

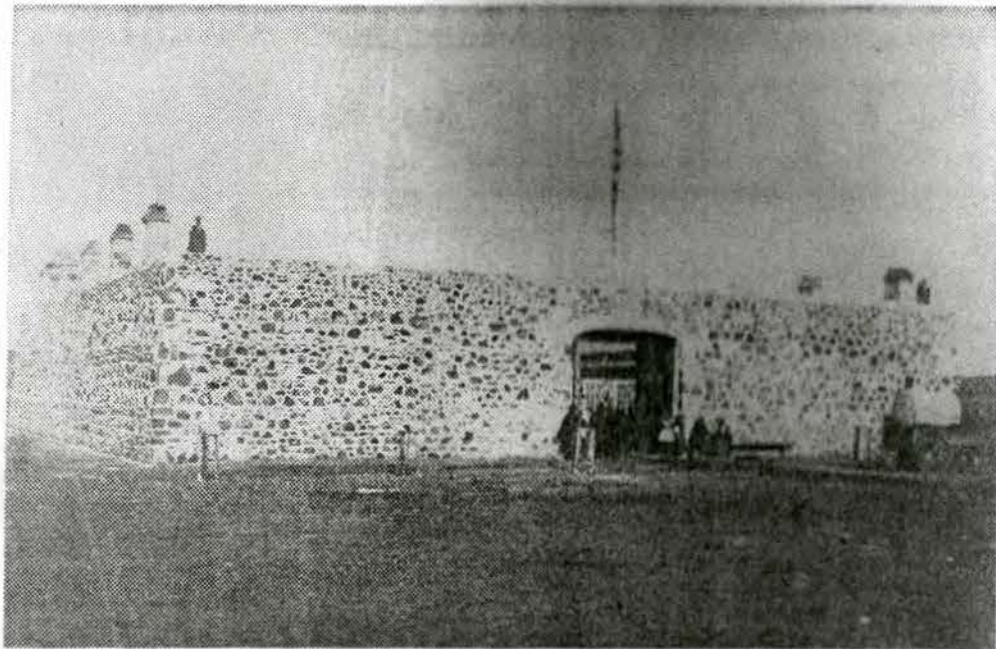


Photo of Cove Fort taken in 1869 — honey locust saplings protected by two years after fort was built—shows fences. Three of trees are still standing.



Millard County's Cove Fort as it appears today — with 18-foot-high walls 98 years old, towering 40 feet high.

Monument to Pioneer Industry, Ingenuity

Cove Fort—Now 100—Improves Image With Age

By Harriet Eliason
Tribune Correspondent

COVE FORT, Millard County — "People are interested in Cove Fort, more now than ever before, when they find it is 100 years old and is the original," says Mrs. Calvin T. (Fay) Kesler of Kanosh.

Cove Fort is now held in the estate of Otto Kesler, former Fillmore resident, who died March 28, 1966, and who is survived by his widow, Alice T. Kesler of Fillmore, and several children and their

families, most of whom reside in Utah.

The fort is located 35 miles southwest of Fillmore on a one-mile turn-off from Interstate 15. Eventually Interstate 70 from Denver through Richfield also will intersect within a mile of the landmark.

Up to 200 Daily

"Anywhere from 100 to 200 visitors stop daily to tour Cove Fort which is the only fort in a perfect state of preservation in Utah," commented Mrs. Calvin T. Kesler who

alternates with her sister-in-law, Mrs. Joseph (Carol) Kelser of Beaver, Utah, as a guide at this pioneer fortress.

"Cove Fort will be open seven days a week from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. from now until deer hunting season, weather permitting," Mrs. Kesler added.

A flag still waves above the "Keystone Arch" where a "liberty pole" held the first flag at the fort 100 years ago. Today, the original 12 rooms inside the fort are glass fronted with viewing areas.

Mrs. LeGrande Davies, the

from nearby fields, discarded building tools found under the floorboards, water-soaked bedsteads, butter churns falling apart, and brass kettles that required much polishing — just to name a few.

Cove Fort itself is a monument to the pioneers who built it a century ago. Built of black volcanic rock, "laid up in lime mortar," the 18-foot-high walls (four feet thick at the base and tapering to two feet at the top) enclose a 100-foot-square of land with an open courtyard.

This courtyard still contains



A lime kiln was built and lime burned and run off a few miles west of where the ground for the fort had been measured and staked. (A log handled about and turned due to the lime kiln are present relics inside the fort.) Timbers were gathered and a sawmill and shingle mill were established.

Because of the high cost of metal nails, wooden pegs were used in construction of Cove Fort. After the big wooden timbers were locked in place, a wooden peg was hammered down through them.

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Mrs. LeGrande Davies, the former Mary Kesler who was born and raised in Cove Fort and served as a guide six years, referred to the furniture and exhibits saying, "We wanted the real articles that were brought across the plains or made and used by the pioneers here. Many of these priceless antiques were owned by persons who built Cove Fort."

All Worked Hard

She added that all the Kesler family "has worked very hard with restoration of furniture" — old guns polished up

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This courtyard still contains the area where the cistern was (water had to be hauled in from nearby Cove Creek) and three of the original honey locust trees planted in 1869.

Loss of Lives

The Black Hawk War of 1865-68 — which cost the Territory of Utah \$1,121,037.38 in cash besides a great loss of property and in which at least 70 white people lost their lives — was a factor in Cove Fort's construction.

In a letter dated April 22, 1867, Brigham Young, then president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, wrote to Ira Nathaniel Hinckley in part as follows: "We wish to get a suitable person to settle on and take charge of the Church Ranch at Cove Creek, Millard County."

