

## History of Washington County, 2006-2016

by Douglas D. Alder

In 1996, the State of Utah celebrated its centennial. The State Legislature asked each county to have a history written, Karl Brooks and I were invited to do that and it was published by the Utah State Historical Society. A decade later in 2006 the County Commissioners asked for an update. It was added to the book by the Zion Natural History Association. Now as 2016 is nearly over, another decade update has been written. Several topics will be considered.

### Government

Naturally one of the important factors in Washington County is the government. Within a month of settling in St. George, a county government was organized and authorized by the Territorial Legislature. Town governments were already set up in each of the villages that existed before St. George--Fort Harmony, Washington, Santa Clara, Virgin, Gunlock, Toquerville, Pine Valley, Hebron, Grafton, Rockville, Springdale and Harrisburg/Leeds--as well as those that came after 1862. They were part of the Utah Territory, which in turn was associated with the U. S. Federal government. Those early governments evolved into the State of Utah and the counties and cities. Washington County was one of those and continues to do so.

This decade (2006-2016) in Washington County has been challenging, especially because of the national 2008 economic decline and another one, less difficult, in 2010. Nonetheless there were significant actions. For example, the Washington City Community Center was completed, including a swimming pool, gymnasium and meeting rooms. Athletic fields for soccer and softball/baseball are across the street adjacent to the cemetery. On the hill at the west end of the parking area is a county library, the last of the seven county libraries enabled by the passage of a county-wide \$23 million bond approved by citizens in 2006. On April 28, 2012 the Utah Parks and Recreation Association selected Washington City as the "Best in the State" for parks and recreation.

Other towns undertook new developments. Some, such as Leeds and Rockville, opposed them. Leeds citizens turned down a developer who wanted to put in 2,500 new homes. Gunlock kept its old town setting and emphasized its annual reunion. The developers in Silver Reef turned the old Wells Fargo Bank into a museum and added an adjacent building to expand the displays, making it a tourist attraction. Springdale continued to welcome more hotels and restaurants to accommodate the increasing numbers of visitors to Zion National Park. Ivins attracted a \$19 million dollar nursing home for veterans, located on north Center Street and hosting 108 residents. Local citizens are volunteering to help there. An amazing announcement is the opening of an Osteopathic Medical School in Ivins, next to the Veterans Center. It will admit 135 students and have about 65 staff members by 2017. The SUNTRAN bus service added a station in Ivins in November 2014, linking it with St. George. Harmon's store opened a major commercial facility midway between Ivins and Santa Clara. All of this was aided by the Ivins City government. In the SUNTRAN case, it required cooperation with St. George City officials.

The highway from Virgin to Springdale (State Road 9) presented the problem of historical preservation. Virgin is largely historic but south of the highway includes commercial businesses. Rockville continues to be devoted to maintaining its original pioneer atmosphere with no commercial business except for bed and breakfast inns. Nearby Grafton is a ghost town managed by the Grafton Heritage Partnership Project. Their policy is to keep the site as a ghost town and open to the public but not businesses. The big issue of this decade was whether to keep the old bridge there or replace it with a new, reinforced two-lane concrete one. The original one-lane structure was built in 1930 by Zion National Park to enable vehicles to reach Grafton and drive on over the hill to Hildale and Grand Canyon. The decision was made in June 2016 to reinforce the original bridge.

In April 2008, the Washington County Solid Waste Special Service District announced a program to recycle paper, plastics and tin cans. By 2016 recycle waste bins (Blu Can Curbside Recycling) were delivered to each home at a modest cost and are unloaded into waste trucks every two weeks. This was done for several reasons, one of which was to protect the county dump from waste that often takes decades to decompose. Some citizens opted out of the service but most were supportive.

A federal government issue was about to impact the county-the proposed coal power plant in Nevada near Mesquite. Many southern Utah citizens worried about the negative impact of smoke. Government officials in St. George voted "no" on it. David Clark, Santa Clara resident who was serving in the State Legislature, vigorously opposed it. Former Governor Olene Walker had moved to St. George because she had pulmonary fibrosis. She went public to protect the clean air (Spectrum, 5 February, 2008, A2). After long public debate, the Federal government decided to close the existing coal fired energy plant in 2009.

Public safety is likely the most basic responsibility of local governments. When visitors come to Washington County they often comment on what appears to be calm and orderly communities and land. They notice the lack of graffiti, the apparent low level of alcohol and drug use, and even how the drivers stop for stop signs on quiet streets. Does this image make any sense? One standard measure is police activity. Do these communities need one policeman per 1000 residents-more or less in comparison with the rest of the nation? Previous decades show that St. George had 58 police officers serving 43,000 people in 1996, 94 serving 70,000 in 2007 and 111 officers serving 85,000 citizens in 2016. Washington County has 143 officers serving the total county population of 145,000 (2015 report). Of the 145 officers a significant number are assigned to the Purgatory Prison near Hurricane.

The report available for 2015 shows no homicides in either the county or the city of St. George. There were 36 rapes in the county, 22 of them in St. George. There were 16 robberies, 12 of them in St. George. There were 129 aggravated assaults in the county, 79 of them in St. George. There were 534 burglaries, 317 of them in St. George. There were 1,807 larcenies, 978 in St. George, 142 motor vehicle thefts, 83 of them in St. George, and 2 arson crimes, both in St. George. The population of the county was 151,948 at the end of 2016 with St. George just above 85,000.

What do we make of this data? Number one, most of the county now is urbanized, perhaps meaning it is more crime involved. The Interstate-15 freeway goes through the county from south to north and is a known drug delivery route. Every year there are arrests of people transporting drugs through the county

to the north. The county no longer has a low rate of one policeman per 1000 residents but it is not a lot higher. Gangs are rare but crime is not unusual. Marijuana farms have been discovered, raided and destroyed. There have been no police officer deaths in the county during this decade. There were no riots or protests. Chief Marlon Stratton of St. George and Sheriff Cory Pulsipher of the county are well known and respected. Police officers are very much in public view-on bicycles, in patrol cars, in schools, on campus at Dixie State University, at public events. One of the first things local people say when asked is that they are proud of the peace and order in the community, but the statistics show that crime is present, as are the police.

### Growth

The words "Growth and Southern Utah" seem to be linked. This headline might be an example: "Southwest Area Taking the Lead" (Spectrum, 6 January, 2016). Utah's population was at 2,995,919, up 1.8% compared to the nation at 0.8% and Washington County was up 2.9%. In 1965 Washington County had a population of 10,400. In 1996 there were 77,500. In 2007 there were 145,000 and that would reach 151,948 in July 2016. In 2012 The U.S. Census Bureau ranked the St. George metropolitan area as the 11th fastest growing in the nation. By July 2014 it was ranked 5th highest growth rate in the nation (Spectrum, 29 March, 2015).

The results of such growth included many things such as rezoning Little Valley that is becoming the fastest growing residential area. Twenty years ago it was mostly agriculture, but not now. Hurricane is also growing. State Route 9 was widened and a new high school was built. The county school system grew from 24 schools and 17,945 students in 1996 to 37 schools and 23,160 students in 2006 and has continued to build new schools and add students. In 2016 there were 30,892 students and 43 schools,

In 2015 Washington City had 24,299 residents, Hurricane had 115,501, Ivins numbered 7,676 and Santa Clara was 6,841. St. George was 80,202. Looking from this steady growth, it is not surprising that official statistics from the Governor's Office of Management predict 196,748 people in the county by 2020, 280,558 in 2030, 371,743 in 2040 and 472,567 in 2050 (Spectrum, 26 October, 2015, A1). In contrast, Iron County's predictions go from 57,055 in 2020 to 105,797 in 2050.

