy gave their lives in the service of their country and were both buried at sea. They were U.S. Marines.

Vincent was born July 13, 1920, a son of the late Earl and Nita Hawley Blackburn, who both died when he was very young. He was raised by his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Hawley, at Oasis. He was wounded on Pelew Island and died Sept. 18, 1944, while being evacuated to a base hospital.

Nathan was born on December 25, 1920, the son of George and Tekkla Christensen Roundy. His mother died when he was a small boy, and his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. James Christensen raised him. He was wounded on Iwo Jima, and died March 3, 1945, while being taken to a base hospital.

Bishop Peter H. Peterson, of the Oasis Ward, gave the main address and paid tribute to the heroism and character of

these young men. He told of their lifelong friendship, and how closely their experiences were paralleled.

The monument was unveiled by two girls, Norma Gene Strang, of Salt Lake City, a cousin to Vincent, and Kay Still of Delta, a niece of Nathan.

Clark H. Bishop, who was bishop of Oasis Ward at the time Vincent and Nathan were in the service, dedicated the monument to their memory.

The beautiful monument was built by Henry Hansen, Delta, and is made of many stones brought in by friends from near and far. Graves of four servicemen, Arthur L. Cahoon, Golden Hawley, Amos Peterson, and Parley Anderson were decorated by the American Legion Auxiliary.

A salute to the dead was fired over the new monument and Taps were sounded.”³²⁷

The monument project was sponsored by the Oasis Ward Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints under the direction of Bishop Peter H. Petersen a World War I veteran. Members of the ward furnished the rock for the marker and funds for the plaque.³²⁸

³²⁷ “Memorial Rites Conducted in Oasis Cemetery,” *Chronicle*, June 5, 1952, 1.

³²⁸ Oasis Ward General Minutes 1892-1975, 69, LR 6370-11, CHL.

OASIS BOUNDARIES



*Scott Roundy by Oasis Sign c.1970—Photo
from Scott's Private Collection*

The Church continues to play a role in defining Oasis. In 2019 the stake reorganized some of its ward boundaries. At that time, Oasis' town limits were unofficially redrawn in a rather odd shape—somewhat resembling an inverted frying pan and all borders were constricted. See maps below. This made Oasis a much smaller geographical area—four-tenths (0.4) of a square mile—which resulted in a lower population count for the census. These maps show the boundaries used for the 2020

census.³²⁹ They do not conform to the town limits which have been recognized since 1891.

The 2020 census shows Oasis' population at 75. (The 2023 projected population count is 29.) "Oasis is a census-designated place in northeastern Millard County, Utah, United States."³³⁰

At the creation of the Oasis Ward in 1891, it was decided that all living on the east side of the Sevier River and east of the Deseret Irrigation Canal were to be members of the Oasis Ward.³³¹

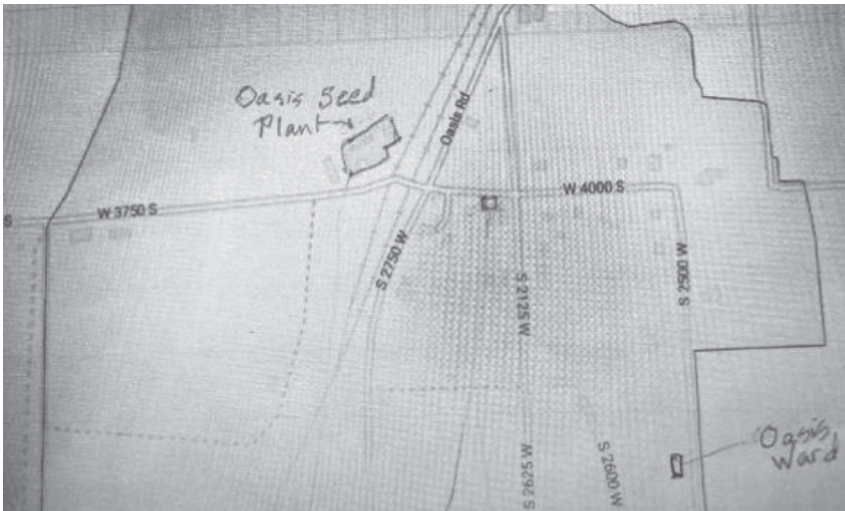


New Oasis town limits as of 2020

³²⁹ These maps were made and provided by Mike Styler.

³³⁰ "Oasis, Utah Population 2023." Microsoft Bing, <https://www.bing.com/search>.

³³¹ Skeem, *Milestones*, 465-66.



Enlargement of preceding map—the center of town



The location of the canal and the Sevier River are key to understanding Oasis' original western border. The aerial map shows the location of the Deseret Canal as a heavy white line. According to the town history, this is the boundary between Oasis and Deseret. The Sevier River, another city limit, is not on this map. Its location is to the southwest. As can easily be seen, the Deseret-Oasis Ward meetinghouse is clearly in Oasis—if one uses the 1891 explanation as to the town limits. However, using the new Oasis borders based on the two outline census bureau maps, not only is the church in Deseret, but the Oasis Cemetery is no longer in Oasis.

In my youth, the ward and town boundaries of Oasis were: Cropper Lane to the north, Lone Tree Road to the east, the Deseret Canal and Sevier River to the west, and Clear Lake to the south. (From 1880 until 1935 Clear Lake was a big enough community to have a school and a depot. Paintings of these building can be seen at Oasis Ward Picture History³³² The town no longer exists.) The distance from the Deseret Canal to South Lone Tree Road (4250 South, Delta) is approximately 2.5 miles. The distance from Cropper Lane (2500 S, Delta) to Lone Tree Road is 3.5 miles. From Cropper Lane to Clear Lake is around 17 miles. Using these parameters, the pioneer understanding of Oasis would have been about 51 square miles. In 1886 when the Millard County Court granted a school district to Oasis, it was thought then that Oasis was approximately 60 square miles. ³³³ *lvii lviii*

332 Jerold Bishop, *Watercolors*. Jerold's painting can be seen online at Oasis Ward Picture History

333 *Manuscript History*, 23, CHL.

Although these calculations take in a considerable area, they are not as grandiose as those written in an editorial by J. Henning in the *Deseret News*.

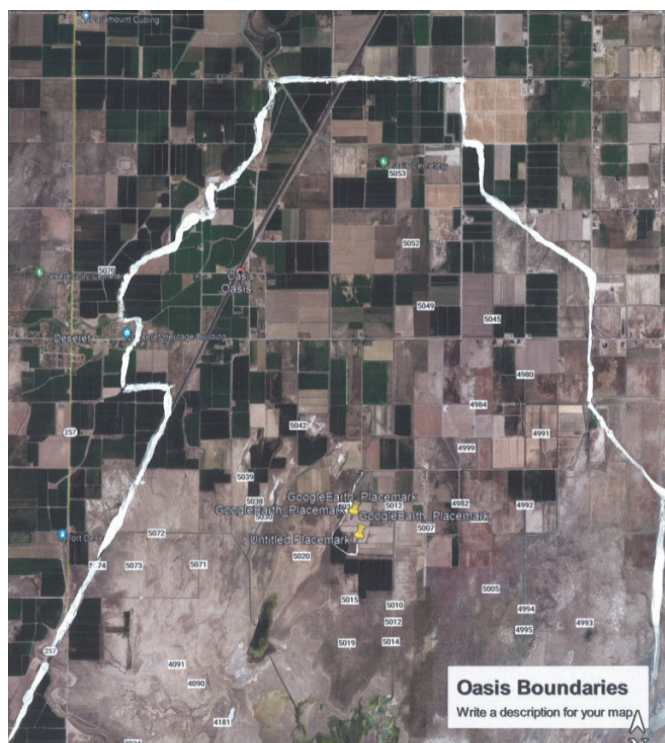
*Our embryo city, although not boasting of many thousands of inhabitants, nevertheless **covers no mean number of square acres or miles**, I might consistently add, and if **only the area** would be entitled to add in scale, in proportion undoubtedly, it would occupy a position near to Philadelphia or Boston. (emphasis added)*

Our boundary, although not precisely defined yet, may be said to include more or less the greater portion of that part of Zion lying between the 3rd and 4th standard parallels south and 112 and 113 longitude west, but of course, if this appears to be a stretch, I can deduct a few miles from the sides.³³⁴

The map on the following page shows the conservative original boundaries of the Oasis based on the location of members' homes. It was created by Mike Styler of Oasis. Mike shares my opinion that the original southern boundary of Oasis was Clear Lake.³³⁵

334 John H. Henning, "Voice from the Deseret," *Deseret News*, September 13, 1885, 8.

335 Private conversations with Mike Styler April 2023.



Generally accepted map of Oasis. The upper road running east and west is Cropper Lane. The twisting town boundary on the west is the Sevier River and Deseret Canal; where it becomes straight is the railroad track to Milford. The upper eastern boundary is conservatively drawn to include citizens' homes; where it changes and goes directly south is the Lone Tree Road. The southern boundary is not shown, but would extend to Clear Lake.

It is an injustice to those now living in Oasis, and those who claim it as their former home, to identify the community as “a census-designated place” and limit its area to .4 square miles. To those of us still living, and to our deceased parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, we reject the most recent census and its new boundaries. In our hearts, Oasis is not just some speck on

a map. Dry and dusty as it may be, Oasis is our hometown and occupies a permanent place in our hearts.

Restoring Oasis to its original town limits would be a significant way to demonstrate our respect and love for our Utah pioneers. The town's legacy and history would be more secure and the Oasis Mormon Pioneers more faithfully honored. We respectfully ask for a restoration of its original town limits.

REBUTTAL

A census-designated place (CDP) is a concentration of population defined by the United States Census Bureau for statistical purposes only. They are populated areas that generally include one officially designated but currently unincorporated community, for which the CDP is named.

The boundaries of a CDP have no legal status and may not always correspond with the local understanding of the area or community with the same name. However, the 2010 census requires that a CDP name be recognized and used in daily communication by the residents of the community and recommends that a CDP's boundaries be mapped based on the geographic extent associated with inhabitants' regular use of the named place.³³⁶

As of 2016, there were 76 census-designated places in Utah. The number fluctuates depending on incorporation and definition. Oasis is not alone as a CDP. Deseret and Sutherland are also classified as CDPs.³³⁷

³³⁶ Wikipedia. 2003. "Census-designated place." Last Modified October 29, 2023.

³³⁷ Wikipedia. 2003. "Census-designated place." Last Modified October 29, 2023.

POPULATION: RISE & FALL

Deseret, Hinckley, and Oasis were the three original valley towns in West Millard County. The population of Oasis³³⁸ has always been the smallest, as can be seen in these graphs. Despite this disparity, it became the center for the other two communities because of its railroad station. A bustling commercial center grew up around it. This beehive-like activity, and the accepted area for Oasis, were probably the reasons Betsy Skeem wrote in her history of Oasis that “in 1914 Oasis was larger than any town in West Millard County.”³³⁹

The Oasis Ward population has fluctuated over the years. In 1930 there were 364 souls, and from there it declined. There was a resurgence in 1983. From the ward’s historical record for that year, we find this entry, “New families are moving into the ward as the area grows due to construction of the Intermountain Power

338 Wikipedia. 2011, “Oasis, Utah.” Last Modified July 12, 2023. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki. Census data is only released every 72 years due to a law passed in 1978. This explains why no census numbers are shown for 1960, 1970, 1980,1990 and 2000.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oasis,_Utah)

339 Skeem, *Milestones*, 463.

Project. All available housing is occupied. The ward population has exceeded 200 members for the first time in many years.”³⁴⁰ More recently, after the installation of a centralized gas and water system, new houses have been constructed. Refer to “Flowing Wells: 1886-2023” in this work.

Population Rise and Fall: 1870-2010
HISTORICAL POPULATION OF DESERET, OASIS, AND HINCKLEY
Source: US Census Bureau

Census Year	Deseret Population	% +/-	Oasis Population	% +/-	Hinckley Population	% +/-
1870	150	-			-	
1880	617	311.3%			-	
1890	661	7.1%	199	-	-	
1900	506	-23.4%	248	24.6%	591	-
1910	414	-18.2%	245	-1.2%	324	-45.2%
1920	463	11.8%	307	+25.3%	821	153.4%
1930	411	-11.2%	364	+18.6%	678	-17.4%
1940	350	-14.8%	224	-38.5	637	-6.0%
1950	332	-5.1%	190	-15.2%	589	-7.5%
2010	353	-	75	-	695	

³⁴⁰ Manuscript History, 283, CHL.

EARLY VIEWS

When I was a boy growing up in Oasis, only 3 businesses were operating: Day's store, the seed plant, and the post office. I often wondered what my hometown may have looked like when it was flourishing. My family told me there had been lumberyards, a store on our property, and other businesses. Of course, I knew there had been a bank—the foundation was there, and the Oasis hotel was by then a private home; I didn't know there had been 3 of them. Nor did I realize there was a saloon in Oasis—I never knew that until Auntie told me when I recorded her personal history in 1978. Here's part of what she said,

Oasis was a much bigger place in my childhood than it is today. They had Rex's Store, Oda Day's Mercantile, a meat market, a little café right to the side of Oda Day's, and a hotel. There was a café in the hotel as well and a store over at Huff's where Berdell and Helen (Skeem) Memmott live now. Mr. Jackson had a warehouse over by the railroad. The Oasis Bank was in operation and there were two lumberyards and a coal yard. Oasis even had a saloon—it was in your yard—just south of your house. (The Lawrence Cropper home was located east of the Oasis Seed Plant on

*the other side of the tracks and north of the post office.)
Deseret didn't seem to flourish like Oasis did at that time.
Delta was just a spot on the railroad.*³⁴¹

She didn't mention all the Oasis businesses. We know there were also barbershops, an auto dealership, a confectionary, and a power plant. Some of their locations are known, but not all. I didn't realize the saloon was in my folks' own yard until she told me. It must have been across the street north of Day's store. I wish now that I had asked her more about the town. Hoping to find a map, I contacted the Millard County Recorder Office in Fillmore. Unfortunately, they weren't able to come up with one. The abstracts they found were interesting, but not too helpful. (See Appendix.)

During the last couple of years, as I have researched for this book, I've come across photos and paintings that help me understand the former grandeur of Oasis. I wish I could have found more. Hopefully, you'll enjoy these photos as much as I have. Check out the Oasis Ward Picture History for others. I have included 14 photos here. More can be found online.^{lix lx lxi lxii lxiii}

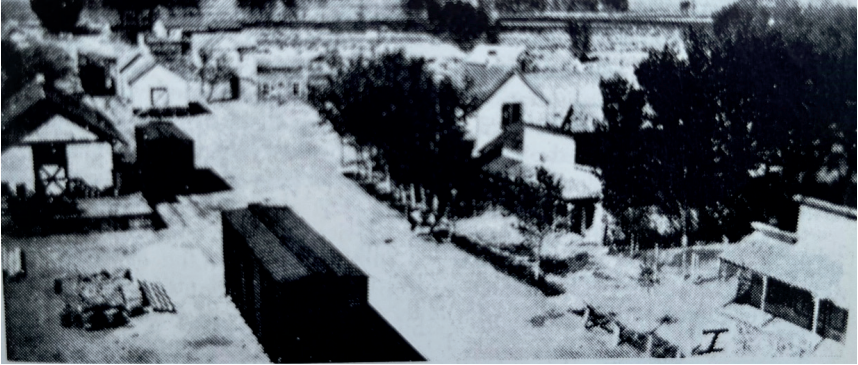
341 "Evelyn Skeem Hawley History," Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM. The Huffs became the home of Helen and Berdell Memmott. They lived about a hundred yards south of the bank. For Delta as a "spot of the railroad," see Wallace and Ekins, *Milestones*, 624. The Lawrence Cropper home that Auntie refers to as "your house" was located east of the Oasis Seed Plant on the other side of the tracks and north of the post office. The house is still there, but has been remodeled from when we lived in it.



Train Depot—the heart of Oasis. This view looks south from W 4000 S and the Oasis Road. On the left is the bank, the hotel, and a store. On the right is the train station and water tower. Note the train and horse-drawn wagon. LaVean Gillen checked with Uncle Edwin Skeem (1897-1997) a life-long Oasis resident to be sure of her painting’s accuracy. It is on display at the Deseret-Oasis Ward.



Ground view photo from water tower looking north. To the right of the tower is a private home, the two-story building in the distance is the hotel. The wagon is parked in front of the store. At the end of the track facing us is the Oasis Cash Store. Photo from FamilySearch Memories (FSM) John Henry Kinder 1837-1914 KWJ7-HCT c.1910



This photo was taken from the top of the water tower looking north. The tower supplied the locomotives with water they needed to make steam. Left center is the train station. Across the tracks to the right is the two-story hotel, two business fronts, and numerous trees. Note there are several unidentified buildings in the area of the Oasis Cash Store. Photo from Milestones, 471. c.1910.



Depot, windmill, and water tank are on the left side of the tracks. Opposite them are the J. H. Kinder Store and Hotel, the confectionary, and a private home. FSM KWJ7-HCT



Kinder Hotel and Store. John Henry is seated in the rocking chair near the center of the porch. FSM KWJ7-HCT



Day's home and store. Watercolor by Jerold Bishop



Oasis Hotel with livery stable. Watercolor by Jerold Bishop



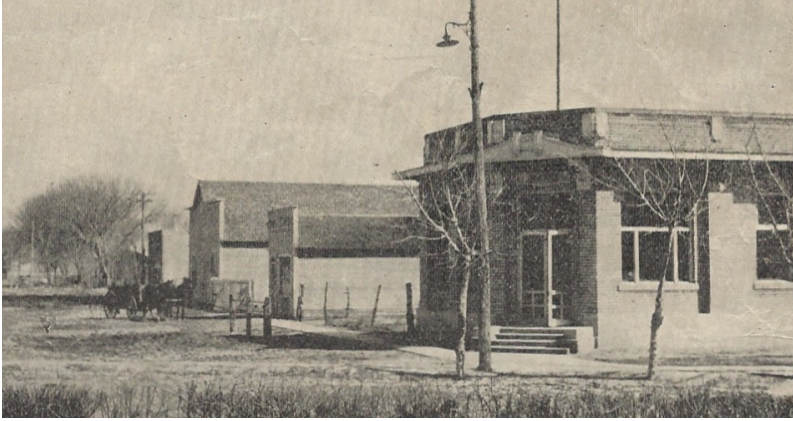
*Freighter Hauling Ore to Oasis Depot. Photo is from the cover of *Deseret Utah Area Freighters* by Waldo and Karolyn Warnick.*



Locomotive at Oasis. Robert Kinder, son of John Henry, is standing on the tracks. Robert was a UPRR engineer. He and his family were 1860 settlers of Oasis. FSM KW83-3XJ c.1910



Oasis Cash Store. I was excited when I found this picture. It was the first time I'd seen the store that I had been told existed on our property. The little building to its right might be a barbershop? Millard County Chronicle, March 23, 1923, page 5.



State Bank of Oasis and other businesses. This view is looking east. The building adjacent to the bank is unknown, but it is in the general area of what became the Oasis Post Office.

The horse-drawn wagon is possibly in front of the livery or blacksmith shop. The structure farther east is probably the Day Store. Other businesses like the barbershop(s) and lumberyard(s) are possibly across the street. FSM KWCR-9CS c.1910



Oasis Bank. The men in front of the entrance are Marcus Skeem, Carl Pierson, Henry Huff, and Herman Peterson.

The foundation still exists. Photo Milestones, 462.



Bank and Livery—Painting by Jerold Bishop

OASIS BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

All of Oasis' businesses have disappeared, except for farming and animal husbandry. I can't foresee the return of the railroad station or the stores and hotels. Life has moved on; times have changed. Two businesses have, however, remained constant in Oasis since pioneer days: farming and raising livestock. Even so, it's good to look back on the way things were. It's an examination of our roots, of which we can be justifiably proud.

FARMING

When the Mormon pioneers arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley, on July 24, 1847, they immediately planted crops. Farming has remained an important industry in Utah. "In 2017 there were 10.8 million acres under cultivation. The total value of agriculture sales was \$184 billion of which 31 percent were from crop sales and 69 percent from livestock and their products."³⁴² *lxiv lxx lxxi lxxvii lxxviii*

³⁴² Posted by John Hilton, "Agriculture in the Beehive State," November 1, 2019, <https://www.Agriculture in the Beehive State | USDA>.

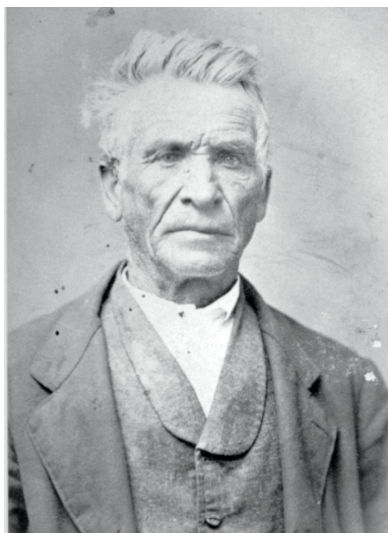


*Peter Skeem on horse-drawn harvester working his farm
in Oasis c.1940. Photo from author's collection*

Establishing the farms in West Millard is a rich story of faithful pioneers who came to the area as directed by their leaders. They faced a vast brush-covered desert terrain with an abundance of water. The challenge was to subject both. In the process, three communities were founded.



*Rich Cropper filling a bag with alfalfa seed
c.1940. Photo from author's collection*



*Jacob Croft was the pioneer leader who settled Deseret. He
was chosen as the first presiding elder of Deseret. His wife,
Sebrina (Land) Cropper was my great-great-grandmother.*

In the fall of 1859, Jacob Croft, chosen as leader because of his experience in building dams,³⁴³ “obeyed a call from Brigham Young... to explore the great western part of Millard County with the idea of locating a new town site.” He and several others explored the area and identified a spot “for the new settlement because the *land was level, rich in silt, and close to the river.*³⁴⁴ (emphasis added)

Their choice was made after riding horseback around the area to examine the prospects. The site selected was northeast of the Black Rock Ridge.³⁴⁵ Croft reports,

*We decided to ask God’s blessing on the location, so I asked Alexander F. Barron to offer the prayer. He responded, at first reluctantly, but soon with great power and fluent speech was blessing the land for the welfare of those who would come here to dwell. [He predicted] the land would become so productive that the valley would become known as the granary of the state. A highway would be thrown up that would run from coast to coast. The farms and cultivated land would extend from the mountain side to mountain side. The population would become numerous and streams of living water would come forth out of the ground.*³⁴⁶

Following Croft’s report to the brethren in Fillmore, a party of forty men returned in early 1860 and “began building a dam

343 Sebrina C. Ekins and Grace C. Warnick, *Milestones*, 426-27.

344 *Among Deseret’s First*, 47. The original town site was closer to Black Rock Ridge than the town of Deseret is today.

345 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 425. The original site was west of Fort Deseret.

346 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*.

to get the water out onto the land. Crops were planted that first year and the virgin soil yielded abundantly and the settlers were encouraged. Wild hay was cut and stacked that fall. Cattle were brought over from Fillmore and turned into the bottoms.³⁴⁷ The crops were “wheat, corn, sugarcane, and potatoes... fruit trees, currant bushes and asparagus.”³⁴⁸ By 1861 there were 142 families established in the area.³⁴⁹ The Deseret Branch [of the Church] was organized in March of that year by George A. Smith and Joseph Ammasa Young with Jacob Croft as presiding elder.³⁵⁰

To choose where their farms would be, these pioneers looked to see how high the greasewoods/sagebrush grew to determine where the soil was the best. If the native brush was over four feet in height, the soil was good. If the brush was small, the soil was less productive. The alkali from the flooding of Lake Sevier made the soil less productive for certain crops.³⁵¹ “Each man was allotted so many acres of land according to the work he had done [on the dam].”³⁵² But, they didn’t stay.

In 1862 the dam broke and the crops were ruined. A similar disaster occurred almost every year. In 1868 the settlers became discouraged and moved away. Many went back to Fillmore and Holden, while others went east and settled in

³⁴⁷ Among Deseret’s First, 47-48.

³⁴⁸ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 428.

³⁴⁹ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 427.

³⁵⁰ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 430.

³⁵¹ Private conversation with Reed Skeem. The information was told to him by his father Peter Edwin Skeem.

³⁵² Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 427.

*Oak City. For about six years, the area was vacated except for a few stockmen who came to winter in the houses built by the first settlers. In the spring of 1875, Gilbert Webb and others raised enough money to rebuild the dam on the Sevier River [and some families returned.]*³⁵³

When the Mormon families came back, they discovered they had competition. A group of non-Mormons were preparing to build a dam. “While the [Webb] dam was being constructed, Joseph S. and William V. Black... settled at Deseret, and took up land where the present town of Deseret now stands.”³⁵⁴

On June 24, 1877, a stake conference was held in Fillmore, “presided over by Wilford Woodruff and Erastus Snow. At this conference, Deseret was organized as a ward.” Joseph S. Black was called as bishop with Mahonri Bishop and Hyrum Dewsnap as counselors.³⁵⁵

Brigham Young had directed the settling of this area in 1860.³⁵⁶ There had been hiccups, but Young’s successors continued to encourage farming here. With prophetic pronouncements, area pioneers continued their efforts.

Mormon faithful saw a direct connection between the onset of the first area boom... and Church president Lorenzo Snow’s delivery of his ‘Windows of Heaven’ sermon in Deseret in June 1899. Snow promised the residents prosperity if they paid

353 *Among Deseret’s First*, 51-52.

354 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 435. The original town site was closer to Black Rock Ridge than the town of Deseret is today.

355 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 437.

356 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 426.

their tithing. After the year's harvest and threshing were completed, at least 35 boxcar loads of seed were shipped from the area. With a November price of seven cents per pound, the estimate that local growers would net at least \$50,000 for the yield was probably quite low.³⁵⁷

One of the challenges of growing good crops in this area is the alkali in the soil. In 1899, a local correspondent noted that “*visiting Church presidents John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff had each blessed the land and predicted it would become productive*. The writer affirmed that the prophetic utterances regarding its future [were] being fulfilled to the letter.”³⁵⁸ (emphasis added)

“Lars Hansen did the first farming [in Oasis] in 1878 after making a private ditch from the Deseret Canal to his farm in the southwest quarter of section 34, township 17 south of range 7 west”³⁵⁹ Lyman and Newell report that “with the development of irrigation at Deseret, Hinckley, and Oasis, farmers of the area became quite successful raising grain and alfalfa, boasting they had ‘no superior in Utah.’”³⁶⁰

Times were not always smooth for West Millard farmers. During World War I many took loans to expand production, but

357 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*.

358 Deseret Evening News, 7, 22 November, 1899; Day and Ekins, *Milestones of Millard*, 609. As quoted in Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 191.

