

## 1863-1883 - Bear Lake Period

### The calling to settle at Bear Lake

We have no record of the calling of Phineas W. Cook and his two wives to go to Bear Lake because no journal exists for that period. However, his daughter Harriet and her husband William Teeples were also called, and her journal describes it as a formal call, to which they responded by selling out and leaving after harvest.

Harriet Teeples Journal: “...in the fall of 1863 we were called to go to Bear Lake Valley to help settle that place. We... traveled over rough roads northward through Utah, passing through Salt Lake City, Ogden and Cache Valley, which was a newly settled district. We stayed at Logan for two or three days with some friends, and to get some flour to take with us for our winter use. Then to Franklin, Idaho, where we stayed overnight and left on the 27th day of November for Paris... We were with my father and family and had six wagons...”



**It was only 45 miles, but ten hard days from Franklin to Paris through the mountains.**

Harriet Teeples Journal: “Although the distance between Franklin and Paris was only forty-five miles, we were on the road ten days, reaching Paris on December 7, 1863. The people who had moved in from the near valleys had made wigwams like Indian teepees, to camp in until they could build log houses, and had now moved into their houses and left the teepees, so we moved into some of them until we could do better. The people who were there were very kind to us, and helped us out by letting us have sortie logs which were already there, and my father being a

*carpenter and builder, he with the help of others soon had a log house of two large rooms ready to move into. They moved in before Christmas day and we all had a nice Christmas dinner in the new house, including some of the people who had come in later than we did.*

## **Why Bear Lake?**

The Homestead Act allowing settlers to take a patent to claim land passed 20 May 1862. Brigham Young had already been informed Texas ranchers were moving into the Bear River Valley, and it was being taken over by an element he did not want near the saints. Already church officials worried that the area between Bear Lake and Evanston, Wyoming was lost to Mormon settlement. So Young sent exploring parties in 1861 and 1862 to find the best routes into Bear Lake Valley. Heber C. Kimball is quoted as saying, “We want to keep out the devils, if possible.”

Charles C. Rich, at that time living in Centerville, was called by Brigham Young to lead the settlement in Bear Lake Valley. Others were called, and they came September 18, 1863 into the northern area of the valley, now Idaho.<sup>1</sup> The Cooks came three months later. Chief Washakie agreed with Brigham Young to allow settlers to come in, possibly because Colonel Connor of the US Army had massacred Indians at the Shoshone winter camp in January of 1863 in Preston, Idaho and he was afraid to say no. However, he maintained that the settlers would take only land at the north end of the lake so his people could have the south end

The pioneers all came the same route: through Franklin Idaho to the Bear River and then East to the confluence of Mink Creek and the Bear River. From Mink Creek they went through the mountains and came down a natural pass called Emigration Canyon. They settled the west side of the valley because of the availability of water and timber. By the end of 1864 there were almost 700 settlers, all instructed to feed and help the native Americans who lived there. In the beginning the settlers stayed at the north end of the lake but slowly moved down and took over land on the south, now at Laketown and Meadowville.<sup>2</sup>

The first winter was relatively mild, but by the next year settlers realized the difficulties they would experience in this high elevation. They lost most of their crops in an early freeze, and many left the area to search for an easier climate. Charles C. Rich voiced his determination to do what the prophet had asked, which obviously is the way Phineas W. Cook felt:

“In the fall of 1863 President Young called me into his office and said, ‘Brother Rich, I want you to go up to Bear Lake Valley and see if it can be opened for settlement, and if it can, I want that you should take a company there and settle it.’ That was all I needed. It was a call. ... There have been many hardships. That I admit...and these we have shared together. But if you want to go somewhere else, that is your right, and I do not want to deprive you of it. If you are of a mind to leave here, my blessing will go with you. But I must stay here, even if I stay alone. Pres. Young called me here, and here I will remain till he releases me and gives me leave to go.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert E. Parson, *A History of Rich County*, (Rich County Commission, 1996), p. 46-53.

<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Parson, *A History of Rich County*, (Rich County Commission, 1996), p. 70-71.

<sup>3</sup> Robert E. Parson, *A History of Rich County*, (Rich County Commission, 1996), p. 55.

Slowly life in the Bear Lake area became a little easier. In 1869 Brigham Young tried to find an easier route into the valley through Huntsville, but roads had not been cut and leveled, and he suggested a road be built from Logan to St. Charles. The people started working on it immediately, and after Highway 89 was finished, the Bear Lake settlers could get to Logan much more easily, and didn't feel as isolated. By 1880 that 35-mile road was altered to come into Garden City.

### Settling in the Bear Lake Valley

Amanda had lost a twin and had a one-month old baby Mary Rozalie when Phineas moved to Bear Lake. Unable to leave her bed all winter, she was cared for by an aunt until she was able to come to Bear Lake. Three months after arriving at Paris, Ann Eliza delivered her fifteenth child, a daughter Aurelia. It must have been an inconvenient time to be obedient to their calling, but they did not turn back.