In June 2014 the population in Washington County was 85.4% White (non-Hispanic), 9.0% Hispanic, 0.5% Black American, 1.1% Native American, .07% Asian, .08% Pacific Islander and 1.6% of two or more races. (Spectrum, June 27, 2014, A1). People over 65 years of age made up 17% in 2014 as compared to 10% in 2010 (Spectrum, October 2014, A1).

The National Park visitation by November 2015 was 3,370,953, passing the record of a year before (Spectrum, November 30, 2015, A1). Despite all this growth, living costs in the area were below those in Salt Lake City and way below those in Las Vegas. Housing costs grew by nearly 10% between 2013 and 2014 but were still below the national average (Spectrum, 3 June, 2014, A1).

The construction industry has bounced back very well after the 2010 economic decline, growing faster than 90% of the nation. There was a job growth of 4.7% in 2013 but still a 5.5% unemployment rate, which dropped to 3.9% in 2014 (Spectrum, July 15, 2013, A1).

The construction industry has bounced back very well after the 2010 economic decline, growing faster than 90% of the nation. There was a job growth of 4.7% in 2013 but still a 5.5% unemployment rate, which dropped to 3.9% in 2014 (Spectrum, July 15, 2013, A1).

Other indications of growth include the expansion of the SUNTRAN bus system to 439,647 riders in 2014 and 461,503 in 2015. The expansion of Route 40 included Ivins and was another dimension of that attempt to serve more of the county. In January 2015 Sun Tran established a route to the Bloomington Walmart.

During this decade St. George City leaders continued their efforts to revitalize the downtown. The Town Square was doubled in size and filled with water features and a clock tower. It was dedicated October 16, 2007. A carousel was installed near the Woodward School on July 5, 2011 and has been a popular attraction, especially for children and grandparents. The Children's Museum was established in the old Dixie Academy building on the square and dedicated November 16, 2013. It is a big draw to downtown.

The most recent development is the retrofitting of the St. George Tabernacle to enforce it against a possible earthquake. The 1992 earthquake caused the west wall to be disconnected from the two adjoining walls. It was quickly repaired but since then plans were developed to reinforce the whole building, giving it another century to serve as the community center.

St. George City leaders have long considered purchasing the Electric Theater. They went ahead with that plan in 2015, partly because the citizens passed a recreation and parks tax (RAP Tax) referendum. City officials planned to also purchase two buildings adjacent to the theater and that necessitated raising additional money. The Council decided to sell land they owned next to the Dixie Center to developers who built two hotels. The resulting restoration of the Electric Theater and adjacent buildings (that include an art gallery and artist studios) has been welcomed by the citizens.

A plan has been approved by the City Council for construction of a major hotel and adjoining commercial building on the southwest corner of Main Street and St. George Boulevard. It will be linked to Tabernacle Street by a walkway with apartments through the block toward the St. George Tabernacle. The same group purchased Green Gate Village, which they are preserving and transitioning to small businesses.

Downtown St. George is now the home to a new elementary school, near the Sun Bowl. It replaces East Elementary School across from the Dixie State University campus. It emphasizes that families are essentially in the blocks immediately adjacent to the business district.

St. George City hosts festivals and films on the expanded Town Square and the St. George Marathon and the Ironman races. The Marathon concludes at Vernon Worthen Park and the Ironman near the Town Square. The city continues to maintain four golf courses (Red Hills, Southgate, Bloomington Hills and Sunbrook) as a draw to serve residents and bring tourists to town. The other eight courses are privately owned (Bloomington, Green Springs, Sky Mountain, Entrada, Sun River, Coral Canyon, Sand Hollow and The Ledges). Most courses are functioning well in the county as are the many trails and parks. A new All Abilities Park opened in late 2016 and is a popular attraction. There are 40 other parks

and 36 trails maintained by St. George City. Almost all of the other communities in the county have parks and trails as well.

The development of River Road/Red Cliffs Drive began as a new commercial district in 1990 with the Red Cliffs Mall and has continued to expand in this 2006-2016 decade. From the ever-expanding Dixie Regional Medical Center hospital on the south of River Road to Walmart on the north of Red Cliffs Drive, this road has become the city's Main Street. It continues to expand, drawing scores of national chain stores, hotels and restaurants, immediately adjacent to Interstate-15.

Drawing people to southern Utah is the goal of many communities in the county. The St. George Marathon brought 7,800 athletes in 2016 plus their families. This was its 40th year. The Huntsman World Senior Games has been held in St. George for 30 years and draws people from every state and 34 other nations. Over 11,000 participants and their guests come during the two-week event. The Ironman race is the most recent to be held here, now in its fourth year. It is very demanding but has a good following. Most of the participants in these athletic events are visitors but locals participate in them all. They help southern Utah become widely known as a destination.

### Roads

In 2012 the Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization initiated a plan in response to growth predictions which classified the area as urbanized or leading to urbanization. Included were St. George, Washington City, Hurricane, Ivins, Santa Clara, La Verkin and Toquerville. Together they created an urban area linking them. The government and business leaders in the conference were mostly pro-growth, seeing such a development as beneficial for job growth, tourism, and recreation-all positives.

One of the problems growth brought was excessive traffic, especially on St. George Boulevard. A redesign of Bluff Street was one proposed answer. An ambitious project at the south end of Bluff Street was initiated. Its cost was estimated to be \$37 million-to build a bridge creating Exit 5 connecting to Dixie Drive. This enabled drivers to reach the Dixie Convention Center without using the Boulevard. They could also turn west to Green Valley, Santa Clara, Kayenta and Ivins without using St. George Boulevard.

A major flyover bridge system was installed on the north end of Bluff Street so that traffic can easily turn to Snow Canyon Parkway on the left or to Red Hills Parkway on the right. St. George City planners try to get people to take Red Hills Parkway instead of St. George Boulevard, which is constantly crowded. They consider it wise to provide alternatives to drive to Ivins, Entrada, Tuachan and Snow Canyon.

The next proposed project is to widen Bluff Street between Sunset Boulevard and the south access to the 1-15 freeway. It is justified by the heavy traffic but it will require tearing down many buildings that house businesses on the west side of Bluff Street for about 10 blocks. It will be costly.

Roundabouts have been used recently to manage traffic and reduce accidents. One is at Tabernacle and Main Streets in St. George. Another is at the entrance to the Southgate community and Tonaquint Drive.

At 400 East and Tabernacle Street another roundabout now manages traffic without a red light. A roundabout was built at the Brigham Road connection to I-15 and Bloomington. It received considerable criticism but facilitates access to Walmart. There are two roundabouts on Snow Canyon Parkway on the way to Tuacahn and Ivins.

At Exit 2 on I-15 the airport highway was improved, linking it to River Road in August 2009. The next project is to extend Airport Drive past the airport to Hurricane. That will likely take another decade. The Exit 2 changes were also a great improvement for access to SunRiver.

Washington City widened Telegraph Street in the center of the town even though they had to tear down the legendary Nisson Market.

In 2015 a bridge was built over the Virgin River at Mall Drive, opening a better way to get to Little Valley. A new commercial district is growing on the south side of the Virgin River there.

Traffic problems are not just in the urban part of the county. Springdale, next to Zion National Park, is facing a major challenge because the highway there is only two lanes wide and the surface is old. The number of visitors to the park reached 3.6 million in 2016. The highway is terribly crowded and parking is scarce. The park has to limit the number of cars allowed to enter the park. They are considering a modification of the park entrance to accommodate more vehicles. The shuttle system serving the park has carried a lot of visitors. By 2009 it had carried the 25th millionth patron and has continued since then but that has not halted the growth. It is not the goal of the park leaders to limit growth.

