

PROVIDENCE, UTAH

BY

DORAN J. BAKER



THE AUTHOR

PROVIDENCE, UTAH

OCTOBER 1971

en by Doran Baker

THE SECOND CENTURY 18

REFERENCES 23



Providence is the second oldest town of all in our resplendent Cache Valley, exceeded in age only by Wellsville.* One hundred and twelve years ago, on April 20, 1859, Ira Rice (1793-1869) and Hopkin Mathews (1823-1903) led a small group of pioneer families from a temporary stop-over at the Elkhorn Ranch (Church Ranch) on the Blacksmith Fork River.[†] They settled a couple of miles to the northeast near a creek which flowed through the Big Spring where Samuel Campbell (ca. 1825-1908) and his brother Joseph (1837-1925) had encamped at the time of the reconnaissance by their party to the Valley two years earlier.²

Logan, Mendon, Richmond and Smithfield, in that order, were to join Wellsville and Providence in 1859 as the Six Original Settlements of Cache

*Wellsville was founded as Maughan's Fort in 1856 but was abandoned until 1859 because of the "Utah War."

[†]The Elkhorn Ranch consisting of log cabins and corrals was established immediately to the west of present-day Providence in 1855 by Captain Briant Stringham (1825-1871) for President Erigham Young's cattle herds. The dates of birth and death of those who resided in or near Providence are in each case given in parentheses.

To Elkhorn Ranch

Rock
Fort

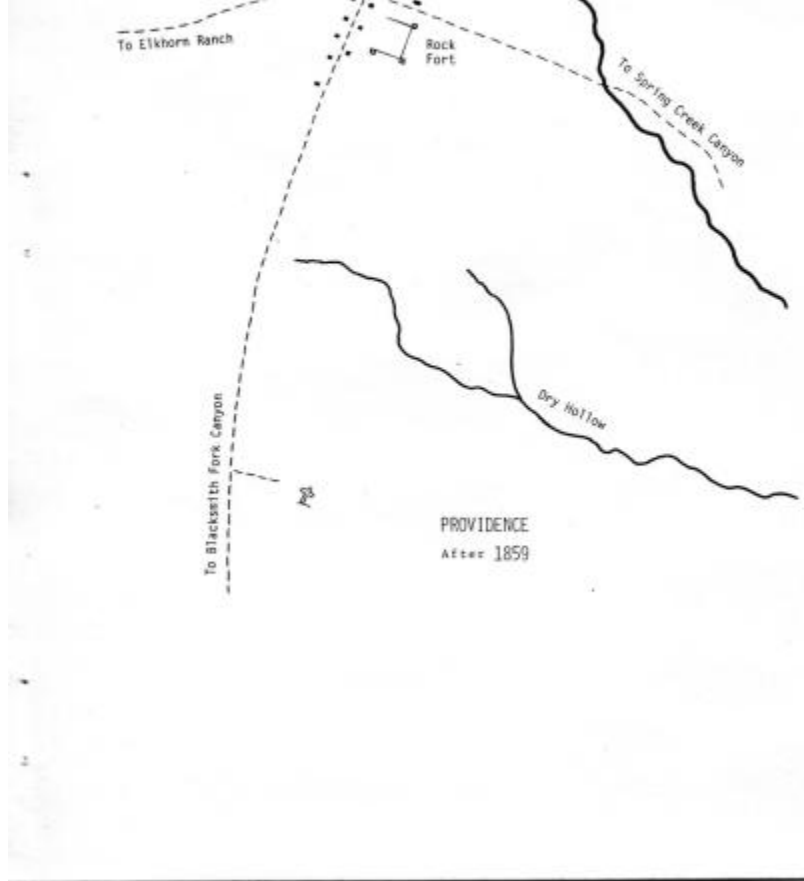
To Spring Creek Canyon

To Blacksmith Fork Canyon

Ag

Dry Hollow

PROVIDENCE
After 1859



in Fort style immediately south of the Big Spring of Spring Creek.³

When spring finally arrived after a hard winter, the available land around Providence was allotted to the settlers. The town was laid out with roads on the diagonal, running from the northeast to the southwest. Construction started on a log schoolhouse and to the east a four to six-foot rock wall was started with the intent of enclosing the fort.⁴ Frederick Theurer (1839-1922) established the first blacksmith shop. That November, Abraham Lincoln was elected President, whereupon South Carolina seceded from the Union and our country precipitated into civil war whose devastation was remote fortunately, from Providence.