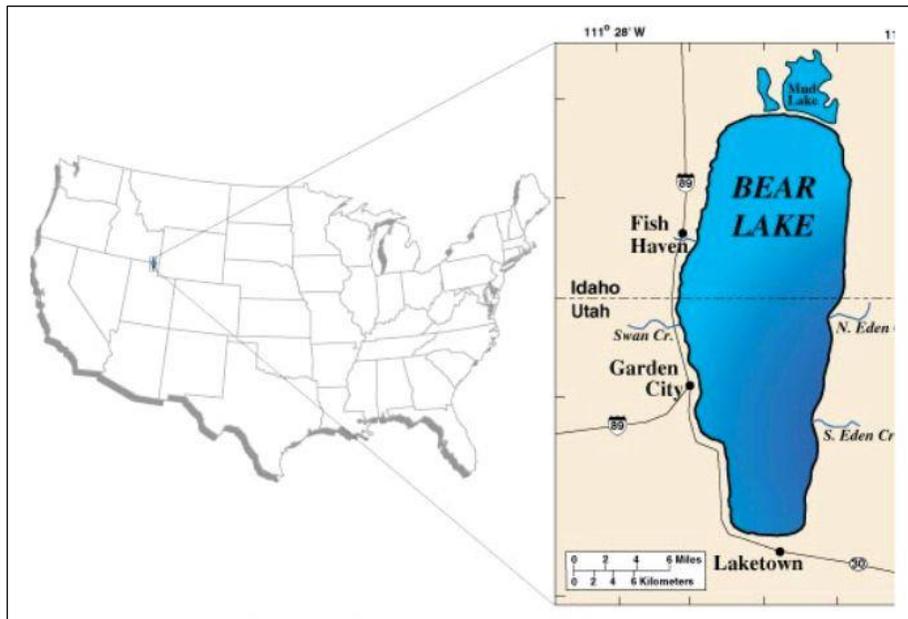
The families lived in Paris (now Idaho) until early spring; then moved again. Having never seen the area, they knew nothing about the land, and there were no towns yet. In fact, Laketown was the first white



Bear Lake on the Utah side from the lookout on US-Highway 89 Agfa 100 slide film  
By Rockclaw1030 - Own work, CC0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=66384743>

settlement in Rich County, Utah, but a fort was not begun until 1867.<sup>4</sup> Before then a few farmers like Phineas built their homes and farms in isolated locations near the Idaho border and often quite far away from neighbors.

Phineas must have made a trip down the west side of the lake, which was still covered by ice. Where a little stream came down the hillside the ice had melted and he saw a



Courtesy pubs.usgs.gov

<sup>4</sup> Robert E. Parson, *A History of Rich County*, (Rich County Commission, 1996).

flock of swans swimming in the lake. He instantly recognized a place for his long hoped-for mill with a stream to provide power. He immediately contacted the local brethren for permission to settle there. It was not a place spoken for by anyone else, and Phineas finally had a place to grow a business and raise his family.

Carl Cook writings: *“The land in this vicinity was considered unimportant, it is said, and therefore was allotted by the Authorities to Father Cook. Whether it was so or not does not matter now, but because of the abundant steam of water, it might be and might have been the best place in the valley, because of the water-power that was later developed and produced a site for father's mills.*



*“He and his boys got out timber from the mountains to build houses and barns. They cleared off the sage-brush and planted crops. They dug ditches for the mills and for irrigation, and soon became well provided for and later were considered*

*well-to-do. The land was a little haven fringed on the west by the mountains and on the east by the lake. The wonderful stream of spring water gushing out of a crevice in the solid rocks, a little more than a mile up the canyon(,) tumbled down into the valley and across the little farmland into the lake. This stream and the lake did much to provide for the comfort and wealth of the family, as well as to afford them pleasure and consolation.*

*“Here in this lovely nook, father with the help of his good wives and their hardy, industrious sons and daughters built a little empire and became in a short time almost independent of the rest of the world. Here they repeated the processes followed in other settlements, planted crops for food and feed for their livestock, built comfortable homes and other necessary improvements as well as the mills.”*

“Bear Lake is one of Rich County’s most striking geographic vistas. The lake is used as a resource for irrigation and power generation, recreation and reflection, and functions as a unique fisheries habitat. It is located within an elongated basin between 2 active fault systems at the boundary between the Basin and Range Province and the Colorado Plateau. The lake covers more than 112 square miles and straddles the Idaho-Utah border. Approximately 20 miles long and 8 miles wide, it sits at an elevation of 5,924 feet along the northeast side of the Wasatch

**Bear Lake as it must have looked when Phineas first traveled south to Swan Creek. (Courtesy <https://bearlake.org/item/swan-creek-mountain-hiking-trail/>)**

Range and on the east side of the Bear River Mountains. It is 208 feet at its deepest point with an average depth of 94 feet. A steep mountain face that begins its climb nearly from the water's edge mostly defines the eastern shore. The western shore rises more gradually through foothills to a high ridge."<sup>5</sup>

"The immediate uses of the water in Bear Lake, local surrounding streams, and the larger Bear River, were primarily for fishing and irrigation. After building a few aspen cabins, the newly settled pioneers began the task of constructing irrigation canals. Within its valley, the Bear River and its tributaries water over 50,000 acres of land in Rich County. The largest irrigation sources are Big Spring and Swan Creek."<sup>6</sup>

Carl Cook writings: *"The family fished in the lake with a homemade seine which was laid out from the homemade boat. They caught loads of suckers, some of which were salted in homemade barrels, and some dried and smoked, but many were hauled away and sold in Salt Lake City, or elsewhere, at a good price. They also caught some fine lake trout by baited hook and line. The trout sold most readily for a very high price."*<sup>7</sup>

"The lake has been called the 'Caribbean of the Rockies' for its unique turquoise-blue color, which is due to the refraction of calcium carbonate (limestone) deposits suspended in the lake." Its content and depth resulted in "several unique species that occur only within the lake."<sup>8</sup>



**Looking toward the east mountains at Bear Lake**  
(Courtesy kla4067-Wikimedia)

"The climate in the valley is warm and dry during the summer, with the first snowfall coming during fall. Fog and snow are common during the winter. The lake is icebound during winter and most of spring. Generally the climatic conditions in Rich County are considered rather severe. Killing frosts are common until June and again in early September affecting a short growing season. Its high elevation makes this region one of the coldest areas in the state. The intense inversion also accounts for some extremely cold temperatures in winter."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Palacios, Patsy; Luecke, Chris; and Robinson, Justin (2007) "Bear Lake Basin : History, geology, biology, people," Natural Resources and Environmental Issues: Vol. 14, Article 1, Geographic Setting, p. 2. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol14/iss1/1>

<sup>6</sup> Palacios, Patsy; Luecke, Chris; and Robinson, Justin (2007) "Bear Lake Basin : History, geology, biology, people," Natural Resources and Environmental Issues: Vol. 14, Article 1, History of Human Impact on Bear Lake, p. 6. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol14/iss1/1>

<sup>7</sup> The Life Story of Carl and Ella Cook," compiled and edited by Josinette Cook Whiting, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981, p. 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> Bear Lake, <https://utah.com/bear-lake-state-park>.