A project began in the winter of 2016-17 to resurface lanes to the highway through Springdale. It required limiting traffic to one lane to allow construction--a very complicated solution. All these challenges have come because of growth throughout the county, especially in Springdale, which is expanding rapidly.

Some citizens maintain that the projected growth by 2030 requires a widening of the I-15 freeway. Two lanes have been added in 2016 immediately north of Exit 8, including an exit to Red Hills Drive and the Red Cliffs Mall. Some widening has also occurred in the Virgin River Gorge in Arizona,

Another issue for the period before 2030 is the Desert Reserve north of St. George. Many leaders are reviving a plan for a highway across the Reserve from I-15 at the north turnoff to Washington City, then go across the Desert Reserve west to Highway 18. This would allow a similar solution that the Dixie Drive Bridge has done on the south. Instead of driving into St. George along the Boulevard to Bluff Street, drivers from the north could take the road across the Reserve and access Snow Canyon, Dammeron Valley, Diamond Valley, Veyo and Pine Valley as well as Entrada, Tuacahn and Ivins. This sounds like a natural solution but the Desert Reserve is federal land and environmentalists are avid protectors of the Desert Tortoise on that reserve as well as opponents of continuing expansion.

In a time when almost everyone has an automobile or bicycle, roads are a central issue. Washington County communities have worked hard to prepare for more growth. Road modifications and expansions



seem to be everywhere. Even the public bus system SUNTRAN is expanding to Ivins, Bloomington and considering Springdale.

## Water

When American settlers arrived in Washington County and nearby areas in Nevada and Arizona in the 1850s and '60s, they brought with them the concept of private property and intensive agriculture (something strange to Native Americans). Between 1854 and 1910 some 30 villages were founded based on farming and gardening. Since their beginning, the settlers devoted much of their effort to building canals and dams and fences. Water has been and still is the major issue of the area.

Some of the great pioneer projects have been reworked in this recent decade such as the Enterprise Reservoir. The upgrading cost was \$3.75 million, mostly paid for by the Utah Division of Water Resources. The dam had to be drained so they stored water to get them through the year in 2007 .

The challenge of floods has continued , but nothing as devastating as the 2005 flood in Santa Clara. In fact the massive reworking of the Virgin River banks there and elsewhere was a good investment. Seventy-five million dollars in federal and state funds were used to fortify the river banks, finishing in 2015. So when floods came in 2008 and 2010, severe damages like 2005 were avoided. Gunlock had three bridges wiped out but they were replaced. In Springdale, the dam on the Trees property was reinforced in 2010. A flash flood occurred in Toquerville on October 13, 2012 but major damage was avoided. In 2012 rains washed out Laub Pond, just above Dutchman's Market near Santa Clara. The market was restored and opened for business by April 2013. The Washington County Water Conservancy District spent \$1 million in early 2014 to install a stainless steel gate at its Quail Creek Dam to improve the diversion operation.

All this sounds positive but a tragic flood hit Hildale, on the eastern border of the county, the first week of December 2015. It was caused by a 100-year rainstorm, killing 13 people (whereas the 2005 flood in St. George and Santa Clara took one life).

A significant project by the Washington County Water Conservancy District was to link the Sand Hollow and Quail Creek reservoirs so water can be delivered between them when one or the other is below its needed level. Other attempts to save water have included water use restrictions. Several communities, including St. George, forbid watering during the hours between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. (Spectrum, 16 May, 2014). Citizens are urged to water outside only once or twice a week. The fact is that 60% of water used in the county is used for gardens and lawns. The attempt is to reduce the water use by 25%, down from 320 gallons a day.

Quail Creek reservoir was closed to boating for a few days in April of 2007 to treat the water and boats for algae. Other government actions include a program beginning in 2006 and continuing through the decade to offer free water checks for residents and a program to help them pay for installing water efficient toilets (Spectrum, July 2, 2010, A3). This idea was linked to Washington City, St. George, Santa Clara and Ivins in 2015. In 2015 Quail Creek's capacity had increased from 50 million gallons per day to

60 million. When Quail Creek Dam was finished in 1985, it was serving 35,000 people. Now plans call for it to be the recipient of water from Lake Powell to serve 250,000 to 350,000 people.

Beginning in 2005, when the major flood occurred, efforts began immediately to restore river banks by eliminating tamarisk bushes and other invasive vegetation. That effort was done by several agencies and has continued to shore up the banks with good results in the floods of 2008 and 2010.

The biggest water issue in the county is still the proposed Lake Powell Pipeline. There are two justifications for the pipeline. One is that the county population continues to grow. In 1965 the population was 10,000. In 2016 it was over 150,000, projected to grow to 250,000 in another decade and 580,000 in 50 years (Spectrum 22 July 2015, 1A). A political justification for the pipeline is that Utah doesn't use all of its allocation of water as established by the Colorado River Compact of 1922. As a result the state officials and legislators are supportive of the proposal. There are two opposing arguments to the pipeline. One is that the level of Lake Powell continues to decline, creating a possibility that the pipeline might not deliver water. The other is the cost. The Washington County Water Conservancy District initially claimed the cost would be \$500 million to the county and \$1 billion to the state. The interest on that would be \$2 billion over five years (Spectrum, 10 July, 2008, A1). That cost will not be relieved by the Federal Government. The State of Utah will allow Washington County to use its borrowing interest but has not offered to actually allocate funds to the project. The cost estimates have risen.

Conservationists agree that there are several alternatives to reduce the use of water in the county, making the pipeline unnecessary. They and others argue that there should be a vote on the proposal (Spectrum, 27 Oct. 2015, A1). An editorial in the Spectrum about the real costs said: "It is clear that something has to change either with the supply of water or the use of available resources. Perhaps both should be examined." The average Washington county resident uses almost 300 gallons of water per day with about 60% of that water being used on landscapes. In contrast, the average resident in Tucson, Arizona, uses a little less than 200 gallons per day" (Spectrum, 30 October, 2015, A1).

After years of expensive planning and lots of debate among the citizens, state water managers filed a preliminary licensing proposal with the Federal Government in 2015 (Spectrum, December 2, 2015, A1, A3). It said: "The pipeline would take an estimated eight years to design and build and would pump 86,000 acre feet of water 140 miles from the lake to Sand Hollow Reservoir in Hurricane. The 86,000 acre feet could represent supplying for roughly 290,000 people along with \$7.3 billion in potential metropolitan product-about twice what the county presently generates (Spectrum, June 5, 2013, A3). Despite such optimism the environmentalists justifiably argue for evidence of a repayment plan." (Spectrum, May 15, 2016, A1). Interestingly the city managers and many elected leaders are supporting the pipeline proposal (Spectrum, April 20, 2016, A1) and legislators continue to do so (Spectrum, 12 February 12, 2016, A1).

Recently the Washington County Water Conservancy District purchased the Pah Tempe Hot Springs (2013) and they are now planning a new reservoir near the freeway at Toquerville.



## Parks and Recreation

Recreation is central to Washington County. One reason is the inviting weather. People want to be outside or at least physically active. One example is the city of Washington that has focused on recreation for its citizens. In 2008 a new \$15 million community center was opened with a major swimming pool and playing courts. A hydrotube is outside and three gymnasiums are inside plus a track and weight room. There are nearby ball parks. The city's eight public parks led to a "Best in the State" award for cities under 50,000 in population. Also that year they opened the Cottonwood Wash Trail that connects to already existing trails. The city turned down some citizen's proposals to create a park around the Boiler's Warm Spring in favor of private development. In 2014 Washington added to the Virgin River Trail.

