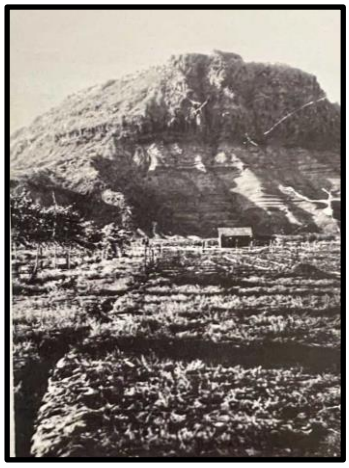
XX. IVINS HISTORY

Ivins As Seen 100 Years Ago Alternate: The Way Ivins Looked 100 Years Ago



Alden and Matilda Gray home 1922

"As you travel north and west of the Santa Clara Valley, you suddenly come upon a view that defies all nature to surpass. There is the snow-capped Pine Valley Mountain rising in the distance in its majesty of sapphire blue. Underneath, in a gradual slope, God has lavishly bestowed his colors of purple, black, gray, and red. Then comes an abrupt decline of red cliffs that tower for hundreds of feet in the air. The lights and shadows playing on its rugged surface bring out the colors more vividly. To the west and south, high mountains raise their towering peaks in the distance, and in the center of all this lies a flat open bench known as the Santa Clara Bench. To the north and nestled underneath these perpendicular cliffs, lies the town of Ivins." - Myrtle Gubler 1930's in the book Under the Dixie Sun.

The Rest of the Story

Swiss immigrants were sent by Brigham Young to settle in Santa Clara in 1861. By the third generation, its farmland along the river was becoming scarce, so in the fall of 1909, Leo A Snow and Clarence S Jarvis conceived the idea of bringing water from Santa Clara Creek onto the Santa Clara Bench for irrigation purposes to expand the farming opportunities. This required the need to build an eight-mile canal, not an easy undertaking considering that it would traverse steep mountainsides and deep ravines that needed to be siphoned or plumed.

The canal was completed in 1914. Shortly thereafter, Edward R Frei Sr. conceived the idea of building a storage pond/reservoir below the canal in a clay basin east of the Shivwits Band Of Paiutes reservation land. By May 1918, it was far enough along to hold water for summer use.

Once the canal and reservoir were completed, in 1920, the St. George/Santa Clara Irrigation Company surveyed a townsite with one-acre lots. Thirteen young ambitious families decided to make their home on the Santa Clara bench between 1922-1926.

The early living conditions were challenging. The land was covered with sage brush and ankle-deep sand. Some lived in tenets and chicken coops until they could complete their small adobe brick homes. They grew hay and grain and raised cows, chickens, and pigs to support themselves. The children attended school when they could, riding on horseback three miles away in Santa Clara.

In the fall of 1924, the government granted Ivins a post office, which they located in Tobler's old one-room homestead cabin that had been relocated from Snow Canyon. At that time, the mail was still carried on horseback. In 1926 the residents felt there were enough families in town that it was time to build their own chapel. When completed, it became their main gathering place not only for the church but all community meetings and events. They brought electricity to the town in 1930 by



Sculpture at City Hall by Ed Hlavka

providing the poles and labor. In 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps completed the Windsor Diversion Dam at the head of the Ivins irrigation canal to control flooding and ice damage.

In 1935, the residents were ready to rename the town from the Santa Clara Bench. After a few discussions, it was decided to name the town Ivins after Anthony W Ivins, an Apostle for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints who had endeared himself to the people in this part of the state through his work with the Shivwits Band of Paiutes and to the town residents by donating the bell for their chapel.

The men continued to improve their roads by traveling to "road Camps" where they would work on a stretch of road throughout the week instead of going home each night.

Arrowhead Road was a main artery for motorcycle transportation between Southern California and Utah. In 1927, the Arrowhead Trail was renamed Highway 91, and finally, in the early 1930s, it was paved. Several years later, Ivins residents oiled the gravel road that connected the town to Highway 91, now known as 200 East.

By 1950, the residents constructed a pipeline across the lava beds from Johnson's Arch spring, bringing culinary water to Ivins. At this time, eighteen families lived in Ivins. The Ivins Culinary Water Company was formed, and the town purchased Snow Spring from Edward and Vernon Tobler at a cost of $1000. After years of dipping water from the ditch in buckets, they felt spoiled. It was a luxury to have a toilet that flushed and a bathtub that could be filled from the tap.

In the 1950's the atomic testing site 125 miles west in Nevada was in active use. The radiation clouds were often visible and little known about the consequences coming from exposure to them at that time. No advanced warnings were given until sometime later when representatives of the Atomic Energy Commission came to town and informed the residents to go indoors and to shower and wash their clothes when a test occurred. Mayor Jack Reber said, "We had no way of knowing the dangerous situation we were in at the time."

Ivins grew very slowly until the early 1980s when Kayenta, a unique desert community focused on preserving the natural landscape with large lots and low-profile southwestern-style homes, was created, and retirement communities began to be developed, bringing a new image and interest to Ivins.

The idea of the Tuacahn Amphitheater began when a St. George resident and playwright, Douglas Stewart, proposed the idea of an outdoor amphitheater to the prominent businessman Hyrum Smith. The writer had even found a location in Padre Canyon, west of Snow Canyon State Park. It just happened to have a natural amphitheater situated between its red canton walls. Construction began in 1993 and utilized horses and wagons for construction to minimize harm to natural habitat. Tuacahn Center for the Arts was completed in 1995 and has continued to showcase the majesty of the area while promoting the arts by bringing top talent to their stage to perform in concerts and theatrical productions.

Ivins Reservoir was modified in 1943 and again in 1986. In 1994 work was performed on the reservoir to bring it into compliance with the State of Utah's safety standards. Cores were drilled all around the dam down to the bedrock. Concrete was then poured to reinforce the dam. On March 15, 2004, Ivins Reservoir was purchased by the Washington County Water Conservancy District. In return for the reservoir, the Santa Clara Field Canal Company was granted primary water availability. The City entered into the Regional Water Supply Agreement in 2006 with the Washington County Water Conservancy District (WCWCD). In this agreement the WCWCD agrees to "provide adequate water to meet the needs of" Ivins City and all other municipal customers in the County that have signed the agreement. The Ivins irrigation system would eventually connect to the recycled water line coming from St. George.

The completion of Snow Canyon Parkway in 1998 provided a critical second convenient access to Ivins, leading to significant new development on its east side. Ivins achieved "city" status in 1998 with a landmark population of 5,000 residents.

Today, Ivins stands as a testament to its past. It is a scenic, safe, and serene city offering a diverse mix of residential developments that make it a destination for people of varied backgrounds to locate here. The vision and work ethic of our early settlers is the legacy they left to all who live in Ivins now. So is the industry and thrift they displayed as they tackled many difficult problems and projects together. Their legacy combined with the careful planning of the generations of residents that followed them has established the beautiful and thriving city we call home.