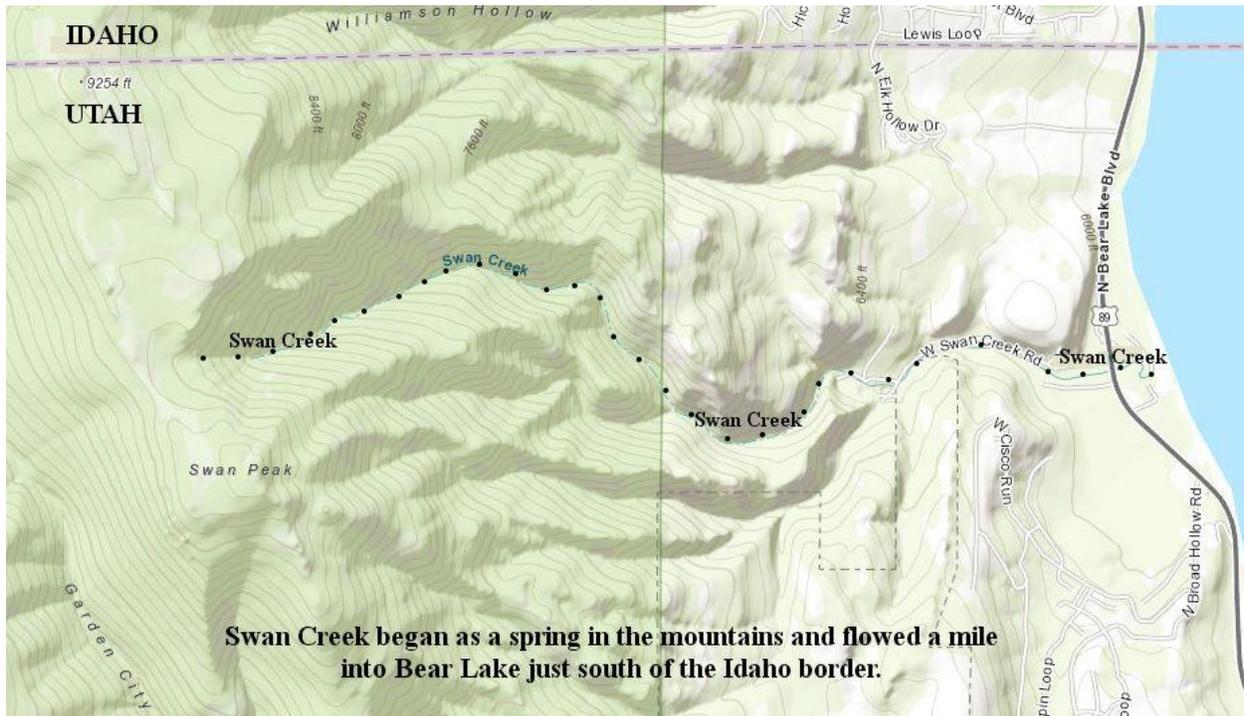
“Elevations in the county vary from a high of 9,045 feet at Cristo Peak on the western edge of the county, to a low of approximately 5,900 feet at the surface of Bear Lake. Existing land use surveys consist of 6 unique types; water (36,352 acres open water), urban land (2,304 acres in Garden City, Laketown, Randolph, and Woodruff), multiple uses (271,040 acres), recreation (2,592 acres), recreation development (3,264 acres mostly privately owned) and agriculture (373,408 acres day cropland, irrigated pastures, native grazing lands) (BLRC, 1979).

## Swan Creek

Mary Rozalie Cook McCann, daughter of Phineas Wolcott Cook and Amanda Polly Savage Cook wrote:

*“Father had located at a place called Swan Creek, now known as Lakota. If you have ever heard of paradise on earth, this place, to a child at least, was it. There was wonderful water power to be obtained in the fast rushing creek, and it in turn emptied out into the beautiful Bear Lake. To the north a foothill rose, and further on dropped down into a sheer cliff. To the south lay the green, open meadows where the Indians camped in huge bands in the spring, and the creek itself came out from beneath a miniature cliff.*

*“My father made use of the power at once. He built the first mill that ground flour in the Valley, and as •••time passed he added more mills; a sawmill, a carding mill where wool was*



<sup>9</sup> Palacios, Patsy; Luecke, Chris; and Robinson, Justin (2007) "Bear Lake Basin : History, geology, biology, people," Natural Resources and Environmental Issues: Vol. 14, Article 1, p. 39, 44. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol14/iss1/1>

*carded and made into rolls, which in turn was spun into yarn and wool batting and made into quilts.”*



**The field just south of Swan Creek, once farmed by the Cooks, was more recently the location of a trailer park.**

Swan Creek was one of the main streams to flow into Bear Lake, and became one of the most important water sources. “The key inflow tributaries for (Bear) Lake are North and South Eden Creeks from the east, Fish Haven, St. Charles, Cheney, and Swan Creeks from the west, and Spring and Big Creek from the south. The outflow is a canal through Dingle Marsh and into the Bear River.