St. George crews extended the Bloomington trail to Sun River in 2009 and upgraded many trails to be safer for bicyclists and runners. St. George also embraced pickle ball and extended its horseshoes facilities, building several courts for both sports which are increasingly popular. In August 2015, the National Horseshoe Pitchers Association conducted its world competition at the Dixie Convention Center. Another development was that St George developed seven new softball/baseball diamonds to attract teams to southern Utah. The result has been amazing. Each winter and spring hundreds of athletes arrive in St. George to compete, most of them from middle schools. Their parents join them and fill the hotels. There are several of these 70-team competitions each year.

In 2003 Hurricane's Sand Hollow State Park came into being. By 2009 there were over 200,000 visitors engaged in boating, fishing, camping and ATV riding. In that same year the park officials invited citizens and park visitors to help make a development plan for the future.

Many people are drawn to the area by the St. George Marathon, the Huntsman Senior Games and recently by the Ironman race. In 2010 the 26-mile Marathon attracted 7000 runners. The city's motels were full with runners from every state and 12 foreign countries. The Huntsman World Senior Games began in 1988 and have grown steadily each year for people age 50 and over. In 2014 more than 10,500 athletes participated. The two weeks of activities include teams playing basketball, softball, tennis, cycling, badminton, archery, horseshoes and more, attracting people and teams from 53 countries. Some 30,000 people have come to the recent competition to support the athletes. In 2013 the ironman Triathlon was held in the area including a 1.2 mile swim in Sand Hollow, a 56-mile bicycle ride from Hurricane to Ivins and back to St. George and a 13.1 mile run through St. George streets. Athletes came from 45 states and 22 countries. This event drew over 9000 visitors to the area. In 2010 the Ironman drew 1,359 athletes who stayed about four days. The participation has increased since then.

Since 1965 golf has expanded as an identification of Washington County with the creation of the Red Hills Golf Course. Community leaders realized that golf courses could be a magnet to draw people to Washington County for visits that helped motels and restaurants or even seasonal residences. The problem was that this would require annual expenditures to build and maintain the courses because the fees would not cover all the costs. The result has been that cities have supplemented the fees for the courses they own.

In 1972 Bloomington was built privately as a response to the opening of I-15. It was a golf course community, making a profit and sustaining costs from fees and real estate profits by selling lots around the course as well as creating condominium complexes. This eventually led to 12 golf courses in the county, promoting citizen recreation, tourism and retirement, almost all of them following the Bloomington model of selling lots around the course.

Recent developments include a face-lift for Southgate Golf Course. The new Dixie Drive required eliminating some of the front nine holes. That was justification for a redesign in 2014. The city-owned course is now more challenging and more attractive to many customers. In 2006 private developers decided to invest in a top-level course, The Ledges. They obtained land north of Snow Canyon State Park, a very scenic location. The course developed slowly but steadily. The lots adjoining the course are large and expensive. The clubhouse is luxurious. It is appealing to the well-to-do.

Bloomington has been struggling in recent years while its neighbor, Sun River, is expanding profitably, Darcy Stewart, from SunRiver, proposed that SunRiver improve the Bloomington clubhouse and build residential structures nearby. That required a revision of St. George's general plan. In October 2015 the Planning Commission agreed to accommodate housing in 23 acres in-and-around the club, including up to 230 condominium units, four townhomes and 43 single homes (Spectrum, October 19, 2015, A3).

Stewart said they will appeal to young people by having a golf school for children. All move-ins will become automatic club members. This revival will be interesting to watch, knowing that many 18-hole courses in the U.S. are struggling and some are closing. Yet in Washington County golf is still surviving at Red Hills, Bloomington, Southgate, Sand Hollow, Entrada, Sunbrook, Bloomington Hills, Sun River, Sky Mountain, Green Springs, Coral Canyon and The Ledges.

Another place that locals and visitors go to see is the St. George Dinosaur Discovery Site at the Johnson Farm founded in 2000. A new exhibit was opened in late 2014 to show visitors how fossils are found and processed. The exhibit building is located on the site where dinosaur skeletons were discovered by heavy equipment operators working on Dr. Sheldon Johnson's farm nearly 20 years ago. It is a great place for adults and children to visit.

Washington County governments are committed to promoting recreation for its impact on lifestyle and the economy. One example is the Leisure Services Department, headed by Kent Perkins. They see their responsibility to be drawing people to St. George and recreation is a magnet.

## Volunteerism

Volunteering is a way of life in Utah's Dixie. People volunteer in the schools, churches, the St. George Temple, the St. George Art Museum, "Historic St. George LIVE!" tours, the Children's Museum, athletic events, performances, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, humanitarian projects, the "Jubilee of Trees", and so much more. Dixie Regional Medical Center depends on volunteers within the

hospital. The Catholic Thrift Store and Deseret Industries are manned largely by volunteers. Women's groups produce quilts and blankets for those in need. The Food Bank constantly needs help. The American Red Cross has blood donation campaigns that have volunteers to register people and serve refreshments.

Big public events depend on volunteers. The St. George Marathon has between 1500 and 2000 volunteers as does the Huntsman Senior Games. Ironman depends on them too. The Hurricane Service Center and St. George Senior Citizen Center have volunteers for classes, meals and transportation. All retirement centers need volunteers. Services for the poor and homeless such as Dixie Care and Share (now Switchpoint) depend on volunteers as does the free lunch program, now four days a week, at the Episcopal Church. The Institute for Continued Learning at Dixie State University holds scores of classes with volunteer teachers. The Doctor's Volunteer Clinic helps patients with professional care. Support groups of every description are available throughout the county.

Some volunteers helped the Boy Scouts plant 200 trees along Pioneer Road in Bloomington in June 2000. The scout eagle projects continue to serve the community. The Girls Scouts do similar things. Virtually all elementary schools solicit volunteers to read with students individually and help in many classroom activities.

These are just a few of the many projects. Every neighborhood has continuing volunteer projects throughout the county. It is a way of life.

## Tourism

The two counties on the borders of Utah, Cache in the north and Washington on the south, are interesting to compare. Their population size is similar but they differ fundamentally, not only in weather and elevation but Washington is a major tourism destination while Cache is not, despite its scenic setting. The I-15 freeway goes through Washington County, particularly St. George, but does not reach the northern county and Logan. Both have universities but Utah State University in Logan is a major research institution and Dixie State University in St. George became a state university in 2013. In contrast to USU, it does not offer graduate degrees at the doctorate level or the accompanying research. Partly because of that, Cache has the highest percentage of its economy in industry in the state (18%) while Washington's industry rate is low (8% of its economy). One might think this is a danger for Washington and county leaders are working hard to attract more industries. What is interesting is that during the economic downturn of 2008, tourism actually increased in Utah's Dixie. How come?

Despite economic downturns, many people still travel. Some seek places with national parks, outdoor recreation, cultural destinations, fine hotels and restaurants. Some want quality golf courses. Retirees are often inspecting potential locations to live. Many come to conventions. Some, in contrast, come to run a marathon or participate in the Ironman or the Huntsman World Senior Games. Whatever, the numbers indicate a steady increase in tourism during the 2006-2016 decade. The St. George Marathon

celebrated its 40th year bringing 7,993 athletes in 2015 and generating \$4.8 million to the county economy. That same year the Huntsman World Senior Game brought 10,500 athletes to St. George during the two weeks of competition and generated \$25.7 million. Athletes usually brought other people with them. The Ironman race day 3 in May 2016 caused 10,000 people to attend the event.

