

# Brigham City, Winslow, and Prospects for Renewal

Alan Ferg, Arizona State Museum

**B**ALLENGER'S CAMP, one of the four Mormon colonies along the Little Colorado River in northern Arizona, was formally named Brigham City in 1878 in honor of Mormon leader Brigham Young. Brigham City was reasonably prosperous and could boast a school, gristmill, pottery, tannery and blacksmith's shops; it also participated in the operation of a sawmill and dairy (see page 10). But the country was hard and the river capricious, repeatedly washing out numerous dams over the years. Families began to move to other settlements, and in 1881 the Mormon Church released the remaining families from their obligations. Virtually abandoned by its settlers, Brigham City was used briefly as the local headquarters during construction of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, and with the arrival of the railroad, the City of Winslow was born. The Brigham City property then changed hands twice before being purchased by Fernando Thornton La Prade in 1890.

Over the next 57 years, the La Prade family farmed and operated the Sunset Dairy on the old fort and surrounding properties. Most of the fort's buildings were dismantled and the stone recycled into new structures, including the huge La Prade barn. In 1947, the property was acquired by the City of Winslow and then leased out as part of the City Farms. The remodeled western two-thirds of the fort's communal dining hall had served as a private home, first for the La Prades and then for the families that followed, up to 1980.

The Brigham City Fort was built as a square, about 200 feet per side, with an eight-foot-tall exterior wall made of locally quarried Moenkopi sandstone. It had bastions at the northeast and southwest corners, wide gates in the center of each side of the fort, and a variety of outbuildings and corrals. Today, the only standing portions of the original fort are part of the dining hall and portions of the east wall, which was incorporated into the La Prade barn.

Archaeological investigations at Brigham City began

in 1977, when Archaeological Research Services, Inc., and the historical architectural firm of Gerald A. Doyle and Associates conducted test excavations and documented the remaining structures at the site for the City of Winslow. In 1988, the Brigham City Restoration Committee was formed to restore the site to its original appearance. Between 1991

and 1995, members of the Arizona Archaeological Society conducted additional test excavations here (see page 7). Although they hoped to excavate the potter's living quarters and the shoe shop operated by Marcor Hansen Peterson (see page 3),

testing showed both rooms were destroyed when the entire southwest quarter of the fort was plowed for farming.

There were hopes that Brigham City could become another tourist destination in the Winslow area, along with Homolovi Ruins State Park, La Posada Hotel, a Hubbell trading post, and local attractions related to State Route 66 and the nearby Hopi mesas. Winslow businessman and Mormon Church Elder Harry Hancock began a reconstruction of the southwest bastion and the walls of the fort, but this personal effort has stopped for the time being. And in spite of general community interest, neither public nor church funding has been forthcoming to totally re-

build the Brigham City Fort.

Ironically, as the original Brigham City has deteriorated over the decades, reduced-scale replicas of its walls and circular bastions live on in the heart of Winslow. Architect Mary Coulter, famous for her Harvey Company hotels and complex of buildings at the Grand Canyon, used extensive sandstone walls—some say they were constructed using the actual stones of Brigham City—to enclose the lawn and gardens on the west side of the La Posada Hotel complex north of the railroad. Built in 1929, both La Posada and its garden walls are still there. What the future holds for the Brigham City Fort is hard to foretell.

Richard W. Lord



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*Top: Janice Griffith, director of the Old Trails Museum (in blue shirt), watches (left to right): Marty Tagg, Lori Hawthorne, Bill Davis, and Alan Ferg excavating Behrman's workshop, kiln, and the northeast bastion in 1991, with the old dining hall in the background. Bottom: The northeast corner of the fort after excavations were backfilled and low walls built to show the locations of the buried features.*

# Brother Behrman's Pottery

Alan Ferg, Arizona State Museum

**T**HE WORKSHOP AND KILN of Brigham City's potter, Wilhelm Frederick Otto Behrman, was excavated in 1991 as a joint project of the Arizona Archaeological Society, the Brigham City Restoration Committee, and the Old Trails Museum in Winslow. (The kiln's location had been discovered during test excavations by Archaeological Research Services, Inc., and Gerald A. Doyle and Associates in 1980.) Behrman, who was born in Denmark, worked as a potter in Ephraim, Utah, around 1870, and was among those Mormons called to Arizona in

1876, presumably so he could supply the Little Colorado colonies with crockery. In 1879, he moved to Colorado and apparently never made pottery again.

*Glazed and unglazed milk-settling pan rim sherds.*

Behrman's workshop was 18 feet square, with a flagstone floor, opening into the 10-foot-diameter bastion on the northeast corner of the fort (see page 6). The kiln, which was built of unfired bricks of local clay, was about 6 feet wide and 10 feet long; it was apparently the only nineteenth-century European-style kiln in Arizona. Behrman was probably firing his pieces with wood (and possibly coal), and he achieved temperatures hot enough to partially melt and vitrify the inner faces of bricks in the kiln walls. When excavated, the remains of the kiln's foundation measured only about a foot high, but the foundation did contain some details of the ventilation system. In the southeast corner of the room was a dense pile of broken pottery and kiln furniture—probably lying where Behrman discarded them after his last use of the kiln 125 years ago.

In addition to the kiln itself, virtually every step in the pottery-making process was

recovered, including raw clay, unfired sherds, sherds from successfully fired vessels, vessels broken in firing, charcoal, and ash. Neutron activation analysis, conducted by Patrick D. Lyons of the Center for Desert Archaeology on a few fired and unfired sherds and on a sample of raw clay from directly underneath the northeast bastion, shows that the clays in all are very similar, and that is distinct from clays used by prehistoric Native American potters in the area.

Behrman's pots are low-fired utilitarian redwares with a greenish-yellow glaze on one or both surfaces. His vessel forms include various sizes of crocks with lids, small plates or saucers, probable water pitchers, and—perhaps his most common product—large, slant-sided bowls (known as "milk-settling pans") probably destined for the dairy at Mormon Lake.

Behrman's pottery, with its very short period of production—1876 to 1879—would be useful to archaeologists attempting to date sites in which it was found. However, his wares have only been found at Brigham City, Joseph City, and Millville at Mormon Lake. In fact, the presence of these distinctive green-glazed redware sherds was critical to archaeologists' identification of the site of Millville (see page 10).

Finally, the excavation of Behrman's kiln had an unusual application. Samples from the kiln bricks were submitted to an archaeomagnetic laboratory, producing one of the most tightly clustered sets of readings yet run for the Southwest. In a reversal of the usual situation, the archaeologists were able to tell the laboratory technicians that the samples were fired

between 1876 and 1879, which helped them to calibrate the recent historic portion of the curve used to calculate archaeomagnetic dates. This has improved the accuracy of dates that can be provided to other archaeologists using archaeomagnetic samples to date historic sites in the Southwest.

Tobi Taylor



Richard W. Lord



Richard W. Lord



*Top: Melted inner faces of kiln bricks. Bottom: A misfired crock lid.*