“During drought cycles and low precipitation years, all streams except Swan Creek, dry up or are dewatered for irrigation purposes. Swan Creek is protected as a culinary water

supply and, due to its relatively high flows and short length, is rarely dewatered. The first week of June typically has the highest rates of runoff. Stream flows on the Bear Lake tributaries in 2004, one of the driest years in this watershed, during the spring runoff period were: Swan Creek 73.0 cubic feet/second.”<sup>10</sup>

“Culinary water sources for the communities of Laketown, Pickleville, and Garden City are supplied by springs in the basin. Swan Creek Spring provides water not only to Garden City but also the area along the lakeshore from Garden City to the Idaho boarder (BLRC, 1979).

Carl Cook writings: *“One of the first and most important developments undertaken was the building of a mill to grind their wheat into flour and meal. It was important for themselves and for the other settlers in the valley. The work on the mill, once it was in process of building, had to be rushed along as rapidly as possible. They employed the assistance of their neighbors from near or far away, who would be paid later in mill products or service, or by barter of such things as*



**An early picture of Bear Lake (Courtesy Utah State Historical Society)**

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<sup>10</sup> Palacios, Patsy; Luecke, Chris; and Robinson, Justin (2007) "Bear Lake Basin : History, geology, biology, people," Natural Resources and Environmental Issues: Vol. 14, Article 1, p. 12, 37. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol14/iss1/1>

*they had on hand or as they could spare.*"<sup>11</sup>

Phineas had been employed many times as mills were needed throughout the early settlement of cities and towns in Winter Quarters and in Utah. This was the first time he was in charge of his own mill, and it apparently was the first mill in the Bear Lake area, so he worked hard to finish it as soon as possible. One of the histories of the area gives us a clue about how long it took to finish the mill, including the mill race, the building, and installing the mill irons. We know he must have begun work almost immediately upon moving from Paris to Swan Creek in March or April, 1864, and it was completed by the next year.



**The old Cook home at the mouth of Swan Creek at 2200 Bear Lake Boulevard. The home was built later, but possibly Phineas lived in it for a time.**

A history of the area records highlights of the progress: "The first gristmill was completed in 1865, and the first water-powered saw mill was built in 1886. Electricity from a small hydropower plant on Swan Creek came to the area in 1912."<sup>12</sup>

Carl tells of Phineas' anxiety to finish the gristmill "with harvest at hand and all the people in need of flour." In his determination to provide the service for friends and neighbors, he urged those helping him to work on the Sabbath, and felt the Lord's wrath upon him when he became too ill to complete the installation of mill irons, something only he could do; thus delaying the use of the mill for six long weeks. Phineas later built a saw mill, which was finished before the one cited in the history, but we have no date:

Carl Cook writings: "*They added to the grist-mill, a saw-mill to make lumber, and a carding machine to comb the wool, all of which helped to build their own plantation and the neighborhood.*"<sup>13</sup>

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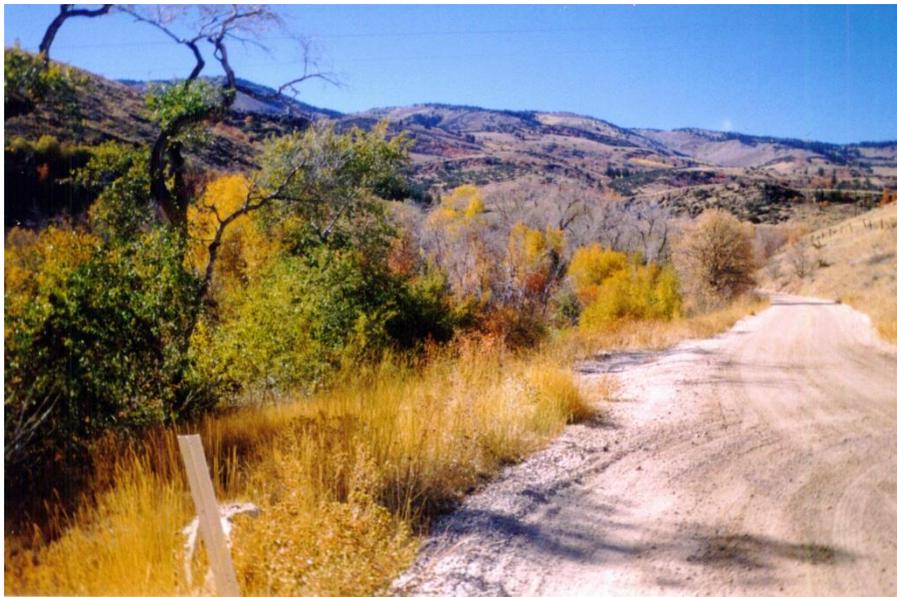
<sup>11</sup> "The Life Story of Carl and Ella Cook," compiled and edited by Josinette Cook Whiting, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Palacios, Patsy; Luecke, Chris; and Robinson, Justin (2007) "Bear Lake Basin : History, geology, biology, people," Natural Resources and Environmental Issues: Vol. 14, Article 1, p. 7. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol14/iss1/1>

<sup>13</sup> The Life Story of Carl and Ella Cook," compiled and edited by Josinette Cook Whiting, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981, p. 7.



**Swan Creek Road takes off west along the creek into the hills at 2150 North Bear Lake Boulevard just south of the Idaho border.**



**It is believed by some descendants that this spot on Swan Creek Road (at 2150 North Bear Lake Boulevard) is the site of Phineas W. Cook's original mill. He probably cut the road himself in the spring of 1864.**

In 1865 and 1867 Phineas made legal claim to his land at Swan Creek: Lots 1.6.7.4 and 12, Block 7 (or 17), containing 20 acres more or less with mill privileges on Lot. 6. He also made a claim on 21¼ acres at the site called Ithaca, now Laketown, signifying an increasing interest in land at the south end of the lake, even though it was at that time claimed by the Shoshone tribe.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rich County Land Records, Book A, Dec. 11-12, 1865; June 28, 1867, (FHL film 1654,400) and p. 645-48.