359 Skeem, *Milestones*, 462, and Manuscript History, 13, CHL.

360 Collins Hakes and John Duel of Kanosh and Amasa and Francis M. Lyman of Fillmore had learned about alfalfa while residing in San Bernardino, California, in the late 1850s. See Edward Leo Lyman, *San Bernardino: The Rise and Fall of a California Community* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 217-19. As quoted in Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 191.

“the agricultural economic bubble began to deflate during the national farmers’ depression of the 1920s. Some farmers and businesses fell upon economic hard times.”³⁶¹ This worsened when “the Oasis State Bank, the only source of loans for [many], closed its doors, leaving farmers without any local financial institution to serve them. One farmer recorded, ‘there is a terrible gloom overall in the county.’”³⁶²

Farms in the United States were largely self-sufficient in the 19th and early 20th centuries. My great-grandparent’s farming household in Deseret exemplified many others. Here’s a description of what farm life was like back then.



Leigh and Fanny Lousia (Powell) Cropper

361 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 272.

362 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 273.

At the back of the Leigh and Fanny Cropper's house, they had what they called a smokehouse which was used to smoke or cure ham and pork shoulders for use during the winter and summer months. A surface well was about 200 feet from the house and the cool water was always enjoyed. [There had been a problem getting good drinking water in the 1860s.]

Each year Leigh had a good-producing garden for summer and fall vegetables. They stored their winter supply of [these products] in a dirt cellar with logs and dirt for a roof. He had currant and gooseberry bushes growing everywhere. Apple and pear trees were planted east of the log house, and they produced plenty for winter use. The fruit was stored in boxes and kept in the back bedroom. A large bed of asparagus was planted along the ditch bank at the end of the orchard by the old well. Each spring the asparagus came up again.

Leigh always had beef cattle to sell and to eat. He would often butcher an animal which kept them supplied with meat. He also had chickens; eggs were plentiful and some were sold to the store. They had their milk cows and would set the milk out in round pans for the cream to rise. Then it would be skimmed and the cream would be churned into butter. The butter was taken to Oasis once a week, shipped by train to Salt Lake City, and sold.

Leigh and Fanny always rode in a nicely-painted black-top horse-drawn buggy... This transportation was all he had to take them two miles to church on Sunday and about twice a week to the post office and general store. He would use

a team of two horses for the plowing of the 80 acres which was used for raising grain, corn, oats, potatoes, and alfalfa.³⁶³

It's easy for us to be complacent about those who settled in this area and not fully realize how challenging it was to establish these communities and the surrounding farms. My great-grandmother, Cecilia Skeem (1834–1920), was one of the early settlers. She and her family came to the area in 1883. Below is her description of the challenges of farm life they experienced.

Only during harvest did my husband [Hans Skeem] have all he could handle. During that season, he would cut grain with the scythe. Our oldest girl, Hannah, followed him with a wooden rake, rolled the cut wheat into bundles, and tied these together. The next step was to gather the bundles and thresh the grain from them.

The following fall of 1883, he, with two other immigrants, went to a new town in the desert that was called Summerset [now Oasis]. He bought a little ground by the county road and built a shack. [This is the only reference I can find to Summerset.]

My husband and boys grubbed [pulled up] brush while the girls separated the good piece for wood and piled the rest to burn as trash. The two little boys... especially enjoyed running from one pile of brush to the other with the fire. I often saw them jumping and shouting when it would blaze up.

I never complained about carrying heavy buckets of water from a canal, getting wood when the box was empty, or

³⁶³ Among Deseret's First, 52-53.

cooking for my big hungry family. [Cecelia had seven children at this time.]...

Later, when a cement dam was built, Hans took a claim for 160 acres of land a mile south of where we lived.

We realized how little we knew about farming, but we were learning by hard experiences. We divided 80 acres of land between the oldest boys. [Andrew born 1861 and Peter S. in 1864]... We were slowly but surely getting ahead.³⁶⁴

The Oasis Ward's annual report for 1900 states, "The farming land is impregnated to a considerable extent with minerals and on this account, crops in certain localities have often failed. This country is splendid for raising lucerne [alfalfa] and in this regard leads both Deseret and Hinckley."³⁶⁵

At the turn of the 20th century, a second wave of would-be farmers, enticed by the federal government, came to the area. The Carey Act was enacted into law by Congress on August 18, 1894. It was a new approach to the disposal of public desert land, as the federal government decided this task was too large for individual settlers. Through advertising, these companies attracted farmers to the many states that successfully utilized the act.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ C. Skeem, "Reader's Biography" C. Jensen Svendsen Skeem KWJH-9TJ, FSM. Pulling up the brush was common practice to clear the land and get it ready for agriculture. The two little boys Great-grandma Cecilia is writing about are Chris born in 1875, and Marcus 1877. The brush they were burning was greasewood which contains tar. This explains why it "blazed up" when burned. The deed is dated December 26, 1891, Homestead Certification Number 4311. See FamilySearch.org/Memories.

³⁶⁵ Jensen, "Veritable Oasis," CHL.

³⁶⁶ Encyclopedia of the American West. 4 vols. Macmillan Reference USA, 1996.

The following is an ad that ran in the *Goodwin Weekly* in 1908 to attract folks to move and take up farming in Oasis. It speaks to the “Million Dollar Oasis Project” which today (2024) would be the equivalent of more than \$32 million!

*The Great Carey Act: Land Opening, Oasis, Utah 43,000 acres
Monday, Water in the Canals/Oasis Irrigation Lands/Crops
Next Year/Two Special Trains/The Oasis Midnight Special and
the Oasis Daylight Special* ^{lxix}

The Oasis midnight special will leave Salt Lake as a second section in the regular number one train of the Salt Lake Route, leaving the Salt Lake Route Depot. Oregon Short Line Station midnight, Sunday night.

The Oasis daylight special will leave Salt Lake at 7:00 am Monday, arriving at Oasis at noon and leaving Oasis after the drawing at about 7:00 in the evening.

From September 24th to 28th, inclusive a special rate of one fair, or \$6.20 for the round trip good for ten days, has been made for this occasion.

PULLMAN CAR RESERVATIONS

When getting your Pullman car reservations, state to the agent how long you desire to remain so that Pullman cars may be set out on the sidetrack at Oasis for your accommodation during your stay. Good accommodations are being provided at Oasis for this occasion.

Carriages can be secured at Oasis to go to all parts of the land.

THE MILLION DOLLAR OASIS PROJECT

This is the largest irrigation system in the state of Utah. It has the largest reservoir in the state at the Sevier Bridge.

The Pahvant Valley is now a beautiful agricultural section of Utah and comprises the largest tract of arable land in the state. 25,000 acres are under cultivation adjoining the lands embraced in the Oasis Project.

Using our irrigation system, we are reclaiming the highlands or the valley; in fact, we already possess the advantage of a finished country.

Five thriving towns, good schools, churches, stores, a bank, long-distance telephone, telegraph, etc. on a transcontinental railroad. "The Salt Lake Route." Artesian wells of lithia water, 300 days of sunshine, and soil of the greatest fertility. See the telephone and telegraph key at Oasis Ward Picture History.^{lxx}

The largest crowds ever assembled in Utah to buy land will be in Oasis on September 25. Our Sunland [The ad continues]

54 pages, 43 pictures, 2 maps full of valuable information will be mailed free on request. Remember to get your Pullman reservations early at Salt Lake Route, 169 Main Street.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁷ Advertisement, "This Great Cary Act: Land Opening Two Special Trains The Oasis Midnight Special and the Oasis Daylight Special-ad," Goodwin Weekly, September 29, 1908. (August 2023)

A similar ad ran in the Salt Lake Tribune on September 25, 1908. It informs interested parties on how to apply for purchasing land and water and includes information on the cost per acre of land which is astonishingly low.

COST FOR LAND AND WATER

At the time of making the application deposit with the State Board of Land Commissioners a certified check for 25 cents per acre for the land and one-tenth of the total cost of perpetual water right (one share of water for each acre). The balance of the cost of perpetual water rights is payable one-tenth each year with six percent interest on deferred payment. When you make final proof, the balance of 25 cents per acre for the land is payable to the state. (emphasis added)

BETTER THAN A SAVINGS BANK AND YOU MAKE ALL THE PROFIT.

The liberal terms under which this land and water may be required should appeal equally to the man of moderate means and the captains. To the former it affords a safe depository for his savings and brings a hundred percent profit at the same time he is independent and has a home for the latter it is the most profitable and safest investment.³⁶⁸

Four days after the above ad ran, the following article appeared in a different newspaper. It adds information as to the amount of land involved and how the sale was proceeding.

³⁶⁸ Untitled, Salt Lake Tribune, September 25, 1908, 4.

CONTRACT FOR LAND AT OASIS: OPENING OF 43,000 ACRE TRACT

The land set apart by the state for the reclamation scheme of the Oasis Land and Irrigation Company was thrown open to settlement at Oasis, a station on the Salt Lake Route, in Millard County, yesterday. The lands were to have been [distributed by a] system of “drawing,” but this part of the proceeding was dispensed with, and the land was sold by the company to interested parties under the rules of ordinary transactions.

According to estimates of men who returned from Oasis last night, the Oasis company contracted for the sale of between 2000 and 3000 acres of land on the opening day.

The Oasis project, which is an enterprise under the Carey Act, involves the opening to settlement of 43,000 acres of land by the state in a contract with the Oasis company to reclaim the land. The land is under canal and ditches taken from the Sevier Dam Reservoir, an exploit which will be of immense proportions when finally it is completed.^{lxxi lxxii}

The contract between the state and the Oasis company provides that none of the land shall be **sold at a figure exceeding \$70 an acre**. Word from Oasis is that all, or nearly all, of the land sold yesterday was at the maximum figure and that was the choice of the soil in the north tract.³⁶⁹ (emphasis added)

³⁶⁹ “Contract for Land at Oasis: Opening of 43,000 Acre Tract,” Salt Lake Herald-Republican, September 29, 1908.

Sixteen years later (1924) we learn how those who chose to invest in the Oasis Project fared on an individual level in this glowing report:

Fine Crops at Oasis: Successful Drainage Making Remarkable Yields The banner crops of the Oasis District were raised by Kay Owens and Henry Huff. Owens has a 39-acre farm; of which he is working 34 acres; from his 34 acres he got the magnificent sum of \$4700.00. In other words, **Owens got back more than the price of the farm from one seed crop.**

Henry Huff got 466 bushels from 30 acres, or 15, and a fraction of bushels per acre.

Anton P. Anderson raised upwards of 700 bushels of seed.

Jensens had about 650 bushels.

Marcus Skeem had about 600 bushels.

R. E. Robison, Jr., on "th' lane" got returns of a little better than \$100 per acre off his land.

There was very little dark seed raised in Oasis in 1923; in fact, careful analysis of that district shows almost none. As one striking case of a good yield, let us mention that J. M. Webb of Deseret [who] contracted to purchase a farm last spring for \$175 an acre; the farm was forty acres; coming to \$7000; this year he **received from his seed crop** on that land \$3500.00, or **one-half of the purchase price** in a crop of one year!

We are elated to say that covering a period of many years, the Oasis and the South Tract Districts for 1923 showed the **banner yields.** [emphasis. added]

*In Oasis drainage is working well; completely unproductive lands are fast coming back. Yields are shooting upward. The farmers are getting along well, and prosperity is not the undreamed-of thing once so distant. On the South Tract, the same conditions exist.*³⁷⁰

Even as a boy in the 1950s, I was aware that some Oasis farmers were succeeding and doing well. In some cases, this was inherited wealth; others were self-made men. Seventy years after the glowing report, we see many area farmers were still doing well, as in this report from 1994:

*Seven Millard County farmers won awards for outstanding hay quality and production recently. Roger Stanworth, Oasis, was named world champion hay grower at the World's Forage Super Bowl in Madison, Wisconsin. Clyde Bunker, Sutherland, received champion honors in the commercial hay cubes category and 10th place in baled hay. At the World Dairy Expo, Rulon Jones, Sutherland, and Kenneth Fowles, Delta, placed seventh and eighth in the cubed hay division. In the bale hay competition, Ladd Hales, Sutherland, was 12th; Jim Stanworth, Delta, 16th; and Harold Knight, Delta, 18th.*³⁷¹

Why are some farmers successful and others not? One answer depends on the type of soil. Dad spoke at Grandmother Annie Skeem's funeral in 1960 and commented how hard it had been for her and her husband because of *the poor quality of the soil*

370 "Fine Crops at Oasis: Successful Drainage Making Remarkable Yields," *Chronicle*, January 24, 1924, 1.

371 "Seven Millard Farmers Win Awards for Hay Production, Quality at World's Forage Superbowl in Wisconsin" *Deseret News*, December 22, 1994, 7.

where they farmed. His own father, however, was favored with *good ground*. (emphasis added)

In the following quote from his history, Dad tells us how Granddad Cropper acquired the property and made it productive. This was prior to the Carey Act.

[Leigh Richmond Cropper Jr.] homesteaded 160 acres. I remember they put in the highland canal which would bring water to all the best land. That land where Dad farmed is some of the choicest land in that part of the country. Half of it was a sandy loam, on the west side of the canal, and on the east, it was heavy clay. Now that's the difference. The clay was hard to work and to get alfalfa started in it; but when he did get it in, he raised a marvelous crop.

[With the highland canal], we could water on the west side. So they railed [pulled a heavy rail over the ground to dislodge] the brush and plowed it up to prepare for planting. There were all kinds of roots; the brush was high—great big rabbit brush and greasewoods, sagebrush and stuff. They plowed it up and picked up the roots and piled them up just like hay. He gave a lot of it away. He'd haul a bunch over to the house and burn it in the stove for firewood.³⁷²

Dad shares that his earliest memories of working on the farm were tromping hay. This job disappeared when hay balers came

³⁷² Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Leigh Richmond Cropper, FSM. Gaylen Cropper has the original document. It is signed by Theodore Roosevelt as President of the United States, who served from 1901-1909.

into use. Before that, someone would ride on top of the loose hay thrown on a wagon with a pitchfork and walk or stomp on it to compact the hay.

My first recollection of farming [c.1912] was tromping hay. I hated getting the foxtail in my socks! It was hot, miserable, and hard work. But it made it possible to load more hay on the wagon, so there were fewer trips between the field and the stock area.

My, we had hundreds of tons of hay! He'd have that yard full of great big stacks of loose hay—you can't imagine. Of course, he needed it to feed his stock.³⁷³

It takes more than good soil and water to be successful at farming. Dad was always happy to relate the following story to illustrate this point.

Dad [L. Richmond Cropper Jr.] raised some wonderful crops of hay, and later in life, he raised a big crop of seed! He was such a good seed grower that Peppard Seed Company hired him to go out in the Uintah Basin and tell those guys how to grow alfalfa seed. So they furnished him a car and paid him \$150 a month. He hired me [Lawrence] to run the farm. [A friend] told him, "If you leave the farm, your boys will ruin it for you." Well, Dad wasn't so worried about it. We put the hay up; we were big enough [c. 1918]. Hon [Dad's brother] was a pretty good-sized kid by then.

373 Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Work, FSM.



Lawrence and Mahonri Cropper on tractor

We always raised second crop seed. It looked kind of dry just going into bud right good. I ordered the water and I irrigated the whole “daggoned” field. Now that’s something Dad would never do—water the second crop. Of course, it made it quite a growth. But I hit it just right and it went into burr and we never raised a crop that big before nor after! That was the biggest crop of seed he ever had. We had 308 bags of seed—all clean and nice coming off the thresher. He sold it for 17 cents a pound in the dirt [without cleaning]. I think he got \$7000 for the crop. And that was a lot of money in those days!³⁷⁴

374 Lawrence Cropper KWC6-TV, Autobiography under Leigh Richmond Cropper, FSM.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

One might ask: What animals made their home in the Pahvant Valley before 1860? Answer, “It was a hunter’s paradise for great flocks of ducks, geese, and all kinds of waterfowl. Fish were plentiful. Coyotes, lizards, many snakes, wild horses, and antelope were found.”³⁷⁵ Domesticated animals were added starting in 1847.^{lxiii}

lxiv lxx lxxvi lxxvii lxxviii lxxix lxxx

When the first Mormon settlers established themselves in the Salt Lake Valley, they brought with them 3,100 head of cattle, 887 cows, and 2,213 working oxen. This large number of cattle thus represented the pulling power needed for the move west, not a beef-producing potential to be turned free upon the grasses of Zion. But meat demands developed; the grasslands of desert and mountains were ready for use. Naturally, if not inevitably, Utah became a grazing state. A century later, her people could count well over half a million cattle on her farms and ranges.³⁷⁶

Cattlemen were among those who settled the Deseret area. For example, when Jacob Croft’s wife, Sebrina Land Cropper, and her sons, migrated from Texas to Fillmore in 1856, they brought with them 500 head of cattle driving them over nearly 1000 miles of rough terrain.³⁷⁷ Three Cropper brothers were among the first

³⁷⁵ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 427.

³⁷⁶ Don D. Walker, “The Cattle Industry of Utah: 1850-1900,” *Utah Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 32, Number 3, 1964, <https://www.TheCattleIndustryofUtah.org>.
 of Utah: An Historical Profile—Issuu.

³⁷⁷ *Among Deseret’s First*, 42.

to settle in Deseret. To provide for the animals brought over from Fillmore, “wild hay was cut and stacked. The cattle were turned into the bottoms. The range was good and the cattle wintered well.”³⁷⁸ Cattle raising and farming were the leading industries in the pioneer days.³⁷⁹



Rich Cropper with his work horse Old Dobb

Domestic animals were ubiquitous in Oasis in the 19th century. Horses were needed for transportation and farming. Cows provided milk which could be made into butter and cheese; chickens gave eggs and could be easily butchered. Before stores, sheep were sheared for their wool, which was then spun and woven to make clothing and blankets. Other animals figured into this mix and

³⁷⁸ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 427.

³⁷⁹ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 446.

were routinely slaughtered. Cows, chickens, pigs, goats, rabbits, etc. provided ready meat for the dinner table.

Taking care of these animals was a constant chore. Hay and grain had to be grown and harvested to provide for them. All the animals needed to be fed and given water. Cows had to be milked by hand morning and evening. There was work for everyone—including the young. “Have you done your chores?” was asked over and over by parents—and it was not an idle question.

Great-grandma Cecilia Skeem faced a dire situation after arriving in Oasis in 1884. The family was saved by her ability to shear sheep.

As I stood in the door of the shack watching my children play, happy and carefree, I asked myself what should I do if they ask me for bread and I have nothing to give them? God forbid! Surely, he will show me the way out. Turning around, I dropped to my knees asking for help, so that I might not see my darling children cry for want of bread. Getting up, I felt better. I knew my prayer would be answered. That night when I mixed bread, I found there was only enough for one more mixing.

Most of the people living around us were as poor as we were. In the morning word came that a man with a herd of sheep some miles away needed help to shear them. Some diseases had been among them in the spring, and they weren't sheared at that time. Our neighbor, a man in poor health, would take anyone who wanted to go. A friend of mine and I piled our bedding into his wagon and went. I told the girls, Hannah and Annie [my grandmother], to borrow some flour

from a neighbor, and that I would bring some back with me to repay them.

The next morning, we started to shear sheep. Toward evening our hands were so stiff we could hardly shut them. That night we were so restless in our misery we couldn't sleep, but we had no thought of giving up. In the morning, we worked our hands, rubbing them until we could hold the shears. We again went to work. This meant bread for ourselves and loved ones; thus, we were saved for the time being.³⁸⁰

Raising sheep was a big industry in and around Oasis. At one time there was even an Oasis Sheep Association.³⁸¹ Uncle Ed had a big flock he tended at his home on Skeem Lane. Lyman and Newell discuss the industry,

The number of sheep raised in the county also increased substantially during the last two decades of the 19th century. In 1880 there were 4,125 sheep, a decade later the number of sheep was more than 48,000, and by the end of 1890s there were nearly 63,700 head of sheep. Oasis and Black Rock were important shearing locations [and] outfitting centers for sheep camps.³⁸²

380 Cecilia Skeem, "Reader's Biography" Cecelia Jensen Svendsen KWJH-9TJ, FSM.

381 Erma T. Styler, "History of John Valentine Styler," John Valentine Styler KWC2-XWD, FSM.

382 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 176.



Vern Skeem surrounded by geese, turkeys, chickens and a wiener pig at Glen Skeem's farm in Oasis

My Uncle Glen Skeem cared for quite a menagerie of animals. To list them is to enumerate almost every domestic creature known to man: horses, cows, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, fighting roosters, guinea hens, peacocks, ducks, turkeys, geese, rabbits, dogs, and cats. Sometimes there were even a few wild critters thrown in with the mix. Consequently, there was a pen for the pigs, a corral for the horses and cows, a tack room for harnesses, saddles, etc., a shed for wheat storage, a shed for sheep and lambs, an area set aside for hay for the animals, and a small garage filled with odds and ends—never a car or pickup truck.

When it was time to harvest the crops, Uncle Glen and Uncle Alf Petersen would harness the horses to use for their work. They hooked up the horses to the wagons to transport the crops from the field. Sometimes a horse was hooked to the derrick to stack the hay in a pile from the wagons. They usually had a tractor to provide the power for threshing the seed. I vividly recall riding beside Uncle Alf on the hay wagon when one of the horses lifted

its tail and passed air. Uncle Alf laughed when I just about passed out from the vile smell!

Uncle Glen had tractors. His father, my grandfather, Peter Straagaard Skeem, who lived and farmed there before him, never did. But they both had an abiding love for horses and other animals. Glen kept his livestock long after he retired.

Glen's oldest sister, Evelyn, loved horses, too. She tells the story of riding one to catch up with her younger sister, my mother, who ran off with her cousin, Laurleen Petersen while she was tending them. "I caught them up by the road where it turns to go into [Oasis] and brought them back. Your mother said she didn't know I could ride that fast."

When Auntie was a child, she enjoyed going in the carriage with Grandma and Grandpa Petersen to Oak City to visit their daughter Hulda. "We were amused that the horses knew where to turn in at Aunt Hulda's; just let them have the rein."³⁸³

Uncle Kelly and his brother Fon Hawley raised thousands of chickens and sold the egg commercially from their farm in Oasis. By the time I was in high school, Uncle Kelly was down to a small coop of chickens. These were mostly for his use. It was always eggs for breakfast. He and I ate plenty of them, and Auntie used them to make wonderful cakes and pastries from scratch.

My family had a few animals, but nothing like Uncle Glen's. I know that when I was a baby, Dad had a cow. Babies drink lots of milk. The cow disappeared shortly after I grew out of diapers. We raised chickens, so I knew something about feeding and watering

383 "Evelyn Skeem Hawley History," Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

them and gathering eggs. The rabbits and chickens we butchered and ate. Slaughtering what we raised for food was all part of farm life. Mother made good meals with the chickens and rabbits. We never butchered a pig, but I've seen it done in Oasis.

I tried my hand at raising pigs when I was in FFA (Future Farmers of America) in high school. Reed was more into sheep. His sheep were prize winners at the Millard County Stock Show. Matter of fact, his Hampshire ram took reserve grand champion. My Yorkshire pig didn't receive anything nearly so great. By the time I graduated from Delta High in 1963, I was no longer in the husbandry business. Reed, on the other hand, when I visited him in Grantsville, had a flock of chickens and ducks at his home and a Canada goose who had voluntarily joined in.

Dad talks about the difficulties his father had milking cows by hand, the pride he had in his horses, and a breed of cattle that has disappeared.

Dad [L. Richmond Cropper Jr.] was the first one to get up and he'd go out and milk the cows to start the day. [Milking at the time was all done by hand. This was before milking machines.] I remember one old cow he had; he called her Old Hard Tits. She was difficult to milk. He had another one that would keep stepping around when he tried to milk her. One time he had some chain hobbles that he put on the back of her legs so that she couldn't kick and move. She fell over, landed on him, and spilled the milk. For sure it hurt him, but he was never one to complain.

The folks always had a bunch of horses—of all kinds: a buggy horse, two or three riding horses, and at least four big work-horses. He had big teams and lots of hay to feed them. Dad

had some of the finest horses in the country, all well-fed and cared for.

We traveled to school from the farm in a horse-drawn buggy.... As the oldest, Mary usually drove us. We carried our lunches and enough hay to feed Old Nome at noon. We'd hitch her on the buggy. She was a trotter. We could get from the farm to the school (some three miles) in about thirty minutes. She was big enough that Dad would use her with his other teams to work. He could also put a saddle on her to ride.

His cattle were always fat too. Nowadays you don't see what they used to call Red Durham cows. They were pure red—not a bit of white on them anywhere. Granddad Cropper [Leigh R. Cropper Sr.] had them. They came from a breed called the Milking Short Horn. They were a good milk cow, those Red Durham cows. He gave me one when I got married. It was a really good cow, but later on of course, they got into the Holsteins and Jerseys and the Red Durhams became a thing of the past. You hardly ever see a red cow anymore—not all red. Now they have a lot of black Galloways and Angus and they're all black.³⁸⁴

Lyman and Newell give a good summary of animal husbandry for the time period we're discussing.

Livestock raising grew in economic importance as the [19th] century came to a close. Improvements in transportation, good free public grazing ground on the Pahvant Range, and... relatively steady livestock prices encouraged county

³⁸⁴ Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Work, FSM.

farmers to raise livestock. The number of cattle in the county increased from 2,773 in 1870 to over 7,500 head in 1900, and by 1910 it exceeded 10,400 beef cattle. The number of milk cows increased less rapidly; there were 1,533 in 1890, some 2,288 by 1900, and 3,256 by 1910. Millard County ranked tenth in gallons (645,700) of milk produced in 1899.³⁸⁵

DAIRY

My Uncle Glen Skeem milked cows and separated the milk from the cream using a hand-operated separator in his home. His daughter complained about washing the machine twice a day and cleaning up the milk splatters. (See “Early Houses” in this record.) They sold the milk to a creamery. Many others in Oasis set out milk cans to be picked up and taken to be processed. ^{lxxxi}

A creamery stood across the street northeast of our house. It was not operating when I lived in Oasis and has since been torn down. My high school friend, Ann Webb’s, father operated a Delta creamery next to their home. He once gave me a tour and let me taste their curd squeaky cheese. Yum!

There were apparently two creameries in Oasis, but they may have operated at different times. The first was established in 1912 and the second in 1926. “The Pahvant Valley Creamery [in Oasis] was built in 1912. Marcus Skeem was president, Nels I. Petersen secretary, with directors A.A. Hinckley, J.C. Hawley, Richard

³⁸⁵ Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 175-76.

Parker, and T.H. Pratt.”³⁸⁶ From a different source, we learn the creamery in Oasis received milk “from Oak City, Deseret, and Hinckley dairy farmers.”³⁸⁷

This 1926 news article lauds the Oasis Creamery as “one of the most convenient and best-equipped butter factories in the state.” After describing some of the equipment and the structure itself, the editor explains,

[There is a] covered driveway where the wagons are loaded and unloaded. The company is preparing to put up an icehouse in the rear of the main building in which they will put up ice this winter for use next summer.