The following year, 1861, a post office was established in Providence, with Bishop Williams as the first postmaster. The first saw mill, which was man-operated, was built by Henry Bair (1813-1904) near the mouth of Providence Canyon to the east of the settlement. The embryonic town began to acquire a measure of self-sufficiency.

In the fourth year of Providence's settlement, Colonel Patrick Connor was ordered to march to Utah with an army of California volunteers. Ostensibly, their purpose was to guard the overland mail routes, as Indians were pillaging Fort Bridger and other mail stations to the East. However, Colonel Connor located his camp high on the bench east of Great Salt Lake City where he could keep watch on President Brigham

were now encamped within two miles of Providence. The day after Major McGarry's detachment arrived at Providence on November 22, 1862, thirty or forty Indians suddenly appeared from the mouth of Dry Canyon and opened fire on the soldiers. Dry Canyon or Dry Pole Canyon is the one immediately north of Providence Canyon. Major McGarry ordered his Captains, Conrad and Smith, to return the fire. A spirited gun fight ensued for the next couple of hours; whereupon Bear Hunter, the Indian chief, appeared with a white flag. Chief Bear Hunter was taken into Providence, but finding neither the boy nor stolen cattle, Major McGarry released his captives and the soldiers made the two-day return march to Camp Douglas.

As soon as the soldiers were gone, the Indians mustered a strong force outside Providence and made hostile demonstrations against the inhabitants who still numbered less than a hundred. The Indians were angry because the Providence settlers had sheltered and fed the troops. Seventy men came from Logan to help defend the town, but Presiding Bishop Maughan finally pacified the Indians by giving them two beef and a supply of flour.⁶ Colonel Conner, though, took it upon himself to settle the Indian question once and for all. In the dead of winter he marched 300 troops to Cache Valley using Orrin Porter Rockwell as his guide.⁷

another of her more well-known citizens. Joseph Alastor Smith (1852-1924), the founder of Edgewood Hall, emigrated to Providence with his parents from Gloucester, England. He was a rapidly-growing lad of fourteen. In this same year the telegraph came to Cache Valley. No longer would news from the East take weeks and months to reach Providence.

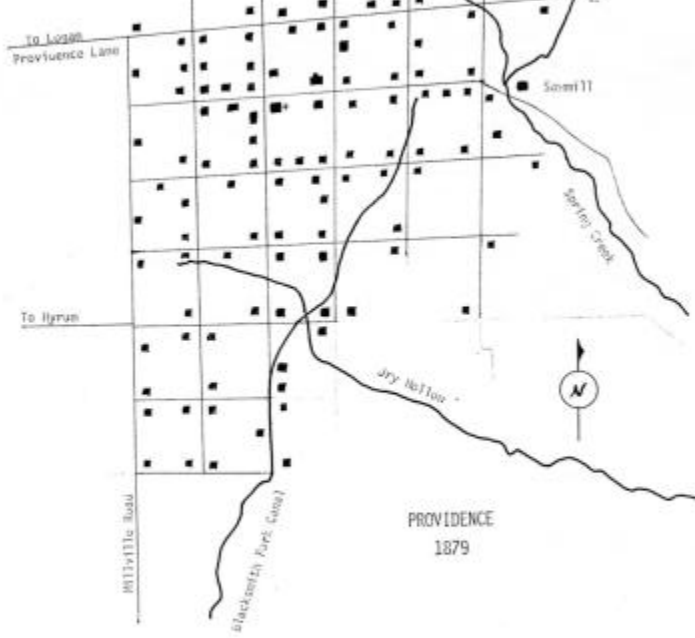
The railroad was snaking its way West. By 1867 it was to Cheyenne. The next year the surveyors were in Utah, and then on March 3, 1869, the first locomotive steamed into Ogden. Three years later the railroad would follow the Bear River into Cache Valley itself. Never more would the immigrants need to make the grueling year's wagon journey across plains and mountains to make their homes in the Rockies. Providence, now with nearly four hundred souls, had survived her isolated first decade.

as bishop. The chapel was finally completed in 1873, the year David O. McKay was born down at Huntsville.