Does that mean that community leaders place tourism above industry? Not at all. But it does mean that city, town and county officials know not to set tourism aside. Take golf as an example. The county is a golf mecca with 12 courses, four of them owned by St. George City. The city has to subsidize their courses but they do it willingly and thereby support the many hotels and restaurants and even the Dixie Convention Center. The Spectrum of June 8, 2014 reported that the impact of golf on the local economy in 2013 was \$40 million. The great athletic events such as the marathon and Ironman and the Huntsman World Senior Games draw thousands of people to the area. That also improves the collection of the tourist tax at hotels and food outlets. In addition, tourism is a major positive for employment in the county.

Another example of thriving tourism is the amazing success of Zion National Park. During the recent decade the visitation has grown from 2.3 million visitors in 2006 to 3.7 million in 2015, up 14% from 2014. Even in the 2008 economic downturn, the park increased visitors. Maybe these figures just reflect the national increase in National Parks visitors. An amazing situation arose in October 2013 when the Federal Government shutdown occurred because of a political deadlock in Congress over the budget. The result was that the national parks throughout the nation closed-but the State of Utah found means to keep the five national parks open until the Feds settled their dispute in Congress. Despite that, Utah lost \$30 million in tourism funds (Spectrum, October 28, 2013). In 2014 visitor spending at Zion National Park was \$173.2 million dollars (Spectrum, April 25, 2015).

A Washington County Convention Center was built in 1986 and located on the Dixie College campus. After a successful decade, a decision was made to build a larger one, called the Dixie Center. It is located near the Confluence Park where the Virgin River and the Santa Clara River meet. It is close to the 1-15 entrance into St. George City and was finished in October 1998. It has become one of the major convention centers in the state. There are now four adjacent hotels with one more being planned. Five restaurants are nearby. An Economic Summit is held there each year. Presidential candidates speak there. "What Women Want" is held there each year as well as the "Jubilee of Trees" and the "Dickens Festival." Other meetings, such as the Utah State Bar for lawyers, and even more commercial displays choose to meet in the Dixie Center.

It is a major draw and the attendees usually fill the nearby hotels, helping the Transient Room Tax and the restaurant tax of 1%. Those funds help support the Dixie Center to pay its construction bond and to pay its staff and other operational expenses. There are about 70 non-local conventions held annually.

Another attraction on the Town Square was the installation of a carousel near the Woodward School.

There was quite a public debate about it because the decision was made during the 2010 economic downturn. It cost \$275,000. By charging only \$1 for adults and 50 cents for children to ride, it generated \$142,000 in three years (Spectrum, August 13, 2014, A1).

An interesting activity is cycling. Six county communities, St. George, Ivins, Springdale, Santa Clara, Washington and Hurricane have become "Road Respect" communities, meaning that they are bike friendly-educating cyclists and drivers to promote bicycle safety. The Ironman competition is an example.

One of the most ambitious efforts of the Leisure Services Department of St. George City is the All Abilities Park that was completed and opened to the public in October 2016. It is located on Dixie Drive. The site is designed mainly to serve children with physical disabilities. It includes a railroad train and many other mechanisms available to most limitations. Tourists with disabled children will likely be drawn there as well as local families.

In November 2013 a Children's Museum was opened on the St. George Town Square in the old Dixie Academy. It was built in 1911 at Main Street and 100 South. St. George City arranged to relocate the Leisure Services offices that had been located there to another city building, making two floors of the building available for the museum that had been attempting for a decade to find a location. City Councilwoman Gail Bunker was instrumental in arranging that decision. When she completed her term on the council she served as the volunteer director of the museum until August 2016 and was replaced by Bob Egner.

The promoters of the museum arranged with the Las Vegas Children's Museum to receive some of their exhibits worth \$1 million for \$40,000 when Las Vegas built a new museum. Gail convinced the city council that placing the Children's Museum at that location would help fulfill the council's goal to draw many people to the town square and revitalize downtown. The result has been amazing. Between the opening in November 2013 and mid-2015, 300,000 people have been in the museum, at least half of them from out of town. It has received major support from private donors, state foundations and local businesses. It is listed as the number 2 or 3 draw, even before the St. George Temple and Tuacahn.

St. George City Leisure Serves has been steadily active in building trails and parks. The St. George trail system includes 42 miles of trails in the city and there are trails elsewhere. Some of the parks are in neighborhoods. Others are large fields for soccer, softball and baseball teams. The latter two host games for the Huntsman World Senior Games for two weeks in October. Young people, sometimes as many as 70 teams concurrently, come with their junior high school athletes for three days. There are about five such competitions. The parents come with the children and fill the hotels and motels. Many pickle ball courts have been built in this decade. A new horseshoe facility has been built at Snow Park, near the freeway, in 2016. All this emphasizes that outdoor life is vibrant in the county.

Tuacahn Amphitheater, near Ivins, has been expanded in seats but also by partnering with Disneyland. The success of this relationship caused the seating expansion. Nearly half of the attendees are tourists. Some 265,000 people attend each year. Recently the Spectrum newspaper of March 27, 2016, page A3,

reported that Tuacahn brings \$8 million into the county economy annually. Clearly tourism is a powerful economic factor even if industry is lacking. The Spectrum of November 5, 2016 reported that Tuacahn had just opened a new \$9.6 million Arts Center that will feature a stage the same size as the theater so that dance rehearsals can be held indoors. There will also be a new gift gallery and a restaurant.

### Historical Sites

Citizens in Washington County support the preservation of historical sites such as the Jacob Hamblin Home in Santa Clara, the Cotton Factory and Relief Society Building and Covington Home in Washington City, the Grafton Ghost Town, the Gunlock Old Church, the Pioneer Church in Virgin, the church in Pine Valley and several sites in St. George-the St. George Tabernacle, Woodward School, Dixie Academy, Brigham Young Home, Green Gate Village, the Opera House and adjoining buildings, and the Electric Theater. Others include the CCC Camp in Leeds and the Wells Fargo building in Silver Reef. Several communities place historical markers in front of pioneer houses.

Was there anything more to do about preserving Dixie history in the 2006-2016 decade? Santa Clara folks certainly thought so. They redesigned the street through the old town, Santa Clara Boulevard, with the intent of displaying and preserving the many pioneer buildings. They built an impressive town hall including an historical museum and a large public square. The grounds feature several pioneer statues and they sponsor and celebrate Swiss Days there.

In St. George the Hela Seegmiller Farm in Little Valley was made into a historical site in 2014. The city spent \$800,000 to restore the grain barn, create trails and a pavilion, enhance the orchard, pond and gardens. There is a collection of classic farm equipment. It is located at 2450 South 3000 East. The land was donated by the Seegmiller family.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre site has been a landmark for decades and monuments have been placed there. Negotiations between the Fancher descendents in Arkansas and the LDS Church have been under way for about three decades. The church has purchased much of the land to enable it to be preserved as an historic site. On September 11, 2011, a joint celebration of the Fancher organization in Arkansas and leaders of the LDS Church occurred at the site. It was to celebrate the official designation that both sides had agreed upon it as a federally-recognized historic site. Recently some human bones were exhumed. They have been collected and buried together with an historic designation. As a symbol of reconciliation, the Fanchers and Mormons have initiated the making of two quilts. One will remain in Arkansas; the other has been placed in the Pioneer Courthouse on St. George Boulevard. Half of the squares on the quilt were made by Fanchers and half by Mormons, symbolizing the spirit of reconciliation.

