

Luke and John, Where Are You?

A SEARCH FOR THE BURIAL SITES OF LUKE HALLORAN AND JOHN HARGRAVE

By Al Mulder

For over a century, one of the unsolved mysteries of the 1846 emigrant migration to California has been the location of the burial sites of Luke Halloran of the Donner-Reed Party and John Hargrave of the Harlan-Young emigrant groups. The published diaries and journals of James F. Reed, Heinrich Lienhard, and Edwin Bryant, along with the writings of respected western history authors, have piqued my interest in the mystery of just where Luke and John are buried. We know that they were buried in what is now known as Tooele Valley, Utah, but exactly where? Reading books such as *Salt Desert Trails*, by Charles Kelly; *Unfortunate Emigrants*, by Kristin Johnson; *West From Fort Bridger*, edited by Morgan and Korn, later revised by Schindler and Bagley; *Prairie Schooner Detours*, by Irene D. Paden; *Ordeal by Hunger*, by George R. Stewart; *Winter of Entrapment*, 1994 edition, by Joseph A. King; and other, often fictionalized, accounts of the Donner Party story has continued to renew and stimulate my curiosity regarding the final resting place of the first white men to die in the region of Tooele County, Utah. The few meager journal entries concerning the deaths and burials leave the subject wide open for speculation and misinterpretation.

Extensive research by noted historians has failed to uncover documented evidence of the exact burial sites. As of this writing, limited field work by OCTA's Utah Crossroads chapter trail historians, Tooele Valley residents, and professional archeologists has not determined the location of the two emigrant graves.

Different interpretations and opposing theories have only added more questions to this historic mystery. Interviews with longtime residents of Grantsville and Tooele and even an archeological dig at a promising site at present Lake Point, Utah, failed to reveal any proof or evidence of just where the burial of the two emigrant travelers took place. The claim of Dr. Walter M. Stookey in his 1950 book, *Fatal Decision*—that Luke Halloran and John Hargrave were buried near Black Rock, close to the south shore of Great Salt Lake—is discounted by serious researchers and historians. Still, it must be considered with two other burial site theories. One recent and promising theory (if one misinterprets or dismisses Reed's entries in the Miller-Reed Diary) was based on the research of the late Harold Schindler, a respected journalist, western historian, and author. Based on his findings, Schindler believed that the young men were buried at present Lake Point, Utah, near a trail fork where some trail historians believe Heinrich Lienhard and his party followed a separate route near the Great Salt Lake shoreline to the "Twenty Wells" area. Depending on one's interpretation of the maps of T. H. Jefferson, Dale Morgan, and the 1856 survey maps, a more circuitous route to "Twenty Wells" was taken by some of the Harlan-Young companies led by Lansford Hastings.¹ Whether or not the Donner-Reed Party followed the

1. Morgan's map, *West of Fort Bridger*, 1994 edition, back cover, and T. H. Jefferson's Map of the Emigrant Road, Part III.

same Hastings and Harlan-Young Party wagon tracks southwest of Adobe Rock is still debated.² The exact route taken by the Donner-Reed party from their camp at a spring near the point of the mountain (Magna Smelter-Black Rock area) to their “lower wells” camp is still another controversy between trail historians. The site researched by Schindler at Lake Point was on a wagon “road” leading toward Adobe Rock.

A third theory, which has been embraced by western authors and historians since the Miller-Reed diary surfaced in 1946, is that they are buried somewhere near the western edge of present-day Grantsville, known from 1846 to 1850 as “Twenty Wells” and later “Willow Creek.” This site would be near the “wells” and the stream that used to flow from North Willow Canyon. Before we embark on a more detailed discussion of the possible locations of the two emigrant graves, a brief background of Luke Halloran and John Hargrave is needed.



Luke Halloran was a young merchant from County Galway, Ireland, who established a general store in St. Joseph, Missouri. Suffering from consumption, he decided to sell his business and go west for his health. He joined the Donner-Reed Party at the Little Sandy crossing in Wyoming. He died in George Donner's wagon in the arms of Tamsen Donner while crossing the Salt Lake Valley and was buried at a Donner Party camp “near the southern shore of Great Salt Lake.”³ In Charles Kelly's book, *Salt Desert Trails*, Kelly states he was buried, in all probability, near a spring near the edge of the lake, just after entering Tooele Valley.⁴

Less is known of John Hargrave. He was a member of the George Harlan company that left Fort Bridger

on July 20, 1846, eleven days ahead of the Donner-Reed Party. George W. Harlan and Samuel C. Young were the two largest family contingents to make up what became known as the Harlan-Young Party. Led by Lansford W. Hastings, they were the first emigrant group to take wagons over the Hastings Cutoff. Hargrave died of pneumonia after exerting himself in the Wasatch Mountains while moving wagons down the rugged and narrow Weber River canyon. Hargrave and his wife Catherine had four small children. His age at the time of his death is unknown. He was buried at Twenty Wells on August 12, 1846, fourteen days before the burial of Luke Halloran.⁵

