

Stokes Nature Center
History & Lore of Logan Canyon Podcast Series
Temple Sawmill

In Spring 1877, Brigham Young, the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, decided to build a temple in Cache Valley. The locals looked to the canyons to the east for the resources they needed to complete this huge task. By summer of the same year, Thomas X. Smith and C. O. Card located an appropriate site in Logan Canyon, a side-canyon then called Maughan's Fork.

This was a very competitive time for lumber. Nearby, the Utah & Northern Railroad was being constructed, and Coe and Carter, a company that supplied railroad ties, had scouts looking to the mountains of northern Utah to supply the wood they would need. Upon receiving news of this, the locals took immediate action to secure the stands of trees they had chosen for the temple. Card sent out a team to begin construction of the new sawmill, and not a moment too soon. Historian Marion Everton wrote, "When the Coe and Carter outfit arrived some forty-eight hours later they found the first logs laid out for a big sawmill and men busily engaged in constructing shelters, but not too busy to tell visitors that they intended to continue the occupation of Maughan's Fork with the exclusion of any and all other outfits."

Work progressed quickly, and on November 4, 1877, the mill sawed its first board. In 1878, the side-canyon where the sawmill was located began to be called by an appropriate name: Temple Fork.

The sawmill proved to be overly capable, producing more wood than was needed for the new temple. Contracts were made with the Utah & Northern to cut the extra wood into railroad ties, and, ironically, the project that once rivaled the temple became a project that helped fund its construction.

The sawmill operated for 9 years, producing more than 2.5 million board-feet of lumber, 21,000 railroad ties, and many other wood products. It was closed down in 1884 and put up for sale, but there were no buyers. In 1886, the sawmill met its end when it mysteriously burned down. Two sets of men's footprints in the snow led to and from the site, which led people to suspect arson. However, no clues indicating who set the fire, or why, were ever found.

Sources:

Simmonds, A. J. *In God's Lap: Cache Valley history as told in the newspaper columns of A. J. Simmonds, A Herald Journal Book*. Herald Journal, 2004.

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