

HISTORY OF CRYSTAL, IDAHO

Found this again the 15 of ^{July} ~~Oct~~ 1998

by

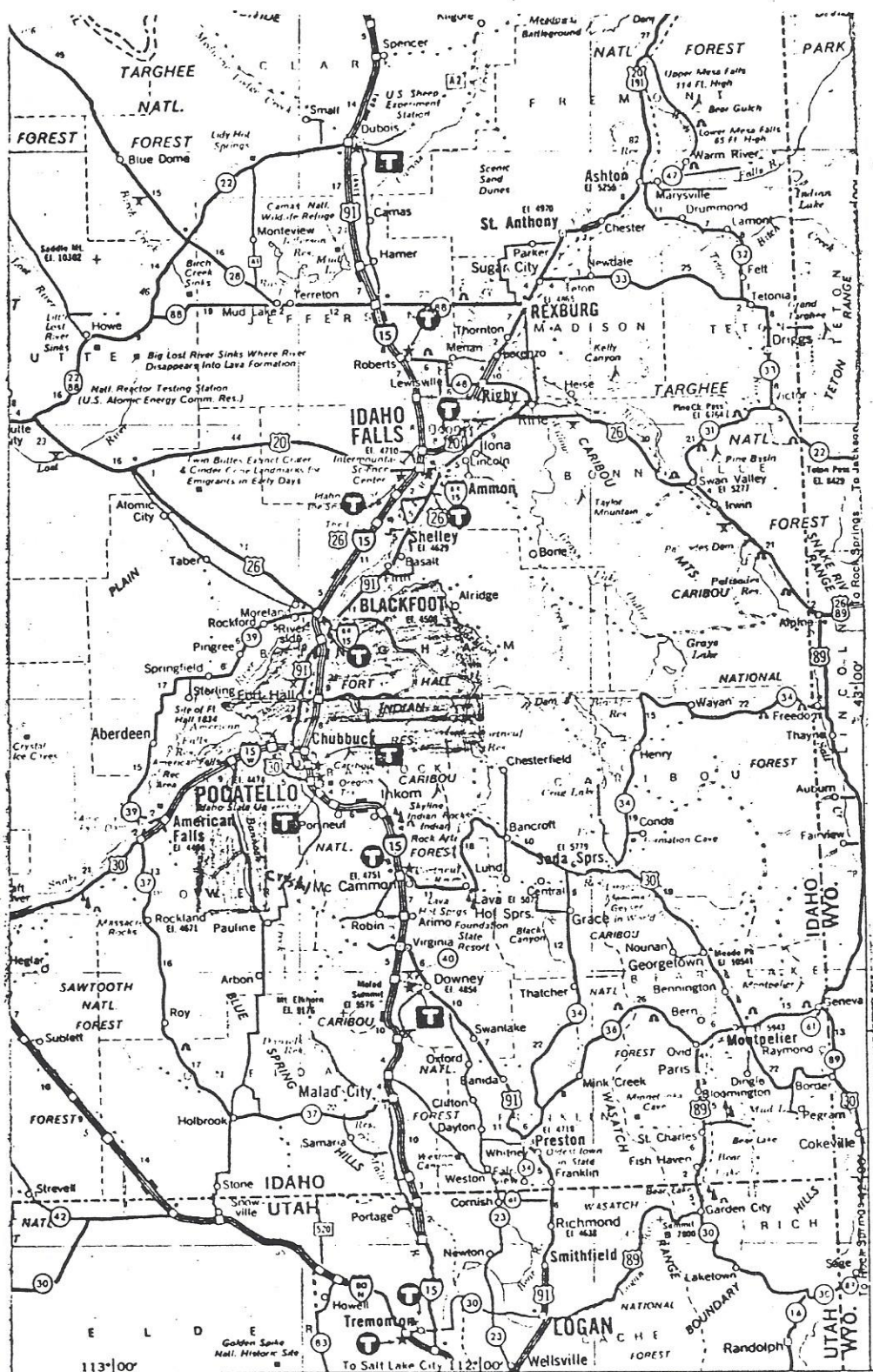
Colleen Hayden Turner
238 South 1015 West
Orem, Utah 84057