Early interviews with Donner Party survivors and various reminiscences have placed the burial of Halloran and Hargrave anywhere from the Jordan River crossing, far to the east of the sites we are discussing, to salt-entombed burials near the shoreline of Great Salt Lake. There was never any mention of emigrant graves south of the Great Salt Lake by any of the emigrant companies using the Hastings Cutoff after 1846. Argonauts and emigrant families camped at many of the same springs and creeks between the Salt Lake Valley and Stansbury Mountains that the wagon companies of 1846 may have camped. Most goldseekers using the Hastings Cutoff kept only fragmentary records of their experiences and none reported seeing the two graves. Memoirs written long after the events took place are often lacking in detail and inaccurate as to dates, distances, and locations. Even Reed's memoirs of the Donner Party experience, published in the *Pacific Rural Newspaper* in 1871, provided no additional information concerning the death and burial of Luke Halloran.⁶

Any visible traces or evidence of graves in any location in the northern Tooele Valley may have been easily erased within a few seasons by extreme weather

2. Adobe Rock is a prominent rock formation mentioned by Edwin Bryant and other emigrants as they entered Tooele Valley.

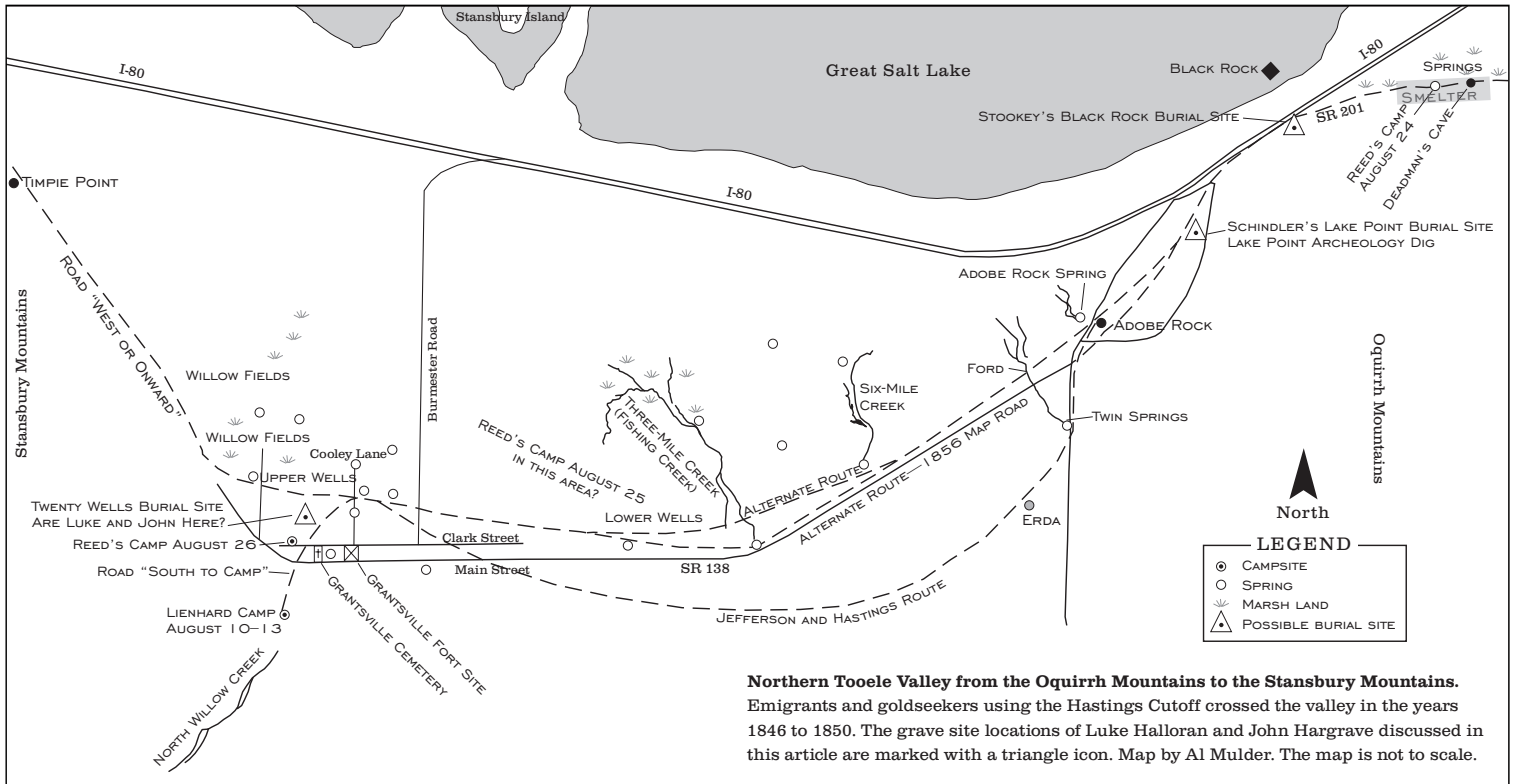
3. Kristin Johnson, “Luke Halloran,” 13.