On September 4, 1871, the Providence Townsite was platted. A survey was made which laid the town off in 8-acre blocks with six lots of one and one-third acres on each block. After a dozen years on the diagonal, the streets of the town now ran north-south and east-west. The settlers drew lots for their parcels of land and moved onto them. The Probate Judge for Cache County, William Hyde, began immediately to issue Townsite Deeds to the settlers. The cemetery was moved from the south end of Main Street (where Eldon Janes now lives) to the more appropriate hill site north of town. Bishop Milton D. Hammond of Providence was elected Probate Judge of Cache County succeeding William Hyde.

On the 17th of May in 1877, with President Brigham Young present, Orson Pratt dedicated the site for the Logan Temple on the bench overlooking Logan City. The next day the ground was broken and construction began. President Young then reorganized the Cache Stake, Moses Thatcher succeeded William B. Preston as President.*

*William Preston had served as President of the Cache Stake of Zion after the death in 1871 of President Peter Maughan, the pioneer of the Cache Valley settlements.



thirty-three years before. The Logan temple was dedicated in May, 1884, by President John Taylor.

In 1887 Jacob Miller (1841-1924) of Providence was arrested and sentenced to the penitentiary for two months for plural marriage as the anti-Mormon pressure intensified throughout the Utah Territory. Subsequently, Rudolph Hochstrasser (1839-1916), Frederick Theurer (1839-1922) and Jacob Fuhrman (1831-1914) were similarly persecuted.

On June 29, 1888, the new Board of Trustees for the Agricultural College visited Providence to investigate its bench as a possible site for the new College. In September the Logan City Council and the Cache County Court appointed a joint committee to locate a site. This joint committee found a 75-acre farm in Providence on which to locate the College, but the county refused to pay their two-thirds of the \$3,000 purchase price, so they went back to seeking a cheaper campus. The committee found four more prospective locations, three again in Providence and one in Hyrum. The best was an 85-acre tract in Providence which they could buy for \$5,000. Although the Logan City Council was again

*The Brigham Young College opened the next year, 1878. It was closed in 1926, whereupon its buildings were taken over by Logan High School.

Thomas Stirland (1858-1924) also was sent to prison. But on September 24, 1890, President Wilford Woodruff issued the *Manifesto* advising the Saints to refrain from contracting any marriages which were forbidden by the law of the land. It was sustained by the body of the Church at the October Conference. In January, 1893, outgoing President Benjamin Harrison signed an Amnesty Proclamation granting clemency, thus freeing most imprisoned Mormons. District court cases, including those against Milton D. Hammond and others of Providence, were dismissed. Church property was restored and Mormons were once again allowed to vote. Three years later, Utah was at long last admitted to the Union as the 45th state. Joseph Alastor Smith served as one of three electors for Utah's first participation in the national election.

On April 2, 1898, the Board of Cache County Commissioners finally approved the formal request by the residents and electors of Providence Precinct of March 24, 1892, to amend their original petition for a Town Incorporation of Providence. This amendment enlarged the boundaries of the town and changed its form of government. The next month (June 17) the first town election was held and Hopkin John Mathews (1858-1924) was elected as the first President of the Providence Town Board.

used in many of Cache Valley homes was started by Joseph Muir (-) at a lot in the south part of town. The clay was quarried on the property later to be owned by Eldon Janes. A brickyard was later (1880's) established by Gottlieb Gessel (1849-1923) where Spring Creek crosses the River Heights road; it was later moved to the Ballard Springs.

In 1901 David Eccles and Charles W. Nibley formed the Logan Sugar Company for the manufacture of sugar from sugar beets. A half million dollar plant was built west of Providence at the junction of the Blacksmith Fork with the Logan River.¹⁰ Gessel's bricks were used in its construction. The following year the plant was merged with plants in Ogden and Oregon to form the Amalgamated Sugar Company. At its peak the factory processed some sixty thousand tons of beets a year and employed about 150 Providence residents. The factory closed down in 1926, and was dismantled in 1936.

Starting about 1903, limestone was quarried from Providence Canyon and hauled by team and wagon to the Sugar Factory where it was crushed and used in the purification of the beet juice for sugar making. Elias Peter Hansen (1863-1950) discovered the high grade limestone, some of which assays 97% calcium, filed a mineral claim on the land and began to sell the rock to

Brothers Grocery and Meat Store by John Michael Theurer (1864-1941) and his brothers David O. (1873-1956) and Henry A. (1880-1956). In 1930 Henry bought out the interests of his brothers, remodeled the store, and expanded it to include general merchandise. Beth Theurer became manager of the Providence Theurer's Store.