Preface

This little history has been under discussion for many years. Many present and former residents of Crystal felt a need for the writing of it, but no one got around to it until now. The enthusiasm and encouragement of all those who helped with the research and writing of this story is greatly acknowledged. June Hayden deserves special thanks for her enthusiasm and unflagging efforts to help track down more sources. One of the exciting results of my quest was the interest engendered among others. Some did research of their own, some sought out and verified traditional stories. At the very least, this project stimulated a lot of animated conversations. Nearly everyone was interested in helping; some called me by long distance telephone to report new sources they had uncovered and to give me information recently remembered.

This history is merely a beginning. My hope is that those who read it will forward additions and corrections to me and that eventually a fuller, more complete story may be prepared.

Colleen Hayden Turner
August, 1978



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beal, M. D. A History of Southeastern Idaho. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1942.
- Brower, Hannah Blair. Pocatello, Idaho. Interview, 24 July 1978.
- Brown, Jennie Broughton. Fort Hall on the Oregon Trail, A Historical Study. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1932.
- Fannin, Cora. "My Life History." Unpublished typescript, Afton, Wyoming, 1957.
- Fannin, Moses. "My Life History." Unpublished typescript, Afton, Wyoming, 1957.
- Hargreaves, Mary Wilma. Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.
- Hayden, Ben L. Crystal, Idaho. Interview, 21 July 1978.
- Hayden, Carl E. Jackpot, Nevada. Telephone interview, 16 July 1978.
- Homestead Patent Records, Power County Records Office, American Falls, Idaho.
- Peterson, F. Ross. Idaho: A Bicentennial History. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976.
- Rice, Delsa Fannin Hayden, Pocatello, Idaho. Interview, 30 May 1978.
- Salt Lake City. Church Historian's Office. Microfilm No. CRMh 2069.
- Salt Lake City. Genealogy Library. Microfilm No. 7424.
- Sherwood, Helen Wrensted. Crystal, Idaho. Interview, 22 July 1978.
- Wright, Elnora. Pocatello, Idaho. Interview, 22 July 1978.

Appendix 4.

Story of Grouse Creek Jack

There lives in this locality on Fort-Hall Reservation an Indian by the name of Grouse Creek Jack, who claims to be 104 years of age, in his early years he was known by Brigham Young; he listened to the preachings of the early pioneers, and was baptized a member of the church along with his wife. He assisted in building the Temple at Logan. He has always avoided the use of alcohol, tobacco, tea and coffee. He settled in the northwestern part of Utah for a time, but he moved, along with the roving Shosone band of Indians that he belonged to, and finally located on the Fort-Hall Reservation. He has quite a posterity - four great grandchildren, several grandchildren, sons and daughters that are still living. His present wife is 20 years younger than he is. He is the oldest member of the Crystal Ward.^a

Grouse Creek Jack was ordained an elder in 1910, two years after his baptism.^b He lived until about 1945 so that by his calculation he was about 114 at the time of his death.

^aManuscript History, Stake Reports of December 31, 1935.

^bCrystal Ward Records, membership record of Grouse Creek Jack.

HISTORY OF CRYSTAL, IDAHO

Crystal, a small agricultural valley located twenty miles southwest of Pocatello, had its beginnings in 1909. For twenty years it was a thriving community before drought and depression produced a significant change in the very nature of the region.

It was Indian country until after the beginning of the twentieth century. A treaty had been negotiated in 1868 with the Bannock and Shoshoni Indians for a reservation and the federal government instructed the territorial governor of Idaho to have the proposed reservation surveyed. The governor instructed the surveyor with a wave of the hand to "survey a good-sized reservation around here for these Indians;"¹ as the surveyor was paid by the mile, he laid out a huge tract of southern Idaho, more than two million acres, for the new reservation.² The ruins of Old Fort Hall stood within the boundaries of the reservation and gave its name to the new home for the Bannocks and Shoshonis.