4. Charles Kelly, *Salt Desert Trails*, 146.

5. J. Roderic Korn, *West From Fort Bridger*, 221-222, note 26.

6. Kristin Johnson, *Unfortunate Emigrants*, 188.

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conditions such as droughts, stream flooding, wind, rain and snow. Emigrant graves on the California and Oregon Trails in the 1840s and later years were obliterated by the trampling hooves of hundreds of heads of livestock and the passing of heavy wagons. In the Twenty Wells area from 1847 (when Miles Goodyear crossed the Salt Desert with a herd of horses) through 1850, hundreds of wagons and hundreds more horses and cattle poured across the Tooele Valley and Salt Desert to California on the Hastings Cutoff. In his journal, Madison Berryman Moorman reported that, in July and August 1850, “there was an almost continuous procession of packers and wagons on the Salt Desert, moving day and night.”⁷ Moorman camped on North Willow Creek in July. He made no mention of graves. It was four years after Halloran and Hargrave were buried.

In 1848, Mormon Battalion members returning from California on the Hastings Cutoff made no mention of graves during their travel through the Twenty Wells area. In November 1849, U.S. Army topo-

graphical engineer Captain Howard Stansbury wrote that

after following the eastern base of the ridge [Stansbury Range] about six miles to the south, we began gradually to diverge from it to the eastward, and at dark encamped in the prairie, near a noble spring of fresh cold water [North Willow Creek], with abundance of excellent grass and an extensive grove of large willows for fuel.⁸

This stream is shown on his 1849–50 survey map as “Tuilla Creek.” Stansbury did not mention seeing any graves.

Only three of the burial sites considered probable will be explored in this writing, and even these sites cannot be substantiated with documented proof or physical evidence. It may still be possible, though, that at some future time, a document, journal, diary, or physical evidence will be unexpectedly discovered and reveal the exact location of the graves, putting to rest all the doubts, theories, and speculation associated with their burials.

7. *Utah Historical Quarterly*, vol. 20, pp. 17–19.

8. Howard Stansbury, *Exploration of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake*, 118.



DEADMAN'S CAVE

Located on Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation property, it is near the springs mentioned by Lienhard in his journal. View is to the south, looking toward SR 201. All photos by Al Mulder.

THE MAGNA SMELTER— BLACK ROCK BURIAL SITE

The Black Rock burial site was first discovered in March 1933, by an employee of the State of Utah Department of Roads. Mr. George T. Royer, who lived in nearby Garfield, Utah, claimed that two graves, forty to fifty feet apart, were uncovered near Black Rock while road crews were improving U.S. highway 40-50. This discovery was investigated by Dr. Walter M. Stookey of Tooele, Utah, in the late 1940s. He had been told of the discovery by Mr. Ira Dern, owner and operator of the Sunset Beach Resort adjacent to Black Rock. Mr. Stookey had Mr. Royer take him to the site of the burials. Royer was the only person located who was there at the time the bones in the two graves were discovered. Dr. Stookey later wrote a book on the Donner Party, *Fatal Decision*, published in 1950, and in which he related the finding of the graves by G. T. Royer.⁹ Unfortunately this discovery

could not be confirmed. The skeletal remains, reportedly turned over to the University of Utah Museum, have never been found and no official record exists of their recovery.¹⁰ Were these possibly the remains of Native Americans, possibly Goshute or Southern Shoshone? In the years since Stookey's book was published, the "discovery" has been discounted by serious western historians. The distances the 1846 emigrant parties traveled, their campsite locations, and other entries appearing in the journals of Reed and Lienhard do not support the Black Rock burial site. When I first read the small book *Grim Journey* by Hoffman Birney, published in 1934, I thought I had found some support for Dr. Stookey's book. But this William Eddy "novel" is just that, a fictional narrative on the Donner Party experience of William H.

9. Walter M. Stookey, *Fatal Decision*, 94-96.

10. "Lost: Donner Party Skeleton," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, Sunday, June 27, 1948.