Before the factory was accepted, an expert from Salt Lake came down to examine it and pronounced it thoroughly up-to-date and perfect in every respect. An expert butter maker has been engaged and it is expected that operations will begin by the first of February. Nearly all the businessmen of Oasis, Deseret, and Hinckley have taken stock in the enterprise.

We hope every farmer who has any cream to sell will patronize the new creamery. Some of the creameries at Salt Lake

386 “Historical Oasis Landmark Nearly Lost to Vandals —Weather,” Gazette, 1983, This news clipping is in the Oasis photo album archived at the Great Basin Museum (GBM). The West Millard Great Basin Historical Society and Museum, P.O. Box 550, Delta, UT 84624, 45 W. Main, Delta, Utah, Phone 435-864-8016. <https://www.gbm@frontierneet.net>. Apparently, this newspaper has not yet been digitized. March 30, 1983, 1 and 3, Millard County Gazette, Vol. 2, Issue 13.

387 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 263.

*are already taking notice of the new factory by offering higher prices than formerly for cream. But no farmer ought to be a big enough sucker to be taken in by any such enticements. [These] are only made for the purpose of trying to break up the new institution. If they succeed prices will go down again. Stay with the new creamery, no matter what inducements any other creamery may offer you.*³⁸⁸

Some farmers on the east end of Cropper Lane had a dairy. We frequently bought whole raw milk from them in the 1960s and early 1970s.

FREIGHTING

I live next door to a trucker. Bob's only home on the weekends. He freights lumber, steel, cardboard, and cow feed around the Northwest. My wife's son-in-law is a long-haul trucker. He makes periodic drives from Idaho to the Midwest hauling potatoes, and potato products from his home in Blackfoot, Idaho, and returns with items such as alcohol, paper, and popsicles.^{lxxxii}

When the Oasis Depot was in its prime, there were no trucks as we know them today. Instead of semis, heavy freight wagons were used. These were pulled by horses or mules. The drivers varied in age from as young as 16 to older. Many local teamsters or "freighters were engaged in hauling ore from the Joy [later Detroit] Mining District [Fish Springs, Ibex Mine, and other locations] to the railroad [depot] at Oasis."³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ "The Oasis Creamery," December 16, 1912, *Chronicle*, 1.

³⁸⁹ Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 164.



*Thomas William Bennett and Samuel Wood Western stop and chat on a freighting expedition. Photo from Great Basin Museum (GBM). See also *Deseret Utah Area Freighters* by Waldo and Karolyn Warnick.*

Joy is now a ghost town. It's approximately 30 miles west of Oasis in the Drum Mountains. It was a precious metals mining operation dating from 1872."³⁹⁰ Another, now mostly forgotten mining ghost town, is Fish Springs. It's about 75 miles to the northwest of Oasis in a remote area of Juab County, just over the hill from the Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge.³⁹¹ "The Ibex Mine [also in Juab County] featured an elaborate three-track tramway that transported ore down a steep mountain slope to waiting ore wagons which hauled it to Oasis where it was transferred to railcars and shipped to the Ibex smelter [in Leamington]."³⁹²

390 "Joy Town Site," Bureau of Land Management, blm.gov.

391 Waldo and Karolyn Warnick, *Deseret, Utah, Area Freighter to the Fish Springs Mines*, (BYU Print and Mail), 2023, 43.

392 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 165.

Between 1880 and 1920, the teamsters would take up to ten days to make the trip if the roads were good. Their caravans would consist of eight heads of horses and three wagons. Bad weather meant bad roads and a longer trip. It usually required ten horses and four wagons.³⁹³ Once the ore was loaded onto the railroad ore cars, a northbound train would pull it to the smelter in Murray, Utah.³⁹⁴

Generally, freighting outfits consisted of a group of three teamsters. Each would pull three wagons hitched to 8 to 10 horses or mules, four or five teams. (There were exceptions, at times only one or two wagons would be used.) A typical freight wagon train would be composed of three teamsters, nine wagons, and 24-30 horses or mules. These animals were given names: Jake, Prince, John, Morg, Jean, Pat, and Bishop.³⁹⁵

The freight wagons didn't return to the mines empty. There was heavy mining equipment, lumber, foodstuff, and other goods which needed to be hauled. Some of this, previously brought in by rail for the mines, was stored in warehouses waiting to be freighted out. Local farmers supplied "hay, straw, oats, barley, wheat, rye, eggs, butter, cheese, potatoes, etc." Area merchants also added to the freight.

A six-horse team could haul about six tons of ore. At \$11/ton, the freighters would make about \$66/trip. If the trip took 12 days, they would add up to \$5.50/day or the equivalent of about \$200/day in 2023.³⁹⁶

393 Warnick, *Area Freighter*, 33.

394 Warnick, *Area Freighter*, 54.

395 Warnick, *Area Freighter*, 18-19.

396 Warnick, *Area Freighter*, 55.

It took skill to be a good teamster. Sam Western (1867-1947), known as ‘Freighter Sam,’ was considered the best teamster in the area. He was very skilled in driving his freight outfit and was also known for the care he gave his teams, wagons, and other equipment. At the age of seventeen, Sam started freighting and kept at it until 1928. For years he drove his freighted outfit to Gold Hill, Fish Springs, Drum, and Tooele. In all, he freighted for forty-four years.³⁹⁷

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD

With the heavy demands of freighters, ranchers, farmers, merchants, and passenger traffic, it’s easy to understand why the railroad and its station flourished. Oasis had become a major hub for numerous industries for all of Millard County and beyond. ^{lxxxiii lxxxiv}



I was thrilled when I found this photo! I never knew exactly where the Oasis Depot was located or what it looked like. To see it in operation with a wagon still hitched to its team of horses being unloaded is a special bonus. Photo found in Millard County Chronicle November 23, 1911, Page 1

³⁹⁷ Warnick, Area Freighter, 19.

There were a considerable number of cattle shipped from the Oasis station. One Toole County cowhand, who kept a diary of an 1894 cattle drive, recounted coming by way of Antelope Springs and driving over 500 head of cattle. They held the stock in the swamplands beyond Hinckley until cattle cars arrived at the Oasis siding. The diarist noted the many welcome trees at the settlement and recalled drawing from a well-known Mormon hymn, "It was truly 'our lovely Deseret.'" A newspaper notice the next spring reported that a Salt Lake City cattle buyer, in association with a local ranch operation, shipped fourteen railroad carloads of cattle from the Oasis station.³⁹⁸

"In the fall of 1879, the railroad was finished to Oasis. The temporary terminus was at Mud Switch, about 15 miles from Oasis until the spring of 1880 when the railroad was completed to Milford and Frisco."³⁹⁹

Several of my uncles and other men from Oasis were employed by the Union Pacific Railroad to maintain an assigned section of the track. Daily these men sometimes called a section crew or railroad tie gang, would do everything associated with keeping the tracks in good shape so that the trains could keep moving safely through without incident.

They would ride together to a section of assigned track on a motorized railroad gang car which carried the men, their tools,

³⁹⁸ Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 176-77 and John W. Bush, *Reminiscences*, Utah State Historical Society; *Millard County Blade*, 3 (accessed April 1895.)

³⁹⁹ Manuscript History, 21, CHL. Frisco was another mining area.

and supplies. Once at their destination, the men would head off, usually in pairs, in different directions. Each man carried the tools of the trade: spike hammer, spike puller, ballast fork, or pick to perform their labor.

Working outside, these men were constantly exposed to the elements. Temperatures could easily reach over 100 degrees in the summer and below zero in the winter. It was a tough job and didn't pay all that well.⁴⁰⁰

SEED PLANT

My great-granddad, Leigh R. Cropper Sr., is credited with starting the alfalfa seed cash crop in Millard County. His is an important story because of the multi-million-dollar industry that developed from it. ^{lxxxv}

In 1876, [Leigh Cropper] was the justice of the peace in Deseret. He got word to hold a man who was traveling through Millard County on his way to California. This person was wanted for a bill he owed back in Iowa.

Mr. Cropper stopped him and asked him to pay his bill. The man didn't have any money, but he did have seventy pounds of alfalfa seed. Mr. Cropper bought the seed from him which enabled him to settle his debt.

*This seed was planted on Mr. Cropper's farm and produced the first alfalfa seed ever grown in Millard County.*⁴⁰¹

400 Private conversation with Steven Willoughby, January 2024.

401 Inez S. Moody, "History of Alfalfa Seed Production in Millard," *Milestones*, 698-99.



Threshing Machine Painting by Jerold Bishop

The alfalfa seed needed to be separated from the hay when it came from the field. This process is called “threshing.” In the 19th and early 20th centuries, large machines called threshing machines were used. Farmers would bring the loose hay from the field and separate the seed by throwing the hay onto a conveyor belt leading to the rotating blades that tore the seed from the hay. This method was replaced by combine harvesters which perform all the functions in one process. Even after the seed had been sorted, further cleaning was usually required.

By the turn of the century, Dan Black had been in business for some time in Oasis cleaning weed seeds and other foreign matter from the precious alfalfa seed harvest with a hand-operated cleaning machine. Other local seed dealers, William R. Ray, Jacob C. Hawley, and Milton Moody, installed a steam cleaning plant at a cost of several thousand dollars. It was capable of eliminating foreign matter at the rate of some 300 bushels per day.

There were reports of unprecedented prosperity in the district, almost entirely credited to the mounting demand for “the precious yellow alfalfa seed.” **Many farmers reportedly produced in a single year crops worth double what their farms had been valued at prior to the seed boom.** One correspondent asserted about the area, “We must declare this the farmer’s paradise... there is no example of greater income to the farmer per acre of land than has been known here.” (emphasis added)

According to press notices at the turn of the century, few Deseret area farmers even considered selling their property. Each individual was ‘getting rich and knew it,’ and that fact makes him spurn all offers for his land. The evidence of prosperity eloquently testified to the success achieved by the pioneering generation and their immediate successors in West Millard County.⁴⁰²

From a 1913 news article, we read, “Nearly every farmer around Oasis raises more or less alfalfa seed, and the crop is seldom a failure. With a good crop and good prices, alfalfa seed is a mortgage lifter.”⁴⁰³ Farmers and yields are then listed by name.

By the turn of the 20th century, farmers began to realize that the soil and climatic conditions were ideal for the production of alfalfa seed and started raising it on a much larger scale. A peak year [was] in 1925 when ***one-third of the crop of alfalfa seed raised in the United States was raised in West Millard.*** In 1947 four million pounds was raised, in 1948 four million five hundred thousand

402 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 192.

403 “Alfalfa Seed Around Oasis,” *Chronicle*, December 12, 1913.

pounds, and in 1949 six million five hundred thousand pounds were raised.⁴⁰⁴ (emphasis. added)

This 1920 euphoric article from the *Chronicle*, published in the fall, embellishes the sweet smell of alfalfa in bloom.

“Oasis With A Smile” on September 1920

Oasis finds itself decked out in a royal cloak of alfalfa seed crops; nearly every farm is in part covered by the precious stuff. If climactic conditions favor the farmers for the next twenty days, it means prosperity at least equal to that of last year.

*We are not dead, here; we have only been affluently pushing on, knowing that we have a good thing, but not saying a great deal about it.*⁴⁰⁵

By 1930, Richfield Bank operated an alfalfa seed cleaning plant in Oasis. “The Oasis Seed Plant is almost through cleaning alfalfa seed for the present season. Styler and Gillen have cleaned and bulked several cars lately.”⁴⁰⁶

404 Moody, “History of Alfalfa Seed,” *Milestones*, 698-9.

405 “Oasis with a Smile On,” September 2, 1920, *Chronicle*.

406 “Oasis Skylines,” *Chronicle*, January 16, 1930, 8.



Seed Plant Painting by Jerold Bishop

In the early fall of 1939, the plant was purchased by J.V. Styler who sold stock to 24 farmers at \$50 a share. The following article gives us information as to the organization of the farmers' cooperative and its directors.

OASIS SEED PLANT OPENS

A group of Deseret and Oasis men have recently formed a company to open and operate the seed mill at Oasis and it will be known as the Oasis Seed Plant. The company has sold stock to about thirty farmers to obtain funds for machinery and equipment, and [they] have installed a new rice machine for cleaning and have overhauled the clipper machines used by the former plant.

*The company is composed of the following officers: James Juhl president, Val Styler Vice President, Sam Hales secretary and treasurer, John Baker and E.J. Elliason directors. Lawrence Cropper has been put in the plant to operate the mechanical end of it.*⁴⁰⁷

Dad started managing the Oasis plant shortly after it opened as a farmers' cooperative. He worked there for 19 years. In addition to overseeing the plant's operating crew of 8 to 10 men, he was in charge of inspecting and purchasing the alfalfa seed for the Foster-Kendall Company in Carmel, Indiana. The seed was shipped by rail to Indiana and from there to other purchasers throughout the world.

In addition to cleaning, bagging, and storing seed, the plant sold insecticides and other farm products. It was especially busy during the harvest season when it operated twenty-four hours a day. During its history, it ran various types of mills: rice, gravity, dodder. An all-metal warehouse was added in 1951.^{lxxxvi}

In the mid-20th century, West Millard became the largest alfalfa seed producer in the world growing millions of pounds each year. Reportedly, some thirty-three million pounds were processed in the Oasis Seed Plant in its peak year in the mid-1950s. In 2003 the plant moved its operation to 290 N. 1000 W, Delta, where it is more centrally located for area farmers. It is still known as the Oasis Seed Cooperative.

Today, although the seed industry remains the area's most important crop, the business has changed. Farmers also raise sorghum, wheat, and barley. The Oasis Seed Cooperative deals with a

407 "Oasis Seed Plant Opens," Chronicle, September 28, 1939.

much smaller quantity of alfalfa seed—800,000 to a million pounds/year. The cooperative continues to clean alfalfa seeds and small grains. They sell farm supplies and buy seeds for wholesale and retail purposes.⁴⁰⁸

ELECTRICAL POWER PLANT

Electricity, discovered by Benjamin Franklin in 1752 when he flew a kite, harnessed by Thomas Edison in 1882 when he provided electric light to Wall Street,⁴⁰⁹ was slow in coming to Millard County. Although it was several years away, by 1914 the *Millard County Chronicle* reported that Delta was looking forward to electric lights.⁴¹⁰ By 1915 the “electrification of many parts of Utah was well underway.”⁴¹¹ But this did not include West Millard County.^{lxxxvii}

Lighting had been a problem for early Deseret/Oasis pioneers. Like elsewhere in 19th century America, first candles and then gas provided light. “Among the many duties of the housewife was that of making pitch or tallow candles and then someone invented gas lights. Carbide lights were then used and in 1916 a generating plant was built at Oasis.”⁴¹²

Ekins and Warnick are wrong about the year, but not about the plant. An electrical power plant was built in Oasis, but not until 1918. The following *Chronicle* article reports on the progress being made in constructing a small steam-powered generating

408 Private conversation with Klint Atkinson, Oasis Seed Cooperative Manager.

409 “The history of Energy in the United States| National Grid Group,” <https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/history-energy>.

410 *Electric Lights for Delta, Chronicle*, March 12, 1914.

411 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 268.

412 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 447.

plant at Oasis by the Deseret Irrigation Company. It appeared on May 9, 1918.

It is the expectation of the company to have the refrigerator plant in operation in early July. The distribution of light is a less definite proposition as the poles on which to string the wire are holding back this end of the enterprise.

The company is busily engaged in the construction of a big enterprise and we are glad to see them moving ahead with such speed and determination and can assure prospective users of electricity that this is no myth, but a real honest-to-goodness light and power plant well under way toward the distribution of light and power over the valley.⁴¹³

By mid-December 1918, the *Chronicle* exclaims on page one, “Our electric plant is running night and day and is giving splendid service, which adds greatly to our comfort.”⁴¹⁴

Yes, electricity had arrived, but there were problems. By September 1919, the situation had deteriorated. Complaining voices were being heard. The tone of the *Chronicle* changed. Under the headline, “The Electric Light Situation,” it voiced a different sentiment.

The community as a whole, and our business houses in particular, are not pleased with the electric light service we are getting; the lights are off almost daily; there is repeated disappointment week after week during a wash that the power

⁴¹³ “Electric Lights for Delta,” *Chronicle*, May 9, 1918.

⁴¹⁴ “Doings in Oasis,” MCC, December 12, 1918.

is off; garages are without air; the hotels are in constant state of anxiety as to lights. the housewives are up in arms—in fact, it is nearly a joke. The picture house is the worst sufferer. Time after time its patrons were subjected to the whole thing stopping with a sudden darkness and a delay of cat-calls, whistling, hooting, and stomping until the manager could start up his own power plant and resume the show.

The blame is placed on the company, not the manager; that is the manager would give good service had he the means to do so. His gain is in good service.

Hence, let us kindly but firmly ask for good service; and follow that up, if not rendered, by demanding the service we want. Failing to get it, demand of our town officials a revocation of the franchise, and invite in those who will give us service.⁴¹⁵

Things electric were the big items for Christmas 1919. The Delta Lumber & Hardware Company placed an ad suggesting “Buy her a new heating stove.” They also sold, “electric grills, electric irons, electric toaster stoves, and electric percolators.”⁴¹⁶

The Oasis power plant provided electricity to Deseret, Hinckley, and Delta during the 1920s. Unfortunately, it was both “costly and inefficient.” It went out of business and was eventually taken over by the Telluride Power Company.⁴¹⁷

Electricity was well established in Oasis when I was born. The only thing I had ever known was flipping a switch for lights.

415 The Electric Light Situation,” MCC, September 11, 1919.

416 Ad, MCC, “Presents for All: Community Silver,” December 12, 1919.

417 Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 269.

Frankly, I didn't realize there was any other way—until I visited my Grandma Skeem one evening with my parents. There I saw Zannie⁴¹⁸ at the kitchen table working on her homework using a coal-oil lamp for her studies. I was surprised. Grandma, Uncle Glen, Aunt Eathel, and Zannie didn't get electric power until the mid-1950s. The story of when electricity finally came to them will be discussed in the “Early Houses” section.

LUMBERYARDS

Oasis may have had three or even four lumberyards! It's hard to tell, one or more of them may have changed names. One thing for certain, lumber was an important industry—even in Oasis.^{lxxxviii}

“The Oasis people joined together and built the Millard County Lumber Yard with B.H. Peterson as manager.”⁴¹⁹ It served more than just Oasis. The first house built in Delta “was made of lumber hauled from Oasis.”⁴²⁰

The Millard County Chronicle names four Oasis lumberyards between 1880 and 1914. They are Barker (sometimes Baker) Lumber, Bonneville Lumber, Pioneer Lumber Company, and the Millard Lumber Company. These businesses probably harvested their lumber from nearby canyons. “Many of the railroad ties were taken from Oak Creek Canyon. The logging was done by oxen. The ties were cut into eight-foot lengths and hued on two sides.”⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ Evelyn (Skeem) Webb. Her nickname “Zannie” is a shortened form of Suzannie that Grandma gave her.

⁴¹⁹ “Oasis Landmark,” *Gazette*, 1983, GBM.

⁴²⁰ Waiora B. Wallace and Sebrina C. Ekins, *Milestones*, 623.

⁴²¹ Skeem, *Milestones*, 461.

Further evidence of harvesting lumber close by is found in a May 1911 issue of the *Chronicle*, “A.J. Henry [proprietor of the Pioneer Lumber Yard in Oasis] made a flying trip to Oak City on business Saturday.” Immediately under that short paragraph, “A great many Oak City teams are hauling lumber from this point, and it looks as though the town must be greatly on the improve.”⁴²² Ekins and Warnick inform us that “lumber was obtained by getting logs in Oak Creek Canyon where there was a water-powered sawmill.”⁴²³

About a month after Henry made his trip to Oak City, we find a reason for the lumber.

“According to the amount of building material unloaded at the lumberyards here, people must be more prosperous than ever before for the new homes that are being built in the different towns.”⁴²⁴

Lumber was needed in the mining industry as well. “There was a large amount of lumber hauled out to the mines to construct the many buildings and for the timbering in the [Fish Springs] mine.”⁴²⁵

November 1911, “The Barker Lumber Company of Salt Lake is here making arrangements to buy out the lumberyards.”⁴²⁶ And in the next issue, “A.J. Henry has sold out the entire stock of lumber in the Pioneer Lumber yard to the Barker Lumber Company from Salt Lake.”⁴²⁷

422 Mina Jackson, “Oasis” *Chronicle*, December 25, 1905, 1.

423 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 437.

424 Jackson, “The Week at Oasis,” *Chronicle*, (accessed June 29, 1911, 1.)

425 Warnick, *Area Freighter*, 63.

426 Jackson, “The Week at Oasis,” *Chronicle*, E, November 9, 1911, 1.

427 Jackson, “The Week at Oasis,” *Chronicle*, E, November 16, 1.

“Mr. Barker of the Barker Lumber Co., was here today after the interests of his business. “McBride and Colgrove unloaded a car of lumber last week at this point to be hauled by a team to Fillmore.”⁴²⁸

COAL YARDS

There are ads of coal being sold at the Baker and Bonneville lumberyards in Oasis.⁴²⁹ On the front page of the September 1925 issue of *The Millard County Chronicle*, the Bonneville Lumber Company encourages everyone to purchase their supply soon: “First cold snap will cause a stampede. Buy your coal now.”⁴³⁰ There may also have been a separate, stand-alone coal yard, but the only account I can find of it is in Auntie’s history. “There were two lumberyards and a coal yard.”⁴³¹

In his 1884 editorial encouraging settlers to check out Oasis, Henning talks of the availability and price of coal. He wrote, “[It] can be obtained by the carload at \$8 per ton, and may be lower next fall. While two or three together could easily purchase a car of coal which, with a load or two of wood, would last all winter.”⁴³²

Coal was used as the primary source for heating, cooking, operating railroad locomotives, and factories. It is not considered clean energy, nor is it environmentally friendly. President Hinckley

⁴²⁸ Jackson, “The Week at Oasis,” *Chronicle*, March 11, 1912, 1.

⁴²⁹ “The Week at Oasis,” *Chronicle*, January 1, 1911, 1, Ad for Baker Lumber Company in Delta, Oasis, and Lynndyl, *Chronicle*, March 25, 1915, 6.

⁴³⁰ Ad for Bonneville Lumber Company, *Chronicle*, September 17, 1925, 1.

⁴³¹ “Evelyn Skeem Hawley History,” Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

⁴³² Henning, “Extolling Oasis,” *Manuscript History*, CHL; see also *Deseret News*, July 27, 1884, 33:474.

described problems associated with its use in a conference address, “When I was a boy living in Salt Lake City, most homes were heated with coal stoves. Black smoke belched forth from almost every chimney. As winter came to a close, black soot and grime were everywhere, both inside and outside of the house.”⁴³³

Homes in Oasis, as well as the adobe chapel and the red-brick building, were heated by coal. Auntie and Uncle Kelly Hawley had a coal shed. Auntie told me their shed would hold a ton of coal. On cold winter nights Uncle Kelly added big shiny black lumps of coal to their stove in the front room and it would keep the house warm. In the morning, he would shake the grates, carry out the clinkers, and put more coal in the stove for the new day.

Not everyone in Oasis used coal. We had an oil furnace which was located in our cellar, but there was space down there where coal had been stored. Probably most folks in Oasis use some other method nowadays.

Cindy and Jay Finlinson, explain about the challenges of using coal to keep warm in the winter.

We purchased the red brick church house in Oasis in May 1989 from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The heat source was a coal furnace that heated the water in a boiler that circulated throughout the heat registers that were located in each room. We typically burned 15-20 tons of coal per year and filled the coal hopper on the furnace generally twice a day using a 5-gallon bucket to carry the coal from the coal room to dump it in the coal hopper. That is quite a bit of coal to carry one bucket at a time. After the coal was burned,

433 G.B. Hinckley, “Spring Cleaning,” April 1996 General Conference Address.

*we then hauled out the clinkers in 5-gallon metal buckets up the stairs and dumped them in a pile out back of the house. We had a very large clinker pile. It was quite the system and kept the entire house warm during the cold winter months. We converted to a natural gas boiler November 2023.”*⁴³⁴

BEEKEEPING

I gained an understanding as to why apiculture took off in the area when I read the following account of my great-grandfather, Leigh R. Cropper Sr., “One year a swarm of bees made their honey between the logs and under the floor [of his house in Deseret]. Leigh and his son George took some of the logs out and found a good supply of honey between the logs and under the floor.”⁴³⁵ *lxxxix xc*

My first cash-paying job was helping assemble bee boxes. In 1958, I was 13 years old; Mr. Hilding Sjostrom asked me and my friend, Paul Ludwig, to work for him. Mr. Sjostrom and his son, Norman, operated a beekeeping business in Oasis. He started his own business in 1922 with between 250-500 colonies. They had a bee house just south of the seed plant and opposite the Union Pacific family railroad homes that stood parallel to the tracks on the west side.

Washington and his son, Howard Roundy, also worked with the bees. A photo of them wearing protective gear and working with bee boxes is found at Oasis Ward Picture History. It was taken on the Skeem farm in Oasis. Ormus Dutson of Deseret managed bees and “served as president of the Utah State Beekeepers Federation.

⁴³⁴ Private text from Jay and Cindy Finlinson, April 2024.

⁴³⁵ *Among Deseret's First*, 53.

According to him, “the alfalfa honey [from the west Millard area] has a beautiful crystal-clear color and its quality is just as good as honey from orange blossoms.”⁴³⁶

STATE BANK OF OASIS

Banks perform an import function by providing a safe location for depositors to establish checking and savings accounts, take out mortgages, and secure business loans. Since many farmers are paid only once a year, banks can be a lifeline to help sustain themselves until their crop comes in. One of Reed’s proud possessions is his dad’s leather checkbook. Embossed in gold on the cover is, “State Bank of Oasis, Oasis, Utah.”^{xci}

Before the establishment of the Oasis Bank, loans were taking place. There is a small ad in the February 13, 1895, issue of the *Millard County Blade* which reads, “Good News for Farmers—Money can be borrowed on Real Estate. Apply to H. Hawley, Agent, Oasis.”⁴³⁷

*The first [Oasis] bank was built in 1907 west of the [railroad] station. It was a small lumber building about 15 x 15 feet. A few years later, this bank was moved over to the east side of the railroad station where [this] very modern brick building had been built. [The State Bank of Oasis] served the people from all over the county and at one time had assets of nearly a quarter of a million dollars.”*⁴³⁸ (2024 value of \$8.2 million.)

⁴³⁶ Walter Wright, *Milestones*, 697.

⁴³⁷ “Good News for Farmers,” *Millard County Blade*, February 13, 1895.