The other principal mercantile establishment was the Providence Co-Op which was organized in 1869 and took over Samuel Hargrave's (1815-1871) private store. Bishop M.D. Hammond served as its first president and William Walker Low (1833-1891), William Budge Low (1856-1930), Joseph Alastor Smith, and E.P. Hansen in turn served as managers. It burned to the ground in 1912. The building (presently occupied by Keith W. Watkins & Sons Printing, Inc., and Marriott's Barber Shop) was rebuilt as a private store across Main Street from the Providence chapel and immediately north of the old wooden Pavilion or Town Amusement Hall which had been erected in 1905.

The Providence auto repair shop and service station was opened in 1935 north of the Theurer Store by Lowell Barkle. Providence Service was moved across the street when the present building was constructed in 1945.

Water has always been a most critical resource for the settlers of Utah. The towns were located along the Wasatch front only where water issued from the mountains. For Providence it was Spring Creek. However, soon after the town was settled the water already proved to be in-

Creek Water Company was formed on January 22, 1902, out of the Providence and Millville Irrigating District to provide irrigation water. Joseph Alastor Smith was elected as its first president. The water users of the canal from the Blacksmith Fork River incorporated into the Providence Blacksmith Fork Irrigation Company.

It wasn't until August of 1938, and then only after great difficulty, that a municipal culinary water system was undertaken by Providence. The critical juncture was the approval by the citizens at a special election (August 15, 1938) of a general bond issue to finance the system. The five private culinary water companies were bought out. The water for the municipal water works comes from the Broad Hollow Spring in Providence Canyon which is completely covered by a concrete collecting chamber.

The old log school house was replaced by a two-story rock school house, which was located on the present school grounds, in 1877. The present white-brick school house was erected in 1905 and at the time was one of the finest in Cache Valley. The gymnasium was completed in 1940. The public schools were consolidated under the Cache County School Board in 1908, and A.E. Allen served as the Board's principal of the

Smith, Jr., divided Providence into the First and Second Wards. Godfrey Fuhrman (1859-1920), who was born the year Providence was founded, was set apart as the bishop of the First Ward. Joseph Campbell, the eldest son of Providence's pioneer, became the Second Ward's first bishop.

The Second Ward held their meetings at the old Pavilion as they made plans to erect themselves a chapel. The first site selected was the corner of Main and Third South where former Providence Bishop Kenneth Braegger's home now stands. At the time Jacob "Jake" Schenk (1856-1937) had a log cabin home at that location, and when the sale was never consummated the site kitty-corner across the road was acquired. Construction started on March 10, 1910, with Alma Mahonri Mathews (1855-1918) as the general contractor. The chapel was dedicated by President Joseph F. Smith on April 30, 1916. Jake Schenk later became custodian of the chapel.

Although Logan had electricity by the late 1800's Providence did not have effective electrical power until 1909. The telephone had already come in 1905.

The appearance of Providence changed markedly after the roads were black-topped (oiled). As early as 1899 some streets were gravelled to ameliorate the choking dust of summer and the mire of mud of spring and fall. In 1922 the Providence Lane leading

presently occupied by Vernon Willits. This couple suffered a terrible tragedy when they were hit by the street car train as they drove east across the tracks which crossed the road south of their home. Neither fully recovered from the accident. The Logan Rapid Transit, which came to Providence in 1912, had a loading station on the southwest corner near there.

While on a mission to Europe, Joseph Alastor Smith became imbued with the notion of building an English country estate. Upon returning, he piecewise acquired a large tract of land on the bench overlooking Providence. On July 25, 1903, he laid the cornerstone for a 28-room mansion. It was his son's (Joseph, Jr. 1882-1947) 11th birthday. He named his estate Edgewood Hall after the books *My Farm at Edgewood* and *Wet Days at Edgewood*. Alastor created the Edgewood Hall nursery and planted thousands of poplar and cottonwood (Balm of Gilead) trees. He imported rare trees, and used them to landscape the grounds of the Temple, the Tabernacle, and the Colleges in Logan. He helped immigrants to gain their passage to America by engaging them to work on his extensive grounds and nursery enterprises. Alastor was a prolific author,¹¹ and also served as the town's amateur dentist. He was accomplished in music, and was a member of Providence's famous Sunflower Quartet. He died suddenly in the library of his home on

in the fireplace using pine cones from trees about the lovely grounds. "As the family sat around the fire, the sparks shooting from the chimney dropped on the roof which soon afterward burst into flames. The family knew nothing of the fire on the roof until they were asked by telephone if a huge bonfire was burning on the hill. The family hurried from the house to find the roof in flames."¹²

The roaring flames on Providence heights could be seen all over the Valley. The Logan-Cache Fire Department could do little as the water supply was too far away at the bottom of the hill. The fire consumed the home and its furnishings, including one of the most extensive private libraries in Utah. Only a grand piano, china closet, and some of the belongings could be saved by the Smith's and their three children. The next morning all that remained of one of the finest homes in Cache Valley were three chimneys standing tall out of the char-black rubble.