## Shoshone Indians at Bear Lake

Carl Cook writings: *“They occasionally, but seldom, had some trouble with Indians, but fortunately none very serious. They fed and pampered the Indians and managed to get along with them.”*<sup>15</sup>



**Chief Washakie of the Shoshones**

The south shore areas of Bear Lake were the home of several nomadic Indian tribes, especially during spring and summer. The Shoshone, Bannock, Ute, Sioux, and Blackfoot Indian tribes favored the prime hunting and fishing of the area, but it was the domain of Chief Washakie’s Shoshone people.<sup>16</sup>

“It was customary for these native Americans to spend many weeks on the shores of Bear Lake trading furs, ponies, and fish with other tribes and then eventually with the white man. The Rocky Mountain Fur Company joined the fur trading rendezvous in 1826 and 1827. Permanent settlement of the valley by “white men” was initiated by the Mormon pioneers in the 1860’s. When Congress passed the Homestead Act of 1862, Brigham Young became anxious to obtain control of the land before the non-Mormons did.”<sup>17</sup>

In a treaty of 1863 the Shoshones claimed the whole of Northern Utah north of Salt Lake for their land: on the north to the Snake River, on the east by the Wind River Mountains, and on the south by the Uinta Mountains,<sup>18</sup> but Brigham Young could see other groups were beginning to move in and take over the Bear River Valley between Bear Lake and Evanston. An agreement was made with the tribe to trade food and a share of the Mormon crops for the right to settle on their land in the north part of Bear Lake, but in the fall of 1864 a group of men tested the patience of the Chief Washakie’s people by settling at the south end of the lake. The tribe had summered there according to the agreement with Charles C. Rich, and then when the weather turned cold, moved on, leaving the land vacant.

Almost immediately Joseph W. Moore, who was appointed presiding Mormon Elder, Luther Reed and ten other men came through Paris and down along the west side of the lake, setting up camp at the present site of Meadowville. Luther had been called as part of the Bear Lake expedition to set up a gristmill. It may have been Brigham Young’s decision to disregard the treaty and settle on Indian land in order to keep it from being settled by Gentiles coming into the

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<sup>15</sup> The Life Story of Carl and Ella Cook,” compiled and edited by Josinette Cook Whiting, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Robert E. Parsons, *History of Rich County*, FHL book 979.213 H2p, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Palacios, Patsy; Luecke, Chris; and Robinson, Justin (2007) "Bear Lake Basin : History, geology, biology, people," *Natural Resources and Environmental Issues*: Vol. 14, Article 1, p. 2-3. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol14/iss1/1>

<sup>18</sup> Charles J. Kappler, ed, *Indian Affairs; Laws and Treaties*, 4 vols, (Wash. D.C.: GPO, 1903), 2:650.) Reprinted in Robert E. Parsons, *History of Rich County*, FHL book 979.213 H2p, p. 72.

area.<sup>19</sup> The men continued to camp there; eventually they brought in their families, and began organizing towns at the south end of the lake. Phineas no doubt knew Reed, as they were both in Goshen beginning in 1857.<sup>20</sup> But Phineas apparently did not trouble himself about his old friend because he considered he already had the best spot on the lake for his own mill.

Perhaps this incursion onto Indian land was facilitated by the treaty signed in July 1863 between Utah Superintendent of Indian Affairs James D. Doty and the Utah tribes. Doty negotiated treaties with several of the tribes having interest in Utah lands. He promised the tribes a share of the money and produce from the settlers; the tribes “granted to the Government the right to use the lands of the Shoshones for roads and travel, for military and agricultural settlement and for military posts thereon; to establish ferries over the rivers and to erect houses and to found settlements at stated points from time to time as the country might develop, and to operate telegraph and overland stage lines as well as a railroad.”<sup>21</sup> It was an open invitation for some to settle wherever they wished.

It seemed almost inevitable for the Indians to be displaced. When they discovered the incursion onto their lands at southern Bear Lake, an army of thousands of Indians amassed as a show of force, and they threatened to annihilate all the settlers in the Bear Lake Valley. While the southern settlers escaped to the fort at St. Charles, Charles C. Rich persuaded the Indians to give up sole ownership of the land. The white settlers, he said, were “as numerous as the waves on Bear Lake and as impossible to stop.” Rich appealed to Washakie’s sense of practicality.<sup>22</sup> As their summer land began to be taken, the Indians often camped farther north on land claimed by the Cooks. Several stories are told about conflicts when the families tried to help the Indians who camped on or near their land.

Washakie later asked Apostle Rich to contact the US government to find a place where his people could live far from the white settlers. Charles C. Rich was appointed the Indian agent for the area,<sup>23</sup> but he could do little. In 1868 the Uinta Wind River Reservation was created, and