⁴³⁸ Skeem, *Milestones*, 462.

Even with its modern looks (See Early Views) and \$225,000, the State Bank of Oasis had problems. Other people wanted their money. Just two years after opening their doors, a thief made an illegal withdrawal.

STATE BANK OF OASIS BURGLARIZED

*Word came over the phone Wednesday morning notifying Sheriff Rowley that the State Bank of Oasis had been burglarized during the night. It was stated that entrance had been made through the back door. The outer vault door had been busted open, and some money was stolen. The amount was not known at that time but was estimated between three and four hundred dollars. No clue whatever for the officers to start an investigation on.*⁴³⁹

Although I can find nothing about the robbers ever being apprehended, the bank recovered from this theft. It didn't, however, recover from the next disaster.

THE STATE BANK OF OASIS CLOSES

Wednesday night the State Bank of Oasis closes its doors for business by order of Seth Fiston State Bank Examiner. The following letter is sent out by the Board of Directors at the State Bank of Oasis. March 1, 1928

After weeks of work, worry, deliberation, and untiring efforts attempting to stabilize the finances of our/your institution,

⁴³⁹ "State Bank of Oasis Burglarized," MCPR, April 9, 1909.

the State Bank of Oasis acting under the counsel and advice of the State Banking Department and other bankers has deemed it advisable to temporarily suspend operations. We hope this does not mean a permanent closing out of business or the usual slow process of liquidation. However, it does mean that this bank is suffering under a heavy load of loans which our people have been unable to pay in due season.

Trusting that in the very near future there will be at your service a bank, organized and existing on such a footing that will merit your full cooperation and confidence, we are

Hopefully yours,

Board of Directors of the State Bank of Oasis⁴⁴⁰

The letter is optimistic in tone and suggests that the closure would be a temporary suspension of operations. Boy, were they wrong! All of this took place during the winter of 1928. The Delta Bank had closed months before.⁴⁴¹ Financially, things had started to turn bleak across the nation, but the stock market crash, which marked the beginning of the Great Depression for the United States, was over a year and a half after the Oasis bank closed. By 1933, banks across America were taking a “holiday.” Congress and the new president responded with the Bank Conservation Act which allowed the Federal Reserve “to supply unlimited amounts of currency to reopened banks, [and] created 100 percent deposit

⁴⁴⁰ “The State Bank of Oasis Closes,” *Chronicle*, March 1, 1928, 1.

⁴⁴¹ “The State Bank of Oasis Closes,” *Chronicle*, March 1, 1928, 1.

insurance.”⁴⁴² Slowly people regained their confidence in the banking industry.

The Oasis bank was long gone when Reed and I rode our bikes around in Oasis, but we, and probably everyone in Oasis then and now, know that it stood just west of the post office. If you’re lucky, there are still some floor tiles there for you to collect.

SCHOOLS

My wife Pam and I are both retired teachers. Education is something dear to our hearts. We were raised with the understanding that “the glory of God is intelligence,”⁴⁴³ and that “whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.”⁴⁴⁴ The importance of education, in our view, cannot be overstated. Oasis saints, both former and current, share our understanding.

Jacob Croft had the first real home in Deseret. It was an adobe two-room structured building that seemed spacious to the settlers. It served as both a school and church meetinghouse. Fanny Powell was asked to teach. She started in various homes and then moved her instruction to a little building by the fort which she and a friend whitewashed inside and out.⁴⁴⁵ The first schoolhouse was

442 William L. Silber, “Why Did FDR’s Bank Holiday Succeed?” *Federal Reserve Bank of New York Economic Policy Review* (July 2009) 15 (1): 19–30. Retrieved 22 February 2020.

443 *Doctrine & Covenants*, 93:36.

444 *Doctrine & Covenants*, 130:18-19.

445 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 428-29.

built in 1877 in Deseret.⁴⁴⁶ It was constructed of handmade adobes and lumber brought from Oak City. In 1895, a structure, known as the Shoenberger Place, was built in Deseret.^{xcii}

“In the beginning of 1886, the county court granted a school district to Oasis and the following July, John H. Kinder, Jacob C. Hawley, and Edward Webb were elected the first school trustees of the district. At this time Oasis contained about 60 square miles of country.”⁴⁴⁷

[In Oasis,] the first school was held in a room of Charley Webb’s butcher shop where twelve students attended. The small room became so crowded with students that Mr. and Mrs. William S. Hawley offered to let them have school in their living room. This was used until about 1884-85 when it was decided to build a larger building. A one-room structure south of the Day store was built which was about 25 x 45 feet. The building was used not only for school but also for church activities.

*A schoolhouse was commenced at Oasis in September 1887. A brick building 36 x 22½ feet was completed in 1888 at the cost of about \$1000. It stood about 800 yards southeast of the railroad station.*⁴⁴⁸

446 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 442.

447 *Manuscript History*, 23, CHL.

448 *Manuscript History*, 23, CHL.



The Oasis School 1896. These students are each identified in Milestones of Millard, 464

About 1897, the town had grown so large that again they needed a larger school building and this was built about one-fourth mile east and one-fourth mile south of the first schoolhouse. My Uncle Kelly Hawley attended that school. He told me about it when he and I played checkers. The class photo pictures him along with forty-seven of his classmates including two future Oasis Ward bishops, Marcus Skeem and Val Styler. Here they learned their three Rs [reading, 'riting and 'rithmatic] under the direction of two able teachers, Milton and Nellie Moody, center front row.⁴⁴⁹

By 1900 Utah teachers were organizing and making efforts to improve themselves and their profession.

⁴⁴⁹ Milestones, 464.

The Millard County Teachers Institute convened in Deseret the 13th inst., at 10 a.m.⁴⁵⁰ Despite the heavy roads and long distances to be covered by teachers, a splendid representation of pedagogues was present. Two interesting addresses were given by President G. H. Brimhall of the B.Y.A. [Brigham Young Academy, later Brigham Young University]. An organization of the teachers' association was affected with the county superintendent as president, Miss Jane Harmon as secretary, and Miss Ellis Bishop as treasurer. A strong degree of enthusiasm prevailed throughout the convention and much interest was manifested by teachers in their work. The institute adjourned to meet in Fillmore on November 3.⁴⁵¹

My mother and her younger siblings all attended the A.C. Nelson Elementary School (named for Andrew C. Nelson, Utah State Superintendent of Education). It stood east of the Deseret Canal in Oasis, just north of the Deseret-Oasis warehouse. My mother's three older siblings first attended the 1897 school and then transferred to the Nelson. Auntie has a frightening memory that tells us a little of what the school was like, "When I was little I got switched—it wasn't called spanking back then. I never got spanked in school. I remember reciting. The first time I ever went, the school was up by the church and I got lost. The brush was

450 inst. is an abbreviation for *instante mense*, meaning a date of the current month.

451 "The Millard County Teacher Meet: An Organization Effected," *Deseret Evening News*, October 17, 1900, 7.

awful high then. I finally walked around and got home. I was just a little girl.”⁴⁵²



AC Nelson School Painting^{xciii}

“In about 1909, a still larger school was needed. Deseret was facing a similar problem so the **two towns cooperated** and built the A.C. Nelson Elementary School building at a central location between the two towns. The two-story building was completed and ready for use in 1912.”⁴⁵³ (emphasis added)

“This school gives eight years of work, and this year [1926] the enrollment is one hundred sixty-seven. It is scoring excellent success in its recently instituted cooperative marketing plan.”⁴⁵⁴

Six teachers are listed as teaching there in this news article.

452 “Evelyn Skeem Hawley History,” Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

453 *Manuscript History*, 23, CHL and Skeem, *Milestones*, 463-65.

454 “Millard County School, *Chronicle*, E, October 28, 1928.

I was surprised to learn that the A.C. Nelson had a swimming pool—I'd never heard of an elementary school with one before. Reed texted me about it when he reviewed the manuscript for this book. I asked how he knew, thinking he had read something about it. His response was, "I saw it when I helped Dad salvage the bricks." I believed him, but I also found a 1917 article in *The Chronicle* that corroborated his statement and described the school. "[The A.C. Nelson] is one of the most complete schools in the country with a swimming pool, lecture room, water system and electric lights."⁴⁵⁵ 1917 is the year my mother entered First Grade.

Here's another news article that tells us about the instruction the students received and the involvement of their parents.

OASIS-DESERET P.T.A. HAS FINE PROGRAM

The Parent-Teachers Association of the Nelson School District held their regular semi-monthly meeting at the schoolhouse on Tuesday evening [1925]. A splendid program was presented by the pupils of the school under the direction of Misses Cropper and Moody. The children showed by their preparation that special care is being taken in their training. An illustrated lecture dealing with the islands of the Pacific was arranged but was frustrated by the lights going off while the lecture was in progress. [Blackouts were common. See "Electrical Power Plant," in this work.]

The "M" Men of Oasis and Deseret wards are giving a dance in Nelson Hall, on Wednesday, December 16th. The proceeds will be used to equip the hall with basketball wickets and

455 "Deseret, the First Town," *Chronicle*, November 22, 1917, 4.

*window guards. Good music has been secured and a banquet will be given. A good time is promised.*⁴⁵⁶

Education in Utah was benefiting from federal government grants. “One of the most worthwhile New Deal programs [in 1933] was the school hot-lunch program. Inez Kelly of Oasis and other parents and staff at the A.C. Nelson School started a school lunch program at the time.”⁴⁵⁷

There were no buses to bring students to this school, like the ones that took me to Delta in the 1950s. Students either walked or came by horse. Auntie explained that one of the ways they got around was riding horses. She continued, “Nowadays people don’t walk, at least not like we used to. We walked to church and back home. [That’s about 4 miles.] We’d change our clothes and eat our dinner. Then we’d walk uptown [to Oasis] and play. If we wanted to do anything else, we had to walk back home and ask.”⁴⁵⁸ Dad talked about how his older sister would drive him and his siblings to school in a buggy. It took them about half an hour to come from the farm to their school in Hinckley. They brought their lunch and enough hay to feed the horse.⁴⁵⁹

At that time, a basic school education was considered sufficient. The A.C. Nelson offered 8 years of schooling. Sometimes the classes

456 “Oasis-Deseret P.T.A. Has Fine Program,” Chronicle, December 17, 1925.

457 Merrill Singer, “Nathaniel Baldwin, Utah Inventor and Patron of the Fundamental Movement,” Utah Historical Quarterly 47 (Winter 1979): 42-53. As quoted in Lyman and Newell, *History of Millard*, 287.

458 “Evelyn Skeem Hawley History,” Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

459 Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV Autobiography under School, FSM.

were mixed with “a lot of grades together.”⁴⁶⁰ Most students went on to become farmers, laborers, or housewives. My mother liked school but stopped after elementary school. She was proud of her accomplishments as a student.

Methodologies and technologies for instruction have improved over time. For me and my generation, a slide projector and reel-to-reel tape recorder were cutting-edge innovations. If there was no electricity, bells to change class would have to be rung by hand. What else might have been different? Here’s what Dad tells us,

The kids always used to line up outside before school and the band played for them to march to class.

The teachers didn’t have much trouble with the kids in class. The children were pretty well-behaved. But there were a few bullies that were ornery. They’d fight, wrestle, and “rigs” a lot, too. There wasn’t a kid who went to school at the time who didn’t learn the little do-ditty about the RIG-a-ma-jig.

[When school wasn’t in session] they’d pile on some kid, grab him by the hair of the head and they’d holler, RENNELS! And the other kids would come running to join with them because they didn’t want to be harassed. Once everyone had gathered around the poor victim, they would chant:

Rig-a-ma-jig

A Quaker’s horn

The sheep’s in the meadow

460 “Evelyn Skeem Hawley History,” Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

The cow's in the corn
 Come all ye men
 Ye scores of ten
 Don't tend this rennels
 We'll rennels them!
 Kick, cuff, box
 Or a long, dry pull?

*Of course, the kid would usually tell them he would take a kick in the butt. [A long, dry pull was pulling his hair.] So all of them would give him a kick in the butt. And if they saw some kids that didn't come to the rennels, they'd take after him and rennels him.*⁴⁶¹

Dad grew up in Hinckley. This made it a lot easier for him to attend secondary school, which for him was the new Millard Academy operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mom and others from Oasis and Deseret often lacked the transportation and encouragement to continue with their schooling. If anyone from Oasis could attend high school, here is where they would have come. ^{xciv}

*"At a [stake] quarterly conference held in Fillmore in August 1908, the matter [of secondary education] was considered. President Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Francis M. Lyman were at the conference and encouraged the project. The people and the Church Board of Education each pledged their support by October 1908."*⁴⁶²

⁴⁶¹ Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under School, FSM.

⁴⁶² Emmeline Allred Stapley and Sebrina C. Ekins, *Milestones*, 513.

Dad talked about the opening of the Millard Academy. It drew students from all over the county.

*It happened along about 1912 that they opened that Church school. And students came from all over the country to attend. I got acquainted with people from Scipio, Meadow, [and] Oak City. They'd come down and stay. They even built houses. Some they called Paradise and the other they called Purgatory. They rented these houses to these kids or they'd rent a room here in somebody's home. At one time, they had over 300 [students] in the Millard Academy. It was quite a deal! [Jerold Bishop's paintings of the Millard Academy, student housing, and other schools can be found online at Oasis Ward Picture History.]*⁴⁶³

The Church saw a need; education has always been paramount to the faithful. Mark Hart recalls that “each day at the academy began with a devotional. Students studied the scriptures in much the same way they do in the modern seminary program.” Although lasting only about 2 decades, and established mostly in the Mormon Corridor, “the academy program provided spiritual and educational training to many of the Church’s future leaders, including Ezra T. Benson. After the turn of the century, public schools began multiplying, and enrollment at the academies declined.”⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶³ Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, FSM, Autobiography under School, FSM.

⁴⁶⁴ Kevin Stocker, “Academy Era Short-lived, but Impact Long Lasting,” Church News: A Living Record of the Restoration, May 28, 1988, <https://www.the-churchnews.com>.

“In 1923 the Millard Academy was taken over by the state and became Hinckley High School.”⁴⁶⁵ Some members objected to paying tuition at the Church-sponsored academies and taxes to support public education. Church leaders decided to trust the state to provide secular education and began promoting seminary and institute programs.⁴⁶⁶

STORES

Today neighborhood mom-and-pop stores have been pretty well taken over by large chain stores. It’s a shame in a way. These small stores were easily accessed and offered friendly, personalized service.

As a young child (1948-50), my mother used to send me to Day’s Store on small shopping errands, usually for 2 quarts of milk. I was instructed to have them “put it on our bill.” It was the only store in Oasis at that time. It sold Utoco gas and oil (Utah Oil Company) in addition to meat, groceries, soda, beer, and clothing. I remember the magazines—they had comic books! Whenever Auntie was asked to work there as a substitute, I could spend time at the magazine rack. This was before TV came to Oasis.

Oda Jesse Day built the Oasis store in 1917. After his death in 1927, his wife Emma continued to operate the business. She added gravity-fed gas pumps in front of the store. When she passed in 1944, her son Leo took over the store. He and his wife, Beth, managed the Oasis store and another one in Sutherland.⁴⁶⁷ A few years

⁴⁶⁵ Stapley and Ekins, *Milestones*, 514.

⁴⁶⁶ Kenneth Godfrey and Casey Paul Griffiths, “Episode 17: Spared for Each Other,” Podcast Saints Season 3, Church History, churchofjesuschrist.org.

⁴⁶⁷ Jerold Bishop, *Watercolors of Millard County with a Brief History*.

after Leo's death in 1968, his wife Beth closed the store. Leo and his family lived next door to it. Their home can be seen in the photo just to the left of their Oasis store. Now in ruins, the still stands. It was once a part of the downtown's thriving commercial center. (See "Early Views.")

The first mention I can find of a store in Oasis is the report of a theft that took place in 1895. It's a fun read but addresses a serious problem of juvenile delinquency in the area.

David Day's store was broken into last Sunday night and some tobacco and gum were extracted. Marshal Pain took the scent and ran down an Oasis kid—one of the toughest of this hoodlum-infested locality—and who made a clean breast of the affair and roped in another Oasis youth. The first one waived examination and is in the hands of the officer. The other was examined on Tuesday and escaped by the skin of his teeth. Justice L.R. Cropper holding that the evidence was insufficient. The one who confessed will very likely go to the reform school, and there are at least a dozen that ought to either go with him or to the penitentiary—a fair share of them from Deseret.

Another Deseret youth recently stole a horse and he, too, is no doubt in for it. Injustice to the parents of all those wrong-doers, we will say that there are no better in Utahland.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁸ Millard County Blade, September 14, 1895, 1.

I remember the Deseret Cash Store and went into it as a young person, but I hadn't realized until I started working on this history that there had also been an Oasis Cash Store. John Dewsnup was the proprietor of both the store in Oasis and the one in Deseret. According to an ad in the *Chronicle*, Dewsnup was a wholesale and retail dealer in "groceries, dry goods, boots and shoes, flour, hay, and grain. Produce taken in exchange."⁴⁶⁹ Ads for the Oasis Cash store in 1911 tell us Dewsnup also sold cloth, "a reduction on calicoes, gingham, and outings for one week only, commencing Monday 27th. 8 1-3c calico go at 7 cents, 12½ gingham go at 11½, outings 12½c, go at 11 cts. This is to make room for spring goods."⁴⁷⁰ A month later the *Chronicle* ran ads that indicated other merchandise: "Straw hats, every style and quality, for young and old at the Oasis Cash Store. A fine four-holed [wood/coal] range for sale [by] the Consolidated Implement Co. for \$32. Call and see and get this bargain."⁴⁷¹

The Church Historical Report for 1900 states, "The village of Oasis consists of only a few houses clustered around the railway station. It contains *three stores* and a saloon."⁴⁷² (emphasis added)

In her history, Auntie Evelyn tells of the stores and other businesses she knew when she was a child growing up in Oasis about 1910-1920. "They had Rex's Store, Oda Day's Mercantile, a meat market, a little café right to the side of Day's, and a hotel."

469 Untitled ad, *Chronicle*, December 15, 1910.

470 Untitled ad, *Chronicle*, E, February 23, 1911, 1.

471 Untitled ad, *Chronicle*, March 23, 1911, 5.

472 Jensen, "Veritable Oasis," LR 6370 2, CHL.

The location of Day Store⁴⁷³ is well-known. Where was Rex's Store? In the Millard County Abstracts, the Coop store (ZCMI) is mentioned.⁴⁷⁴ Where was it? The Huff house, about a hundred yards south of the hotel, was another store. Was that Rex's Store?



Oasis Cash Store and the Oasis Store

This photo shows two stores. The photo in “Early Views,” identifies the first as the Oasis Cash Store. The two-story building with the pitched roof in the center of this photo is the hotel. The structure to its right facing us, with a wagon parked in front of it, was another store. It was simply named the Oasis Store but carried the name of its proprietor: J.H. Kinder. Next to it, on the north side was the hotel. The store, hotel, and confectionary faced west toward the tracks.

In addition to these stores, which changed hands a few times and probably names, there were 2 butcher shops. “North of the

473 The Day Store was operated by at least four men with the last name of Day: George, David, George's son Oda and his son Leo.

474 Oasis Blk 2 or F-1.tif, Millard Co. Recorder Office, Laci Worsley, Deputy Recorder lworsley@co.millard.ut.us

hotel, Charley Webb built a butcher shop, and later [they] added on another room which was used for the first school.”⁴⁷⁵ Another butcher shop was located where Warren Peterson presently lives (2024). His home is two blocks or more east of the tracks. Both Harold and Arlo Skeem told him the well he uses once belonged to an old butcher shop. Warren found several large cow bones in the area where the well is located which verifies its location.”⁴⁷⁶

I can find no indication as to where the lumberyards were located. “In 1902 Henry L. Jackson built the first Oasis Drug Store. It stood only a few years, however, for it burned down.”⁴⁷⁷ I wonder if there was ever a second one and where it stood. Unfortunately, the locations and names of many of these stores and businesses has been lost.

HOTELS

When I was a boy, the Oscar (Peck) Kelly family lived in the old Oasis hotel. Once he invited Reed and me into his home to look at his arrowheads. Reed remembers a staircase; I remember his large collection of obsidian points which were displayed on a table with a glass top in a rather large room, probably the hotel lobby. There was an old shed or barn behind his house which was part of the hotel and had served as the Oasis livery stable.^{xv}

There may have been several hotels. B. Skeem tell us, “Mr. Edward Webb built the first hotel on the east side of the station, but it later burned to the ground. John Kinder owned a hotel and store combined. Henry Huff bought the Thompson store in

⁴⁷⁵ Skeem, *Milestones*, 462. See also “Oasis Landmark,” GBM.

⁴⁷⁶ Private text with Warren Peterson, January 2024. A better view of it can be found in the “Early Views” section of this work.

⁴⁷⁷ Skeem, *Milestones*, 462.

1904 and built the Huff Hotel. Mr. McCosh bought the Huff Hotel and called it the Commercial Hotel. In 1896 Henry W. Hawley built a hotel on the west side of town.”⁴⁷⁸

Judging from the one still standing, these hotels were not like a Hilton or a Marriott. Electricity didn’t exist in Oasis until 1919, so these accommodations would have been pretty rustic. They probably only had 4 or 5 guest rooms. On the other hand, they did have customers. People came to Oasis to look at the land, conduct business with the railroad, or engage in some other enterprise. They didn’t go to Delta.

The most famous guest to ever spend a night in an Oasis hotel was the young school teacher Camilla Eyring. She had come to teach at the Millard Academy in Hinckley. Camilla later became the wife of Spencer Kimball, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When fall came [Camilla] set out by train for Hinckley, Utah. It was midnight when she arrived in Oasis, the railroad station closest to Hinckley. Just the old stationmaster was at the depot and he took her to a little old hotel across the track, led her up the stairs by the light of his lantern, and lighted a coal-oil lamp in the bedroom for her. Her imagination ran rampant, about lone, defenseless girls being waylaid.

That night she was so frightened she could scarcely stand up. As soon as the old man was out the door, she closed it

⁴⁷⁸ Skeem, *Milestones*, 469, and “Oasis Landmark,” *Gazette*, 1983, GBM.

*quickly and bolted it. She slept very little during what was left of the night, starting at every creak of the old building.*⁴⁷⁹

The Oasis Hotel is still in use today as a private home. It remained in the Kelly family for many years, but today is owned by a different family.

AUTO DEALERSHIP

An auto dealership in Oasis! Who would have thought that? It was a surprise to me, but this 1913 ad from the *Millard County Chronicle* offers a couple of cars for sale and the services of a repair shop.

“The new auto company, just formed, has rented the old saloon building of Washington Rogers and is doing some remodeling—putting a large door in the front and expecting to use it for a garage for their autos. They expect to put in two more cars in the near future, also a large freight carrying car. This will be an ideal line via Holden to Fillmore and return to Oasis daily. We also have an up-to-date blacksmith shop where all kinds of repairing is done.”^{480 xcvi}

Cars were in their infancy in 1913. My Grandfather Cropper bought a 1913 Model T Ford, the same year as the ones sold in Oasis. He traded 5 milk cows for it. When he drove it home, he hollered “whoa” at the gate, but the car didn’t stop and he crashed on through! Dad described some of the car’s features,

⁴⁷⁹ Caroline Eyring Miner, *Camilla: A Biography of Camilla Eyring Kimball*, (Deseret Book Co, 1980), ISBN 13: 9780877478454, 48.

⁴⁸⁰ “Oasis Auto Company,” *Chronicle*, January 23, 1913, 1.

*The lights each had a little tank on the side for the gas. You could turn on the gas with a key then run around and open a door and light it with a match. The taillight was a lantern with a red reflector bulb on it that you would fill up with kerosene. The upholstery was pure leather. The gas tank was under the front seat. It only held ten gallons.*⁴⁸¹

I can't find any other references to the Oasis auto company. I'm guessing it was short-lived. The next mention of automobiles in the newspapers is an ad for Ford cars which ran in the *Millard County Chronicle* in June 1913. "More than 275,000 Fords now in service—convincing evidence of their wonderful merit. Runabout, \$525; Touring Car \$600; Town Car, \$800—f.o.b. See E.J. Whicker, Delta."⁴⁸²

Even buying a car was noteworthy in those days. Under "New Notes from Oasis," the local paper states that "J.C. Hawley made a trip to Delta in his new car on Monday. S.M. Hawley will start on the mail route from Oasis to Fillmore on July 1st in his new auto."⁴⁸³ About a week later the paper boasts that two new cars have been sold and that "Ford cars are taking the place of the horse and buggy little by little hereabout, and we expect to see many new cars in this neighborhood before a great while."⁴⁸⁴

Dad's first car was a 1926 Model T coupe. He loved to talk about the cars he and his family had owned.

481 Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, FSM, Autobiography under Automobiles.

482 Untitled ad, (accessed June 26, 1913, *Chronicle*.)

483 News Notes from Oasis, *Chronicle*, E, (accessed June, 25, 1914.)

484 News Notes from Oasis, *Chronicle*, July, 9, 1914.



*Lawrence Cropper and his sister Florence (Cropper)
Robins c.1926. Photo from author's collection.*

Oh, I'll tell you there have been a lot of changes in automobiles and everything else in my life. I feel like I've lived in one of the greatest eras known to man. It's been since the priesthood has been restored to earth that all these inventions have come about.

I remember when I bought my new Ford in 1926, it was an improved Model T Ford coupe. I gave about \$645 for it. I think a new Dodge Brothers car cost about \$1000—and that's what Dad bought. He had three Dodges, then he bought a Buick. It was a six-cylinder car. The Dodges were only four, but they were awful good cars. Then Dodge Brothers sold out to Chrysler. The Dodge Brothers' cars were a low-gear automobile. Low gear but [they had] lots of power and pep. They were really nice cars—started easy. We had three of them. Dad bought them new. I think he had a 1918 or 1919 and a 1922

*and a 1924. They were open-air cars [with] side curtains on them. There was no such thing as a sedan in those days.*⁴⁸⁵

I love old cars. Working in Dad's service station I'd listen to older men talk about how they wished they'd kept.... "It would be worth a lot of money, now." In 1963 I bought a 1937 4-door Pontiac from Norman Moody in Deseret. I restored it with a lot of help and several thousand dollars. You can see a photo of the car at Oasis Ward Picture History. I finally decided one antique was enough and opted to keep Dad's 1956 Ford F-100 pickup and sold the Pontiac to a friend for a fair price. It was not the money-maker I had hoped.

POST OFFICE

In 1914 "mail was delivered in the Oasis post office for the towns of East Millard County,"⁴⁸⁶ as well as for the local area. There was a post office in Deseret and another one in Hinckley. These have all closed; now you need to go to the Delta post office.