Mrs. Annie Mathews Smith (1861-1934) had passed away the year before (January 31, 1934) and the Edgewood Hall estate was in probate when the disaster occurred. Joseph A. Smith, Jr., the executor of the estate sold it to L. Boyd Hatch, New York's millionaire from Logan. In 1938 Mr. Hatch undertook himself to build a formal English estate of grandiose proportions, but it was never completed. Theron Bringhurst purchased

Providence was incorporated as a Third Class City. These city ordinances were revised in 1929.¹³ The mayors of this period were James E. Hansen, Joseph Campbell, David O. Theurer, Austin Frank, Walter Fuhrman, Preston D. Alder, Norman Fuhrman, Ernest B. Maughan, Grant Mathews, Fred Alder and Keith Mathews.

city, in one decade its population nearly doubled (2,200 in 1970). In the present decade it will probably double again.

Changes have rapidly been coming. Ground was broken for a new Second Ward chapel on March 26, 1963, and under the timely and energetic bishopric of Kenneth Braegger the beautiful new brick chapel with the blue roof was dedicated on December 12, 1965.¹⁴ The old chapel came down. The next year the new Third Ward under Bishop Blaine Olsen was formed out of a portion of the Second Ward whose new bishop was Arthur Olsen, Jr. The lovely new Providence First Ward Chapel was constructed under the guidance of Bishop Chester Zollinger; the dedication in August, 1968. All three wards are now led by new bishops, Kenneth L. Spuhler (1st Ward), Clair L. Wyatt (2nd Ward), C. Richard Baker (3rd Ward).

As Providence goes on into her second century she must cope with new problems. She is now part of a rapidly growing population which is consuming dwindling resources at an accelerating rate. How to preserve the freedom of her citizens and yet save Providence from losing her identity and her soul? The automated sprawl of suburbia has already consumed towns like her across the country. How to preserve and keep pure the precious, cold water while serving more and more people? How to preserve the beautiful foothills, mountains, canyons, streams, watershed and open areas and yet continue to provide homes and livelihood for all of Providence's residents? How to route the





Estates. Major improvements were made on both the culinary and the irrigation water works. In 1969, under the leadership of Mayor Lloyd L. Leonhart, a Master Plan of Land Use was formulated for Providence as part of that for Cache County as a whole.^{15,16} The plans laid and implemented now will determine what Providence will be like, or even if there will continue to be a Providence through her second century.



compensation, residents, provisions and the
People; 1949.

3. Joel E. Ricks and Everett L. Cooley (eds.), *The History of a Valley*, Cache Valley, Utah-Idaho, Cache Valley Centennial Commission, Logan; 1956.
4. M.R. Hovey, *An Early History of Cache County*, Logan Chamber of Commerce, Logan; 1936.
5. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Volume L, Part II, Government Printing Office, Washington; 1897.
6. Peter Maughan Family Organization (Richard S. Maughan, President) *Peter Maughan Family History*, Logan; 1971.
7. Peter Gottfredson, *History of Indian Depredations in Utah*, The Author; Salt Lake City; 1919.
8. Edward W. Tullidge, *Northern Utah and Southern Idaho*, Tullidge's Histories, Volume II, Salt Lake City; 1889.
9. Joel Edward Ricks, *The Utah State Agricultural College, A History of Fifty Years*, The Deseret News Press, Salt Lake City; 1938.

13. *Revised Ordinances of Providence City, Utah, 1929*, The City Council of Providence (Compiled by Leon Fannesbeck).

14. *Providence Second Ward*, 1964.

15. *Master Plan of Land Use for Providence, Utah*; October, 1969.

16. *Cache County Master Plan, 1990*, Planning and Research Associates, Salt Lake City; June 1, 1970.

Supporting Documents

Sesquicentennial 2009 by Doran J
Baker.pdf 727.95 KB

[View Slideshow](#)