A visible historic project is the retrofitting of the St. George Tabernacle. This is being done to reinforce the building from a possible earthquake. It is partially in response to an earthquake in 1992 that disattached the top of the west wall from its links to the two side walls. The wall did not collapse,



partially because a construction company was on site and quickly prevented it from falling. The current project is costly. Those who drive by in the 2016-17 period see extensive metal scaffolding surrounding the building. Once it is completed, the interior will be restored and the building will again become the community center with its three weekly concerts and lectures and daily tours. The Heritage Choir will be able to return there as its venue.

What might seem like a minor matter is the Rockville Bridge. It was built over 90 years ago by Zion National Park to enable Union Pacific busses to continue their National Parks tour from Bryce Canyon to Grand Canyon. The steel bridge was built in 1924 and has been in use since then-one lane wide. It is weakening. A solution is needed. Many have proposed replacing it with a two lane cement bridge. The citizens of Rockville want the old bridge restored. The city has started a fundraising effort and has been granted some Federal funds. It appears that the bridge will be restored.

In 1950 the Sun Bowl was completed on 400 East in St. George, becoming the home of the annual rodeo. At that time it was on the eastern edge of the city. Now the city has expanded and the result is that the Sun Bowl is part of downtown. The Lions Club members were major supporters of the project. By 2014 the Sun Bowl was in major need of repair or demolition. At the same time, Dixie State University was in serious need of more space to expand its land-locked campus. They negotiated a purchase of the block where East Elementary school is located, immediately across the street from the Dixie State University campus. The Washington County School Board was receptive because East Elementary is its oldest school building. They told DSU officials they would sell if Dixie leaders would help them obtain land in the city center, such as the Sun Bowl. Negotiations began with the City Council. The Lions Club members were determined to keep the Sun Bowl functioning and the rodeo in town--not at the county park on State Road 9 toward Hurricane. They argued that the rodeo would decline seriously at that site because many people would not drive that far. Negotiations were delicate. The City Council proposed a compromise that would locate the East Elementary School on the baseball field just west of the Sun Bowl. The compromise was accepted by all parties and the school building was constructed there, opening in early 2017. The Sun Bowl and rodeo remain but the structure still needs major improvement.

Several towns hold History Day celebrations such as Santa Clara. On the first week of 2009 the Spectrum reported History Days in Ivins City Park. The choir, led by Linda Elwell, said the community spent three months preparing for it. The people at Silver Reef and Leeds prepare celebrations every three months. Ron Cundick and his board are very determined in promoting the history there with regular activities.

The Dinosaur Discovery Museum at the Johnson Farm at 2180 East Riverside Drive in St. George was conceived in 2000. Since then a major museum has been built. In 2010 a foundation named DinosaurAH!Torium has taken over the management of the museum with the agreement of St. George City and Mayor Dan McArthur. The museum staff members have found more bones and tracks, including the skull of a 200 million year old crocodile-like Phytosaur. That is something quite different from the Dixie pioneers' discoveries.

In contrast a Paiute archeological site dating back to between 500 and 1200 AD has been found on the hill overlooking the Confluence Park. Some 10 foundations of Indian dwellings have been uncovered. One worker there suggested it was the site where Brigham Young stated: "There will yet be a city here with towns and steeples" (Spectrum, May 1, 2015, A1).

Historical sites keep appearing. For example, Wayne Pace and the Sons of Utah Pioneers lobbied the St. George City Council and the Red Hills Golf Course Manager to allow them to establish a trail to the sandstone quarry on the western side of the course. It is where the sandstone was quarried for the St. George Tabernacle, the Temple, the Pioneer Courthouse and the Woodward School. People have known about it for the full century but since 1965, when the Red Hills Golf Course was located next to the quarry, they have not been able to visit the site. It took a lot of convincing but finally an agreement was reached. The Dixie Encampment Chapter of the SUP went to work, including raising funds to supplement the city's contributions. It is called "Pathway to the Quarry Project." The entrance is located on 700 North above Diagonal Street. It was dedicated and opened to the public on March 19, 2016.

## Fine Arts

Many important aspects of the Fine Arts have existed in previous decades-The Southwest Symphony, Heritage Choir, St. George Art Museum, Sears Art Gallery, the many community choirs and bands, the high school theater productions and orchestras and choirs, the Dixie State University theater and musical groups, dance and art, the Art Around the corner sculpture displays in downtown St. George, the annual art festival on the town square, the Kayenta art shows, the art galleries that sell artists works in Springdale, Santa Clara and St. George, the Tuacahn productions-all these make fine arts vibrant in Washington County.

There have been some additions in this decade. St. George Musical Theater revived after a five-year hiatus and reopened its full season in the St. George Opera House, producing many Broadway and classical show in the theater-in-the-round setting. Brigham's Playhouse opened in Washington and has quickly become a substantial venue for theater.

Dixie State University raised the standard for its symphony orchestra and it is now performing in the Cox Auditorium with full season tickets and a good-sized audience. They include professional soloists in some of their concerts. The Music Department has expanded its piano offerings. The department now offers three Bachelor's degrees. It presents many concerts and they indicate the extent of their curriculum: Concert Choir, Women's Choir, Chamber Singers, Jazz, Percussion, Cello, Vocal, String, Piano Ensemble, Opera. The Dance Department also offers a Bachelor's degree and several concerts.

The Heritage Choir is directed by Dr. Ken Peterson with Dr. Nancy Allred as pianist and artistic director. They have long rehearsed and performed in the St. George Tabernacle but in 2016 they had to move to the Dunford Auditorium for practices and the Cox Auditorium for performances because of the two-year Tabernacle closure for repair. Nonetheless they fulfilled their plans for a September 2016 concert tour in

central Europe (Krakow, Poland, Berno, Czech Republic, Bratislav, Slovakia, Vienna, Austria and Budapest, Hungary).

Every year in April, a major St. George Art Festival is sponsored on the large lawn of the Town Square. At least 50 artists come to sell their work. Large crowds respond enthusiastically, many of them tourists. Kayenta, the upscale community west of Santa Clara, attracted 90 artists to their eighth year of an Art Festival, and has established an art center. The annual "Art Around the Corner" promotes a significant sculpture event. The people who have promoted this program to beautify St. George invite 24 artists from the Intermountain West to place a sculpture in the downtown area on a pedestal provided by St. George City. They leave each piece there for a year and they are for sale. The city has purchased several of them for the Town Square and nearby areas. Some donors have also purchased sculptures and located them downtown permanently. Tourists continually comment that downtown is certainly an art center. There are about ten art outlets in the business district.

The city has recently remodeled the East Annex building across the street from the City Hall. It used to be the courthouse before the new one on Tabernacle Street was finished. The foyer of the East Annex is now devoted to rotating art shows. The city continues to sponsor the St. George Art Museum, a significant professional facility. It is located on 200 North across from the Post Office in the Pioneer Center for the Arts. The four shows in 2016 were devoted to art about the centennial of National Parks throughout the nation.

Near the St. George Art Museum is a neighborhood of art galleries. There are four on Ancestor Square, three in old pioneer homes on Main Street next to the Ancestor parking lot, one nearby on Second North, and several more on the Main Street block below the Boulevard. Tourists flock around these areas and realize that St. George is an art destination.