Oasis had some 13 postmasters over the years.⁴⁸⁷ One of them, Ambrose Stanworth, served as postmaster for 17 years. He embodied the postman's creed, "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

Amby carried the mail from the depot in Oasis to Deseret, Hinckley, and out to Abraham starting in 1910. This he did with

⁴⁸⁵ Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, Autobiography under Automobiles, FSM. This is a small selection of what Dad had to say about cars. You can find lots more on FamilySearch.

⁴⁸⁶ Skeem, *Milestones*, 469, and "Oasis Landmark," *Gazette*, 1983, GBM.

⁴⁸⁷ Skeem, *Milestones*, 469, and *Gazette*, "Oasis Landmark," 1983, GBM.

horse and buggy. To cover his route was a good day's travel. In the spring and the winter, the weather made it unpleasant. The roads were the good old country type, knee-deep with dust in the summer and hub-deep with mud the rest of the time. It was said of Amby that he was so dependable that you could set your clock by his appearance. However, he always found time for little acts of kindness for those living on isolated farms who needed coal, oil, a spool of thread, or some other necessity and couldn't get to town.

When the roads improved and cars became more practical, [he completed his route more easily.] Amby carried the mail from the post office in Oasis to the trains in a two-wheeled cart. Often with a grandson or some other child perched atop the mail bags knowing there would always be a nickel to spend at the general store.⁴⁸⁸

The post office I remember was the small gray asphalt-shingle structure seen below. It was operated by Peter H. Petersen, a World War I veteran. He began working at the post office in 1930. Peter was the Oasis postmaster when I was growing up in the late 1940s and 1950s. I have a letter that he wrote to me on Santa Claus' behalf telling me to be a good boy and that he would visit me on Christmas Eve.

488 Ethel M. Stanworth, "Ambrose Nutter Stanworth," KWZX-3NK, FSM.



This is the Oasis Post Office I remember. The pitched roof behind it is the hotel. The bank's foundation is to the right. Photo Peter Launer



Postman Peter H. Petersen gathers mail from a train-drop. c.1951. Photo from author's video collection

In the photo, he is picking up the mail that was dropped by a passing train. It was Peter's job to collect it for the area. The train did not stop. The outgoing mail was placed in a bag, put on a pole, and was snatched up by someone on the train. After Peter retrieved the mail, he'd stack it onto his big steel-wheeled handcart and haul it to his post office and sort it. He'd put the Oasis mail in individual boxes inside the post office. Mail for other areas, like Deseret and Hinckley, was shipped off to their post offices.

Most families in Oasis had a mailbox during the 1950s through the 1970s and had to go into the post office to pick up their mail. As you entered, you were inevitably greeted by the postmaster, unless he/she was otherwise occupied. There wasn't much room inside. Immediately after passing through the door, there were several rows of mailboxes and one window through which the mailman could deliver packages, sell stamps, and greet patrons. Our box number was 142. On the front of this 4" x 4" box were two dials. To open it, the first dial had to be set to "F" and the second to "R."

This small gray structure was not the first post office in Oasis. An early adobe two-room building served all of Millard County and was probably the one Ambrose worked from. There may have been others. ^{xvii}

When Peter retired, Elmo Gillen, a World War II vet, took it over. The Oasis post office was closed when he stopped working (c.1983) and the system was changed to R.F.D.

BARBERSHOPS

I was surprised to learn Oasis had barbershops, but an article in the Gazette, reminiscing about Oasis' glory days states, "Oasis was a commercial center boasting a bank, *barbershops*, three hotels, two

lumberyards, a railroad station, saloons, and an ice cream parlor called the Confectionary.”⁴⁸⁹ (emphasis added)

Strangely, Dad never told me that Oasis had barbershops. He was barbering in Delta when Oasis was at its zenith. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any other reference to an Oasis barber-shop. Oasis did have, however, the other businesses mentioned, so in all probability there were barbershops as well. (I do doubt there was more than one saloon, however.)

My father and grandfather were both barbers. Dad had trouble accepting men with long hair. He’d sometimes quote from the New Testament to make his point, “if a man has long hair, it is a shame unto him.”⁴⁹⁰ A guy with long hair was simply unheard of before the Beatles era in the 1960s. Dad couldn’t understand why a fellow would want long hair or go without shaving. He’d question, “Why would you want to go about with dirt on your face?” (Obviously, not everyone from that era went beardless—Mormon prophets from Brigham Young up until George A. Smith all had beards.)

Barbershops were important in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Interestingly, the first position mentioned in a local news article written in 1911 to attract settlers to Burtner (later Delta) solicits “a first-class barber.” In its entirety, the paragraph reads, “Wanted at Burtner: *a first-class barber*, an up-to-date drug store, a bank, a depot (the best between Salt Lake and Los Angeles), a few thousand people to make their homes here and develop the

⁴⁸⁹ “Oasis Landmark,” Gazette, 1983, GBM.

⁴⁹⁰ New Testament, 1 Corinthians 13:14.

many thousands of acres of undeveloped land in and adjoining Burtner.⁴⁹¹ (emphasis added)

CROPPER BARBERS

Grandpa's barbershop was next to his home in Hinckley. It was probably typical of barbershops at the time and similar to the ones in Oasis. It was there Dad learned the trade. He was proud of the fact that one of his customers was a general authority. He spoke about his barbering days, ^{xcviii xcix}



Rich Cropper in his hairstylist's coat seated in a barber chair c. 1910. Photo from FamilySearch KWCV-H44

491 A.O. Sorensen, "Burtner," MCPR, (accessed April 7, 1911, 2.)

It seems I always had a barbershop to run. I figured by the time I was in high school; I was a really good barber. Lorenzo Hatch was one of my customers. He was principal of the Millard Academy, a captain in the army, and later became a general authority. He always liked his hair clipped real tight. He had to have a haircut every week or ten days. He'd never let it get long. He told me that I gave him the best haircut that he ever had. Whenever he was going away anywhere, like to Salt Lake, he'd come down and get me to cut his hair before he left. He said, "I've never had a better haircut."

As I best remember, I was in the fifth grade when I started cutting kids' hair [1913]. I would get Dad's tools [hand-operated clippers, scissors, straight razor, and comb] and then we would crawl into the shop through the back window of the barbershop. I was fourteen years old when Dad registered me as an apprentice barber. With that, I could work in the shop and charge for my haircuts. The price was 25 cents. I didn't learn to shave anyone till years later. It was during my high school days that I became very good at cutting hair.

From 1929 to 1930, I attended Monaro Barber College in Salt Lake City for one month. Then I passed the state examination to become a licensed barber. I had a shop in Delta until 1932. I had a very good business with a lot of the women's trade. My specialties were the shingle bob and windblown cuts. My last license expired on June 30, 1932, but I still cut some hair.⁴⁹² [At the time, a shave cost 10 cents and haircuts 50.]

492 Lawrence Cropper KWCR-6TV, FSM, Autobiography under Work.

I was one of Dad's steady customers. He started cutting my hair when I was a boy. He used a comb, scissors, manual clippers, and a straight razor—these were his “tools.” He also used a leather strap to put a fine edge on his razor which he had from his days as a barber. The strap hung in our bathroom. He would take a straight razor in one hand, the strap in the other, and whip the blade quickly back and forth across the leather. Eventually, he bought some electric clippers. They got very hot after a short time and I didn't like them on my neck. I felt he always took too long—he was a perfectionist; I was an impatient kid.

In his early career, men would go to the barber quite regularly to get their whiskers shaven off. I remember him telling me, and he said it with emphasis, “I've shaved a lot of men!” The only thing he shaved on me was the back of my neck. (The disposable and electric razors we use now were simply unknown when he was barbering.)

Dad said there were quite a few barbershops in Delta where he worked and that when the price of a haircut fell to 25 cents during the Depression he quit barbering and went back to the farm.

CONFECTIONERY

As quoted in the section above, the Oasis Confectionary sold ice cream. I suppose they also sold candy and pastries since the definition of confectionery is “candy and sweets sold collectively.” Skeem told us that the shop itself was built by David Day and was added to the existing building. It “was operated about 1910 by Mrs. Della C. Hartley.”^{493 c}

493 Skeem, *Milestones*, 462-63.

We boys would sometimes walk down the road parallel to the tracks just south of the hotel and look at it. You could still read the word “confectionery” on the façade forty years after it had gone out of business.

I did an internet search of the local newspapers using the word “confection” from 1880 to 1929. I was hoping to find an old newspaper article or ad on the Oasis Confectionery. There were 28 results, but none mentioned Oasis. There was, however, an article on the Delta Confectionery from 1912. It gives us a good idea of what the store in Oasis may have been like.

*The opening of the Delta Bakery and Delicatessen store last Saturday afternoon was a great success. Visitors were served with lemonade, cake, and candy and admired the newly decorated room and the handsome display of bakery goods and confectionery. Besides the usual line of confectionery, there was some delicious homemade candy in the making at which Mrs. January seems to be adept. Miss Geigley is an expert at the soda fountain and if you want something new in that line, call for a Delta Alfalfa Stimulator. We know the baker is alright for we have tried some of his bread and mince pie and can testify that none better can be found anywhere.*⁴⁹⁴

An ad from the Swallow’s Confectionery Company, probably in Fillmore, lists other items that may also have been sold in the Oasis Confectionery. “We have postcards, stationary, the latest popular magazines, boxed candy, fountain pens, good candies of

494 “In and Around Delta,” *Chronicle*, E, September 12, 1912, 1.

all kinds: 15, 20, 25 c per lb, varieties, and the 12 ½ c candy. Don't buy until you see our goods."⁴⁹⁵

SALOON

The Oasis saloon stood in our yard, just south of our house—across the street for Day's Store.⁴⁹⁶ There are several enlightening comments in the *Millard County Progress Review* which refers to the saloon in Oasis and saloons in general.

March 27, 1906—"The Payne Bros. saloon is rapidly going up under the supervision of A G. Henry the contractor, and will soon be ready for business."

May 11, 1906—"The Payne Bros. new building is now finished and will soon be occupied by them and be ready for use."

July 5, 1906—"With two blooming stores, a saloon, and a railroad station, we could not die for the life of us."

With growing concern over alcohol use national-wide, it was not the best time to be going into the saloon business. The *Millard County Progress Review* reprinted the following anti-alcohol article at the same time the Oasis saloon was opening for business.

GOOD WITHOUT SALOONS

A recent number of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, just received, states that crime is almost unknown in the city now.... There are no street brawls, no cases of drunkenness and brutality,

⁴⁹⁵ "Swallows Confectionery Co.," MCPR, February 7, 1913.

⁴⁹⁶ "Evelyn Skeem Hawley History," Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

no murder in low resorts. Some cases of theft have occupied the courts, but no serious disorders.

*This enviable condition is ascribed to the closing of the saloons, and it is pointed to as evidence of the value to the community of restricted liquor traffic. If the deductions of the Chronicle are correct, as they seem to be, no more conclusive demonstration of **the curse of the saloon business** could be given. What it costs the taxpayer in expenses for police and courts, the support on insane asylums and poorhouses, not to mention the breaking up of homes, is poorly covered by the license.*

*The **saloon element** is bad enough to any community, even under ordinary circumstances, but when it undertakes to regulate government and dispose of offices as rewards to its friends, it becomes a **public menace**. The present moral status of San Francisco is a most powerful temperance lecture.⁴⁹⁷ (emphasis added)*

The editorial is just one small example of the debate that led to the Prohibition Era. Oasis citizens were anxious about the saloon in their neighborhood and the bad influence and environment it created for their community.

Did members of the Church frequent the saloon? One of the tenets of Mormonism deals with abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee.⁴⁹⁸ To worthily enter a temple, one must comply with this doctrine. It seems incongruent, therefore, that in a primarily

⁴⁹⁷ "Good Without Saloons," MCPR, June 1, 1906, 5.

⁴⁹⁸ Doctrine & Covenants 89:5-9.

LDS community, like Oasis has always been, there was a saloon—a place to drink alcoholic beverages. Yet the existence of a saloon/bar is well documented in the historical record.

It is possible that some Church members frequented the saloon. But, let's not be too hasty in our condemnation. Adherence to the Word of Wisdom, an edict against alcoholic beverages, was sporadic in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The mandatory prohibition didn't occur suddenly or in a vacuum.

- The Word of Wisdom, was given “not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation” for the benefit of the [members].⁴⁹⁹
- Wilford Woodruff (1807-1898) did not think bishops should withhold recommends from persons who did not adhere to it strictly.
- In 1900 none of the general authorities supported drunkenness. In practice, however, they and other members occasionally drank beverages that today are prohibited.
- Joseph F. Smith urged the refusal of recommends to flagrant violators, but to be somewhat liberal with old men who used tobacco and old ladies who drank tea.
- Habitual drunkards were to be denied temple recommends.
- In 1921, under the Heber J. Grant administration, Church leadership made adherence to the Word of Wisdom a

⁴⁹⁹ Doctrine & Covenants 89:1-2.

requirement for temple admission. Prior to this time, exceptions had been made.

- Utahans were late additions to the national prohibition movement (1920-1933) rather than its early leaders.⁵⁰⁰

The saloon was a thorn in the side of Oasis citizens. Enough so that they presented a petition to the county commissioners and with enough clout to get it passed.

*At the [November 5, 1909] session of county commissioners held last Tuesday, a petition signed by nearly all the inhabitants of Oasis was presented. [It] complained of the saloon being a disorderly house and a nuisance in the community. It was decided that no more liquor licenses should be granted to those people.*⁵⁰¹

“Without a liquor license, it would have been impossible to keep the saloon doors open. In the December 17, 1909, issue we read, “The cold weather and the ***closing of the saloon*** has run the Mexicans out of the country so that now we have peace—precious peace.”⁵⁰² (emphasis added)

The Oasis Saloon was in business for 3½ years. “The 18th Amendment [which banned the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcohol] didn’t take effect for another ten years. It was proposed by Congress on December 18, 1917, and ratified by the requisite number of states on January 16, 1919. It was repealed by

500 Alexander, Tomas G., *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints 1890-1930*, Ch. 13.

501 “Oasis Saloon in Trouble, MCPR, November 5, 1909.

502 “Saloon Closes,” MCPR, December 17, 1909.

the 21st Amendment on December 5, 1933—it is the only constitutional amendment in American history to be repealed.”⁵⁰³

The National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics reveals the extent of the continuing problem of alcohol today:

- Alcohol abuse kills over 3 million people each year.
- 140,557 Americans die from the effects of alcohol in an average year.
- 1-in-10 Americans over the age of 12 have Alcohol Use Disorder.
- 10.5% of Utah adults over 18 binge drink at least once per month.
- 16.0% of Idaho adults over 18 binge drink at least once per month.
- 19.8% of Colorado adults over 18 binge drink at least once per month.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ Wikipedia. 2001, “Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution,” Last Modified December 5, 2023. <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index>.

⁵⁰⁴ “Alcohol Abuse Statistics,” <https://drugabusestatistics.org>

RESTAURANT

John Henning mentions a restaurant among other businesses in his 1884 editorial.

*We have also a hotel and restaurant. And since the grateful change of time on the Utah Central Railroad, opportunities for seeing and inspecting our situation and facilities are given to passengers who may feel so inclined. For it is now a breakfast station with a generous allowance of 25 minutes in which to enjoy both the comfort and luxury of a nice warm breakfast. For to the traveler, it seems indeed a luxury when he has plenty of time to comfortable [sic] swallow his meal at the table of our genial caterer Brother Edward Webb.*⁵⁰⁵

There were at least two Oasis restaurants. Auntie mentions them both. “[There was] a little café right to the side of Oda Day’s [store], and a café in the hotel as well.”⁵⁰⁶

GARDEN CLUB

Civic organizations were limited in Oasis, nevertheless, there have been several groups, not specifically centered in Oasis, to which Oasis folks have been members: Arthur L. Cahoon Post 89 of the American Legion and its auxiliary—now Delta Post 135, Delta Lions, Kiwanis Club. There was also the Oasis Boy Scout Troop 146, a 4-H club, Knitting Circle, and notably, the Oasis Garden Club. Many of its projects involved improving the church grounds.

⁵⁰⁵ Henning, “Voice from the Deseret,” *Deseret News*, September 13, 1885, 8, CHL.

⁵⁰⁶ “Evelyn Skeem Hawley History,” Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

The foundational meeting for the Oasis Garden Club was held at the home of Lillian Roundy in November 1948. They elected Lillian as president, Betsy Skeem as vice president, Erma Styler secretary, Stella Hawley program chairman, and Celia Christensen recreation. Plans were made to join the state federation, improve individual gardens, and take on a community project. Their first meeting was to be held Monday, Nov. 7, at 3 p.m. in the Oasis church house.⁵⁰⁷

They took their organization seriously and raised needed funds for their projects.

*The Oasis Garden Club is sponsoring a square dance in Oasis on Monday night, April 2 [1951], and invites everyone to attend. The dance is free. A feature of the evening will be the home-baked food sale and the display of a silk quilt. The funds raised by the entertainment will be used by the club to beautify the grounds at the ward church with the planting of shrubs.*⁵⁰⁸

There are several entries about the club in 1952. The first announces newly elected officers.⁵⁰⁹ There are also references to it in the Church records. For example, we read, “The Garden Club leveled the land on church grounds and planted flowers and shrubs.”⁵¹⁰

507 “Oasis Women Organize Garden Club for Next Year,” *Chronicle*, November 10, 1949.

508 “Square Dance at Oasis Mon. Eve,” *Chronicle*, March 29, 1951, 1.

509 “Oasis Garden Club,” *Chronicle*, January 24, 1952, 6.

510 “Quarterly Historical Record for 1952,” CHL, LR 6370-10.



Millard County Chronicle August 12, 1954. Photo by Glen Gardner.

In 1954 the above photo of the club was published on the first page of the *Millard County Chronicle* along with this commendation:

One of the most active clubs in Millard is the Oasis Garden Club. An achievement in the last five months is the new fireplace built at a cost of \$585.00 on the church grounds at [the] Oasis Ward.

Club members are Hilda Gillen, program, Erma Skeem, secretary, Ella Christensen, president, Rose Nichols, vice-president, and Ruby Skeem reporter. With fellow club members they have completed their project.

To finance it, the club has made and sold three quilts, held bake sales, gave a lawn party, gave a dance, sold plants and rose brushes. A new lawn around the fireplace was planted and now flourishes.⁵¹¹

⁵¹¹ "Garden Club Builds Fireplace, *Chronicle*, August 12, 1954, 1.

The bishopric praised the efforts of the Oasis Garden Club and its presidency in the 1956 dedication program. (See “Warehouse Remodeled: The Red-brick Building” and “Dedication” in this record.) That was probably their high point. Following that event, mention is made in the *Chronicle* of a Father’s Day bake sale and a flower show at the fair.

In June 2023, I emailed the Utah Associated Garden Clubs asking if they had any information on the Oasis Garden Club. Webmaster Geoff Ellis responded,

I was not aware that Oasis had its own garden club, but it’s certainly possible. Fillmore and several other small towns in central Utah had thriving garden clubs in the 1950s. We have an archive, but it is not organized or indexed; it’s just a collection of scrapbooks. We’ve been planning to go through and put it in order this summer. If we find any references to Oasis, I’ll let you know.

The end of July, I shared with him what I had found online. He responded in August that they hadn’t finished sorting their materials.

BUSINESSES IN DESERET AND HINCKLEY

“After of the coming of the railroad to Oasis, industries sprang up with surprising speed.”⁵¹² Aside from the businesses mentioned above in Oasis, Deseret and Hinckley flourished with new businesses as well. Delta was a late-comer to these towns; its first house

⁵¹² Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 446.

was built in 1907.⁵¹³ Deseret was actively growing with all sorts of industries.^{ci cii ciii}

*[These included]: A grist burr mill, a printing office, a butcher shop, five stores, two hotels, a livery stable, dance halls, millinery shops, a newspaper, two flour mills, a picture show house, a freight station, a cheese mill/creamery, a molasses mill, an alfalfa seed mill, a furniture store, a printing office, a service garage, a pool-hall and club room, a cabaret, a picture show house, a large dance hall, a barbershop, and a blacksmith shop.*⁵¹⁴

Auntie Evelyn relates how she and others would sometimes get a ticket to see the movie. “We’d get a matchbox full of flies and go to the show out to Deseret. Mrs. Dewsnup would look at them and then throw them out in the ditch. Then we went in and saw the movie.” This wasn’t a multi-screen theater as we have today. She explains, “It was just an old barn, really.”⁵¹⁵

The Deseret Cash Store was like Day’s Store in Oasis. I went there a couple of times. We took our “wouldn’t-start” lawnmower to a Deseret mechanic who operated out of his home. Dad once showed me where the Deseret Post Office had been, just a few blocks west of the Deseret-Oasis Ward on the north side of the road. But by the early 1960s, most of these businesses were gone.

Was Deseret incorporated? Did it have the legal status of an organized town with a document? Answer: Maybe. Ekins and

⁵¹³ Ekins and Wallace, *Milestones*, 623.

⁵¹⁴ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 442, 446.

⁵¹⁵ “Evelyn Skeem Hawley History,” Evelyn Cecilia Augusta Skeem KWZQ-K94, FSM.

Warnick explained, “We find little information about the corporation of the first city government. We do know that at one time, Deseret was a thriving town.... The civic affairs must have been in capable hands.”⁵¹⁶

They did have a justice of the peace. Leigh R. Cropper Sr. served in this capacity for 30 years. He performed weddings, enforced the law, and acted as a judge. He and his wife also operated Deseret’s first post office. “Daniel Melville and his brother Can, carried mail on horseback from Fillmore twice a week. The Pony Express seemed a complete mail system.”⁵¹⁷

Hinckley, established in 1876 and originally referred to as Deseret Number 3, developed rapidly as well. There were several mercantile stores, a meat market, confectionary, a roller mill, a garage, a show house, two millinery shops, a creamery, two seed houses, six dorms, a dance pavilion, two barbershops, a blacksmith shop, a theater building and the central for the telephone system which was installed in 1902.⁵¹⁸ It was incorporated in 1907, with Hosea F. Stout as its first mayor. “The Cleanest Town Trophy” for the state of Utah was awarded to Hinckley in 1947.⁵¹⁹

By 1900 Hinckley had bypassed Deseret’s population, 510 to 408, although the latter community with five stores was still the commercial center of west Millard. A correspondent to the Salt Lake Herald termed Deseret’s businesses as the “best commercial facilities of any place in Millard County.”...

⁵¹⁶ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 442.

⁵¹⁷ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 442-43.

⁵¹⁸ Staple and Ekins, *Milestones*, 508, 518-21.

⁵¹⁹ Emmeline Stapley and Sebrina Ekins, *Milestones*, 522-23.

*[Oasis] remained the primary county rail shipping point and was the first to have a bank and a dairy as well as an alfalfa-seed cleaning plant.*⁵²⁰

I have a very early memory of attending a silent black and white movie in the Hinckley Ward building—that might be the “show house” mentioned above. The Morris Store was still operating when Susan and I, as newly-weds, rented my deceased grandparents’ home there in 1969. All commercial businesses in Deseret, Oasis, and Hinckley have now either gone out of business or relocated to Delta. I can easily remember the Deseret Cash Store and the Hinckley Conoco service station on Highway 6-50. There was another one across from the church. Hinckley also had a small mom-and-pop motel. I loved the name of it: The Sleep and Snore.

⁵²⁰ Journal History, 23 July 1880; 15 September 1886; 28 May, 27 November, 1889; 19, 20 June 1900; *Salt Lake Herald*, 24 April 1884, as quoted in Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 190.

EARLY HOUSES

John Styler built the first house in Oasis in 1879. It was a two-roomed log cabin located in section 2, township 18, about 1½ miles southeast of the Oasis railroad station.⁵²¹ “In that [same] year, Jacob C. Hawley and Carl C. Andersen built houses [in] the Oasis Ward.”⁵²² People lived in Oasis before these houses were built. “Willows and mud were used in constructing some of the first rudimentary dwellings.”⁵²³ civ cv cvi cvii cviii cix cx cxi cxii cxiii

Great-grandma Cecilia Skeem talks about what some of these first rustic dwellings were like, and how she felt when she and her family arrived in Oasis in 1884.

There were only a few shacks scattered around. My heart sank and tears sprang into my eyes. I thought of my beautiful Denmark with its abundance of beautiful flowers, trees, and birds. This thought I only allowed for a moment. I forced myself to face this situation saying aloud, “Courage; we shall win!”

⁵²¹ Skeem, *Milestones*, 462.

⁵²² Manuscript History, 13.

⁵²³ Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 169.

*We moved into the shack Peter had built. It was in a low place. My husband had scraped it down to make a level floor. Mud walls and willow roof with dirt on top was our home now.*⁵²⁴

One home that has always held special memories for me is Grandma's home in Oasis. Grandpa Peter Skeem and his brother Andrew built it about 1900. Seven children were raised there, including my mother. The following description represents many early homes in Oasis. (Jerold Bishop, a commercial artist from Oasis, painted many older homes in the area. You can see some of his work at Oasis Ward Picture History.)



Painting of the Peter and Annie Skeem later Glen and Eathel Skeem home on Skeem Lane in Oasis by Jerold Bishop. FamilySearch KWZ3-XNT

524 C. Skeem, "Reader's Biography," Cecelia Jensen Svendsen KWJH-9TJ, FSM.

The sights, smells, and earthiness of Grandma's place are a sweet memory now. It stood empty after the 1983 flood until it burned down in 2022. The home was located on Skeem Lane a mile south of the road from Oasis to Deseret, sometimes called Danish Lane, officially known as West 4500 Street South.

You could see the house from half a mile away as you drove nearer. The old wood-framed unpainted structure nestled itself among tall trees common for the area. Aside from them, there was no landscaping—no grass or decorative shrubs.

When I was a boy grandma lived there with her son, Uncle Glen (Sam), his wife Aunt Eathel (Ingram) Skeem, and their daughter, Evelyn Kay, whom family members called by her nickname, Zannie. Glen ran the farm. It wasn't big—just a folksy family enterprise.

When visiting, it was essential to watch one's step as you approached its backdoor. (The front door was on the south side of the house, but was rarely used.) Chickens and other fowl roamed the yard freely, so you had to be careful so no excrement (no one ever called it that) was tracked into the house. Extra caution was especially needed as a little person. Keep your guard up—watch out for the geese that would bite if provoked. Their peck was notorious and painful! It was also possible that a dog in a bad mood could sneak up and take a bite out of your bottom.

Grandma's was unique in the 1950s because unlike the other Oasis houses I knew; it didn't have running water or electricity. Electricity came to the area in 1916 when a generating plant was built in Oasis—but not to Grandma's. Her house, and her son's, Edwin's, were a mile or more from the main line. Utah Power required a considerable fee to run electricity to these isolated homes, charging for poles, wire, and labor. The hook-up was finally accomplished in the mid-1950s through a friend, Forest Taylor.