During the next forty years, the United States government took back chunks of the reservation until there was less than one-half million acres left.³ One such chunk on the southeastern side of the reservation was released for homesteading in 1909 and was first named "Rattlesnake" for a local creek,

but the name was soon changed to "Crystal" for a spring and creek of clear, sparkling water running through the valley.⁴

Indians were still occupying the valley when the first settlers arrived. Obsidian, arrowheads, grinding stones and other Indian relics in abundance attested to the long history of the area as Indian territory. Frank Blair, one of the early homesteaders, took up ground not far from a small Indian village.⁵

The first settlers, including Moses Fannin, Lorenzo S. Whiting, Peter Wrensted, and William Snyder⁶ claimed homesteads on the available creeks, but these areas proved to be susceptible to frost in a valley where the growing season was already short. Later homesteaders settled the rolling hills and planned dry farm operations.

News of the valley spread through surrounding communities, and families from Pocatello, Rockland, Garden Creek and other nearby places⁷ took advantage of the opportunity to better their circumstances. In 1910 Moses Fannin staked a 160-acre claim on Clifton Creek with his wife and eight children.⁸

I worked hard. It was real pioneering. . . . But with the help of my good wife Cora and my family I was able to build a comfortable home and other buildings and fence all my land and make a living. . . . The only means of travel was with a buggy or wagon. I plowed all the land with eight head of horses and a three bottom plow. I would get up at four in the morning and ride horseback until I found the horses and harness them before breakfast. Then plow till dark.⁹

Moses' wife, Cora, recalls:

We had a nice spring of nice cold mountain water only a short distance from the house that never froze in the winter. We had one hundred and sixty acres in our farm and raised wheat, oats, hay, cattle and

poultry. We always raised a big garden.¹⁰

Fannin and his family lived at Crystal for twenty-one years until "through droth (sic) and crop failure during the depression in 1931 we lost our farm at Crystal."¹¹

John Hayden, married and the father of three young children, claimed 160 acres in 1913.¹² John was a Swedish immigrant and had been a sailor, railroad worker and foreman, and carpenter. At forty-five years of age, he saw Crystal as an opportunity to try a new adventure. He built a five-room frame house and outbuildings on his land, as well as building some of the other homes at Crystal. His son Carl recalls the move from Pocatello to Crystal:

Dad had a black horse with one white foot. Her name was Mollie. I remember he had a wagonload of furniture going to Crystal. As he started down Gumbo Hill Mollie shied or stumbled and Dad fell back against the dresser and the mirror broke. When he got to the homestead he straightened up the remaining piece of glass and forever after we had a five-inch panel of glass in the dresser.¹³

Peter Wrensted became the first Forest Service supervisor of Caribou National Forest when Theodore Roosevelt was president in 1903. Six years later, when the land adjoining the forest opened for settlement, Peter claimed 160 acres.

His son Carl also claimed 160 nearby acres. ~~Carl is one of the few original homesteaders who still lives and works on the home place.~~¹⁴ *died about 1974*

The first homestead law was passed by the United States government in 1862. It provided free land upon completion of a five-year tenancy and cultivation of the land. By payment of \$1.25 per acre the claimant could gain title after

fourteen months. As the good land was settled and demand for land continued, Congress passed the Desert Land Act of 1877 which allowed 320 acres at twenty-five cents an acre at the time of filing the claim and \$1.00 an acre within three years, after completion of irrigating works adequate to water one-eighth of the tract. As the early dry farm experiments proved successful, often producing crops annually, arid and semi-arid lands acquired new value and in 1891 legislation was passed to reduce the size of entries under the Desert Land Act to 160 acres,¹⁵ but discussion nonetheless continued in Congress as to the amount of land required for successful dry farming. In 1908 Congressman William A. Reeder of Kansas was emphatic that dry farming was not a viable method of agriculture.