Kennecott Copper property road going west from Deadman's Cave.
This road is on the route the 1846 emigrant wagon companies took going west to Tooele Valley and Twenty Wells.
This road is just below SR 201 and just above the springs and bulrush marshes.



One of several springs still existing in the Magna-Black Rock area between SR 201 and Interstate 80.
Springs are near Kennecott Copper Corporation's Arthur Plant. Emigrant trails of 1846 came through this area.
View is looking west toward Tooele Valley.



BLACK ROCK

This photo was taken approximately two hundred yards north of the Magna Smelter-Black Rock burial site shown in the book *Fatal Decision*.

Eddy, according to respected Donner Party researcher and author Kristin Johnson.¹¹

In her book, *The Old California Trail*, Julia C. Altrocchi wrote,

When the foundations for the pier and the beach house were dug at Sunset Beach [next to Black Rock on the south shore of Great Salt Lake] four years ago, two bodies were uncovered undoubtedly those of John Hargrave [of the Hastings group] and Luke Halloran who had laid undisturbed for a hundred years.

She added, “Halloran was not even wrapped in a winding sheet, but was placed in the white coffin of the desert, in his clothes, as he was.”¹² Where Altrocchi got her graves-location ideas from is unknown. Don-

ner Party historian Kristin Johnson has been unable to find a source for Altrocchi’s unsubstantiated burial story and has dismissed it as another fictional account. The Magna Smelter-Black Rock site is occupied by the Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation’s Arthur Smelter operation, which is traversed by State Road 201 and several private roads. But just north of the smelter the land is still covered with bulrushes nourished by several springs. Although abused and distorted by industrial plants, highways and roads, and huge piles of mill tailings, the Magna Smelter-Black Rock area fits the description of where the 1846 emigrants camped before they entered the broad plain of the northern Tooele Valley. Although Interstate I-80 (former route of U.S. Highway 40) and State Route 201 (the route of the 1913 to 1919 Lincoln Highway) now cover the burial site shown in Dr. Stookey’s book, the approximate location of the graves discovered in 1933 can still be determined. The site is near the Lake Point junction of Interstate I-80 and State Road 201.

11. This tale told of Luke Halloran being buried “in a bed of salt” and was based on a letter James Breen wrote to C. F. McGlashan forty years after the event. Breen was only five years old when Halloran died.

12. Julia C. Altrocchi, *The Old California Trail* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1945), 241.

THE LAKE POINT BURIAL SITE

In 1927, an article appeared in the *Sacramento Bee* newspaper, dateline Salt Lake City, (Utah), October 11, 1927: "Davis Believes He Has Found Grave of Early Emigrant." The article stated that Captain Charles E. Davis was satisfied that he had located the grave of Luke Halloran. Davis returned to Salt Lake City on October 10, 1927, from Fort Bridger; while on this trip he met William Haight, age 86, who entered the Salt Lake Valley with the second Mormon Party in 1847. The article stated that Haight confirmed the story of Joseph Yates, the 76-year-old life-long resident of Lake Point. Haight related to Davis an account perhaps given to him by Yates of an emigrant who had been previously buried there at Lake Point. How Haight knew about the site wasn't explained, but we may assume that he had visited the site at some time with Joseph Yates, whom he apparently knew well. The article went on to state that this meeting with Haight confirmed the story of the Donner Party survivors: that they buried Halloran by the side of a previously buried emigrant. The article also stated that members of the Masonic fraternity were interested in the burial site and said that they planned steps to erect a shaft over the grave, about fifty yards from the Victory Highway (the old Lincoln Highway now named Lakeshore Drive). This was apparently never done. When I visited the site in 1995, only a small mound of rocks was found there, supposedly placed at the site by Davis and Yates in 1927.

The Lake Point burial theory was revived when Harold Schindler located the papers of Charles E. Davis at the Sutter's Fort Historical Museum archives in Sacramento. Among the notes, scrapbooks, and photographic negatives was a photograph of a mound of rocks about fifty yards from the old Lincoln Highway at Lake Point. By viewing the skyline of the Oquirrh Mountains in the background, the location of the rock pile was found by members of Utah Crossroads in 1994. In 1927 Davis, who was an amateur explorer of means, retraced the Donner-Reed Trail east to Fort Bridger. While exploring the salt desert and Tooele Valley, he met Joseph Yates, the man who had informed William Haight in the account given

above. Yates "pointed out a spot where the two emigrants were buried and these same graves were known to have been made between the years of 1845 and '47." They marked the spot with a cross and "built up a mound of rocks."¹³ Schindler's research came up with the first solid evidence that Halloran and Hargrave may be buried at Lake Point. The property where the rock mound was located was owned by the Deseret Land and Livestock Company (later named Skull Valley Company LTD) and permission was needed to work on the site. Also, the state archeologist had to be involved in the event that any archeological excavation was permitted. After visiting the site in November 1995, the state archeologist (who didn't appear too interested) suggested that those of us researching the site contact professional archeology consultants.