He willingly donated his equipment, time, and expertise. That combined with a reduced price for the needed materials, finally brought power to these two families on Skeem Lane.⁵²⁵

The family well was about thirty feet from the house. To get the water pooled inside a submerged barrel, you needed to lift a board. A dipper hung nearby on the wire fence. If anyone was thirsty, they could treat themselves to a cold drink.

Until about 1950, there was no indoor plumbing. Water was manually carried into the house for all their needs. Of course, washday meant many trips to the well and back.

The kitchen was the first room entered through the outside door; it was the natural heart of the home. Here water was heated on a wood/coal-burning stove. The hot water was used for washing everything—utensils, table tops, hands. There was a basin on a stand near the main kitchen entrance. A mirror hung on a nail just above it. Nearby was a little shelf for combs and a brush. A galvanized tub hung on the house's outside wall. The bathing water was heated on this kitchen stove, so that's where you had your Saturday night bath—in front of the stove in the kitchen. For other bathroom facilities, you had to go outside. There was a two-seater toilet about a hundred and fifty-foot dash from the back door. The outhouse stood next to the pigpen.

Naturally, the kitchen wood/coal-burning stove was used for all the cooking. It's hard to regulate the heat on one of those, nevertheless, some fabulous meals were produced there. This same stove also heated the heavy irons Grandma and Aunt Ethel used to iron clothes. It kept the kitchen warm and cozy in the winter, but

525 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 447. Private conversation with Reed Skeem.

nearly unbearably hot in the summer. There was no dining room. Everyone would crowd around a long kitchen table when it was time to “tie on the feedbag.” Uncle Glen’s favorite dish was beans, and there were always plenty.

Another stove stood in the adjoining front room. It was used to heat that part of the house. This room was comfortably furnished. It had soft chairs and a rocker, pictures on the walls, and after they finally hooked up to electricity, a black and white television set.

All three bedrooms lacked heat and they would sometimes get miserably cold in the winter, so far from the heat source. Because there was no electricity, at night coal-oil lamps were used for lighting. About once a week, one of the household chores was to wash the glass chimneys, which became black with soot from the smoke.

Grandma’s had two covered porches located in the front and rear of the house. A milk separator (centrifugal device) was kept on the front porch to separate the cream from the milk, some of which were then sold to the dairy. In the summer, Zannie would sleep on a bed on the back porch—it was cooler there. During the day, it had to be covered with a canvas in case of rain. The porches were closed with boards and wire screen which went halfway up to the roof.

Away from the house and just north of the parking area were several outbuildings. These consisted of a tack room for saddles and harnesses, a granary, a chicken coop, a pigpen, several small covered sheds for sheep, and a larger one for cows and horses. On the far east side of the property was a pond where the ducks and geese congregated.

Near the parking area, between the back porch and sheds, was an immense woodpile. Given the family’s lack of electricity, a ready supply of firewood was needed for cooking and heating. At one

time, Glen had a circular saw, powered by a pulley on an old tractor, set up in this area. The outhouse was just north of this.

Grandma's bedroom was to the left after you passed from the kitchen into the living room. It was quite small—just enough room for a single bed and a dresser. I remember going in there when she was bedridden. On its north wall hung a convex-glass painting of a windmill. I liked to think it depicted a scene from Denmark—the family's native home. Today it hangs in my front room here in Nampa, Idaho.

Evelyn (Skeem) Webb, aka Zannie, is about seven years older than me. She grew up in this home. Her first-hand perspective of living without electricity or running water follows.

We had a water bucket in the house on a bench, and a dipper. Anyone who wanted water drank from the same dipper. Then it was dipped in the bucket for the next guy. Sanitary, huh?

I used a windup phonograph to listen or dance to. But I had to rewind it every few minutes, so that was a job itself. Later we got a battery powered radio. It was very important to me. I loved the music. I could dance to my music in my bedroom. I listened to my stories on it every Saturday morning while I cleaned bedrooms. I had it playing my music when I was ironing with the irons that had to sit on the stove to keep them hot.

The milk separator was in the kitchen most of the year. It had to be taken all apart and washed and dried twice a day after each use. Also, there had to be extra cleaning because of milk splatters, milk buckets, etc.

To this day, I have no fondness for ducks, chickens, geese, turkeys who like to poop close to the front door. My dad [Glen Skeem aka Sam] had some geese, and chickens, and pigs in a pen.

On the farm there was a dirt cellar, which was three steps down from ground level. It was on the north side of the house, so it was always in the shade. The cellar had a dirt floor and dirt walls. It was supported by a wood ceiling and some framing and a good layer of cool dirt on top of that. This was a mound of dirt that kids liked to climb on. We stored bottled fruit in there and some pickle crocks and if we had cream; we kept it there. No electricity—no refrigeration. We also had a potato pit, which was just a hole in the ground where we stored potatoes. The entry-hole was covered with boards and gunny sacks. Spiders like potato pits. I didn't!

Under the eaves, on the north side of the house where it was cooler, there were hooks on which the guys hung ducks and geese that they shot at Clear Lake. In the fall, there was always a good supply. The family hunters thought it was shameful when the limit was lowered from fifty to twenty-five ducks. With the game hanging there, the cooks would simply retrieve one or two for the evening meal. We had no refrigerator, of course. Before we ate a meal, I went to the well and got the bottle of milk and a pint jar of butter. It was kept in the water in the well hanging by a nail and string as that was our coolest place. If I wanted ice cream, I got some in Delta on Saturday.

In the middle of the yard, there was a big woodpile. It consisted of old boards thrown every which way. Hazel [Skeem]

and I made lots of playhouses in that mess of boards. Reed [Skeem, Hazel's younger brother] says when we had to tend to him, we stuck him in a big wooden box so he wouldn't wreck our playhouse. That's true. Maybe you [the author] lucked out.

Of course, we had no phone. [At this time, only a few families had a phone in their home. If anyone wanted to contact someone who didn't have a phone, they would call a family in the community and ask that a message be relayed.]

We had one pickup truck for transportation, so I rode my bike a lot to Oasis [Day's Store or the Oasis Post Office.]

The school bus let us off up on the main road to Deseret, [Skeem Lane and 4500 Street South] and I had to walk down home. It's just over a mile.

If Grandma and I were home alone at night, we would sit at the kitchen table where the coal-oil light was. She played cards (Solitaire) and I would do homework or else I'd color in books, or draw a little—remember we didn't have any electricity, so there was never any television.

Even though we didn't have electricity, I always had my battery powered radio. Life would have been unbearable without that. Sometimes Grandma complained about my music playing too much, but that's life between an older lady and a teenager.

We could always hear if anyone drove into our yard. If so, they would come to the kitchen door at the rear of the house. When Grandma thought someone was coming, she would

scoop the cards into her apron—she did not want the bishop to come and see her playing cards!

In the daytime she always sat in her rocker in the living room, by the south window. That was her spot. It's where she did all her crocheting. And she crocheted a lot. Occasionally, she would read a little while in her favorite chair.

At Christmas time, that spot is where the Christmas tree had to be. This was always very troublesome to her. Every Christmas when we put the tree there, she got mad. But there really was not another place in the living room for it. I always felt bad that we had to have heck before we could put up a Christmas tree. Of course, our Christmas tree was dark, never lit because, like I explained, we had no electricity.

There were four doors leading to the front room. One from the kitchen, two from each of the bedrooms, and one came in from the outside. This was supposed to be the main entrance, but no one ever used it.

In the front room, there was a heater stove along one wall, a daybed, (an uncomfortable sofa with no back but the wall). There was a sewing machine by the door to Grandma's bedroom, and on the other side of her door was what we called the secretary (a piece of furniture used for correspondence). By the outside door was a radio that stood on the floor—I don't remember if it ever worked. So, you can see, there was nowhere else for the tree except Grandma's favorite spot.

If she and I had a snack at night, she would have a cup of tea, and I had soda crackers and real butter, which we churned ourselves. My parents were usually home at night. We all

had to sit together around the kitchen table. That's where the light was and the kitchen was the only room that had any heat at night.

Our bedroom doors always had to stay shut to keep the heat in the kitchen area. This meant we had no heat in any of our bedrooms. They were the same temperature as outside. The one exception was Grandma's bedroom door. It was always half open, so her room would not have been so cold.

I remember one 4th of July when Gary and I were dating; he came to my house and we sat on that uncomfortable daybed together. There was no T.V., again, no electricity. We were just sitting there holding hands and Grandma came into the room. I was embarrassed that she had caught us holding hands.

At night if Gary and I came home from a movie, we could never go in the house. Grandma and my parents would have been in bed. (Grandma kept her night pot under her bed—it was quite a way to the outside privy.) But the point is, the house was very dark and unwelcoming. Grandma's home was terrible for dating, not like my kids had.

For them, when they came home after a date, they could come into the house and everyone was welcome. That was not the case at Grandma's.

I was just short of turning sixteen when we finally got electricity. How thrilled I was! WOW! Sooo exciting.... [This would have been 1953. Zannie was born August 24, 1937. Hazel (Skeem) Babbitt, who grew up in the Hans Peter / Edwin Skeem home just through the field from Grandma's, was amazingly born on the exact same day and year as Zannie.

They grew up in these isolated farm homes and were play-mates as well as cousins. They were “hooked up” with electricity at the same time.]

My parents did not get a bathroom until I was married and living in California in 1958 when my husband, Gary Webb, was in the Navy. My mother, Eathel, had two brothers who went down and put her in a bathroom. That made a huge difference, too.⁵²⁶

Paris has its Eiffel Tower; Seattle its Space Needle—Oasis had an iconic structure as well, although admittedly not as famous as the aforementioned. I’m referring to the home of Axel and Gus Johnson (X and Gus), two well-known Oasis bootleggers. It stood southwest of the Oasis church and was an oft photographed/painted Oasis landmark. Built by Mormon converts, John P. and Karine C. Johnson, it was one of the first houses in Oasis. Axel and Gus continued living in the home after their parents died. This photo shows the home as I remember it from the 1950s. The last time I looked, it had crumbled and was open to the elements. Originally, “the two-room structure had a log back room and the large adobe room was later added as the family grew. Axel lived here alone until his death in 1953.”⁵²⁷

Today the homes in Oasis are a mix. Some are brand new, but there are still lots of older homes. “Many substantial homes still remaining in Hinckley, Deseret, and Oasis date from [1900].”⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ Evelyn Webb and Cordell Cropper, “Grandma’s Place,” Annie Johanna Petersen KWZ3-XNT, FSM.

⁵²⁷ Jerold Bishop, *Watercolors of Millard Utah with a Brief History*.

⁵²⁸ Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*.



*Home of Axle and Gus Jensen (X and Gus), two well-known Oasis bootleggers. Their house was an often photographed or painted Oasis landmark in the 1960s. It stood southwest of the Oasis church.
Photo from Great Basin Museum*

OASIS CEMETERY

With its attractive gate, trees, and lush grass, the Oasis Cemetery is indeed an oasis in the desert. It is located a few miles northeast of the acknowledge center of town. This secluded reverent place is well maintained by the sexton, Mr. Tony Stanworth. Our national banner and armed service flags mark its center.

The oldest grave is that of William S. Hawley. His gravestone is a flat cement marker with the inscription, “Utah Captain Utah Ter. [Territorial] Militia Indian Wars Dec. 20, 1829—May 29, 1893.” (His photograph, gravestone, medal, as well as other pictures of the cemetery can be seen online at Oasis Ward Picture History. ^{cxiv}

Some 300 other graves lie nearby. Most were Oasis residents, at least for a part of their lives. It is a common occurrence for former residents and their spouses to find their final resting place here. One example of this is my cousin, Fred Skeem (1930-2012). Fred grew up in Oasis, attended the A.C. Nelson School, and married a local girl, Elva Webb, who lived on Cropper Lane. Fred and Elva lived in Oasis for a few years in their early married life, but spent many years in Hinckley. They have now both passed and are buried in Oasis, not Hinckley.



Horse-drawn hearse
Photo by Beverly (Skeem) Roth

Horses and carriages were Fred's lifelong passion. His funeral was made more memorable by arranging to have his casket transported to the Oasis Cemetery from the Hinckley chapel where his funeral was held in a horse-drawn hearse pulled by two beautiful percheron draft horses.

WHY DELTA AND NOT OASIS?

With such a good start, one wonders what happened? Why did Oasis fade as the hub of West Millard County? Why did Delta rise to prominence?

Oasis became an important shipping point because of its railroad station. From 1885 to 1911, Oasis was the predominant city in the area with seemingly unstoppable growth potential. By 1911, Delta was growing in prominence. Its population in 1910 was 459, which is the first year it's recorded in the census. Twenty years later, Oasis had reached its population peak of 364 inhabitants. The population of Delta in 1930 was triple that of Oasis—1,183.

With the attraction of large tracks of uncultivated level land available, the Deseret Stake Presidency called James A. Melville on a mission to investigate purchasing water rights in 1905. Brother Melville gave a favorable report which attracted settlers to the new town site.⁵²⁹ The location for the town that became Delta was chosen at the meeting of the Melville Irrigation Company held in Oasis. The new town boomed. The original name Melville was changed to Burtner in 1908 and then to Delta in 1911. As an

529 Wallace and Ekins, *Milestones*, 620-22.

incentive, “a town lot was given free to every farmer who ‘took up’ 40 acres of farmland.”⁵³⁰

The Oasis Land and Water Company was organized in 1908 to develop water and land west of Burtner, but it failed due to flooding and financial problems in 1910.⁵³¹ “The Burtner project, on the other hand, was extremely successful, selling thousands of acres per month. Homesteaders streamed into the makeshift railroad depot, which by 1911 was the busiest in the county. and the railroad built a new Delta station, the largest south of Salt Lake City.⁵³² The centrally located Delta permanently supplanted Oasis in prominence.⁵³³

Its railroad business gone; Oasis returned to agricultural industries. Alfalfa seed, lumber, and sugar beets. A few businesses rounded up and trained Mustang horses for sale.⁵³⁴ A creamery was established in 1913.⁵³⁵ A coal-fired power plant was built in Oasis in the 1920s. Small and inefficient, it served Deseret, Hinckley, and Delta until 1930.⁵³⁶

“The last years of the 1920s were hard on the entire region. Drought, insects, and frost damaged crop yields, and numerous farms closed down due to financial difficulties. The Oasis State Bank went out of business in 1928.⁵³⁷ Many other businesses folded

530 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 206-210.

531 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 212-213.

532 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 215.

533 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 218.

534 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 225-226.

535 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 263.

536 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 269.

537 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 273-74.

at this time. Continuing drought conditions in the 1930s severely reduced the available irrigation water, and large tracts of farmland in the Oasis area had to be abandoned.”⁵³⁸

The L.D. Day Store continued to operate until shortly after Leo’s death in 1968. The Oasis Seed Plant transferred to Delta in 2003, There are no commercial businesses in Oasis today.

Delta, on the other hand, continues to grow. In 2020 its population was 3,622 which represent a 5.4% increase from 2010. It is the largest city in Millard County.⁵³⁹ Geography played a large part in Delta becoming the center for West Millard. The pioneer towns, Deseret, Oasis and Hinckley are about 7 miles to the southwest; Oak City some 13 miles to the east; Lynndell and Leamington 19-22 miles to the northeast; Sutherland and Abraham 5-7 miles to the northwest. Delta is more or less in the middle of these surrounding communities and remains the undisputed commercial and educational center of West Millard County.

⁵³⁸ Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 282.

⁵³⁹ “Delta, Utah, and Census of Population and Housing”. Census.gov. <https://www.bing.com/search>.

TOWN RIVALRY

When I attended Delta High School (1960-1963) our nemesis was East Millard (Fillmore) v. West Millard (Delta). This was especially true when it came to football. At that time, there existed a well-established losing streak. The Delta High Rabbits had lost to the Fillmore Eagles consecutively for 19 years straight. Finally, in 1962, our boys defeated the Eagles (DHS 32—FHS 18)! Immediately following the game, there was an impromptu celebration as the DHS student body and players descended on Delta's downtown in what is now called a "flash mob"—a sweet moment indeed!

Similarly, there has been a long-standing rivalry between Oasis and Deseret. The strife goes back to before the ward was created in 1891. In John Styler's journal, we find this entry for February 21, 1886, "went to S School and meeting; there I heard I was to be dropped from all duties [callings] for permitting myself to be elected president of a company to construct a canal east side of [the] river simply because Bishop Black was interested in the other."⁵⁴⁰

540 John Styler, unpublished personal journal in possession of his great-grandson, Michael Styler.

In an 1890 editorial published in the *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, a Deseret resident took issue with a piece written in praise of Oasis. He was offended because its author, referred to only as M.M.J. called Deseret a “suburb” of Oasis.

In his rebuttal, our Deseret friend calls Oasis, as an outgrowth of Deseret, a “pretentious little sister.” He goes on to point out that “Deseret has plenty of land and water with the finest market in Utah for her products. We expect her to grow and flourish and become the county seat within six years.” He concludes with this bit of sarcasm,

*And while we (Deseret) are growing and developing, we will not forget our ambitious neighbor on the east side of the canal and will pull her, brass band and all, up along with us. and would only ask in return that the residents of this respectable suburb [Deseret] may be permitted to occasionally cross the canal to admire our little sister, look at the [train] cars, hear the engine whistle, and listen in silent wonder to the Oasis brass band. [Signed] A SUBURBAN RESIDENT*⁵⁴¹

As Oasis continued to grow and become the county hub with lots of industry and activity, for a time it overshadowed its parent, Deseret. The Desereters probably felt a little jealous. Perhaps the Oasisites became a little prideful—maybe even boastful? Rivalry was born.

About 1960 when I was in the Oasis YMMIA, we were invited to play a game of basketball in Deseret. We Oasis boys had basketball

⁵⁴¹ Suburban Resident, “Oasis and Deseret,” *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, November 4, 1890, 6.

hoops in our cultural hall, but the space was not regulation size and we didn't really play; we only messed around. Deseret, on the other hand, had a full-sized gym as part of their building.

The Oasis team barely had enough players; the Deseret squad had uniforms and a coach. There was even a referee. I remember he called me out-of-bounds when I stepped over the outside line to make a throw-in and we forfeited the ball. I had no idea. That was bad enough, but the most memorable part of the game for me was when I got the tipoff to start the second half. Not being very well acquainted with the game, I didn't realize the defensive and offensive ends are switched at halftime. Consequently, I ran to the wrong basket for my layup. I wondered why no one from the Deseret team was chasing after me. Fortunately, I missed it. Needless to say, Oasis lost big time. Sorry, I don't remember the final score. ^{cxv}

This basketball rivalry had a happy conclusion some twelve years later. In 1972, *the Oasis boys teamed up with the Deseret guys*. "The Deseret and Oasis basketball team won the first-place trophy. The tournament [ran] February 9, 10, 11. Everyone was proud. The trophy was placed in the trophy case of both wards." The girls were also successful that same year, "[On] April 7 *the Deseret-Oasis girls' volleyball team* took first place in a tournament. They received a volleyball net."⁵⁴² (emphasis added)

Despite the Sevier River and the Deseret Canal being clearly noted in the history as the border between Oasis and Deseret, over the years some disagreement has arisen concerning the town limits. (For a map, refer to the section "Oasis Boundaries.") The dispute

542 Church Historical Report, 239, CHL, LR 6370-2, CHL.

was made even more acute when in the 1960s the Utah Highway Department misplaced a sign showing the entrance to Deseret. Some enterprising and mischievous Oasis young people took upon themselves the responsibility to move it to where it should have been—west of the canal. In retaliation, some Deseret youngsters moved it back which encouraged the original perpetrators to move it again and cement it in place. The sign was eventually either knocked down or removed.

This town rivalry probably ebbs and flows according to the people involved. When the Deseret-Oasis Ward was organized in 1991, there were people in Oasis who refused to go to church in the new ward. I suppose there were some in Deseret who felt the same. Reed Skeem reports a conversation he observed that took place between his father and his aunt when the wards were combined.

“I’m not going down there and go to church with those Desereters.”

“Well, Sis, who do you suppose that’s goin’ to hurt?”

Happily, Auntie had a change of heart and did attend.

Vincent Memmott, formerly of Oasis, commented, “There was a little attitude at times, but I rode the bus with kids from Deseret every day and had several good friends.”⁵⁴³

I was happy to read notations in the ward history that on several occasions, Deseret and Oasis MIAs got together for various activities. The canal was never a Mason-Dixon line with warring factions standing in stark division.

⁵⁴³ Private conversation with Vin Memmott, September 2023.

On Sunday, May 20, 2023, at the beginning of a Sunday School class, in the Deseret-Oasis Ward, I stood to introduce my wife and myself. (Someone had already mentioned I was writing a book on Oasis.) While I was standing, a good sister challenged me with a question. “What brings you to Deseret?”

I responded in friendly repartee, “Well, actually, we’re in Oasis.”

My response brought a moan of not-this-again acknowledgment from the class. The sister retorted with, “What are your ties to Deseret?”

“Well, my great-grandparents are buried in the Deseret Cemetery.” I guess some of the old town rivalry still exists.

During my visit, I noticed there were a lot of new names and faces in the Deseret-Oasis Ward. What with working remotely, low property values, and the area’s new central water and gas hookups, new homes are being built in Oasis and I suppose Deseret, too. I was told the Deseret-Oasis Ward is the largest in the stake. New people will bring new attitudes.

Sister Penny Stanworth, a member of the Deseret-Oasis Ward, put it this way. “It took the Children of Israel 40 years in the wilderness to work out their difference. We’ve been at it 30, and the situation has improved.”

DRAINAGE

Other than Sugarloaf Mountain, some 15 miles to the southeast, the Suasey Mountains 100 miles to the west, and the Oak Creek Mountains 20 miles to the east, there are not many distinctive land features in Oasis. Several large deep open trenches, however, are noteworthy. When I was young, I was told they were “drains.” I never questioned why they were called that, but it seems incongruent when I think about it now. Why would one need to drain anything in this dry, barren, drought-plagued country?



First drainage machine to operate in Oasis.

Photo from Milestones, 469

In his 1884 editorial, John Henning mentions an excessive water problem.

The unusually high water has caused us a great deal of damage, labor, and expense. For the third time has the angry Sevier overcome us and cut a new channel, but through the mercy and assistance of Him who has promised to be with the saints in their labors to build up Zion, we know we shall finally succeed and this fall, when the river is low, en masse we will secure all breaks and dangerous places and tighten and strengthen the dam until we feel satisfied that this spring's freshet will have no effect unless it be the triple of our supply of water.⁵⁴⁴

Where did all this water come from? We need to keep in mind that this was before the Gunnison Bend Reservoir, the YUBA, and DMAD dams were built. Large amounts of water flowed down to Sevier Lake or went wherever it wanted. Simply said, at that time, there was too much water. (See appendix for the entire editorial: "A Voice from the Desert of Sevier Valley".)

Despite Henning's optimism, the attempts to dam the Sevier continued to meet with failure and large sections of land throughout the valley became waterlogged. To help solve the problem, a government agent, Mr. Hart, was brought in. He explained that there were actually two problems: water logging and minerals in the water which would coat the surface. Draining the land would solve both problems, otherwise the land would remain unproductive.

544 Henning, "Voice from the Deseret," Deseret News, September 13, 1885, 8, CHL.

Everyone realized digging drains would be time consuming and expensive. “Mr. Hart, the engineer, recommended incorporation of the entire project into a drainage district.”⁵⁴⁵ By 1918 “Three [drainage] districts had been created embracing some 70,000 acres.” Delta created a separate district bringing the number to four. It included some 10,600 acres.⁵⁴⁶ (For an explanation of the dams, see “Hard Times: Floods,” and “Farming.”)

The drainage project turned out to be a cumbersome tax expense—especially during the Depression.

West Millard County farmers were burdened with heavy taxes, more than double those of the average Utah farmer of irrigated land, primarily because of drainage district assessments. In 1929 the average tax assessment per family in West Millard was \$682, or \$9.27 per acre. The typical farmer’s annual income was \$1,935. As a result of these high taxes, some landowners were forced to vacate their property.

As the drainage bond problem mounted, general authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints urged farmers of West Millard to meet their burdensome financial commitments. Predictably, the district drainage-indebtedness issue was taken to the courts. Judicial authorities, including both state and national supreme courts, ruled in favor of the farmers: there was no “blanket lien liability” forcing remaining

⁵⁴⁵ *Milestones*, 566-67.

⁵⁴⁶ Waioira B. Wallace and Sebrina C. Ekins, *Milestones*, 662.

*property owners to pay the entire cost levied against the district.*⁵⁴⁷

These drains were all planned out depending on land slope and what was needed. Those in Oasis, empty into Skeem Lake and Styler Lake. When I was a boy, they were simply called salt marshes.

Today these drains are mostly dry. On average, they are about 20 feet across and about that deep. They stretch for miles and are located in a seemingly haphazard manner around the area from South Tract to North Tract. There's one at the east end of the Oasis Cemetery Road, another one on the southern end of Skeem Lane, one on the east side of Cropper Lane, etc. Today they are useless artifacts of a bygone era, but will probably remain because it would cost too much to fill them in.

547 Lyman and Newell, *A History of Millard*, 281-82.

FLOWING WELLS 1886-2023

When settlers first came to the West Millard area in 1860 irrigation water was in rich supply, but good drinking water was another matter.⁵⁴⁸ The situation was much remedied in 1866 with a good flowing artesian well. The discovery of easy-flowing well water in Oasis in 1886 was important enough to share.

This afternoon artesian water was struck on the premises of Mr. John H. Kinder opposite the Utah Central Railway Station at a depth of 190 feet. The flow is somewhat less than one gallon per minute, but seems to be slowly increasing. The water is very soft tasting like rain or filtered fluid hence it must be pure and wholesome. Mr. Giles Bowler contractor who also drove several successful wells at Deseret is of the opinion that there is not a place in this vast but fertile region where flowing water cannot be obtained at from 160 to 300 feet.

⁵⁴⁸ "Hardships," Among Deseret's First, 51.

*The benefit of recent discoveries cannot be overestimated and the truth of the old saying the desert shall blossom like a rose and produce abundantly is but a question of a very short period of time. May the good work continue J. H. H.*⁵⁴⁹

There is a section in *Milestones of Millard* entitled “Wells.” It claims that “William V. Black drilled the first artesian well in Deseret which was from 100 to 150 feet deep.” There is no date on this entry, but it probably is about the same time as the above newspaper editorial because it goes on to claim that “Josiah Biggs shipped lythia water to Salt Lake where it sold for 5 cents a glass.”⁵⁵⁰ [Lythia mineral water was popular in the United States in 1888 for its supposed health benefits].⁵⁵¹

Milestones asserts that as of 1951, there was a great deal of fluorine in the area’s drinking water and that “a dental clinic from Salt Lake remarked on the good condition of the teeth of the boys and girls in Deseret and Hinckley.”⁵⁵² I always thought the water tasted good. My Delta dentist told me several times that the people in Oasis had good teeth because of the water.