I say that he (the settler) cannot make a living on 640 acres of it, nor 1,280 acres. There is the trouble. If he could make a living on 320 acres, it would be all right, but there is where most people are deceived. They cannot make a living on 640 acres in most cases.¹⁶

In February, 1909 the Enlarged Homestead Act was passed which again allowed 320 acres of arid or semi-arid land for dry farming at a price of \$1.25 per acre with five years' tenancy and cultivation. Senator Fred Dubois kept Idaho from falling under the Enlarged Homestead Act because he believed there were areas of his state that though non-irrigable could be successfully farmed on an annual basis.¹⁷ However, in June, 1910, Idaho requested and was brought under the Enlarged Homestead Act and in 1912 the law was revised to allow final proof after three years' residence.¹⁸ However,

the evidence in Crystal indicates that 160 acres was the commonly accepted amount for homestead, though some claimed forty, eighty, or 120 acres, and most filed final proof only after five years or more residence.¹⁹

Areas where irrigation was feasible grew hay and alfalfa but even this was risky because the Indians retained prior water rights and dry years left no water in the streams. The first irrigating works were installed on the head of Rattlesnake Creek by George S. Bradley who came into the valley in 1898. George eventually rigged up a generating system and enjoyed the only electric lights in the region. In years when the creek went dry George resorted to kerosene like everybody else.²⁰

The virgin land had virtually no weeds. What weeding was needed could be done with a hoe. Weeds were imported with seed from the mid-west until at present there is no area, virgin or cultivated, that is free of weeds. The land was fertile and when rainfall was adequate it produced good crops.²¹

While the land could not be mortgaged prior to final proof, some used their homestead as a grubstake. Instead of trying to earn their living on the land, they "proved up" by falsifying the amount of land under cultivation. Since little checking was done because of lack of manpower, there was little danger they would be discovered. Tax notices were sent out on the basis of the homestead patent application and the mortgage companies then loaned money on the tax notice.

Upon receiving the loan money, the settler absconded. On the other hand, sometimes the value of the land fell below the value of the outstanding loan on it, in which case the loan companies occasionally foreclosed unmortgaged land as well as mortgaged up to the value of the loan.²²

More often, proved up patents were sold to a neighboring homesteader. Elnora Wright had taken out a homestead when she came to teach school in 1918. She married and moved onto her husband's homestead and agreed to sell hers to Art Stewart. Art brought \$5.00 or \$10.00 payments when he could. Elnora, wishing to avoid the hassle of \$10.00 payments, gave the deed to Art, whereupon he ceased making payments.²³

In the early days Crystal boasted an amusement hall where rollicking dances were regularly held, the infants and toddlers sleeping peacefully in corners. Adjoining the amusement hall was a General Store, owned by William Snyder, which sold everything from coal oil to horse collars to needles and thread. Snyder also ran the first post office which opened in 1911. There was no regularly scheduled mail route or carrier. Whoever was coming by the Hawkins post office twelve miles away brought the mail and it sometimes took two months for mail to travel from Pocatello to Crystal.²⁴ When the store closed down the post office was moved to Margary Hayden's and Delsa Fannin Hayden secured the post office contract in 1935 after the untimely death of Margary.²⁵

Crystal was in School District No. 14 which comprised six schools: Gabbart, Davis, Whiting, Crystal, Armstrong,

and Lappland, (so named because its altitude and climate reminded local Scandinavians of their old world origins). Louis S. Moench was the first schoolteacher and the first schoolhouse was built in 1912 at a cost of \$1,725.²⁶ In 1918 Miss Trullinger took her class of eighth graders to American Falls for exams. Norman and Walter Hayden, James Fannin, Jim Butterfield, Edna Burwell and George Stewart got the highest grades in the county on the achievement tests that year.²⁷