With the permission and funding of the landowner, an archeological excavation took place April 21-22 and May 12, 1998. A meeting was held at the site on April 8, 1998, with JBR Environmental Consultants Incorporated representatives, a Lake Point Community representative, and several Utah Crossroads members, including myself. The location of Davis's "mound of rocks" was located and identified using the photos taken by Charles E. Davis's assistant in 1927. I visited the site several times before and during the field work, itching to do some digging even before the JBR group was contacted. The use of a friend's metal detector, as well as the later coverage of the entire field with a metal detector by the JBR staff, revealed nothing. Even a forked branch "divining rod" used later at the rock mound site was a bust.¹⁴ The elation felt by Hal Schindler and others who had pinpointed the location of the rock pile using the Davis photos soon disappeared as the archeological excavations revealed nothing. As the archeologists carefully hand-dug several trenches and later excavated with a backhoe, I shared the disappointment of Hal Schindler, Jeff Carlstrom (who coordinated the project), and others who were present. No cultural remains were encountered

13. J. Roderick Korns, *West From Fort Bridger*, xiv and xv; and Jeff Carlstrom, "A Side Trip to Mark, Luke and John," 7.

14. Jeff Carlstrom, "2nd Part, A Side Trip to Mark, Luke, and John," 7.



OCTA Carsonite post marks the field where the Lake Point burial site is located. The rock mound thought to be the grave of Luke Halloran was in this field about seventy-five yards from the road fence line. View is west-southwest.



LAKE POINT BURIAL SITE

A few scattered rocks are all the remains of the rock mound placed at the site by Davis and Yates in 1927. Trail goes through this field toward Adobe Rock. View is looking north to the point of the Oquirrh Mountains.



ADOBE ROCK

This notable landmark was mentioned in the journals of emigrants and goldseekers using the Hastings Cutoff. View is to the west. The Stansbury Mountains are obscured by valley smog created by the Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation smelter operations.

in any of the hand- or backhoe trenches that were dug in selected areas. According to the archeologists' findings, the soil had never been disturbed. The report prepared for the Skull Valley Company LTD states in the conclusion,

While no cultural remains were found relating to possible burials in the areas tested, there is a chance that the burials may still be encountered. In view of the fact that this undertaking is on private land, with tight budget constraints, it is recommended that members of OCTA act as monitors during bulldozing operations. In the event that skeletal material is found, an archeologist could then be contacted to provide verification. Complete removal and analysis, or reburial with project avoidance is up to the discretion of the land owner.¹⁵

15. JBR Cultural Resources Report 98-40. Cultural Resource Investigations at Lake Point, Tooele County, Utah. Prepared for Skull Valley Company LTD, Salt Lake City, Utah, August 20, 1998.

Failure to find any evidence of the graves does not mean that during some future development of the property and excavation activity at the site evidence of emigrant burials won't be uncovered. Charles Kelly, author of *Salt Desert Trails*, may have shown interest in the Lake Point burial site theory, but I don't think anyone, without physical evidence, would have convinced noted western historian and author Dale Morgan that Luke Halloran was buried where Davis and Yates said he was buried.

While reviewing the archeological activity at the Lake Point site, I thought of another possibility: could the graves be located near Adobe Rock? Adobe Rock is not only a notable landmark in the northern Tooele Valley, but it was a popular camping area for the parties of 1846 and, later, goldseekers using the Hastings Cutoff. The good water from the Adobe Rock spring and the creek running northwest of the rock formation toward the Great Salt Lake, plus the plentiful feed



ADOBE ROCK SPRING

The spring is on private property owned by Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation. Water from the spring is piped to the Kennecott Smelter. Surrounded by shrubs, trees, and plentiful grass, the spring was a choice camping area for emigrants and goldseekers.

for livestock, made Adobe Rock an excellent resting and camping area. However, the distance to Adobe Rock from the springs in the Magna Smelter-Black Rock area as depicted on the T. H. Jefferson map is approximately six-plus miles, a far greater distance than the two miles Reed traveled on August 26 from their camp at the “lower wells” to where they buried Luke Halloran. The 1856 Survey Map sections of the upper Tooele Valley show trails that go west and south of Adobe Rock, which could have provided a “fork in the road” as mentioned in Reed’s August 26 (25th) entry. However, this idea was soon dismissed. I realized that according to the Miller-Reed diary entry of Tuesday, August 25, the party left their camp at the point of the mountain, which was 1½ miles from the junction with the route taken by Hastings and the Harlan-Young party, and traveled 20 miles to the “lower wells.”¹⁶ The Lake Point burial site does not match up with the distances noted in Reed’s journal entries. The

distance from the Donner-Reed Party’s camp near the trail junction in the Magna Smelter-Black Rock area to the Lake Point site is approximately 6½ miles. It was time to seriously consider the Grantsville “Twenty Wells” site theory.