**Chief Washakie and others in his tribe**

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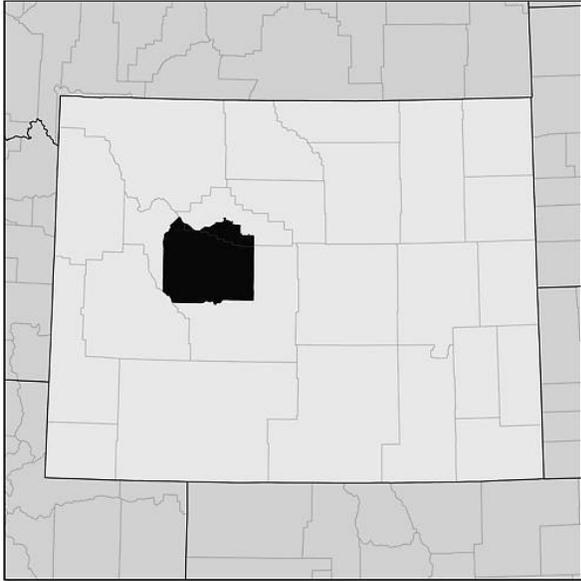
<sup>19</sup> An 23 August 1863 meeting with Brigham Young is discussed in Leonard J. Arrington, *Charles C. Rich* (Provo: BYU Press 1974, 249.) reprinted in Robert E. Parsons, *History of Rich County*, FHL book 979.213 H2p, p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> Robert E. Parsons, *History of Rich County*, FHL book 979.213 H2p, p. 71 citing *Bear Lake Valley Pioneer Histories*, nd, np, typescript, Special Collections and Archives, USU, Logan. See also Elizabeth P. Astle, “Life Story of Ellen Jane Bailey Lamborn,” 7, typescript, Special Collections and Archives, USU.

<sup>21</sup> Grace Raymond Hebard, *Washakie, an Account of Indian Resistance of the Covered Wagon and Union Pacific Railroad Invasions of Their Territorys*, quoted in Frances Birkhead Beard, *Wyoming from Territorial Days to the Present*, 3 vols, (Chicago: The American historical Society, 1933), 1:235.

<sup>22</sup> Russel R. Rich, *Land of the Sky-Blue Water: A History of the LDS Settlement of the Bear Lake Valley*, p. 269.

<sup>23</sup> Robert E. Parsons, *History of Rich County*, FHL book 979.213 H2p, p. 72, citing Arrington, *Charles C. Rich*, p. 268



The Uinta Wind River Reservation, created in 1868, was for Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Native American tribes. It covers one-third of Fremont County and part of Hot Springs County, in west-central Wyoming. Courtesy Wikipedia

although it was several years before the native people actually moved there, the Indian problems in Bear Lake Valley began to lessen. The Shoshoni people continued to gather for many years in the Bear Lake area and in the Bear River Valley, but in much smaller numbers.<sup>24</sup>

The reservation is about 3.5 million square miles, surrounded by the Wind River Mountains. The government has tried to help the people by setting up a military post, called Fort Washakie, and building a hospital and schools. However, native Americans have continued to have difficulty adjusting to new social norms they aren't culturally equipped to understand.



### Bear Lake Monster

The extremely deep water, the presence of fish species not found in any other waters, and the strikingly blue color of the lake sparked immediate interest of the locals. Suddenly there were stories circulated by the Indians about a monster in the lake, and people began to watch for it. The Cook family as well as the family of Charles C. Rich were caught in the middle of this story.

Sightings like this one keep the story alive. (clip.fail)

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<sup>24</sup> Rich, *Land of the Sky-blue Water*, p. 54, 56. Although the Wind River Reservation was set aside in 1868, Washakie refused to go on the reservation until 1872 because of enmity between the Shoshoni, the Sioux, and the Cheyenne, who claimed the same area of the Wind Rivers. See Frances Birkhead Beard, *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1833), 1:235. Reprinted in Robert E. Parsons, *History of Rich County*, FHL book 979.213 H2p, p. 74.

"The legend of the Bear Lake monster began with the Native Americans who lived in the area before the white settlers ever saw it. They told of a monster that lived in the lake and carried off people who went swimming in it. It was described as a serpent-like creature that crawled on land for small distances. Steam was said to spurt from its mouth and it had two to four legs, each about two feet long. At that time, it had been named the devil fish by the local tribe. Many had stories of monster sightings or had lost loved ones when the creature appeared and dragged people down to the bottom of the lake. It was said that over the years several people had drowned this way. The creature had eaten children while others watched from the shore. Tribal members were warned not to swim in the lake. The Native Americans had not seen the creature since the buffalo had lived in the valley; however, they did tell the first settlers about the monster in the 1860s. They described the beast as having a very large mouth and large ears. They said the mouth was large enough to swallow a man whole."<sup>25</sup>



**A recent post on U-Tube proves there's still hope for the monster.**

Phineas W. Cook and his sons were among the first white men to see the monster. One report claimed:

"Joseph Rich even knew a man who had a plan as to how to catch the Bear Lake monster. Phineas (W.) Cook was hatching his plan to protect his family from the monster as they had had their own sighting. A woman named Marion Thomas and three of Phineas' sons had been out boating on the lake, fishing opposite Swan Creek, when they came near "his majesty." Brother Thomas describes his head as serpent shaped. He saw about twenty feet of his body, which was covered with hair or fur, something like an otter and light brown. It had two flippers extending from the upper part of its body, which he compared to the blades of his oars. He was so near it that if he had had a rifle he could have shot it."

Phineas had an ingenious plan, apparently inspired by Brigham Young:<sup>26</sup>

"...using a barbed hook, attached to twenty feet of cable, which in turn would be fastened to three hundred feet of one-inch rope; at the end of the rope would be a large buoy with a flag-staff in a perpendicular position. The stars and stripes were to float from the top of the staff. To this buoy would be attached another one

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<sup>25</sup> Linda Dunning, *Lost Landscapes: Utah's Ghosts, Mysterious Creatures, and Aliens*, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup> Dan Kenyon, *Dark Highway: Utah's Strange Tales*, p. 43. "Brigham Young, one of the famous cofounders of Salt Lake City, contracted Phineas Cook of Swan Creek to be his 'Ahab.' Cook was given a long coil of one-inch rope and solid hooks with orders to catch the beast."

hundred yards of three-fourth inch rope fastened to the switch end of a tree on shore. The hook would be baited by a leg of mutton...and allowed to sink twenty feet in the water, being held at that depth by a smaller buoy. Naturally, when the monster swallowed the hook there would be a great commotion in the water; but the flag would always indicate the position of the monster, regardless of where he went in the lake.”<sup>27</sup>

By the time the settlers had lived at Bear Lake a few years, dozens of sightings and stories appeared, such as this one that appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune in August of 1870. The “enterprising citizen” mentioned was Phineas W. Cook.