A Sunday School was organized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1911 to meet in the schoolhouse and to serve the needs of all denominations. A branch of about one hundred members was organized in 1913 with John A. Brown as Presiding Elder. In 1916, when the Brown family moved away, the branch was organized as a ward with John W. Staley as bishop. Other bishops of Crystal Ward were Moses Fannin, Lorenzo S. Whiting and John Myler.²⁸ The ward took pride in counting among its membership an Old Indian, Grouse Creek Jack and his wife. Grouse Creek figured he was born about 1833 in what is now Box Elder County, Utah. When he was baptized in 1908 he claimed to be the first Indian convert in Idaho.²⁹

Crystal was still booming when the depression struck in 1929 and farm prices began to fall. Two years later Crystal suffered a severe and prolonged drought and the combined disaster forced some to sell their property and leave; others lost their land through foreclosure. The stake reports of

Crystal Ward offer a poignant description of the break-up of the community:

This ward is suffering a drought - had no rain for several months.³⁰

The crops in this locality are below average on account of the shortage of rain.³¹

It seems that there is an inclination for several families to move out of this Ward, to live in the Salmon Country. Some of the families have already gone; more will probably go in the spring of 1932.³²

Bishop L. S. Whiting and family and three other families including the ward clerk have left the ward and gone to the Salmon River country. The first three months of this year no Sacrament meetings have been held, in fact the Ward is disorganized.³³

The wheat crop in this section was practically a failure on account of drought, very little was harvested. . . .Crops have been very poor, due to lack of moisture. Many of the people have left Crystal to seek a better country, also to find better school facilities. This has reduced the membership to about one-half, the population now consists of 51 souls.³⁴

Crop conditions were slightly better during 1934. The outlook for dry farms for 1935 are very good.³⁵

The people in this locality are very discouraged. The crops that at one time looked exceptionally good are failing very fast; the excessive heat is burning everything up, and what is left will have the smut.³⁶

This Ward is in a very unsettled condition. . . . On January 1, 1935, this Ward had 15 families. Since then some have moved away.³⁷

Some managed to outlast the drought; as they were able, they mortgaged their farms and purchased the farms of their neighbors, but boom days were over. Crystal retrenched and settled down to quiet isolation.

Ben Hayden, the son of John Hayden, currently owns and farms seventeen of the old homesteads. His holdings total about 2500 acres which he farms with the help of his wife

June and their children. Ben has modified the dry farming techniques that were recommended in the early days in that he plows in the spring, not the fall. He leaves one-half his acreage fallow each year and the fallow land is clean-cultivated during the summer to keep down weeds and conserve the moisture. Winter wheat is planted in September for harvesting the following August. In normal years when adequate rain falls in May, June, and July, the land produces thirty to thirty-five bushels per acre. Averaging in the drought years reduces the average yield to twenty to thirty bushels per acre. The land is fertile and in the early days with poor equipment was capable of producing a good yield.³⁸

Some experimentation has been done to produce annual crops through the use of fertilizer and crop rotation. Short term projects of three to four years indicate some success, but long term projects generally produce below average amounts.³⁹

Time and diligence have proved Congressman Reeder wrong about dry farm practices, and have not vindicated the United States Congress as to the amount of land required for dry land agriculture. Twelve hundred acres of land under cultivation each year requires an availability of twice that much acreage. The farmers who remained at Crystal and purchased or leased the lands of their former neighbors demonstrated that with a sufficient amount of land and good farm practice a successful operation could be maintained. Of approximately seventy-three original families, only a few still own the

original homestead.

Crystal began as a frontier, became a boom community and then settled down to be a quiet farm community. At present there is no school, church, or store at Crystal. Such amenities of civilization disappeared decades ago. The ward was dissolved in 1935; the store disappeared some time after 1921. The school lasted until 1951 but was finally forced to close after alternating its location for several years because of the lack of pupils. Electricity arrived in 1949, but no telephones were available until a private company strung a line from American Falls in 1966.

