

SCIPIO, UTAH HISTORY

Steep rugged canyons at the entrances of the round valley now known as Scipio were a little intimidating to the early settlers traveling from the Salt Lake Valley to the communities of southern Utah. The beautiful little round valley was eight miles long and three miles wide, with an elevation of 5,306 feet.

In 1857, Benjamin H. Johnson was called to establish a mail station at the mouth of the canyon, known today as Scipio Pass. Ben soon earned the reputation as one of the best station masters on the line and was a top hand with horses. At the station weary travelers could find rest, water and food as well as water and feed for their teams, before traveling up the pass. He always had a fresh team ready for the stage coach drivers.

It didn't take long before Pioneer settlers began to notice the little round valley as a perspective location for a home and farm land. In the spring of 1860, settlers came into the valley and set up their residence on the west side of a small stream of water, which wound its way from the upper valley. At first they lived in their wagons and dugouts and as soon as possible rough log cabins were built. The little community was named Graball; the name was later changed to Round Valley. This first location was about two and one-half miles southwest from Scipio's present location. Thomas H. Robins, William Robins, Benjamin H. Johnson, Elias F. Pearson, John Brown, James Mathews and Samuel Kershaw were first in the valley. A few months later, John Yeardley, George Monroe, John Memmott, William Shelton, Levi Savage and Peter Boyce arrived. They are known as the original thirteen settlers of Round Valley.

They began to clear the land and planted crops to provide food for their families. The early settlers worked hard, but it was not long before they realized water would have to be conserved. The spring flood waters, in the "Upper Valley" located about ten miles to the south east, ponded into a shallow natural lake and the excess flowed out and down to the lower valley which was used to water the crops. The water was usually gone by June. On March 13, 1861, the settlers build a sod and brush dam across the north end of the shallow lake in the upper valley. The dam held back the water and the water leaving the lake could be controlled as it come into the lower valley for irrigation. It is now known as the Scipio Lake Dam.

Because Graball was located close to the mountains, there was little protection from the Indians who threatened Pioneer settlements and often made raids on the livestock.

In March, 1861, Elder George A. Smith and Joseph Young set up the Robinsville Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Graball with Benjamin H. Johnson, President, Elias F. Pearson acting as the Presiding Elder and Levi Savage as Clerk. The branch was part of the Fillmore Ward. On June 29, 1862, the members of the church held their first meeting in the school house. The one room school house was built by donations of produce and labor from the settlers. The school had a dirt floor, chinked log walls plastered with mud, a roof covered with dirt and was it heated by a fireplace. The first teacher in the new school was Thomas Memmott, a young school teacher who had just migrated from England to Graball to reside. The school also served as the Social Hall.

The following spring the saints of Graball were asked to furnish a team and a wagon to transport needy saints from Florence, Nebraska to Graball.

Later the Scipio Lake Dam broke and water covered over one hundred acres of plowed ground. The sod and brush dam was not strong enough to hold back the increased supply of water. By spring a much larger, stronger dam was built of rocks. The dam has had reinforcements through the years but is still being used today and is said to be the oldest dam in the State of Utah.

The Indians became more troublesome and Brigham Young suggested the settlers move near

the center of the valley where more people could join them and they could protect themselves better. He promised them if they moved, the water would be increased to provide for all. On April 29, 1863 and again on May 16, 1863, President Brigham Young visited the people in Round Valley and advised them to move to a more suitable, safer location. On May 17 most of the men in the settlement went two and one half miles northeast of Round Valley with President Brigham Young and his son Joseph A. Young to the proposed new location for the community. President Young put his cane on the ground and said. "This will be the center to town." A decision was made by the settlement that they would move to the new location. The town was surveyed into 10 acre blocks, with each block divided into four lots. The new streets ran north and south; east and west. Each man received a plot of ground for their homes, gardens and orchards. All of the inhabitants were farmers except Levi Savage who was a cattle and sheep man. Soon some of the families started to tear down their cabins in Graball (Round Valley) and began rebuild them at the new site. It is said that Elder Jesse Martin's wife, Sophrona, was the first white woman to live there.

Round Valley's name was changed to Scipio after Scipio A. Kenner, a lawyer, telegraph operator, secretary and driver to Brigham Young. It took a while for the new name to take hold because people called it Round Valley for some time later.

The Indians continued to be a problem to the settlers and during an Indian raid on the livestock in Scipio, James Russell Ivie and a young boy Henry Wright were killed. The next day a friendly Indian, though some say he was a spy, because and livestock raids always happened after he came to town, was killed by James A. Ivie. The Kanosh Indians never came into town without first sending one of their tribe to get permission to enter. They were sorry when they learned James Russell Ivie had been killed because he was their friend.