We had an artesian well for our home and garden use in Oasis when I was growing up there in the 1950s. It was encased in a cement box which measured about 5’ x 5’ x 5’ and stood next to our house. We never had any problem with our system that I recall,

549 J.H. Henning, “Flowing Wells at Oasis,” *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, September 11 1886, 8.

550 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 443.

551 Loring Bullard (2004), *Healing waters: Missouri’s Historic Mineral Springs and Spas*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>.

552 Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 443.

but as a deacon, I once took part in a service project cleaning the well of one of the members. We got down inside and cleared away some debris and scrubbed the walls.

There are some dangers concerning this well water. In September 2023, Warren Petersen and I got together by phone. He explained how artesian wells operate, how *arsenic* has always been in the Oasis drinking water, and what remedies have taken place. Below are some of my notes from that conversation. (emphasis added)

After the introduction of turbine pumps in the area around the late 1940s, the artesian pressure pretty much disappeared. Folks had to install pumps, which before were not necessary.

In the early 1980s, because of EPA's findings and setting the limits on the amount of arsenic potable water could contain, some home loans were being denied in Deseret and Oasis. Neighbors combined efforts to put in a community well-water system. At the request of these local folks, Warren made arrangements for a community water system to be installed in Deseret and Oasis in 1982 and 1983.

A government agency was created, known as Deseret-Oasis Special Service District, to finance, build and operate the system. Water from a well in South Tract was used because of its lower arsenic content. It fed into a central storage tank in Oasis for distribution to Oasis, Deseret and Hinckley. With changing EPA demands, the water system now contains an arsenic filtering system.

Water comes off the hills and infiltrates into a confined aquifer and builds up pressure to produce the water which flows from artesian wells. In this process the water picks up both good and bad chemicals, the bad ones including hydrogen sulfide and arsenic. Most wells in this area need to be about 150-200 feet deep to reach potable water. Interestingly, the alkaline Pahvant Valley acts

as a water softener, but the arsenic has been a problem. (emphasis added)

Shortly after finding a solution to the potable water problem, natural gas lines were installed following the blueprints for the water system.”⁵⁵³ In a way, this recombines physically the separation created when the Deseret Ward was divided in 1891.

⁵⁵³ Private conversations with Warren Peterson, May 2023 and September 2023.

OASIS WARD COMBINED WITH DESERET

As stated in the “Floods” section above, on July 23, 1983, the spillway of the DMAD Dam, about 8 miles northeast of Delta, failed. “The sudden release of some 17,000 acre-feet of water caused millions of dollars in damages.... The failure itself resulted from inadequacies in both the spillway design and the operation of the river system.”⁵⁵⁴

In this rush of water, the town of Deseret was hit hard. The old 1944 Deseret Ward building was damaged, condemned and is now completely gone. It was located on the north bank of the Sevier River near the bridge. Most of Oasis escaped; the railroad track bed acting as a dike except for the southern part of town where the water broke through below of the junction of Skeem Lane and W. 4500 St S./Danish Lane and destroyed the homes of Edwin Skeem and Annie Skeem. (See “The Flood of 1983” above.)

To hold their meetings, the Deseret Ward began attending in the Oasis Ward red-brick building. The two wards continued

⁵⁵⁴ Roger W. Walker, and Wynn R. Walker, “The DMAD Dam Spillway Failure: The Engineering Issues.”.

meeting there separately until the new meetinghouse was ready. When it was, both moved into the new church. It is located at 3423 West 4500 South, in west Oasis very close to Deseret.^{cxvi}

Shortly after moving to the new building, Bishop Conard Stanworth was released and Dale Willoughby was sustained as the Oasis Ward bishop. Around this same time, the Deseret Stake was divided into the Delta and the Delta West Stake. The name “Deseret Stake” was retired. It was decided that a new stake center was needed and that it would replace the Hinckley Ward meetinghouse which was scheduled for repair. During this construction period, the Hinckley wards met in Oasis. For a time, these four wards met as separate units in the new building.⁵⁵⁵

The end of February 1991, the following news article ran under the headline “Deseret, Oasis Wards Combine.”

Two of the oldest LDS Wards in the area, Deseret and Oasis, have recently combined. This action was taken on Sunday, February 24, under the direction of Delta West Stake President Waldo Warnick. The Oasis and Hinckley wards were originally formed from the Deseret Ward, and this unification also affected the two Hinckley wards.

The new ward, retaining the name Deseret Ward, will be led by Bishop Dale Jensen. His councilors are Bryan Richardson and Jay Finlinson. Mike Styler was sustained as ward clerk, with Preston Eliason serving as executive secretary.

This reorganization has led to some shifts in membership. Some former Deseret Ward members are now part of the

555 Private conversation with Mike Styler.

Hinckley First Ward. The changes between the two Hinckley wards have also resulted in some membership adjustments.

The goal of these changes is to provide a better balance within the four wards, particularly among the young people. In the past, some age groups had very limited membership, making a viable youth program difficult. With the shifts in membership, the four affected wards will now have between 100 and 450 members, which should facilitate the church program in all wards.⁵⁵⁶

For the first 21 years, the Oasis Ward met in two different schoolhouses. The red-brick meetinghouse had served the Oasis Ward for over 30 years; the adobe building for 49. The Oasis Ward was organized in 1891, so in total it existed as an independent ward for 100 years. There was some discussion about the name. Some preferred just Deseret Ward, as reported in the newspaper. Then it was decided that Oasis should be recognized. The decision was finally made to list the towns in alphabetical order, hence the name Deseret-Oasis Ward.

This Christmas card of the soon-to-be sold meetinghouse was given to Oasis Ward members for their use in 1985. Dad (Lawrence Cropper) sent it to my family and me. On the back he wrote, "To the Croppers in Nampa from the Oasis Ward, 1985. Chapel will soon be vacated. Too bad! Dad/Grandpa" He was called on to give the last baby blessing in the red-brick church. The daughter of

⁵⁵⁶ Deseret, "Oasis Wards Combine," *Chronicle*, February 28, 1991, 3.

Delene (Skeem) and John Leonard, Megan Leonard, received her name and a blessing there in 1986.⁵⁵⁷



Christmas card in the author's collection.

The Oasis Ward church was sold to Jay and Cindy Finlinson and made into their private residence. The Finlinsons are musically talented. Cindy teaches piano and uses the cultural hall for recitals. At Christmas time, the family puts on a program for the community.⁵⁵⁸ In May 2023, Jay and Cindy graciously gave Pam and me to take a tour of their home. Much has changed; much remains the same. I'm happy we made the visit.

⁵⁵⁷ Private conversation with Delene (Skeem) Leonard, November 2022.

⁵⁵⁸ Private conversation with Jay and Cindy Finlinson.

CONCLUSION

There were at least three reasons why the Oasis saints decided to build a new meetinghouse in the mid-1950s:

- 1) The old adobe building required repairs.⁵⁵⁹
- 2) They wanted to solve the heating problem for themselves and in the children's classes.⁵⁶⁰
- 3) Using curtains to separate classes in the one-room chapel was inadequate for good instruction.

The decision on how to confront these problems was not made in haste. On August 22, 1954, "A special meeting was held to see what the members of the ward would like to do. Three choices were presented: 1) Build a new ward meetinghouse. 2) Add onto the old one. 3) Join with another ward, possibly Deseret."⁵⁶¹ The bishopric did not rush the decision and involved the membership. After some

559 "Oasis Ward General Minutes 1892-1975: Annual Report 1954 and March 1955," Call Number LR 6370-11, CHL.

560 Private conversation with Paul Ludwig, January 2022.

561 "Oasis Ward General Minutes 1892-1975," LR 6370 11. See also 1954 and March 1955- Annual Report New Building, and April 1- June 1956 Quarterly Historical Report New Building in this record.

three months of deliberations, “plans were made to raise money to start a new addition.”⁵⁶²



Oasis Ward Relief Society Visiting Teachers.

Top row: Erma Skeem, LaVean Gillen, Fontella Skeem, Hilda Gillen, Lillie Memmott, Eva Cahoon, Claire Petersen, Jeannie Styler, Stella Hawley, Ruby Skeem, LaVeda Bishop.

Bottom Row: Helen Memmott, Eathel Skeem Rose Nichols, Lillian Roundy, Verta Stanworth, Jona Hawley, Inga Petersen.

Photo from the private collection of Kathy Babbitt

This small group, for the gospel's sake, committed to this project with a price tag of \$74,000 (\$822,863 today-2023). The Oasis members paid 30% of that which was in addition to their regular tithing and fast offerings. Their commitment to the project, their labor and their financial contributions are exhibits of their great faith and one of the lasting legacies of the Oasis Ward. When the

⁵⁶² “Oasis Ward General Minutes 1892-1975,” LR 6370 11, CHL. See also 1954 and March 1955- Annual Report New Building.

remodeled church was dedicated in January 1957, it was completely paid for—a remarkable effort for so few to accomplish so quickly!

The men gave money and donated labor to the construction of the new meetinghouse; the ward sisters did their share as well. The Oasis Ward sisters were determined to take on this project and see it through. Their support was a motivating factor.

For the most part, these members of the Oasis Ward who built the chapel in 1956 were descendants of Mormon pioneers. They were not the ones who crossed the plains to come to Zion; they were their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. They were the product of pioneer heritage and knew how to come together for a common goal; their dedication to a strong work ethic was unparalleled. Through faith, hard work and perseverance, they accomplished their goal.

These dedicated saints were some of my greatest supporters. They encouraged me in my scouting, priesthood duties and education. They celebrated with me when I left and when I returned from my mission. One Christmas in the mission field, I received enough money in Christmas cards from ward members to buy myself a new suit. I was awed by their generosity.

I loved the members of the Oasis Ward unreservedly. It was at the Oasis Ward that Susan and I held our marriage reception on May 31, 1969. Almost the entire ward membership came and stayed for the evening. There was a dance with a live band, a program, refreshments and a cutting of the cake. We received many nice gifts. ^{cxvii}

When Susan died in 2017, the Deseret-Oasis Ward reached out to me when they discovered we were having a graveside service in the Oasis Cemetery. They generously provided lunch for the family. Even today, the Deseret-Oasis Ward is a home base for

many funerals as old-time residents are returned for their final rest. Members there graciously prepare food and offer their condolences and services. This happens more frequently than one might suppose. There are, after all, two cemeteries.

Today the Oasis Ward is a sweet memory. It has transitioned into the Deseret-Oasis Ward. The idea of recombining the Oasis and Deseret Wards was not new. It was proposed by the stake presidency in 1947 under Bishop Clark Bishop. It reappeared when the members were deciding whether or not to remodel the adobe church in 1954. The pros and cons were weighed and reweighed. Eventually, the two wards were made one in 1991.

The Deseret-Oasis Ward has existed now for some thirty-three years and is growing in membership. As of 2023, there are about four hundred and fifty members. A few years earlier, there were five hundred and fifteen. That was when some were taken from the Deseret-Oasis Ward and added to the Gunnison Bend and Hinckley Wards.⁵⁶³

I'm happy to visit the Deseret-Oasis Ward whenever I'm in the area. It has a rich heritage that is important to me. Oasis was my home and where I starting learning the restored gospel. My great-grandparents helped settle Deseret and Oasis. I'm sure you would be welcomed, too.

FAITH

Over the years, there have been a number of changes in the way services are conducted and hours of worship. One thing has remained constant: The Lord Jesus Christ stands at the head of the Church

⁵⁶³ Private conversation with Bishop Kirk Willoughby, July 2023.

and deserves our praise and worship. I'm grateful for what I learned in the Oasis Ward. It served as a solid foundation on which I continue to build my testimony of the Lord's divinity and His Church.

Utah is where the saints were to gather. Early missionaries gave presentations on Utah and encouraged the members to make the move. My ancestors came from Denmark and Texas expressly to gather as saints and build Zion. For them Zion meant Utah.⁵⁶⁴ They trusted in the Lord and in their prophet leaders so when asked to settle in Deseret/Oasis they did. Their faith was instilled in their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and is still evident today.

HARD WORK

A desolate barren land, their assigned parcel of Zion, was what greeted these early settlers. Two of my great-grandmothers despaired when they saw the desert stretching before them and longed for the beautiful flowers of Denmark or the cool mountain streams of Fillmore. Both of them, and many others I'm sure, sought and found the Lord's strength to carry on.

Building Zion required hard work—strenuous manual labor. For the men: plowing fields with a team, digging canals with horse-drawn scrapers and shovels, milking cows by hand, hauling boulder to make dams, and then doing it all again when they washed

⁵⁶⁴ As stated by Elder Russell M. Nelson, "True, in the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well. But now the gathering takes place in each nation. The place of gathering for Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; the place of gathering for Nigerian Saints is in Nigeria; the place of gathering for Korean Saints is in Korea; and so forth. Zion is 'the pure in heart.' (D&C 97:21.) Zion is wherever righteous Saints are." (Russell M. Nelson, "The Gathering of Scattered Israel," *Ensign*, November 2006.

out. Women worked hard as well: hauling water from the well for washing clothes and bathing, heating it on a wood-burning stove, planting and harvesting vegetable gardens, bottling fruit, surviving without electricity. Doing all this and more without murmuring or complaining.

PERSEVERANCE

These folks were doggedly resolute. It was said that “Mormon farmers could make water run uphill.” They found ways to solve their many problems. “Make do, or do without” was a code they lived by. They survived the Great Depression; frugality was their watchword. In the beginning, there was no store to shop at, no YouTube to turn to for solving problems. Their methods were trial and error, learn from mistakes, and keep on keeping on.

The story of Oasis is a “rags to riches story.” Where Deseret’s early settlers ate pigweed and lumpy dick, residents today enjoy good nutritious meals. Where the adult pioneers went barefooted in the summer and wore moccasins made of denim or leather in the winter, many now have a selection of good footwear. Where it was a struggle to get cash and people used tin coins, the median annual household income for Millard County is now \$63,221 with 22.6% of the households earning over \$100,000 (July 2022).⁵⁶⁵

The perseverance of the Oasis saints brought forth the Lord’s blessings. “Every foot of progress, every inch of advancement made in this desert country was stubbornly resisted by nature and was overcome only by tenacious persistence and repeated efforts.”⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ “Where Do the Richest People Live in Utah,” <https://www.abc4.com/news/local-news/w>, July 6, 2022.

⁵⁶⁶ Ekins and Warnick, *Milestones*, 435.

These endeavors bore fruit and can be seen in their descendants who have raised successful families and prospered in a barren land. West Millard has fulfilled prophecy and its destiny. It has become “a land flowing with milk and honey.”⁵⁶⁷

So, you might wonder, how do I answer the question “Where are you from?” My first response would be, “I’m from Nampa, Idaho.” If that’s not sufficient, my rejoinder would be, “...near Boise.” Usually that will suffice, and it’s correct; I’ve lived in Nampa, for fifty years. But suppose I’m asked, “Alright, but where are you from originally?” Now that’s a question that will elicit, “I’m from Oasis, Utah.” For clarification, I’ll add “Oasis is to Delta as Bethlehem is to Jerusalem—a neighboring community of some renown.”

⁵⁶⁷ *Old Testament*, Numbers 14:8.

APPENDIX

CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY *CXVIII*

*“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you.”*⁵⁶⁸

As a boy in the Oasis Ward, I remember the ward clerk seated at the front of the chapel during sacrament meetings. Now, after visiting the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, I realize how he was fulfilling his calling, what he wrote, and what happened to the record he kept.

Keith Erickson, who served for 7 years as the Church History Library Director, explained its purpose.

The library is a building, but it also the front door to a tremendous world-wide collection of records about the Church’s history. We actually store the records in more than two dozen locations around the world. We manage them as part of a single collection. The library has an online catalog. You can search and it’s searching all the different places around the world.

⁵⁶⁸ Doctrine and Covenants 21:1.

*It involves gathering records. We have people who look for historical records and they're searching around in attics and old places, but also modern and contemporary experiences. We harvest materials from Twitter that talk about the Church and things that are new like digital publications. The task is to gather the records of the Church's history from the very beginning until the present.*⁵⁶⁹

On a bright May morning in 2023, Pam and I went in search of the Church History Library. We had the address, 15 E North Temple Street Salt Lake City, and we had scheduled an appointment, and watched the video, but that didn't mean we knew exactly where to go. It took us some ten to fifteen minutes to park our car in the underground Conference Center lot and begin our search. Once we were ground level, we asked direction and responded, "No, we aren't looking for the Family History Library, thanks."

It really wasn't that hard once we got going in the right direction. The Church History Library is located on the northeast corner of North Temple and Main Street—just across the street from the Conference Center. We actually made it just before the library opened at 10:00 am.

A spacious and towering two-story lobby with a senior missionary custodian greeted us. He directed us to where we needed to be. It was obvious there was much more here than we were going to see.

After a brief orientation about where and how to request the materials we had pre-selected, we were seated in front of some microfiche readers. Interestingly, no pencils or paper are allowed

⁵⁶⁹ Keith Erickson, "Episode 8: The Rock of Revelation," Podcast Saints Season 3, Church History, churchofjesuschrist.org.

in the Church History Library reading room. Pam and I brought USB flash drives to make copies of our finds, but found it was easier to take a photo of an interesting screen with our phones.

Each time we checked out or returned a microfilm reel, it was weighed. I thought that was strange and asked why they did that. Answer: To make sure everything is returned intact and as it was. Evidently, this weighing procedure came about because someone had used a blank page in one of the original documents to write his own “revelation.” He then returned it to the stacks. The addition was discovered to be a forgery—not because of its weight or an analysis of the paper, which was authentic since it was part of the record, but the ink!

The reels of microfilm we looked at from the Oasis Ward are digital versions of the paper records. They are mostly copies of ward, auxiliary, and priesthood minutes. What I found most enlightening were those dealing with the creation of the ward, but it was fun and even, at times, emotional when I came across people I knew. For example, I read my own name as having passed the sacrament as an Aaronic Priesthood holder and that Reed Skeem was my deacon quorum president. I unexpectedly choked up a bit when I read my mother’s name on a list as a 10-year-old Primary student.

Of particular interest were the reports leading up to the decision to remodel the old chapel and build the addition in 1956. Some of this has been incorporated in this work. (See “Wardhouse Remodeled: The Red-brick Building.”)

The ward clerk responsible for the ward record during the 1983 flood did an outstanding work. On the other hand, the ball was dropped at times—there’s a ten-year gap in the record from 1976 to 82. I also wonder what happened to the records from 1983 to 1991.

Did it get turned in? There were comments about some records the ward still had when we visited in 2023.

Frankly, we barely scratched the surface of what is available on the Oasis Ward. The Oasis Ward Historical Manuscript History and Historical Record 1890-1983 has been extremely important to this record and quoted extensively, but we didn't have the time to review the auxiliary minutes very well.

Below are four of our finds from the Church History Library. The first two from 1884 and 1885 are newspaper editorials by John H. Henning. Selection from them were quoted previously, they are presented here in their entirety. Both predate the creation of the ward in 1891. The last two, 1891 and 1900, are from the historical record. I am responsible for the titles of all four articles.

EXTOLLING OASIS—1884

The first entry we came across in the microfilm copies of the Oasis Ward Manuscript History and Historical Record was an editorial praising Oasis. Evidently, the first bishopric included it because they thought it was important to make a statement about their position and potential in Zion. ^{cxix}

Oasis Ward. under date of July 27, 1884, John H. Henning wrote from Oasis to the Deseret News:

Frequently hearing the question asked: 'Where is this place designated Oasis?' it would perhaps be of some interest to your many many readers to hear something about it—especially geographically. For our embryo city, though not boasting of many thousands of inhabitants, nevertheless, covers no mean number of square acres or rather miles, I might insistently add. And if only the area considered entitled us to

a place on the scale, a place in proportion, undoubtedly, we would occupy a position near Philadelphia or Boston.

Our boundary, though not precisely defined yet, may be said to include, more or less, the greater portion of that part of Zion lying between the third and fourth standard parallels south and 112 and 113 longitudes west. But of course, if this appears to be a stretch, I can deduct a few miles from the sides.

We are in the large and spacious county of Millard, on the line of the Utah Central Railway. Our post office is Oasis, while our station bears the misnomer Deseret, so also does our telegraph office. The indispensable store flourishes. We have also a hotel and restaurant. And since the grateful change of time on the U.C. [Utah Central] the opportunities of seeing and inspecting our situation and facilities are given passengers who may feel so inclined. For it is now a breakfast station with an allowance of twenty-five minutes in which to enjoy both the comfort and luxury of a nice warm breakfast. (For to a traveler, it seems indeed a luxury when he has plenty of time to comfortably swallow his meal at the table of our genial catered Brother Edward Webb.)

Our prospects for becoming a large and wealthy settlement and eventually a city are beyond a doubt excellent. And anyone who closely examines the facility of the place cannot fail to discern the same bright future. For firstly, we have plenty of land—miles and miles of it. Secondly, there is an abundance of water which needs only the labor combined with good management (common sense) to bring it upon the land.

The only drawback is the distance to fuel and timber. The former is 15 to 20 miles away and the latter 25 to 30 miles. Yet even this disadvantage is slight, for coal can be obtained by the carload at \$8 per ton, and may be lower next fall. While two or three together could easily purchase a car of coal which, with a load or two of wood, would last all winter.

Then again, our winters are very mild. There are few days but what the south-side of the house is actually hot. Our summers are long and dry. And if our Dr. Koch's theory is correct, [Robert Koch 1843-1910, physician and microbiologist] then indeed we have no "morbified" soil; for the dreaded cholera microbe could not live or flourish in this arid spot. And not a healthier place exists in the land, as all who visit us or reside here can prove.

The usually high water has caused us a great deal of damage, labor and expense. For the third time has the angry Sevier [River] overcome us and cut a new channel. But through the mercy and assistance of Him who has promised to be with His saints in their labors to build up Zion, we know we shall finally succeed. And this fall, when the river is low, en masse we will secure all breaks and dangerous places and tighten and strengthen the dam (Deseret Dam) until we feel satisfied that next spring's freschet will have no effect—unless it be to triple our supply of water.

We cordially invite settlers. Come and see us before you go to Arizona, Colorado, or New Mexico. If you are intending to leave or change your residence, our bonanza is sure!⁵⁷⁰

A VOICE FROM THE DESERT OF SEVIER VALLEY—1885

This is a follow-up article to “Extolling Oasis,” which Mr. Henning wrote the year before. Here Henning entices settlers to come to this area to help build Zion and their own future. He talks about Oasis’ connection to the outside world: “the iron horse passes through our burg twice a day,” he brags of its bounty “large and numerous grain stacks encircling their houses and corrals,” and entices his readers, “an additional plateau of some 100,000 acres or more only waiting for water and the farmers’ tools to make hundreds of new farms and homes.” He concludes by alluding to the abundance of “wild fowl” in the area, an inducement to hunters, perhaps.

To the Editor of The Herald

Perhaps a voice from the desert would not pass unheard. Hearing and reading so much of other places, more blessed in many respects than we are at times, makes us feel “out of the world entirely,” although the iron horse passes through our burg twice a day. To many of you readers, if not to all, this heading will be new and naturally the question “Where is Oasis?” will arise. To remind our friends, and all who feel interested in the progress and development of our “Deseret”

⁵⁷⁰ Henning, “Extolling Oasis, Manuscript History, CHL; see also Deseret News, July 27, 1884, 33:474.

and in the transformation of its sterile and alkaline lands into fertile and productive soil that the good work is still going on with unabated zeal and energy, I will mention our rapid advances, our hopes, and our situation.

Fifty-two miles southwest of Juab Station on the Utah Central Railroad, and in the interior of what is known as the desert or Sevier River Valley, a few miles east of the long-established town of Deseret, lies the young and thrifty settlement of Oasis.

Scarcely five years have elapsed since a few hardy and determined settlers built their humble homes on its almost barren soil. Now as far as the eye can reach eastward a golden yellow floor proclaims that their toil and labor have not been in vain and the large and numerous grain stacks encircling their houses and corrals, with the happy countenances of all, portray the pleasure and satisfaction a bounteous harvest can bring.

On account of the uncertainty attending the water supply heretofore, this is the first year any extensive farming has been attempted and nature seems to have tried to outdo herself by the returns the majority of farmers will receive, which goes to show what fertility there is in this desert land when humored with the life-giving fluid.

At present we receive our water supply from the Deseret dam by what is known as the East Canal, but in the near future we propose to tap the Sevier, about eight or nine miles above the dam, which undoubtedly will secure a certain and sufficient supply of water to not alone irrigate our present limits, but

an additional plateau of some 100,000 acres or more only waiting for water and the farmers' tools to make hundreds of new farms and homes.

Several estimates have been made of the contemplated canal and all satisfactory, considering the immense benefit to be derived therefrom, and work would be commenced at once were it not for our weakness. We lack strength and means, and our working force is too light. We want more settlers, more sturdy and industrious young men (and older ones, too) who are not afraid to battle against the difficulties their fathers had to before them; who are willing to "rough it" a few years for the sake of independence and a home of their own!

We would like to have all who feel that they are too crowded, come and examine our facilities and extend a cordial invitation to everyone to visit us and look at the opportunities and weigh the prospects that are here.

The Utah Central [U.C.] has a station in our town which bears the misnomer Deseret. The Deseret Telegraph and Pacific Express companies also have offices under the same roof.

Near the station are two stores. One, the Oasis Coop., does a flourishing business both in town and along the U.C. A few yards north is the Oasis Hotel where accommodations for both man and beast can be obtained.

Our climate for health cannot be excelled; winters are mild and the nights—always cool and, taken as a whole, a healthier place could not be found.

The only news for some time has been the sad death of Miss Ellen Hutchinson, aged sixteen years, who died at Deseret, September 3, after a brief illness contracted by wearing damp clothing, after having been rained upon.

On the same day, a wedding occurred at Oasis between a Mr. W. Williams from Fillmore and Miss A. M. Rutherford of Oasis and on the 5th inst.⁵⁷¹ As the young couple evinced no disposition to give the customary dance, a party of Deseret boys politely waited upon them, while they were at their evening meal, to ascertain the reason of this unusual deviation. What excuse was made or what passed between them may probably be published under another heading. Suffice it to say, that the convention culminated by the bridegroom being thrown headfirst into the canal three successive times, and one member of the crowd followed accidentally at the last throw. The boys had a good laugh and the bridegroom a good cry. But I am told the affair goes before "His Honor;" if so, the laugh and cry may be reversed.