The days of community dances in the amusement hall are long past. Residents, past and present, content themselves with an annual picnic to keep friendships alive. Owners of many of the farms now reside in Pocatello, living in the old farm houses only during periods of planting and harvest. No maps except the detailed topographic maps of the United States government betray this quiet valley where one can still find an occasional obsidian arrowhead. The rich heritage and colorful history of Crystal is all but forgotten except by those who lived there.

FOOTNOTES

¹F. Ross Peterson, Idaho: A Bicentennial History, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976), p. 339.

²Ibid.

³Jennie Broughton Brown, Fort Hall on the Oregon Trail, A Historical Study, (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1932), p. 388.

⁴Interview with Hannah Blair Brower, Pocatello, Idaho, 24 July 1978.

⁵Ibid.

⁶M. D. Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho, (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1942), p. 190.

⁷Crystal Ward Records, Salt Lake City Genealogical Library, Microfilm No. 7424.

⁸Moses Fannin, Homestead Patent No. 562 831, Instrument No. 9676, Book 49, Page 17, Records of Power County, Idaho. See Appendix 1.

⁹Moses Fannin, "My Life History," (unpublished type-script), Afton, Wyoming, 1957, p. 3.

¹⁰Cora Fannin, "My Life History," (unpublished type-script), Afton, Wyoming, 1957, p. 3.

¹¹Moses Fannin, *ibid*, p. 4.

¹²John A. B. Hayden, Homestead Patent No. 669 381, Instrument No. 21033, Book 49, Page 292, Records of Power County, Idaho. See Appendix 1.

¹³Interview by telephone with Carl E. Hayden, Jackpot, Nevada, 16 July, 1978.

¹⁴Interview with Helen Wrensted Sherwood, Crystal, Idaho, 22 July 1978.

¹⁵Mary Wilma Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 334-337.

¹⁶Congressional Record, 60th Congress, 1st Session, p. 6832 (April 1, 1908). Cited in Hargreaves, p. 348.

- ¹⁷Hargreaves, p. 349.
- ¹⁸Ibid, p. 351.
- ¹⁹See Appendix 2 and 3.
- ²⁰Telephone conversation with Brower, 11 August 1978.
- ²¹Interview with Ben L. Hayden, Crystal, Idaho, 21 July 1978.
- ²²Ibid.
- ²³Interview with Elnora Wright, Pocatello, Idaho, 22 July 1978.
- ²⁴Crystal Ward Manuscript History, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Microfilm No. CRMh 2069.
- ²⁵Interview with Delsa Fannin Hayden Rice, 12 August 1978.
- ²⁶Manuscript History, ibid.
- ²⁷Wright interview.
- ²⁸Manuscript History, ibid.
- ²⁹Crystal Ward Records, ibid. See Appendix 4.
- ³⁰Manuscript History, 30 June 1931.
- ³¹Ibid, 30 September 1931.
- ³²Ibid, 31 December 1931.
- ³³Ibid, 30 March 1932.
- ³⁴Ibid, 31 December, 1933.
- ³⁵Ibid, 31 December, 1934.
- ³⁶Ibid, 30 June 1935.
- ³⁷Ibid, 30 September 1935.
- ³⁸Hayden interview.
- ³⁹Ibid.

Appendix 2.