On Cove Creek

"As it is some distance from any other settlement, a man of sound practical judgment and experience is needed to fill this place. . . . The object to build a fort at Cove Creek is to afford protection from the Indians to the telegraph and mail stations and to the travelers who are almost constantly on the road. Also to furnish food and protection to this latter class. There is farming and hay land plentifully, also herding

Police Hunting Two Trustees

City Police Saturday continued their search for two City-County Jail trustees who walked away from work assignments Thursday.

Ben Chee, 37, 5 foot 6 inches tall, 170 pounds, walked away from the police firing range. Tony Ernest Arguello, 30, 5 foot 5 inches, 120 pounds, walked off his job at the police garage fuel pumps.



Nathaniel Hinckley
Built Cove Fort

facilities, good firewood in abundance close by."

A previous establishment here known as Ft. Willden, consisting of two homes, a dugout and corrals, was located near a creek called by the Indians "Pa-Hump-Pa" which means Cane Creek (or cane growing in the creek water).

The first settlers who encamped on this stream Jan. 5, 1851, gave it the name Cove Creek, but it was not until the fall of 1860 that Charles Willden and his son Elliot Willden commenced to improve the area. On Sept. 19, 1865, notice of its evacuation was published after which the LDS Church became interested in the property.

In January, 1866, when Utah was redivided into counties, Beaver County was "bounded on the north by a line running east and west through a point two miles due south from the south side of Ft. Willden on Cove Creek."

Timbers Gathered

Ira Nathaniel Hinckley arrived at Cove Creek, April 27, 1867, and because he had the ability to encourage men to work on the fort as well as they would for themselves, it was successfully and speedily completed by November, 1867.

A lime kiln was built and lime burned and run off a few miles east of where the ground for the fort had been measured and staked. (A long handled shovel and former door to the lime kiln are present relics inside the fort.) Timbers were gathered and a sawmill and shingle mill were established.

Because of the high cost of metal nails, wooden pegs were used in construction of Cove Fort. After the big wooden timbers were locked in place, a wooden peg was hammered down through them.

The entire building contains 2,250 perch of rock (a perch is 24 3/4 cubic feet), 1,975 bushels of lime, 34,342 feet of lumber, and cost approximately \$25,000. All the materials including the stone and volcanic rock were taken from the vicinity, except metal hinges, etc.

Stage Lines Stopped

Freight wagons going to and from Utah, Nevada and California stopped at the fort. Twice daily the stage lines of Gillsmore and Salisbury stopped with their heavy steel boxes of money and their well-armed expressmen. The passengers dined and the drivers obtained four fresh horses for continuing the journey with their large, heavy coaches.

This fort also served as a station on the Deseret Telegraph line, and the U.S. mail route to southern California. The early pioneer road to Cove Fort was east of the present road and came south of Fillmore by way of a low pass through "Dog Valley."

The surrounding country soon developed into a great stock-raising point and all comers were welcome to make camp there. Several notables spent the night at Cove Fort. Wells-Fargo & Co. came through with their strong steel express boxes to transfer treasures and gold and silver, guarded by daring messengers Eugene Blair, Phil Barnhart and others.

Unhappy Instance

Most of the time Indians caused no trouble, because Ira Nathaniel Hinckley strongly adhered to the tenet that it was better to feed the Indians than fight them. However, once an unhappy situation arose when an Indian named Sissik was apprehended at Cove Fort after killing two miners in Beaver County. Sissik later was tried and shot for his crimes.

His two squaws who worked at Cove Fort could scarcely be found but were later discovered, one hiding in a basket of laundry and the other under the floor.

One night a Negro woman, her skirts ringed with ice, came to the fort looking for her unfaithful husband. She was comforted, fed and given a warm place to sleep by the fireplace but she disappeared before morning. On another occasion, a young lad, a half-frozen shepherd, was heard outside giving almost "his last wail" — and was rescued.

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Obtained Deed

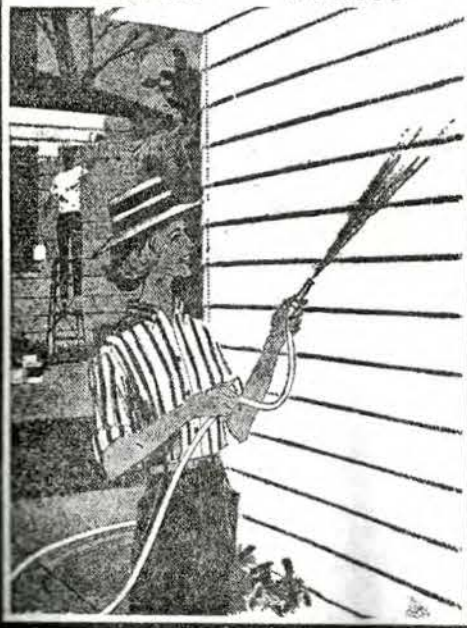
As early as 1903, William H. Kesler leased Cove Fort and in 1919 he procured a deed to the fort signed by Heber J. Grant as trustee for the LDS Church.

"We receive many compliments on the interesting assortment of relics inside Cove Fort," said Mrs. Calvin Kesler — "especially a washstand and captain's chair owned by Parley P. Pratt and an old desk built by Heber C. Kimball."

She added: "We expect tourist trade to be better than ever the rest of the summer as Highway 91 is being used while Interstate 15 is being oiled south of Cove Fort to Beaver."

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