In the fall the people built a fort in the South end of Scipio to provide protection from the Indians. The town men dismantled their individual log homes and moved the logs to the location of the fort. The logs were then used to construct a uniform series of one room homes. The homes were joined with mud walls to form a square, with entrances on the north and east side of the fort. Henry McArthur was the only one not living in the fort because his cabin was nearby. The men took turns guarding the fort to protect the people and the animals in the corrals. During the day when the men went out to work in the fields or to cut wood in the hills, they went in groups of eight to ten men for protection.

One hundred horses and three hundred head of cattle were stolen during the last Indian raid in 1868. The calves were left behind and sometime during the night a few cows returned home to their calves.

Later peace was once again restored with the Indians. Chief Black Hawk, being gravely ill, wanted to make peace with each of the settlements that he had raided. He came to Scipio with a few of his braves escorted by William Probert and told the settlers he was sorry he and his band had molested and stolen from them.

Soon after last raid in 1868, the people began to once again dismantle their log homes and move out of the fort and onto their own property lots. Scipio began to be a flourishing community.

During a visit to town, Brigham Young advised the saints to make their own clothing, to plant gardens, orchards and fields, and provide for themselves the food and other necessities of life, which they did. Many projects and products were introduced that enabled the settlers sustain life here in the Scipio Valley including wheat and other grains, poultry, eggs, sugar cane, and milk. The early pioneers spun, wove, dipped candles, made soap, processed molasses and did a great many other things to meet their needs and comfort.

In addition, a major source of income for Scipio was the dairy industry. The Dairy Knoll Project

was located on the southeast corner of what is now known as Scipio Lake. The position of the knoll is what made it so important. Equally as important was the cold, fresh water flowing from a natural spring at its base. The spring provided drinking water for a large number of animals. The run-off from above the knoll spread out over the level ground and created lush pasture at this location.

In 1874, the United Order was organized in Scipio – the concept being that all persons would join together in the ownership of property, etc. and all fare alike in satisfying individual needs – at this time the Dairy Knoll Project was created. A committee was appointed and assigned out the different jobs. Peter Freece, P.C. Nielson and Neils Johnson built cow sheds, work houses and pig sheds.

Most of the cattle in the valley were branded with the United Order brand and taken to the location of the Dairy Knoll. Hay was harvested there also. Many of the young girls of Scipio were transported to the knoll in oxen drawn wagons. The trip was about a ten-or-twelve mile journey. The girls would stay at the milking headquarters in a rock building that had been constructed by the men of the community.

It was the girls who, sitting on three-legged milk stools, milked the cows morning and evening. These milkmaids, as they were called, then placed the fresh milk in storage in an ice-cold cistern which had also been constructed of rock. The cream content of the milk was separated out and was churned and turned into butter. The rest of the milk was turned in cheese. These products were supplied to others living in and contributing to the United Order. Some lesser quantities of butter and cheese were marketed for use by others.

The United Order in Scipio only lasted one year. However, the milk industry continued on for many years. A cheese and butter factory, later known as a cooperative and as the Scipio Creamery Company was later established. And it all began with the Dairy Knoll Project.

Being on the Overland Stage route from Salt Lake City to Nevada, Scipio became a hub for freighting, stage coach, and all other manner of travel. Crops were taken to Pioche, Nevada and other mining camps where they were sold for considerable profit.

The old school house was torn down and moved to the north central part of town, where the Brown Store now stands. In March the Millard Stake was organized. The Sunday School and Relief Society were organized by Daniel Thompson. Thomas Callister was chosen as President and Daniel Thompson was set apart as the first Bishop of Scipio. He was succeeded by Thomas Yates.

As more people arrived in Scipio more homes were built. They also built a post office, several blacksmith shops, a stagecoach stop, a grist mill, a molasses mill, a larger school house, stores, barns, sheds, pool halls, a town hall, a Relief Society Building and cultural hall. William Memmott was the first superintendent of the co-op store and it was in part of his home. The Pioneer Cemetery was located in the South east part of town.

The early settlers of Scipio made their own fun and entertainment. They enjoyed dances, with their own brass band and orchestra. Brother Yates and Thomas Memmott organized Junior and Adult choirs with Brother Memmott as the leader. They entertained themselves with rodeos, plays, horse races, foot races, three-legged races, horse shoe throwing contests, ax throwing contests, cow chip throwing contests, pie eating contests, log sawing competitions, parades, and whatever else they could think of for entertainment.

In the fall of 1899, some of the town representatives met in a mass meeting and appointed a committee to begin the process of incorporating the town. This resulted in an election being called January 1, 1900. The following men took the oath of office: William Riley Thompson, President; Thomas Memmott, Secretary; William James Robins, Treasurer; Adoph Hanseen, William Ira Hatch, Trustees; Jesse B. Martin, Marshall.