THE GRANTSVILLE “UPPER WELLS”
BURIAL SITE

Until the appearance of the Miller-Reed diary in 1946, most, if not all, accounts of travel by the Donner-Reed Party in 1846 were based on reminiscences, particularly stories, articles, and interviews regarding the Donner-Reed party’s experience in the Sierra Nevada. The early writings of J. Quinn Thornton, C. F. McGlashan, and Eliza Donner Houghton; the later writ-

16. Reed’s journal entry for Tuesday, August 25: “. . . left Camp this morning intending if possible to make the Lower Wells being fair water 20 [miles] which we made [two words written in margin] fair water.”



TWIN SPRINGS, LOOKING EAST

This spring is located south of Mills Junction and SR 138. It flows north toward Benson's Mill. Emigrants going west from Adobe Rock would have crossed this stream.



SIX-MILE SPRING

The creek runs north from this point. View is looking west toward the Stansbury Mountains.

ings of George R. Stewart, and Joseph A. King; and lesser works by amateur authors gave little, if any, verifiable information concerning the burials of Halloran and Hargrave. In her anthology *Unfortunate Emigrants—Narratives of the Donner Party*, Kristin Johnson wrote, “Because of the contradictions among the sources, a complete and accurate retelling of the Donner story may prove impossible.”¹⁷ Only further research and the possible discovery of unpublished diaries and papers of members of 1846 emigrant parties will reveal additional information concerning the deaths and burials of Luke Halloran and John Hargrave and confirm the exact location of their graves.

After several years of following and marking the Hastings Cutoff trail in Tooele Valley and neighboring Skull Valley, I became convinced that Luke and John had to be buried closer to Grantsville. The 7.5 minute Topographic Maps prepared by OCTA member Rush Spedden during the Crossroads chapter’s Mapping and Marking Cost-Share Project were, together with the 1856 survey maps, valuable sources in formulating my theory of a Grantsville burial site. Controversy among historians and trail enthusiasts will always exist when trying to determine the exact route or routes of the 1846 parties through Tooele Valley. The routes and distances traveled by the Bryant–Russell mounted party, Harlan–Young wagon groups, Heinrich Lienhard wagons, and the Donner–Reed Party are based mainly on the journal entries of Reed, Bryant, and Lienhard and the maps of T. H. Jefferson, which do not make the routes clear or detailed enough for a general agreement by trail historians.

Exact routes from Lake Point to Grantsville can never be proved for lack of physical evidence such as wagon ruts and swales. Road and highway development, residential and commercial development, ranching, and other agricultural activity long ago obliterated the pristine trails and wagon roads made by the emigrant parties of 1846.¹⁸ After crossing two small

streams, Edwin Bryant said “the plain presented a sterile appearance with little vegetation that was stunted and withered.” In Bryant’s journal entry of July 31, 1846, he mentioned passing “several remarkable rocks rising in tower-like shapes from the plain to height of sixty or eighty feet [Adobe Rock]” and then wrote “we crossed two small streams bitter with saline and alkaline impregnation . . . the plain presented a sterile appearance with little vegetation that was stunted and withered.” These streams could have been Twin Springs, where the Benson Mill is now, and the stream farther west, Six-Mile Creek. Bryant’s mounted party went on to reach the freshwater stream of North Willow Creek, where they made their camp.¹⁹ It must be remembered when trying to determine the routes the 1846 emigrant parties took across Tooele Valley that the present receding shoreline of the Great Salt Lake was probably farther south than current maps show. The springs and streams of Adobe Rock Creek, Twin Springs, Six-Mile Creek, and Fishing Creek spread out as they ran north toward the lakeshore. Lienhard described the area lying between the lake and the road or “bar” they traveled on from present Lake Point to the springs at Grantsville as “an expanse of marshland.”²⁰ The springs and streams described in the journals of the 1846 parties, the goldseekers of 1849 and 1850, and even the early settlers of the northern Tooele Valley have been diverted, channeled, dammed, or dried up. The creek shown as Six-Mile Creek, north of SR 138 and shown on the Grantsville Quadrangle, 7.5 minute Topographical Map, is now diverted and transported to the Magna-Garfield Smelter for industrial use. In the early days, water from the Mill Pond, fed by Twin Springs, spread out in many directions until it was channeled into a canal and used for irrigation.²¹ Only by interviewing elderly, long-time residents who were born and raised in northern Tooele Valley can one obtain some idea of where the creeks,

17. Johnson, *Unfortunate Emigrants*, 5.

18. Burmester Road from I-80 to Grantsville, enters Grantsville about 2½ miles west of Fishing Creek (Three-Mile Creek). The area to the east of the road before entering Grantsville, is a flat, dry plain. No trails, depressions, marshy areas or streams are visible from Burmester Road. Grantsville Quad map, Section R5W, T2S.

19. Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw In California* (Minneapolis: Ross Haines, Inc., 1967), 164 and 165. The night’s camp was on the creek perhaps a mile or more south of State Route 138 in present-day Grantsville.

20. Korn, *West From Fort Bridger*, 150.

21. *History of Tooele County*, 1961, Daughters of Utah Pioneers Tooele County Company, pp. 278–770.



This natural berm or “bar” may have been the route traveled by Lienhard when he passed near the lake and went swimming. Older residents say the “bar” road was used to travel from the Castagno Ranch (Six-Mile Ranch) to Lake Point in the early 1900s. View is looking east to the Oquirrh Mountains and Lake Point.

springs, and wells were during the early part of this century. In her book, *Prairie Schooner Detours*, Irene D. Paden stated, “Someone who is familiar with the country as it used to be should take the time and trouble to work out the geography.”²²

Defining the “Lower Wells” and “Upper Wells” entries in Reed’s diary has always been the stickler when trying to determine the campsite location of the Donner Party on August 25. Could some of these “lower wells” have been the springs at Three-Mile Creek, shown as Fishing Creek on the Grantsville Quad map? This map also shows artesian wells west of Fishing Creek. According to 90-year-old and long-time resident Myron Sutton, now deceased, the Grantsville “Willow Fields” area shown on the Grantsville Quad map were wells that gradually dried up by the droughts of the 1930s and the piping of the

creeks from South and North Willow Canyons. Except for a few small springs or “seeps” on private property in the area of northwest Grantsville, there is little evidence left of “Twenty Wells.” Early residents called the few remaining wells in Grantsville “potholes.” Farmers hauled rocks and gravel into the springs until they disappeared. The city of Grantsville filled the large potholes created by the wells in the city streets with rocks and gravel until they were sealed and paved over. A small street map given to me several years ago by Myron Sutton showed that the wells he knew as a boy were scattered throughout the area of present Grantsville, from Main (SR 138) and Cooley Streets north to the area shown as the “Willow Fields” on the Grantsville 7.5 minute quadrangle map.²³ I believe the wells in this area to be Reed’s “upper wells.”

22. Irene D. Paden, *Prairie Schooner Detours*, 60.

23. Sutton’s Grantsville Street map of well locations and Hastings Cut-off map number HA-UT-18, 7.5 minute Topo Map, Grantsville Quadrangle, prepared by Rush Spedden.

SIX-MILE CREEK

Flowing north from the spring, the creek has carved a deep ravine. Travelers with wagons would have had to ford the creek farther to the north or bypass the spring where the photo was taken.

According to Reed's journal entry for Wednesday, August 26, 1846, the party traveled only two miles from their camp at the "lower wells" (likely the Fishing Creek area) to where they buried Luke Halloran at the "upper wells." The key entry to this burial location is the journal entry "at the forks of the road—one turning directly *south to camp* and the other *west or onward* [italics are the author's]." The "south to camp" would indicate there were or had been other groups camped at the "wells" near present Main and Cooley Streets, and not far from the stream coming from North Willow Canyon. The distance from where Three-Mile Creek (Fishing Creek) is located to the intersection of Clark and Cooley streets in Grantsville is approximately three miles. However, an existing artesian well west of Fishing Creek is exactly two miles from Cooley Street. It is also near this intersection that, according to the 1856 Survey Map, Section T2S, R6W, North Willow Creek ran north, branching off near the old Grantsville Fort. The site where the Mormon settlement fort was located is at Clark and Cooley Streets. Irene Paden wrote that down Cooley Street (the lane with Lombardy Poplar trees) were a few of the wells and a shaded reservoir that held the overflow from four small wells of the original group.²⁴

Writing about his camp about a half-mile below (north of) North Willow Creek, Lienhard wrote that there were many deep salt-free springs and that the group found excellent grass and a grove of trees. Lien-



hard mentions that there were three other companies in camp and that North Willow Creek exhausted itself a half-mile above their camp.²⁵ In a letter dated April 21, 1991, Myron Sutton wrote that when he was a boy, the creek [North Willow] was probably like it was at the time of Bryant–Russell. The creek would flood in the spring and by the middle of July it would mostly seep into the ground before getting to town. There was a row of willows following it all the way back to the canyon. It was piped from the mouth in the thirties to conserve water. Then, according to Sutton's

24. Paden, *Prairie Schooner Detours*, 59–60. Author's note: The large Lombardy poplar trees that lined Cooley Street, the reservoir, and the four wells Paden observed are no longer there.