We have a fine wild fowl range, but I am sorry to say we need a few members of the Game Protective Society in our midst J.H.H.⁵⁷²

Mike Styler, former director of the Utah Department of Natural Resources and an Oasis resident, helps clarify this last sentence, "I would guess that duck and goose hunters were shooting way

571 This is an abbreviation for *instante mense*, meaning a date of the current month.

572 Henning, "Voice from the Desert," *The Herald*, September 13, 1885, 8; see also *Manuscript History*, CHL.

more birds than the author thought proper, therefore the need for someone from the ‘Game Protective Society.’”⁵⁷³

I agree. My uncle, Kelly Hawley (1889-1981), spoke of bringing home a hundred ducks from one expedition to Clear Lake. Evelyn Skeem Webb wrote, “The family hunters thought it was shameful when the limit was lowered from fifty [ducks] to twenty-five.” (See “Early Houses” in this work.)

OASIS WARD CREATION RECORD—1891

I’m impressed that a quarter of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to Deseret to create two new wards. ^{cxx}

In 1887 a Sunday School was organized which has had a continued existence ever since. [penciled in]

1891 at a meeting held at Deseret March 21, 1891, attended by Apostles Frances K. Lyman, John Henry Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Abraham N. Cannon and the Millard Stake Presidency, the Deseret Ward was divided into three wards, the east portion of the old Deseret Ward being organized into a separate ward called Oasis with John Styler as bishop and Lars Hansen as his first counselor and Jacob C. Hawley as his second counselor. They were all three ordained high priests and set apart on that occasion. A number of teachers to act in the new ward were chosen and set apart on the same occasion: Soren Jorgensen, Jim Christensen, Wm. P. Hawley, Lucas H. Noyes, John Anton Iversen, Niels Iversen, John W. Reid, Anton

⁵⁷³ Private email from Mike Styler, April 2023.

Christian Christensen. Wm. P. Hawley was chosen as ward clerk. (emphasis added)

Today, all the Church auxiliary organizations function under the ward's leadership. In 1891, however, each organization had its own leaders and more autonomy. This would account for why these organizations were set up on different dates.

A Relief Society was organized May 8, 1891, with Mrs. Mary Warren as president.

A YLMIA was organized May 21, 1891, with Mrs. Mary F. Webb as president; a Primary Association was also organized on this date with Mrs. Agnes Reid as president.

A YMMIA was organized on Nov. 2, 1891, with Wm. P. Hawley as president. All these associations have had a continued existence ever since.⁵⁷⁴ (emphasis added)

A VERITABLE OASIS IN THE DESERT—1900

Ward Clerk Jensen marked the turn of the century with a special report on the condition of the ward. He describes the town, its inhabitants, and its location. ^{cxxi}

The Oasis Ward consists of the Latter-day Saints residing in a tract of country on the south side of the Sevier River. The center of the ward is the railroad station known as Oasis, but most of the people live in a scattered condition on their farms, the majority of them east and southeast of the railway station.

⁵⁷⁴ Manuscript History, CHL.

The village of Oasis consists of only a few houses clustered around the railway station. It contains three stores and a saloon. This station lies in the midst of a large tract of level country in the great Pahvant Valley.

Water for irrigation purposes is obtained from the Deseret Irrigation Company's canal and is flown across the river.

There are about 35 Mormon families in the Oasis precinct and only a few nonmembers.

Oasis is known for its beautiful shade trees which together with quite a number of orchards give the place the appearance of a veritable oasis in the desert. (emphasis added.)

The farming land is impregnated to a considerable extent with minerals and on this account, crops in certain localities have often failed. This country is splendid for raising lucerne and in this regard leads both Deseret and Hinckley.

Oasis is the shipping point for the whole surrounding country.

The only public building in the place is a schoolhouse in which meetings are also held.

Oasis is 35 miles by the nearest road northwest of Fillmore, two miles east of Deseret and [150] miles from Salt Lake City.

The ward has a Relief Society, a Sunday School, a Y.M. and YLMIA [Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association], and a Primary.⁵⁷⁵

575 Jensen, Manuscript History, 3, CHL. This is actually the first entry in the Oasis Ward Manuscript History and Historical Reports, 1890-1983.

INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS

“When the Mormon Pioneers arrived [in the Salt Lake Valley], they did not happen onto an empty landscape. It is estimated that around 20,000 Native Americans already inhabited the land now encompassed by the boundaries of Utah.”⁵⁷⁶

The Black Hawk Indian War of 1866 was fought against the Utes, but there were several other tribes in the general area of Oasis including the Goshute, Paiute, Shoshone, and Navajo. “The Pahvant were a band of the Ute tribe.”⁵⁷⁷

These native people have long been a subject of interest to those of my generation and before. One of the fun activities for Reed, our friends and me was to hunt for arrowheads and pottery shards in the desert in the early 1960s. We wanted to add to our collections. We would drive out in the desert and look for hills. Indians preferred to make their camps on knolls and that was a good place to start looking. As we searched, we decided it might also be a good

⁵⁷⁶ Marlin Jensen, “The Rest of the Story: Latter-day Saint Relations with Utah’s Native Americans,” See also Wikipedia, Native Americans in Utah.

⁵⁷⁷ Russell Yost, “Pahvant Utes, Facts and History,” The History Junkie Podcast, January 29, 2022.

idea to search in the Black Rock Ridge area south of Deseret. We got excited thinking we might even discover some caves filled with artifacts where Indians had buried their dead. We weren't the first to go there looking for evidence of the original inhabitants of the area. A group came from Delta in 1926.

The remarkably interesting Indian hieroglyphics, just a short distance south of Deseret, are to be visited by a large group of persons of Hinckley, Oasis, Deseret, and Delta next Saturday morning at 9:30, all the cars meeting at the public square by Black's store at that hour. The caravan will leave for the black rocks promptly at ten o'clock.

One may make this trip from Delta easily over good roads, no hills, and fair comfort; as it is only nineteen miles. The trip is not burdensome.

These ancient Indian hieroglyphics may be from 1200 to 2000 years old and bring to your consciousness some startling remembrances to Old World customs of Palestine and Egypt. Speeches and explanations will be given on the spot, making plain the connections.

Those who are interested in this matter, make it a point to attend. Bring your own drinking water, lunch, and combine in groups to use your own auto.⁵⁷⁸

Concerning this petroglyph, current thinking is that although "the meaning of these writings is unknown, some authorities think these symbols were an agreement dividing water

578 "A Trip to the Indian Hieroglyphics," *Chronicle*, November 4, 1926.

and hunting right among the Indians of the lower Sevier River area.”⁵⁷⁹

Reed and I didn’t find any caves—nothing even remotely close to our Indiana Jones imaginations. On the other hand, we saw a lot of examples of small prehistoric art/writing. The large petroglyph is not the only example of stone art left by our Indian friends.

More evidence of the abiding interest in the indigenous people surfaces in this 1932 *Chronicle* article.

*Bernon and Rulon Christensen of Oasis, sons of Alma Christensen, ran across a large piece of pottery in the old Huff field at Oasis and brought it into me. This piece of pottery is slightly broken but now represents the upper part of an olla originally about 14 inches high and about 11 inches in diameter of usual plain gray ware. The rim is outwardly flaring. When in its entirety, the piece was no doubt quite handsome and serviceable. It is unpainted—that is plain ware. It does not show any marks of having been used over a fire—possibly [it] was a storage pot and not a cooking vessel. Close by they found a very tiny arrowhead of jet-black obsidian well made of a pleasing shape and not over half an inch long. I thank the boys very kindly.*⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁹ Discovering Utah’s Ancient Rock Art, utahoutdooractivities.com.

⁵⁸⁰ “Find Large Indian Pot in Huff Field at Oasis: Oasis Skylines,” *Chronicle*, January 16, 1930, 8.

I shared this pottery article with Reed. He's still an ardent Indian lore enthusiast and gives classes in arrowhead knapping. Reed texted back that our grandpa Skeem found two Indian pots on his Oasis property, which were about the size of a one-gallon crock. He sold them for \$5 each.

THE GREAT STONE FACE

Just a few hundred yards to the east of the petroglyph towers a 35-foot lava pillar situated atop the Black Rock ridge. Of course, Reed and I climbed to the top—so have many others.

The bulletin board was the first thing you'd see when entering the Oasis Ward's red-brick church. Adjacent to this short entranceway, there was a foyer that contained a comfortable couch, armchair, and a wall-mounted telephone. I don't recall any artwork depicting the Savior, which is so prevalent in Church's meetinghouses today, but I do remember a photo of the Great Stone Face.

Why would the Oasis Ward display a photo of this geological feature? Lynn Arrave gives us the answer in this 2010 article in the *Deseret News* entitled, "Great Stone Face Resembles Prophet."

Does a likeness of Joseph Smith Jr., first president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, exist in the vast desert of Millard County?

Some think so.

On a remote hillside in Utah's Sevier Desert, about four miles southwest of Deseret and some seventeen miles southwest

of Delta rises a craggy volcanic outcrop. For almost seven decades, area residents and visitors have been attracted to the formation. In it, they can discern the outlines of a man's features: head, brow, nose, mouth, and even perhaps a high collar.



Great Stone Face 110



Joseph Smith Profile

Welcome to the “Great Stone Face,” or the “Guardian of Deseret,” or “Keeper of the Desert.” [It’s also called the Devil’s Chimney.] From a certain angle, notes the book *A History of Millard County*, a 1999 entry in the *Utah Centennial County History Series*, “some see a resemblance to LDS Church founder Joseph Smith. Many Mormons see an uncanny resemblance of this naturally carved formation to profile pictures of church founder Joseph Smith,”⁵⁸¹

⁵⁸¹ Lynn Arave, “Great Stone Face Formation Resembles Prophet,” *Deseret News*.

OASIS ABSTRACTS

There are two abstracts detailing property sold in Oasis. Each has 45 lines that indicate who sold the property (grantor) and to whom (grantee). Most of the sales were from individuals to individuals. The earliest date is February 16, 1866. The most recent date is August 7, 1991. There's a noticeable gap from 1925 to 1960 on both. Below is a copy of the heading of the two sheets and most interesting transactions.

MILLARD COUNTY ABSTRACTS

TOWN Oasis

BLOCK 2 or F

<i>E 20 4th, etc., Bkg. 5 4th. So. 7th cor. lot 2, Blk. 2, Oasis, 30.9 ac,</i>	7
<i>Qark lot 4 Blk. F, lying E-8 point 4 ch. 2nd cor. lot 4</i>	8

7. Alice Alexander grantor sold property to Zion's Coop. Merc. Inst. on December 21, 1893 for \$585.85.

8. Samuel H. Alexander sold to Oasis School District May 5, 1894 for \$1.

Q. 1.04 Bldg F, lying E. of point 4 ch. 22 Sec. 104 8

MILLARD COUNTY ABSTRACTS

TOWN Quail

BLOCK 3 or F

On this page, ZCMI is listed as grantee three times: 1893, 1894, 1895. They are listed as grantor twice: 1895, 1896.

Unfortunately, no map was found at the Millard County Recorder Office:

Laci Worsley, Deputy Recorder

lworsley@co.millard.ut.us

(435) 743-6210

Millard County Recorder Office

50 South Main, Fillmore UT 84631

FORMER RESIDENTS

This section recognizes deceased Oasis folks. More than half of the photos come from FamilySearch.org., others were furnished by family members or obituaries. Not everyone shown here is deceased. In those cases, the living person appears with someone who has passed on. The circa (c.) dates are my best guess. A date without the “c.” is the date indicated with the photo. Pictures were not available for everyone. If we have overlooked anyone, we apologize.

“This is the best water on earth, the best farming land anywhere, and the best place to live in the whole world!”

—Leigh Richmond Cropper Jr., 1949. Milestones, 458.



Some early Oasis residents.

“Agnes Hansen, Josephine Anderson, and Karine Johnson are sisters. They kept up the custom [of their] Norwegian family and met each afternoon to spend a few moments over coffee.”⁵⁸²

⁵⁸² Great Basin Museum, Edward Payne photographer.

*Girls Basketball Champions 1910. Ella Langston Mecham, Ava Jackson Bennett, Lilly Hansen Dillenbeck, Inga Christensen Peterson, Hulda Hansen Dillenbeck, and lying on the ball are Dora Henry Bengie and Carrie Black Jensen. After the picture of the Oak City champions of 1910 appeared in the Chronicle last week, Peter H. Peterson produced this picture of the Oasis Girls' Team who won the Girls' Basketball Game. Their victory was told of in the sports write-up copied from the Chronicle of March 23, 1911. The girls pictured here are all grandmothers now.*⁵⁸³



The girls' victory was told of in the sports write-up in the Chronicle March 23, 1911.

⁵⁸³ Millard County Chronicle March 5, 1951.



On steps of adobe church. Teacher Erma Styler; Students Hazel Skeem, Evelyn Skeem, and Viola Memmott. Boys unknown c.1947



Fontella Skeem's class c.1940 in front of adobe church. Photo from Kathy Babbitt

Fontella Skeem's Sunday School class: Voy Stewart, Jerold Bishop, Dick Willoughby, Fontella Skeem [adult teacher], Marlyn Stanworth, Stewart Inga Mae (Memmott) Shurtz c.1940. Photo from Kathy Babbitt.



Gold and Green Ball Royalty c.1947—Photo from Author

Helen Gene Christensen was crowned queen of Oasis Ward Gold and Green [Ball]; and Melvin Memmott king in ceremonies Saturday night. Their crowns were presented by Lawrence Cropper to the queen and Fontella Skeem to the king. Attendants were Keith Stanworth and Erma Roundy at left and Colleen Gillen trainbearer. At right are Gwen Stanworth, trainbearer, and attendants Shirley Stone and Grant Memmott. Seated in front are Cordell Cropper and Reed Skeem, crown bearers.

Springtime in the Rockies was the theme in decorations and was the song sung by Norma Fae Howell. Green and gold colors were used and a rock garden was built around the throne. A floor-show was given of two dances by teenagers.

Helen was crowned queen of Oasis Ward Gold and Green [Ball]; and Melvin Memmott king in ceremonies Saturday night. Their crowns were presented by Lawrence Cropper to the queen and Fontella Skeem to the king. Attendants were Keith Stanworth and Erma Roundy at left and Colleen Gillen

trainbearer. At right are Gwen Stanworth, trainbearer, and attendants Shirley Stone and Grant Memmott. Seated in front are Cordell Cropper and Reed Skeem, crown bearers. ⁵⁸⁴ c.1947

The Eagle rank is the highest award in Scouting. At the award ceremony, the boy receiving this rank is allowed to sit in the “nest” with others who have been so honored. This is a photo taken when Brent Skeem received his Eagle award. ⁵⁸⁵



Brent Skeem's (tallest boy) Eagle's Nest. Rear: Jack Willoughby, Loren Rowley, Clarence Anderson, Ralph Skeem, Arlo Skeem. 2nd Row: Loenza Willoughby, Beulah Rowley, Leona Anderson, Shirley Skeem, Norma Skeem. Front Row: Steve Willoughby, Scott Rowley, Jack Anderson, Brent Skeem, Ken Skeem, Brent Skeem 1949-1964

Images of other deceased Oasis residents follow. They are grouped alphabetically by family last name. See Image Index if needed.

⁵⁸⁴ *The Millard County Gazette* c.1947, in possession of the author.

⁵⁸⁵ Brent Skeem, FSM KWRJ-493.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Five types of sources were consulted for this work: 1) books, 2) newspapers, 3) online sites, 4) microfilm housed in the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, 5) memories of living individuals. In this selected bibliography I have grouped the first four of these sources citing those which I feel would be of most use to anyone wanting to do future research.

BOOKS

Cropper Family Committee: Kathryn (Kate) Cropper Dorton, Chairwoman, Muriel Cropper Bush, Leigh R. Maxfield, Sebrina Cropper Ekins, Maurine Jacobs Blake, Bryce Allred, Laurel Moody Blake Johnson, Francis Marion Warnick. *Among Deseret's First: Leigh Richmond and Fanny Powell Cropper History, Vol. 1. Remember When Histories, Journals*, 1982.

Day, Stella and Sebrina C. Ekins. *100 Years of History of Millard County or Milestones of Millard*. Art City Publishing Company, 1951.

Lyman, Edward Leo, and Linda King Newell. *A History of Millard County* (PDF). Utah Centennial County

History Series. Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society. ISBN 0-913738-38-7. A History of Millard County | Department of Cultural and Community Engagement | J. Willard Marriott Digital Library (utah.edu).

NEWSPAPERS

All but one of the newspapers used in this work were found at Utah Digital Newspapers which is provided by the University of Utah. (The University of Utah partnered with Brigham Young University, Utah State University, and Salt Lake Community College to create Utah's only keyword-searchable statewide digital newspaper repository.) Advanced Search | Utah Digital Newspapers

"Historical Oasis Landmark Nearly Lost to Vandals —Weather," March 30, 1983, 1 and 3, Millard County Gazette, Vol. 2, Issue 13. Not digitized. The article can be found at the Great Basin Museum in the Oasis scrapbook. The West Millard Great Basin Historical Society and Museum, P.O. Box 550, Delta, UT 84624, 45 W. Main, Delta, Utah, Phone 435-864-8016, <https://www.gbm@frontierneet.net>.

ONLINE SITES

Wikipedia and other searches made on various topics as detailed in the endnotes.

CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY— NON-DIGITAL/MICROFILM

The Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, is open to the public. Materials from the library's collection are accessible in the library's reading room by appointment.

Oasis Ward Manuscript History and Historical Reports, 1890-1983.
Author/Creator: Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 2

Oasis Ward confidential minutes, 1960-1975. Author/Creator: Oasis
Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 10

Oasis Ward confidential minutes, 1892-1975. Author/Creator: Oasis
Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 11

Oasis Ward Aaronic Priesthood minutes and records, 1960 Author/
Creator: Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 12

Oasis Ward Melchizedek Priesthood minutes and records, 1951-1962
Author/Creator: Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 13.

Oasis Ward Relief Society minutes and records, 1891-1971
Author/Creator: Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 14.

Oasis Ward Sunday School minutes and records, 1957-1973
Author/Creator: Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number:
LR 6370 15.

Oasis Ward Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association min-
utes and records, 1945-1955

Author/Creator: Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 16.

Non-digital Oasis Ward Young Women's Mutual Improvement
Association minutes and records, 1947-1973 Author/Creator: Oasis
Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 17.

Oasis Ward Primary Association minutes and records, 1904-1972
Author/Creator: Oasis Ward, Deseret Stake Call Number: LR 6370 18

IMAGE INDEX

Some 400 images are available online. All the images, including these in the text, are online at the Oasis Ward Picture History.

ONLINE IMAGES FOUND AT OASIS WARD PICTURE HISTORY

Access to this photo history can be found using the hyperlink below or by typing the following web address: <https://forms.gle/BeRuBxVxyaHnnXkc6>

You can also access using this QR code to view the photos. Please remember that these photos are not copyrighted by the author and he has been given permission by the photo owners to share them. It is not permitted to use the photos for any commercial or exploitive reasons. By filling out the online form you are agreeing to these terms of use.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to my cousin Reed Skeem for giving me the idea to write this history. He shared the photo of our Junior Sunday School with me and asked for my help identifying some of the children. Thinking of days gone by, I started writing my memories of the Oasis Ward for my children and grandchildren. In the process, I stumbled across the photo of the MIA Gold and Green Ball, a formal dance for young and old in my collection (see page 22). I also needed help identifying the attendees. As I continued my research, my requests for help extended to more and more people, and the work seemingly took on a life of its own.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dale Willoughby (the last bishop of the Oasis Ward), Glenda (Cropper) Roundy Conk (twice Oasis Ward Relief Society President), Penny (Memcott) Stanworth, her husband Gene (residents of Oasis and members of the Deseret-Oasis Ward), Kirk Willoughby (bishop of the Deseret-Oasis Ward), Jay Finlinson, Jerold Bishop and his son Darin who gave me permission to use his father's paintings, Patricia Roundy, Evelyn Skeem Webb, Vicki (Webb) Judkins, Delene (Skeem) Leonard, Sue (Willoughby) and her husband Paul Ludwig, Mike Styler, Kathy Babbitt, Brenda (Skeem) Cullimore, Melissa Kroon, Jefferson Day, Edward Payne, Warren Peterson, Corry Cropper, my

wife Pam Cropper and of course, my childhood buddy, fisherman par excellence and old friend—who loves Oasis maybe even more than I do—my cousin Reed Ervin Skeem, to whom I dedicate this book. (There are two photos of Reed online at Oasis Ward Picture History The first is how I like to remember him. It was taken in 1952 as a school photo. The second dates from sixty years later. His looks didn't improve, but his fishing skills did.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cordell Skeem Cropper is a product of Oasis, Utah. He graduated from nearby Delta High in 1963, and from Brigham Young University with an MA in Spanish in 1973. He married Susan Woods. They resided in Panama while he served 2 years in the United States Army. During his thirty-five-year career in Nampa, Idaho, he taught Spanish, French, German, and English as a Foreign Language. He and Susan are the parents of four children. She died in 2017 and is buried in Oasis. Cordell is now married to Pamela (Hicken) Hall. They continue living in Nampa, where they enjoy reading, cycling, and traveling.

ONLINE IMAGES

- i* B1 Edna, Cordell and Lawrence c. 1950
- ii* C1 UPRR locomotive Promontory Point
- iii* D1 Deseret Ward and stake center 1887
- iv* E1 Oasis Ward Chapel 1951
- v* E2 JB watercolor Old Deseret Church
- vi* E3 Jerold Bishop's watercolor of church
- vii* F news article with photo
- viii* F news clipping
- ix* F2 Carole & Randy wedding
- x* F1 Berdell wedding
- xi* G1 Maudie Wright Cropper
- xii* G2 Neils Skeem
- xiii* G4 News photo dam collapse
- xiv* H1' Evelyn with quilt
- xv* I From the handwritten minutes
- xvi* I New chapel in use
- xvii* I2 Headline from Chronicle

xviii	I2 Elder Lee news photo
xix	I1 4 pages of dedication program
xx	J1 wedding couple cut cake
xxi	J2 Bride and groom
xxii	J3 Primary Conference children
xxiii	J5 Martin L.
xxiv	J6 Scout group Maple Dell
xxv	J7 Scouts eating
xxvi	J8 Certificates: baptism
xxvii	J9 Cordell Primary graduation
xxviii	J10 Deacon ordination
xxix	J11 Pam Primary graduation
xxx	J12 Pam's Individual Award
xxxi	J12 AP Award
xxxii	J13 Duty to God
xxxiii	J15 70s ordination certificate
xxxiv	J14 Bp. Certificate
xxxv	J16 Marriage Certificate
xxxvi	J17 Elder Fenn's certificate
xxxvii	J18 Bp. Cropper presents Duty to God Award
xxxviii	J19 buffalo head pin
xxxix	J21 inside of program
xl	V Alma PP
xli	V Enoch Gillen

- xlii* V Charles Thompson
- xlili* V Antone Andersen
- xliv* V Lars Hansen
- xl v* V Marcus Skeem
- xlvi* V Peter Anderson
- xl vii* V J.C. Hawley
- xl viii* V George T. Reid with others
- xl ix* V Lars Hansen
- l* K11 Adam-ondi Ahman scene photo
- li* L2 mud fort i.e. Fort Deseret
- lii* L4 medal
- liii* L6 honor roll plaque in Deseret-Oasis Ward
- liv* L7 B-17
- lv* L8 Arlo and his flight crew
- lvi* L9 cemetery monument
- lvii* M5 JB Clear Lake school
- lviii* M6 JB Clear Lake Depot
- lix* N5 Looking north toward seed plant from RR houses
- lx* N1 hotel today with white paint
- lxi* O27 Day's store
- lxii* N6 Peck Kelly's barn and old truck
- lxiii* N7 Fon Hawley's barn
- lxiv* O1 Marcus Skeem on tractor
- lxv* O3 threshing on Webb farm

- lxvi* O4 Great Carey ad
- lxvii* O2 Willoughby hay stack with derrick
- lxviii* threshing machine painting
- lxix* ad Carey Act RR
- lxx* O5 & O6 telephone and telegraph key
- lxxi* N3 dam construction with horses
- lxxii* N4 Sevier River Bridge Dam
- lxxiii* O9 Mules and driver
- lxxiv* O7 Harold Skeem sheep
- lxxv* P Ad Brands
- lxxvi* O12 Ad Farmer Auction
- lxxvii* O8 Cordell feeding pigs
- lxxviii* O10 Fred Petersen horses
- lxxix* O13 Anton Christensen horse
- lxxx* O12 farmer auction sale
- lxxxi* O14 creamery
- lxxxii* Z1 team of 3 horses
- lxxxiii* O16 UP RR schedule Oasis stop
- lxxxiv* O17 UP officials and Oasis crew
- lxxxv* O19 Recording seed weight
- lxxxvi* O20 Seed Plant with stacked seed sacks
- lxxxvii* O21 ad for Oasis power plant
- lxxxviii* Z Lumber Yard ad
- lxxxix* Z2 Sjostrom warehouse

- xc* Z3 Working with Bees Howard Roundy (son) and Washington (father) 1949 from Oasis Milestones, 696.
- xc*i** Z4 bank ad
- xc*ii** Z7 Schoenberger Place
- xc*iii** Z4 bank ad
- xc*iv** O22, O23, O24, O25 Hinckley Elementary, Seminary, Millard Academy/HHS, Student Housing for MA — watercolors by Jerold Bishop
- xc*v** N1 hotel with white paint
- xc*vi** O29 cartoon image of car and horse
- xc*vii** O30 PO c.1900
- xc*viii** O31 news cartoon-lather
- xc*ix** O32 barber chair
- c* O33 confectionary photo
- ci* P1 Hinckley store
- cii* P2 —P7 Jerold Bishop's watercolors: Deseret Show House Social Hall, Deseret Cash Store painting, Western's Blacksmith Shop, Love's Basic Service in Hinckley, Hilton Bros. Motor Co. Hinckley, Hotel Hinckley/Peterson Home
- ciii* P2 —P7 Jerold Bishop's watercolors: Deseret Show House Social Hall, Deseret Cash Store painting, Western's Blacksmith Shop, Love's Basic Service in Hinckley, Hilton Bros. Motor Co. Hinckley, Hotel Hinckley/Peterson Home
- civ* Q2 Marcus and Betsy home
- cv* Q1 & Q7 pioneer home
- cvi* Q9 James and Thea Christensen home

- cvi* Q3 Peter Hansen home
- cvi* Q6 Berta Jensen home
- cix* Q house—residents unknown
- cx* Q8 Cropper home
- cxi* Z5 Cropper home rear
- cxi* Q4 Jerold Bishop paintings: Clark & LaVeda Bishop's home
- cxi* Q5 Val & Erma Styler's home
- cxi* R1, R2 gate, monument with flags, grave stone, medal, personal photo
- cxv* S1 Hinckley HS basketball team
- cxvi* T2 new warehouse
- cxvii* T1 wedding line outside
- cxviii* U1 Church History Library-bldg.
- cxix* Z6 typed Extolling Oasis first page
- cx* U3 typed Creation Record first page
- cx* Z6 typed Veritable first page