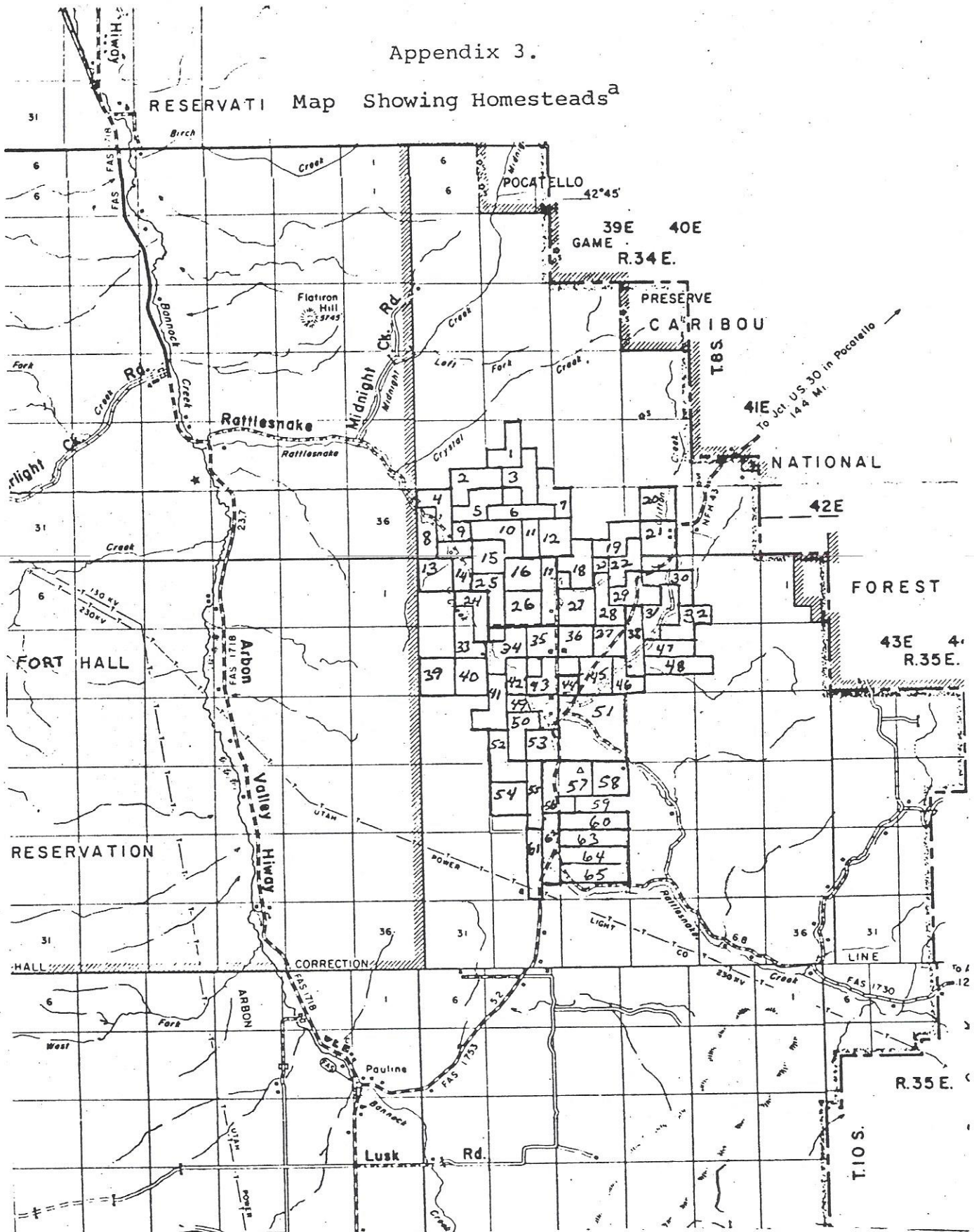
Partial list of homesteaders with dates of filing final proof.^a