The opening of the restored Electric Theater in 2016 has been a huge step in the Fine Arts progress. The theater hosts the Dixie State University DOC-Utah film festival and many musical performances and lectures. In addition, it is now the location for an art gallery with several cubicles where artists can paint. It is open daily. The restoration of the theater was debated extensively but the city purchased the building for \$900,000. It spent another \$2 million to purchase the adjacent two buildings for the art gallery; they rebuilt them and retrofitted the theater. Part of the funds came from the newly-passed Recreation and Arts Tax (RAP).

The Tabernacle concerts three times a week have drawn good audiences but this opportunity is now on hold, as is the annual Juanita Brooks Lecture, for two years while the St. George Tabernacle is being reinforced against earthquakes. Nonetheless there are high-quality fine arts opportunities virtually every day in the county.

### Religion and Diversity

Until the 1950s Mormonism was almost totally dominant in Washington County. A small Presbyterian congregation existed for decades before that. A Catholic one was in Silver Reef but that town closed

about 1878 and later the well-known Father Scanlan moved north. The Catholic community had a good re-start in the 1950s and has expanded ever since, especially with the influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the last two decades. Religious diversity has grown in Washington County in the past 50 years, especially the last two decades. In September 2016 the *Dixie Book* (telephone) listed 59 churches in the county other than Mormons. These included traditional Christian congregations-Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, Christian Science--but in this decade others such as Calvary Chapel, Salvation Army, Full Gospel, Christian Covenants, New Covenant, Bible Church and others have been established. The Catholic Church has several thousand members, about half of them Spanish-speaking, and they conduct weekly services in Spanish. The LDS Church has many Spanish congregations also. There are 28 LDS stakes in the county with an average of seven congregations, about 180 wards and branches. The population of the county in 2016 is about 65% Mormon whereas in 1983 the LDS percentage was 79%. The population of the State of Utah in 2015 was about 52% Mormon.

Another way to look at diversity is race. For example, the inner city school in St. George, East Elementary, has about 60% of its students whose native language is Spanish. There is some dual immersion in the school but many of the Spanish speakers are in classes conducted in English. They learn to speak English quickly, much sooner than their parents, and are fluent by fourth grade. The percentage of residents in the county who are of Spanish descent is 10%. There are many Polynesians but they only make up 1.7%. There are some Black Americans in the county and the same with Native Americans. There are more Asians, 2%.

When Reverend Alex Wilkie moved to St. George in 1961, there were only two non-Mormon churches, Catholic and Baptist, where Wilkie was the pastor. Lutherans came in 1969. By 1983 the Latter-day Saints (Mormons) made up 79% of the 36,000 residents. By 2013 only 65% of the 125,000 residents were LDS (Spectrum, October 26, 2014, A5).

## Schools

The population growth in the 2006-2016 decade also means that the schools would have to be expanded. In 2010 there were 34 schools in the county with 35,713 students. By 2016 there were 43 schools including six high schools (Dixie, Snow Canyon, Desert Hills, Pine View, Hurricane and Enterprise) and one planned to serve the Washington Fields and Little Valley. The Crimson High School there will have a capacity of 1500 students and the nearby middle school will accommodate 1000 students. There are also five middle schools adjacent to the high schools. Enrollment in 2016 was 29,652 with a 2020 projection of 32,000. In addition, there are several charter schools and private schools.

One interesting development was the opening of Water Canyon K-12 School in Hildale. Washington County School District was forced to close Phelps School there in 2001 when Warren Jeffs ordered FLDS members to withdraw their children from the public school and home school them. The majority of the

students in the new school come from families that have pulled away from the FLDS religion. Some 147 high school students and 200 elementary students enrolled in 2016.

Another major development underway in 2016 is the transfer of East Elementary School to a new building in the middle of downtown St. George. It is next to the Sun Bowl on land donated by the city which was previously the Elks baseball field. Dixie State University purchased East Elementary School and its large playground and parking lot to enable expansion of the university campus.

To support school construction, the Washington County School District leaders asked voters to approve a \$185 million bond during the November 5, 2013 general election, costing most taxpayers about \$216 per year. The bond supported construction of Desert Hills (\$43 million) and Hurricane (\$33 million) High Schools and was retired in 2016.

The arrival of computer technology in classrooms was very much alive by 2010. There were nearly 11,000 computers in the classrooms then. Anyone visiting classes now can see them in use everywhere.

Another significant factor in education in Washington County is the Dixie Applied Technology College. Since its beginnings its programs have been located in various places, mainly existing schools for vocational training. In 2009 there were 5,061 students involved in subjects such as auto mechanics, construction, heating and ventilation, air conditioning, instructional technology (computers). Recently the college took over the old Airport Terminal and 30 adjoining acres. Then they began plans for a full campus there. They requested \$15 million from the State Legislature in 2015. The Legislature appropriated \$31.9 million dollars. The college is now actively seeking private funds.

### Environmental Issues and Actions

Anyone driving around St. George since February 2014 may have noticed Blue Bins on the curbs in front of most houses twice a month on garbage day. They contain items such as paper, plastic and metal to be picked up for recycling. This is an effort to extend the life of the Washington County Solid Waste Dump. It has been welcomed by almost all residents because of the benefit to the environment at a modest cost.

Several other environmental improvement projects have been undertaken. Ivins and St. George have installed solar stations. An announcement about solar energy came in 2010, terminating plans for a coal power plant in nearby Nevada and replacing it with solar generators. That calmed the fears of coal dust being blown into the county. Another project was the installation of two wind turbines at the Anderson Ranch junction at I-15 in February 2015. A further announcement was by Rocky Mountain Power when they declared that the St. George Airport was environmentally clear. Fish were placed in the Virgin River in March 2016. SUNTRAN bus service was expanded to Santa Clara, Ivins, Bloomington and Washington. Zion National Park established and expanded a free bus service into the park to reduce the automobile traffic there. Park officials are also installing charging stations for electric vehicles.

Many of these environmental improvements were called for in the Vision Dixie conferences during the decade, as well as in the Bennett-Matheson Wilderness Bill in Congress in March 2009. The Desert Reserve issue has continued to be debated-how to keep the area from over-building by developers.

St. George City leaders want a highway through the Reserve from I-15 to Snow Canyon Parkway to reduce the traffic in the city and are exploring ways to protect the tortoise and keep the Reserve air clean.

## Polygamy

On the southwest corner of Washington County is the controversial community of Hildale. For several decades it has been the U. S. headquarters of polygamy. Such plural marriage is illegal in Utah and Arizona and both states have attempted, without success, to terminate the practice. The 1953 raid by a police in Colorado City and Hildale was a failure because the U. S. public rejected the action of taking the children in polygamous families away from their parents. Both Arizona and Utah quit enforcing their laws against polygamy. Gradually the two states adopted another strategy, punishing polygamist men for taking under-age wives.

When Warren Jeffs succeeded his father, Rulon Jeffs, in 2005 as the FLDS prophet, Warren promoted polygamy by encouraging faithful male members to have multiple wives, especially under-age girls. The states of Utah and Arizona decided to prosecute such men. This seemed to be more acceptable to public opinion.

In August 2006 Warren Jeffs was captured on a Nevada highway in a vehicle traveling toward Utah. Police found implicating evidence in the car. He was arrested and placed in the Washington County Prison near Hurricane and charged as an accomplice in a marriage of a 14-year-old girl, Elisa Wall, to her 19-year-old cousin, Allan Steed.