“Brothers Milando Pratt and Thomas, son of Charles C. Rich, had a view of the Bear Lake monster July 19, south of Fish Haven. They reported that their attention was attracted by an unusual commotion in the waters of the lake, and looking in the direction, they presently saw a head and a portion of the body of a creature larger around than the body of a man, the head resembling somewhat the pictorial representations of the walrus, minus the tusks. The portion of the body out of the water was about ten feet long. Several shots were fired, but missed the creature. It swam away in the direction of the east side of the lake, its track being marked by a wavy, serpentine motion. Its entire length was apparently forty feet. The young men had a view of this denizen of the deep for about fifteen minutes. One enterprising citizen, determined, if possible, to capture one of these animals, had a large rope to which is attached a strong hook, well baited, tied around a stout tree.”<sup>28</sup>



**This boat on Bear Lake is a reminder of past sightings  
(Courtesy Utah Outdoor Activities)**

Another report came in 1871 before the Bear Lake Monster had become famous. Mildred Hatch Thompson recorded their sightings in the book *Rich Memories: Some of the Happenings in Rich County From 1863 to 1960*:

<sup>27</sup> Robert E. Parsons, *History of Rich County*, FHL book 979.213 H2p, p. 330)

<sup>28</sup> Kate Carter, *Heart Throbs of the West*, Vol. 2, p. 53, quoted in Linda Dunning, *Lost Landscapes: Utah's Ghosts, Mysterious Creatures, and Aliens*, pp. 65, 66.

“1871 four campers fled when an alligator-like animal 75 feet long crawled out of the water near their camp. They returned the next day to find the camp destroyed.

Two days later a Logan family at the lake for a weekend reported ‘We were in the water when we heard a great commotion, and a great monster the size of two box cars crawled up on the beach. He headed for one of our horses, about to gobble the houses when our dog barked and frightened it back into the water. We were terrified.’

“A man named Johnson reported: ‘It had ears or bunches on the side of its head the size of pint cups. The waves dashed over it and it threw water from its mouth and nose. It stayed only a few moments moving its head back and forth. Then it disappeared under the water, swimming rapidly away.’”

“There were several other sightings the following weeks. Gun sales boomed. Several settlers moved. Two huge lizard fossils were found in fossil Hill in Wyoming only about 30 miles from the lake.”<sup>29</sup>



“Utah: Remains of Mysterious Creature Discovered at Bear Lake”

<https://worldnewsdailyreport.com/utah-remains-of-mysterious-creature-discovered-at-bear-lake/>



“Utah: Remains of Mysterious Creature Discovered at Bear Lake”

“Garden City, Utah. The remains of a large unidentified creature resembling a dinosaur were found this morning on the western shore of Bear Lake, giving rise to many rumors concerning the legendary monster associated with the site...a 25 foot long carcass.” (World News Daily Report, 2018, <https://worldnewsdailyreport.com/utah-remains-of-mysterious-creature-discovered-at-bear-lake/>)

Sonar in the lake has failed to turn up any sign of a giant creature lurking under the hidden and deep ledges, but still the stories are told. The writer (Janet Porter) has been told by honest and credible people that they have seen the monster and are certain it exists.

Perhaps we will never know.

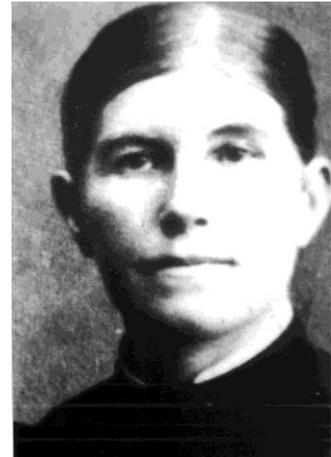
<sup>29</sup> *Rich Memories: Some of the Happenings in Rich County From 1863 to 1960*, Compiled by Mildred Hatch Thompson, FHL 979.213 H2t, p. 47.

## Johanna Christina Pahlson at Swan Creek

In 1878 Phineas and his family were doing very well financially for the first time since coming to Utah. In gratitude they decided to sponsor a church member in Europe who otherwise could find no way to immigrate. Their friends, the Bundersons, knew Johanna and her two children, and made arrangements for her to come to America. On July 22, 1878 the Cooks met her for the first time when Johanna finally made it to Swan Creek.

Carl Cook writings: *“There was a feeling of welcome and friendship that needs no language to express or understand. Then too, good Father and Mother Bunderson served as interpreters for a day.*

*“Johanna could spin wool, sew, knit, darn and cook. The little girls could help with the chores, and they would all soon learn the language. A log cabin with dirt roof, that was one of the first homes built at Swan Creek, but not used for some time past, was cleaned up and furnished with simple furniture and an old cook stove. Here, Johanna and her girls lived. And so began the new life for them in America.”<sup>30</sup>*



Johanna Christina Pahlson

Less than two months later, on September 13, Phineas took Johanna as his plural wife, and the two girls as his own. According to their son Carl, they lived at Swan Creek for four years.<sup>31</sup>

Before leaving, Phineas deeded land to Johanna; then bought it back the next week. On July 29 and August 4 of 1882 the Garden City land changed to her name and back to his.<sup>32</sup>

## Move to Logan

Conflict over polygamy became intense and Phineas knew it was only a matter of time before he would be arrested and sent to prison. In spite of his generosity and obedience, it suddenly was necessary for Phineas to separate his families. He divided his Bear Lake land among his wives and sons there, and took the youngest wife and family away. Carl recorded they went first to Sanpete County where Phineas made a claim. He knew Sanpete County and felt he could make a go of it there. But a broken leg kept him off the land long enough for another man to jump his claim, and they had to leave. They moved to Logan in about 1882<sup>33</sup> and lived there for seven years.