Joe Armstrong	8- 3-15	Will M. Main	5-13-21
Val Alsworth	10-8-13	Arthur Main	11-23-14
C. R. Butterfield	9-29-13	Paul L. Martin	9-15-16
Albert Beal	6- 7-13	Benjamin McClain	7-24-11
Alma Butterfield	7-25-17	Delbert Nebeker	2- 2-17
Frank Blair	-16	Hugh Poling	11-26-15
Wm. Henry Breeze	9-29-19	Sid Phillips	11-25-12
Ezra Burwell	3-13-14	Thomas O. Phillips	3- 4-12
James W. Burton	9-27-18	Lish Poole	6-18-20
Charles Butterfield	3-15-15	Daniel Pope	3-21-16
Bill Butterfield	3- 3-15	Sidney Peck	5- 3-15
Erastus Capel	12-4-19	John Reddy	-14
Floyd Denning	4- 8-16	William C. Snyder	5-10-10
James C. Davis	11-20-16	Sam Stewart	6- 7-20
Martison Dennison	3-20-16	Dave Sievert	5-16-20
Moses Fannin	4-29-16	H. L. Trego	1-21-13
John Francis	5- 1-16	Peter Wrensted	3- 7-12
Keith Farr	8-21-16	Elnora Wright	5-13-16
Sam Garrett		Edgar K. Watson	2-18-15
Emma Green	6- 8-11	Grant Williams	-10
Martin Hayden	8-19-19	George Woods	11-16-16
John A. B. Hayden	9-23-19	L. S. Whiting	1-10-14
Jim Huff	5- 4-17	L. S. Whiting, Sr.	2-27-18
Lyman Hampson	8-19-19	Forres Whiting	3-10-14
Horace Humphrey	10-30-18	George Weber	10-31-14
Dave Handy	10-8-21	Chester Smith	12-14-54
Mary Jane Howells	10-3-18	Charlie Wanstreet	1-21-13
Carl Axsell Johnson	6-16-20	Robert Wheatly	8- 7-18
Arthur Light	5- 7-17	Howard Tate	3-13-14
Josie Light	4-27-17	Ralph W. Rossiter	3-19-17
Alvie Lowman	1- 5-16	Maurice J. Rossiter	2-26-15
Max Lowman	5- 3-13		
C. M. Light	4-27-17		

^a Homestead Patent Records, Power County Recorders Office, American Falls, Idaho.

Appendix 3.

RESERVATI Map Showing Homesteads^a



^a Map and key prepared from a chart of the homesteads constructed by Walter T. Hayden.

Key to Homestead Locations

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Delbert "Lew" Nebeker | 34. Henry Cutler |
| 2. Arthur Main | 35. Lorenzo S. Whiting |
| 3. James C. Davis | 36. Forres Whiting |
| 4. James W. Burton | 37. Thomas O. Phillips |
| 5. Charles Butterfield | 38. H. L. Trego |
| 6. C. R. Butterfield | 39. Carl Axsell Johnson |
| 7. Alma Butterfield | 40. Henry Breeze |
| 8. George Weber | 41. Edgar K. Watson |
| 9. Lish Poole | 42. Melvin Meadows |
| 10. Bill Butterfield | 43. L. S. Whiting |
| 11. Monroe Johnson | 44. Dave Handy |
| 12. Sid Peck | 45. Val Alsworth |
| 13. Sam Stewart | 46. Dr. Pettit |
| 14. Benjamin W. McClain | 47. vacant |
| 15. Lonnie Stewart | 48. Emma Green |
| 16. Daniel Pope | 49. William C. Snyder |
| 17. John Hayden | 50. Wilford Morgan |
| 18. Carl Wrensted | 51. School section |
| 19. Martin Hayden | 52. Kieth Farr |
| 20. Jim Huff | 53. Lyman Hampson |
| 21. Peter Wrensted | 54. Joe Armstrong |
| 22. Josie Light | 55. Albert Beal |
| 23. Mary Jane Howells | 56. Sid Phillips |
| 24. W. Ed Verley | 57. Ralph Whiting |
| 25. Max Lowman | 58. John W. Staley |
| 26. Gertrude Green | 59. vacant |
| 27. C. M. Light | 60. Hugh Poling |
| 28. Erastus Capel | 61. Sam Garrett |
| 29. Arthur Light | 62. John Reddy |
| 30. John Francis | 63. Floyd Denning |
| 31. Moses Fannin | 64. Jacob Schrader |
| 32. Ezra Burwell | 65. John Poling |
| 33. Isaac Phillips | |