25. Lienhard's Journal, *West From Fort Bridger*, 15.



Trees mark the site of where active “wells” were located.
The Stansbury Mountains are in the background, looking southwest.
Soft, wet areas still exist around the trees.

1991 letter, it had been dammed for flood control in the late 1980s.²⁶ In his journal Lienhard wrote that on August 11, while they remained in camp, two companies left and one company was still encamped nearby. He wrote that a man died [John Hargrave] “who had been ill only a short time.” These journal entries of Lienhard support the theory that the Donner Party was also close to this same camp area when they buried Luke Halloran on Wednesday, August 26. The “forks in the road” were created by the tracks going south to where the parties camped at the “upper” wells where the grass was apparently very plentiful, and by the tracks made by the companies that traveled “west and onward” prior to the arrival of the Donner-Reed

Party. The freshwater springs or wells, the lush pasture, and the possibility of trees fed by the stream from North Willow Canyon would have made Luke Halloran’s burial site “a beautiful place,” where one fork of the road went south to camp and the other road went northwest toward the point of the Stansbury Mountain Range, Timpie Point.

Correspondence and interviews with older residents of Grantsville—those who were born and raised there and still living in the area—have helped to visualize the topography and features of the several springs and creeks in the northern Tooele Valley as they may have appeared in the late 1880s and early 1900s. These recollections also helped clarify (for me) Reed’s journal entries of “lower wells” and “upper wells.” In a letter to me from Myron Sutton, dated April 18, 1993, he wrote,

26. Letter from Myron Sutton to David Bigler, dated April 25, 1991.



UPPER COOLEY STREET (LANE) IN GRANTSVILLE
All the old Lombardy poplar trees that lined the street are gone. The trees mentioned by Irene Paden in her book died as the wells and free-flowing ditch water dried up.



J. REUBEN CLARK FARM IN GRANTSVILLE
The farm is on Clark Street and west of Cooley Street, not far from where Reed may have camped on August 26, 1846. The 1856 survey map shows springs north of the farm location.

The entire area northwest of town used to be swampy. We used it for pastures and cut grass hay from it in the late summer. The farmers hauled rocks to the springs [wells] when they had the time and they gradually disappeared. Another factor was that a lot of shallow artesian wells were drilled for culinary use in the town. Probably the main factor in the demise was the 1930s drought and the piping of the Willow Creeks.

I believe that because of the plentiful grass and freshwater springs such as Fishing Creek, several of the large emigrant companies went on to make camp in this slightly lower valley, making the effort to ford Twin Springs and avoid the marshy areas. This is a more direct route west and closer to the present state road to Grantsville. According to Jefferson's map, Hastings and some companies of the Harlan-Young Party looped south near the present town of Erda to avoid fording Twin Springs Creek and other streams west of Adobe Rock. The 1856 Survey Map for Section T2S, R4W, shows there were freshwater springs at Bates (the present town of Erda). The Bates road rejoined the road from Adobe Rock and Benson's Mill at Grantsville. It is reasonable to assume that to avoid the congestion of perhaps a hundred wagons, emigrants would spread their camps along the lower valley and "lower wells" north of the present road to Grantsville and west of Six-Mile Creek and Fishing Creek. According to older residents of the area that I have talked to, these streams had grass clear to the lakeshore after spreading out.²⁷

After accumulating dozens of notes, re-visiting sites, studying maps and letters, and conversing with historians, writers, and good friends with a common interest in the Hastings Cutoff and those who traveled on it 159 years ago, I have concluded that the mystery of where Luke and John are buried will continue to provide more questions than answers. For some of us, the fun is more often in the search than in the discovery.

A few years before he died in 1998 at the age of 90, Myron Sutton wrote me about an earlier visit and conversation we had concerning the wells and creeks in the Grantsville area. He wrote,

We didn't talk about the Halloran and Hargrave graves when you were here, but this upper wells, lower wells seems to further nail down my feeling that they were buried in the west part of Grantsville where I was born. I was never haunted by them but I feel they are here, even in the area of the present cemetery.²⁸

I agree. But I don't think Myron or I would mind at all if some day a new discovery during a road repair project or a basement excavation somewhere along the Hastings Cutoff in Tooele Valley proved us wrong.

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