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<sup>30</sup> The Life Story of Carl and Ella Cook,” compiled and edited by Josinette Cook Whiting, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> The Life Story of Carl and Ella Cook,” compiled and edited by Josinette Cook Whiting, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981, p. 10-12. Carl explains in detail the impossibility of Johanna ever having the means to come to America, and her joy at receiving a letter from the Bundersons explaining that their friend Phineas Cook would pay her expenses.

<sup>32</sup> Rich County, Utah Land Records, Book A, July 29, 1882, Phineas sold 155 acres in Garden City to Johanna for \$1; and on August 4, 1882 she sold it back to him for \$100. (FHL film 1,654,400, pp. 645-648).

<sup>33</sup> The Life Story of Carl and Ella Cook,” compiled and edited by Josinette Cook Whiting, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981, p. 12.

The Cook family never quite got over the shock. Mary Rosalie summed up the family's sorrow when Phineas sold the Swan Creek property and had to leave.

*"When I was eighteen, one of the saddest days of my life occurred. My father sold the whole place to his oldest son. My heart was almost broken. I felt like the world had come to an end. For many years I could not go back to it without crying bitterly."*<sup>34</sup>

Phineas sold his Swan Creek property to his son Alonzo, who ran the whole enterprise. Alonzo then sold it to his wives Sarah and Amy in October of 1888, much of which was listed as "gift." It is possible these men were protecting their property as it began to look as if polygamists would be imprisoned and their land confiscated. Alonzo continued to run the mills, but legally they belonged to his wives.<sup>35</sup>

### **Ann Eliza after Phineas left Bear Lake**

Ann Eliza Cook served as Relief Society President in the Garden City Ward for many years before her death. Although the record has not been found, she was given her share of the family property when Phineas left. In February of 1896, the year she died, she sold it to her son Hyrum for \$810, including her home lot in Garden City.<sup>36</sup>

On the last page of her journal, A. L. Cook made notes to record her death and his final thoughts:

*"This record finished Grandmother's work for this side of the veil. She was a very careful recorder of events, had a worry for all of her posterity(,) suffered intensely with pain in her leg and weight of her body. She suffered in her feelings seriously from grandfather's taking a fourth wife and asking her to divorce in order to marry legally. She was very quiet and patient. Was a well-educated deep character(.) Spoke good English and taught her children correct forms and cultural ways. My Father, (Alonzo Cook) always corrected us children in our English. She had taught him so carefully. Humility was such a firm rooted characteristic with her that she breathed it into all her children. Because of father's care in English we children had easy times in school with grammar."*<sup>37</sup>



**Ann Eliza died in Garden City May 17, 1896**

In the end Ann Eliza admitted the suffering was all worth it. Her son Alonzo Howland Cook wrote: *"She said, a few days before her death, that through all her suffering, hardships and sacrifices for the Gospel, she had never wanted to go back."*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Mary R. C. McCann Story," (Autobiography of Mary Rosalie McCann,) p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Rich County Utah Land Records 1888-1911, Grantor Index Vol. C, pp. 631-34 (FHL 1,654,399, item 1)

<sup>36</sup> Rich County Utah Land Records 1888-1911, Grantor Index Vol. E, pp. 675-678 (FHL 1,654,399, item 1) Ann Eliza Cook to Hyrum Cook, #1442-1444, dated February 22, 1896.

<sup>37</sup> Ann Eliza Howland Cook Diary, 1894-1896, compiled by A. L. Cook, p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> Alonzo Howland Cook, "Ann Eliza Howland Cook," *History of Bear Lake Pioneers*, compiled by Edith Parker Haddock and Dorothy Hardy Matthews, Family History Library book 979.6 H2beh.



Amanda Polly died in Garden City July 15, 1915

### Amanda Polly after Phineas left Bear Lake

Amanda had two children who lived to adulthood, David and Rozalie. David remained in Garden City and raised his family there. Rozalie married Hyrum Johnson McCann and they lived in Uinta County, Utah, Kemerer and Big Horn, Wyoming and occasionally came back to Garden City.

She wrote her name “Mary Rosaliz Cook McCann, daughter of Amanda:”

*“As I grew older, my mother and I spun yarn and sold it... We would scrub the yarn, double and twist it into what we called ten-knot skeins, each knot having forty threads and each thread waxed separately. We sold the yarn for one dollar a pound, and as my father's sister, Eliza Hall, was a fine weaver, she would weave it into cloth which was very lovely.*

*“(In 1881) when I was eighteen, mother bought a little home and small farm in Garden City, which was just three and one-half miles south of Swan Creek.. I lived with her until July 12, 1883, when I was married.”*

Amanda had sold her share of the land by 1914, the year before she died. In 1910 she sold her six acre lot in Garden City, and in 1914 she sold seventeen acres to her daughter Mary Rozalie for one dollar.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Rich County Utah Land Records 1888-1911, Grantor Index. (FHL 1,654,399, item 1.) Amanda Cook to John B. Spencer #C548 for \$2700 dated May 27, 1910, Vol. J p. 593; and Amanda Cook to MR McCann, #D493 for \$1 dated February 11, 1914, Vol. L p. 48.