Washington County Attorney Brock Belnap had been preparing a case against Jeffs. The arrest drew national attention, particularly because Warren Jeffs was on the national "Most Wanted" list. County leaders were delighted to have Jeffs on trial for something other than adult polygamy. The trial was held in the Washington County Courthouse east of the St. George City Hall. It quickly became a national event with major newspaper reporters and photographers there and some television stations attending. Jeffs said next to nothing during the five-day trial in September 2007. Elisa Wall told how she pleaded with Jeffs, saying she was too young to marry at age 14 and also that she did not like her cousin who Jeffs had chosen to be her husband. She said in court that Jeffs told her to "follow the prophet" and that the priesthood her cousin bore would bless her life. Jeffs was found guilty and sentenced to five years to life and sent to the Utah State Prison near Salt Lake City. Elisa Wall's marriage to her cousin Allan Steed was canceled and Belnap congratulated her for her courage. The cost of the case was \$400,000.



Three years later the Utah Supreme Court reversed the Jeff case decision, based on evidence of a jury irregularity. During that procedure County Attorney Belnap had to decide what to recommend to Governor Gary Herbert if Jeffs was exonerated. Prior to the appeal, the State of Texas requested that Governor Herbert transfer Jeffs to Texas to face much more serious charges of having sexual relations with several teenage girls in the temple at the Yearning For Zion Ranch. Belnap and Herbert realized the punishment for these acts would be much harsher than the Utah case if he was found guilty. Second, the cost for that case would be paid for by the State of Texas. Herbert transferred Jeffs to Texas, hoping he would be found guilty. In the trial there the prosecutor presented tapes Jeffs had made of his young women to satisfy him and of their sexual intercourse. He was convicted and sentenced to life in prison plus 20 years. Jeffs transferred management of the FLDS Church to his brother Allen Jeffs but retained the office of Prophet which he implemented by mail and phone calls and visits at the prison.

The Utah officials knew that the Jeffs case was one of a kind. It would not limit the practice of polygamy, It did however cause several hundred people to become disillusioned and leave the FLDS fold. Many of them remained in Hildale and Colorado City. Some continued to practice polygamy. They raised several issues: their right to retain their residences and the bias of the Hildale police in favor of the FLDS organization.

In addition to prosecuting under-age polygamist marriage, the State of Utah challenged the United Effort Plan Trust. That trust had been initiated in 1956 in Hildale. It was a Twentieth Century revival of the United Order initiated by Brigham Young where members would have all things in common. Young's effort did not last long in most pioneer communities, although Orderville pursued it for a few decades. It was recreated in 1936 and 1942 in Arizona. There were many ups and downs for the trust but it became a major issue in this decade, previous to the under-age sex cases.

Warren Jeffs diverted a large amount of the trust's funds to constructing the Yearning For Zion Ranch in Texas. The State of Utah took a dramatic step by taking over the management of the \$100 million trust in 2005. They appointed accountant Bruce Wison to manage it. Jeffs had pressed church members to fund the trust in two ways. The first was the continuation of the policy that the FLDS Church owned the property in Hildale and Colorado City, family homes included. Second, Jeffs required church members to obtain food stamps from the U. S. Federal government and give them to the FLDS Church to be distributed to the members, or to buy food with the stamps and give it to the trust for distribution.

Bruce Wison was convinced that Jeffs ordered part of the trust funds to be spent, not for food, but to build the new FLDS community in Texas. FBI surveillance cameras photographed purchases for a year. Eleven people were accused of diverting \$12 million worth of goods (Spectrum, April 25, 2016, A1). In 2015, people were still being evicted from homes in Hildale (Spectrum, May 8, 2015, A1). Residents were facing the reality that the United Effort Plan would no longer be able to support them. Washington County began investigations into police bias in Hildale. They argued that the police department there followed orders from the FLDS Church. Washington County is still trying to decide whether to eliminate the Hildale Police Department in favor of using county law enforcement.

The citizens in Hildale have had to respond to enormous pressures and decisions. One challenge for them is to compare their lives with their immediate neighbors in the Second Ward, who continue to practice polygamy but left the FLDS Church over three decades ago. They own their own homes and do not have to dress like the FLDS do. They are successfully employed in their community enterprises and are not subject to any legal investigations or evictions. Many of the FLDS respond to the comparison by considering themselves persecuted.

As if all this pressure was not enough for Hildale residents, Mother Nature stepped in on September 15, 2015. "A huge flood of water swept down out of the cliffs separating Hildale from Zion National Park's boundaries shortly before 5 p.m." (Spectrum, September 16, 2015, A1).

The State of Utah activated the Utah National Guard, sending 25 soldiers to help with the search and rescue effort to find six-year-old Tyson Lukas Black, the only one still missing when 13 people drowned. Several other people besides the Guard came to help. Lt. Governor Spencer Cox came and guaranteed that the cement ditch would be restored and modified to prevent another such flood. Community members were both surprised and gratified at the wide response to help them.

Another example of Dixie citizens responding to the polygamy issue deals with those who have left the FLDS world in Hildale and Colorado City. Many are women and children. Some are the boys who were excommunicated for socially deviant behavior such as watching television, smoking or wearing clothes not recommended by FLDS leaders. A good portion of them came to St. George. Elaine Tyler responded and enlisted others. They established the HOPE organization. They try to help escapees find jobs and get an education. The HOPE group works through the Dove Center. They have received grants from the United Way (Spectrum, September 17, 2007,A1).

The Water Canyon School opening in 2015 has been a real plus. It is part of the Washington County School District. Likewise, the 2016 opening of a library in Hildale is being welcomed. As part of the Washington County Library group it allows patrons to access the index that includes all the books in the county system. If they choose a book that is not in their branch, it will be delivered there in a day or two.

A most recent development was reported in the Spectrum, November 4, 2016, 2A. It said that "A Utah concrete company with ties to a polygamous group has agreed to pay about \$145,000 to settle a federal child labor case alleging it put at least two underage laborers to work for long hours with little pay on job sites around the country." The company agreed to make the payments in order to avoid a much more expensive trial. The FLDS leaders have used unpaid child labor as another way to generate funds to support their construction projects. This is another example of using courts to prosecute the FLDS organization without attacking polygamy.

## Conclusion

Washington County is very much a known entity. It is listed as one of the top places in America to live and especially to retire. It is on a well-traveled freeway between Denver, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas and Los Angeles that helps tourism thrive. It has an impressive new airport and an amazing hospital and health care system. It is the home to a university. It is the site of the oldest functioning LDS Temple. It is the gateway to several national parks and national monuments. It is a paradise for hikers, bikers, campers and photographers. The altitude is modest; the weather is fantastic, natural disasters such as tornadoes don't happen. The fine arts are thriving, as is education. Water is in demand and actions to use it more wisely are in constant discussion. Parks and trails and outdoor opportunities are always available, scores of them. Diversity is growing, so are taxes, but not excessively. Clean air is generally available without inversions. All this is the concern of the government, especially the projected population growth versus the projected water supply.

## Acknowledgements

Several people and organizations have contributed to this essay. The Special Collections/Archive staff at Dixie State University have been central to the effort. Glen Harris has been a great colleague in this effort, especially in the use of the films of the Spectrum newspaper. Curator Kathleen Broeder and her predecessor Amber D'Ambroiso have been cooperative and encouraging. Heber Jones, a volunteer there with much experience in Washington County history, has also. The Washington County Historical Society, including George Q. Cannon and Richard Kohler, have contributed. Dean Cox, who recently retired from the Washington County Administration to become a Commission member, continued giving advice as he had done on earlier chapters. Other officials of the county and St. George City were helpful critics, including Gary Esplin, Brock Belnap, Bob Nicholson, Kent Perkins. Lyman Hafen, director of the Zion Natural History Association, was also a reader.

